BECOMING DEAF IN THE POSTHUMAN ERA: POSTHUMANISM, ARTS-BASED RESEARCH AND DEAF EDUCATION

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By

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Joanne Catherine Weber, candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, has presented a thesis titled, *Becoming Deaf in the Posthuman Era: Posthumanism, Arts-Based Research and Deaf Education*, in an oral examination held on December 6, 2018. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I explore posthumanism as a possible paradigm shift for deaf education which is presently mired in binarized thinking concerning language choices. The ontologies, epistemologies, research methodologies and pedagogy associated with posthumanism propose a radical shift in thinking about what it means to educate deaf adolescents who struggle to acquire English as an additional language whom I teach in a small resource room program contained within a high school in a midwestern Canadian city. Posthumanist onto-epistemology proposes a shift from anthropocentrism to a posthumanism that emphasizes multiple and shifting relationships between animals, plants, humans, and the earth. Here, posthumanism proposes that human activity not be defined according to a binarized lens often used by many governing bodies, policy developers, medical specialists, and educators but include the material realities as expressed by animal, plant and mineral entities. Implications of the shift from anthropocentricism to posthumanism is explored within the context of deaf education where language choices (American Sign Language and spoken English) are presented as binary opposites to deaf children and youth, parents and educators.

This text is rhizomatic in that it affords several points of entry at multiple levels, that is, the personal, the classroom where I teach deaf adolescents, the social and political arena, and the academy. This dissertation includes 1) a narrative inquiry into my becoming a posthumanist researcher where I grapple with my understanding of posthumanist onto-epistemology (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2005; Coole & Frost, 2010; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Haraway, 1991) and becoming a posthumanist teacher-researcher within the context of the classroom of deaf adolescents whom I teach, 2)
application of posthumanist methodology in investigating the arts-based literacy interventions with deaf adolescents (Barrett & Bolt, 2013; Braidotti, 2013; Coole & Frost, 2010; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016) and 3) the application of affective pedagogy shaped by posthumanist onto-epistemology (Hickey-Moody, 2009; 2013) to arts-based interventions with deaf adolescents. Findings from this rhizomatic exploration of posthumanism underscores recent anthropological discoveries of deaf anthropologists concerning deaf people and their learning, the relevance of translanguaging as an approach to language acquisition for deaf children and youth, and a paradigm shift toward the posthumanist deaf subject which affords a line of flight out of and away from the binarized choices concerning language acquisition in deaf children and youth.
DEDICATION

For Murray, Anna and Paula
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INTRODUCTION

My own commitment to the language and literacy education of deaf adolescents who struggle to acquire English as an additional language is not preventative in nature. I work primarily with students who arrive in my classroom at the age of 14 or higher and who struggle to acquire English and American Sign Language (ASL) language. I do not attempt to continue previous efforts to develop language in deaf adolescents using predominantly structuralist approaches to language acquisition which emphasizes sequences of grammar exercises, structured pragmatic rehearsals, scripts directing reading activities and worksheets (Canagarajah, 2018b). (Please note that in this text, I use the term “deaf” as proposed by deaf anthropologists, Friedner & Kusters, 2015 as the term is more inclusive and less polarizing than the multiple terms assigned - Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing - to various ideological positions which is not essential to understanding the dissertation as a whole).

To this day, I continue to witness in language-deprived deaf adolescents what Vygotsky observed in older deaf children in 1927:

By that time, the general development of the child was so advanced that it could not possibly take an interest in the slow teaching of speech and considered the task as a very unpleasant one without any practical advantages. On the other hand, the habit of mimicry became so strong that it was very difficult for the verbal speech to fight it, especially when the child’s interest in the verbal speech had been absolutely killed. The only way out of this position was to make use of artificial measures, exceptional severity and cruelty, and appealing to the
consciousness of the pupil, and thus the child was successfully taught to speak; but we all know that methods based on conscious efforts of the pupil, against his fundamental interests and habits, are not reliable (Vygotsky, 1925, p. 20).

Vygotsky’s observation challenges me to search for other ways to approach students who, after many long years of auditory training, speech therapy, dedication to wearing hearing aids and cochlear implant users, and placements in inclusive education environments with sign language interpreters, have acquired language (English and or ASL) that lies on the spectrum between a mother tongue and a second language. The lack of full access to either language contributes primarily to this state. Educational programming at the secondary level typically varies little from elementary schooling they’ve received. Many deaf students flounder their way through high school as they did in their early years of schooling and often finish with the ability to read and write at the fourth grade (Hall, Levin, & Anderson, 2017; Humphries, et al., 2016; Penicaud, et al., 2013; Mayberry, Chen, Witcher, & Klein, 2011; Mitchell, E, & Qi, 2012).

The resource room tutorial model, established at the secondary high school where I teach, was designed to facilitate the inclusive education of deaf adolescents. My fifteen years of teaching (2003-2018) within this program can be characterized in three phases: 1) sustainment of tutorial model, 2) adjustment of the tutorial model and 3) abandonment of the tutorial model to allow for direct instruction in the resource room and provision of support in selected mainstream classes. The first six years are best described as working within a tutorial program whereby a sign language interpreter or a notetaker accompanied each adolescent deaf student to their classes. Upon the student’s and interpreter or notetaker’s return to the resource room, I provided tutorial services for the class attended
during that day. Sometimes the educational interpreter or the notetaker would also provide tutorial services under my supervision. I spent much time finding ways to scaffold the concepts taught in the high school subjects using concept maps, drawings, additional reading materials and direct instruction concerning concepts presented in classes taught by other teachers.

During those early years, I often did not use American Sign Language (ASL) except in the presence of the ASL using students whom I instructed apart from the oral deaf or hard of hearing deaf students. Interpreters in the resource room program often looked at me with suspicion because I used ASL with the signing deaf students and often complained to the administration about my work (Weber, 2015b). The interpreters had been trained to use Signed English in the classroom and were heavily invested in the tutorial model and many felt unmoored when I questioned the efficacy of Signed English in ensuring comprehension of concepts.

Throughout this stage, the students behaved as atomistic entities, seldom conversing with each other, and remained invested in maintaining their friendships within their hearing cohort. Many of them did not have friends beyond their first year in the high school program because the communication demands exercised by hearing adolescents were too difficult to meet. These students also displayed little or no interest in my own deaf experiences. I felt that they viewed me in the same way they viewed themselves; we were hearing people who could not hear very well. And I did not attempt to correct that lens during this phase because I felt outnumbered by the interpreters who were committed to using Signed English, and I struggled to establish a positive working relationship with them (Weber, 2015b).
The second phase beginning in the sixth year of teaching is characterized by my restructuring of the tutorial model in response to linguistic, emotional and social needs of deaf students who experienced difficulty in being integrated into the regular classrooms. For many reasons, this group missed too much content within their mainstream classes. I found that I could not reteach the material during the time allotted and assist the students in maintaining the pace of classroom instruction. The students needed more time to learn the concepts, vocabulary and engage in reading and writing. I began to group students according to required class content (such as English language arts) rather than the year or level in which the class was taught. This meant that I taught several English classes at once, using the same content, to small groups of students, differentiating tasks and evaluations. The students demonstrated similar difficulties and abilities regardless of the grade level classes they had been placed in (mostly according to age). I began to provide more direct instruction concerning classes that required extensive reading and writing tasks. Thus, the deaf students attended some classes outside the resource room and other classes within the resource room.

During this phase, I integrated curriculums for English Language Arts, Psychology, and Social Studies. The students began to associate with each other according to their communication and language preferences. Hard of hearing students and oral deaf students talked to each other while students who used ASL (always in the minority) conversed with each other or kept to themselves. Students, who used oral English, continued to express a disdain for ASL and expressed little interest in learning the language. The ASL-using students were the most marginalized group within the resource room. All students seemed to be unaware of their own language difficulties and
attributed their successes and failures according to their innate intellectual abilities. Being able to speak (even badly) was equated with being smart; sign language was delegated to those who were less intelligent. I did not talk often about sign language rights, ASL or the deaf community during this phase. I did, however, share common and humorous stories about communication gaffes and breakdowns I had experienced in restaurants, drive-through fast food outlets, and in family conversations. The students began to respond with stories of their own. I felt that the students were beginning to respond to a shared experience of deafness. I did not relay any information about deaf culture, ASL or the deaf community in this phase to the oral deaf and hard of hearing students. In the meantime, I had one newcomer Canadian learning ASL for the first time. I introduced him to the deaf community, took him with me to many deaf events, and spent time in his home with his family, educating them about ASL, deaf culture and the deaf community. The other students were not aware of my cultural, linguistic and social interventions with this student and expressed little interest in learning sign language and communicating with him.

During this time, I began to question the foundations of my teaching. According to my teaching preparation courses at Gallaudet University, I used structuralist approaches to language development to maximize the learning of course material. Progress was slow, protracted and disheartening. Students remained largely uninterested, disengaged and unattached to what was going on around them in the resource room. In *The Deaf House*, a creative non-fiction memoir, I wrote:

> How will they ever learn to live in a community, to be active participants in a group? But they are not fretting about it. After all, they’ve operated in dyads all

Disturbed at their passivity, I felt an unbearable urgency to continue developing language in deaf adolescent students rather than pulling them through high school classes during which I ended up doing the bulk of the intellectual tasks required by the assignments because I had a fully developed first language (English). Unaddressed challenges to language learning do result in permanent cognitive deficits that are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to reverse (Mayberry, Chen, Witcher, & Klein, 2011; Davenport, et al., 2016). Currently, the case is being made to register language deprivation as a psychiatric condition, a syndrome which impacts academic performance, mental health and ability to form relationships with other people (Gulati, 2014; Hall, Levin, & Anderson, 2017). The term “language deprivation” emanates from a positivist research paradigm and many prominent researchers are advocating for this position (Gulati, 2014; Hall, Levin, & Anderson, 2017; Humphries, et al., 2012; 2016; Mayberry, Chen, Witcher, & Klein, 2011). I personally witnessed how social and cultural roadblocks to language acquisition indeed results in a neurodevelopmental disorder (Hall, Levin, & Anderson, 2017) and appreciated the practical outcomes associated with this position. For instance, in my work with such “language deprived adolescents” there are undeniably cognitive, social and emotional impacts that often become invisible when dealing with social services, justice and health systems. For example, many students who, upon leaving high school, are not ready to live on their own, need additional years of schooling beyond high school, and
exhibit mental health issues. These students are treated as average nineteen-year-old individuals who are entitled to the same benefits and supports as their hearing peers which amounts to virtually nothing because those benefits and supports do not address the effects of language deprivation (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016). A label such as “language deprivation” might force the government and professionals to assume responsibility and develop policies to address the roadblocks to language acquisition imposed upon deaf children. Therefore, more supports might be developed. This is a strategic essentialist position designed to foist responsibility on those who have created challenges to deaf children’s language acquisition (Spivak, 2005). It is also a way to advocate for bilingual education, pointing to the necessity of providing ASL role models in early childhood education (Humphries, et al., 2016). Without exposure to ASL in the critical formative years of language acquisition, deaf children then struggle to acquire language, particularly the language of the dominant culture which is English or French here in Canada (Snoddon & Underwood, 2014). For this reason, I do use a strategic essentialist phrase, auditory industrial complex, to present a sobering picture of what a deaf child faces when placed within a monolingual framework and only receiving the supports to acquire spoken English.

The auditory industrial complex is a phrase coined by David Eberwein (2007) in a lecture at Ohlone College, California to describe the tightly interwoven network of scientists, sound engineers, manufacturers of cochlear implants and hearing aids, audiologists, surgeons, ear, nose and throat specialists, speech and language pathologist and teachers of the deaf who subscribe to the view that deafness is a disability and in need of a cure. The word complex suggests that the auditory industrial complex is a
power nexus in which school divisions, parents, and companies allocate financial resources toward sustaining this network in their work with deaf clients. Eckert and Rowley (2013) use this term in their peer reviewed article, “Audism: A theory and practice of audiocentric privilege”. Most deaf academics have not picked up on this term which is mostly used by deaf advocacy groups. For instance, on Tuesday, February 4, 2008, the Deaf Bilingual Coalition (DBC) wrote a letter to Pepsico, praising the reference to ASL and deaf culture in their Pepsi advertisements (to which the AG Bell, a non-profit organization objected), stating:

> It appears that any positive and widespread celebration of ASL and Deaf people’s way of living represents a potential loss of profits, power, and political clout for the auditory-industrial complex. The DBC is pleased that Pepsi, unlike AG Bell, understands the miracle of sound reasoning (Deaf Bilingual Coalition, 2008)

The use of the phrase, auditory industrial complex” here, is a strategic essentialist term and pits those who promote oralism against those who use sign language. My own reasons for using this phrase throughout this dissertation are different. Braidotti (2013) proposes that posthumanism needs to critically address the question of difference as anthropocentricism often promotes exclusion, exploitation and oppression of humans categorized as the Other. For instance, the allocation of resources to the auditory industrial complex creates a chronic shortage of financial resources to be extended toward deaf individuals who require sign language to access the curriculum and to participate in the community. In addition, my commitment to intercultural pedagogy pushes past efforts at tinkering with the established educational system that primarily serves a tight web of modernity, colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchalism (Pirbhai-Illich, Pete, & Martin, 2017). The auditory industrial complex, while providing biomedical interventions, often reproduces
social, cultural and linguistic inequality to those who are marginalized according to class, race, gender and ability (Mauldin, 2016). For instance, funding for ASL instruction to families with newly diagnosed deaf children is often temporary and sporadic (Gillies, 2018). The term, auditory industrial complex, will appear as a motif throughout this dissertation as I strive to find ways to address marginalization of deaf people without resorting to strategic essentialism. I use the term so that marginalization is not put under erasure but to ensure that the difference is in the forefront upon applying the posthumanist lens throughout this dissertation.

Furthermore, the label “language deprivation” hints at required membership for “belonging” in our society in that language deprived children are “ruined” and therefore cannot participate in our society but are to be maintained as social services recipients for the remainder of their lives. Caregivers and professionals become even more entrenched in a deficit position that seeks to manage “deafness” as a biomedical condition (Blume, 2010; Mauldin, 2016). Within my work environment, I have received deaf students referred by parents, caregivers, audiologists, speech pathologists, mental health personnel and probation officers who have given up, citing the overwhelming cognitive, social and emotional deficits associated with unaddressed challenges associated with language acquisition as the reason for their inability to serve them. I am part of a small deaf community who lacks capacity and resources to provide services to such individuals (Gillies, 2018). I have also witnessed how many deaf individuals including myself in the local deaf community often apply the deficit label to these abandoned deaf individuals because we lacked the capacity to serve the same deaf individuals upon reaching adolescence or adulthood. Often, in the bid to acquire more supports and services for
these individuals, I used the same deficit label, “language deprivation” in the bid for increased services and supports by warning of the unintended consequences of a monolingual framework and to advocate for early bilingual education. As I worked alongside other deaf lobbyists, I became increasingly aware of the ineffectiveness of this argument and saw how the usage of the term “language deprivation” did not achieve desired results. The language deprivation argument appeared tautological and did not seem to provide an opening through which all people concerned with deaf individuals could see alternatives.

As a resource room teacher, I continue to ask myself, what can be done if the damage is already done? What is possible when deaf adolescent students are saddled with linguistic and cognitive deficits through no fault of their own? In my presence, their intelligence took a haunted, ghostly presence, as if it ran between trees and bushes, affording me glimpses. At other times, their intelligence clearly showed up and then slipped away. During this second phase of my teaching in the resource program, the interpreters and I engaged in many discussions about redefining roles for ourselves. The educational interpreters were no longer being assigned to classrooms which provided instruction in English, Psychology and Social Studies. They worked alongside me in the resource room, providing individual support under my direction. This phase enabled me to develop stronger bonds with the interpreters in the program. Nonetheless, the students remained primarily passive and disengaged in their learning. They were also independent silos, incessantly groping their way toward acceptance by their hearing peers and teachers.

After struggling for five years in this fashion, I decided to enter doctoral studies in
the fall of 2014. The last four years constitute the third phase of teaching in the resource room marked by a radical examination of my own deficit perspectives upon myself, my students and the deaf community. With the help of doctoral studies, I began to see deaf students through a lens which empowered me to form a more truthful understanding of their potential for language acquisition even at the adolescent stage of development, and to establish a community of learning, characterized by enthusiasm, increased investment in learning, joy, laughter, and authentic communication. During this phase, I became inspired by educators who strove to be culturally responsive in their teaching and began to think about ways in which ASL linguistics, deaf culture, deaf spaces and the deaf community resources could be brought into the program. Please note that the phrase “culturally responsive pedagogy” is no longer a term used to describe working with students who are marginalized due to race, class, gender and ability. Older literature refers to culturally responsive pedagogy but researchers in this field are now using the term “intercultural” pedagogy in order to ensure that the educator is aware of one’s own cultural lens while engaging with people categorized as “other and their cultural lens. Culturally responsive pedagogy, on the other hand, implies a “missionary approach” and does not refer to the necessity of viewing the dominant culture (such that held by those of white, European settler ancestry) as a culture to be contended with, while engaging with students who are marginalized according to class, race, gender and ability (Pirbhai-Illich, Pete, & Martin, 2017).

The interpreters, at this time, became enthusiastic about learning American Sign Language, acting as a resource for students rather than accompanying the students through every phase of their learning. The interpreters began to interpret for outside
resource people who came to work in the classroom and to support me and the students in our projects. The old tutorial model began to give way to a student-centered model replacing the authoritative roles previously assigned to me and the interpreters.

The third phase of my work (four years) at this resource program, aided by my doctoral studies, initially plunged me into much uncomfortable soul searching. I became aware that the deficit perspective did not allow me to see certain things and therefore I began with my assessment of my own epistemic blindness. This dissertation includes a personal journey out of epistemic blindess through the exploration of the personal, cultural, pedagogical and academic work undertaken during the past four years.

Beginning with several difficult conversations I had with my doctoral supervisor who challenged me as maintaining a deficit perspective on “language-deprived” deaf adolescents, I began to see the intelligence exhibited by the deaf students as a virtual real (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The virtual real suggests a world beyond what is immediately observable. I began to consider the possibility that the deaf adolescents possessed “virtual thought and when actualized, thinking happens to [them]. It is an event filled with experiences that opens thinking into unpredictable directions” (Masny, 2013, p. 223). I began to consider how virtual thought could be actualized or brought out into the open. First, I began to stalk it in those whom I taught.

During my doctoral studies, I began to vacillate between the old deficit perspective and the newfound terms introduced through my readings in posthumanism. Ironically, in my efforts to eschew binaries, I began to wage a war within myself in which I began to discard mostly everything I had learned in my professional training in deaf education, and to learn to see these students through an entirely different lens, one that
would not allow me to impose a deficit lens upon the students (Pirbhai-Illich, Pete, & Martin, 2017). In doing so, I felt energized, renewed, calmer and more purposeful in my work with the deaf students whom I taught in the resource program.

**Epistemic Blindness**

Stalking the virtual real required nerves of steel. Facing opposition from my own staff interpreters, administrators, parents of deaf children and even the deaf community who was mistrustful of any educational enterprise other than the deaf school in which they had acquired language, I had to first address my own great privilege. I am white, a child of white settlers whose families established homesteads in Saskatchewan in the early 1900’s. Moreover, my parents were educators who studied deaf education, enabled me to make use of my residual hearing in one ear (I have a profound hearing loss in both ears). Moreover, my grandmother was a teacher, my father was a principal of the high school I once attended, my mother was a special education teacher, I am married to an educator, and our two daughters (who are hearing) are educators. My sister is a superintendent of a school division, my brother provides the educational technology support and teaches in the classroom in another school division, and my youngest sister is an instructor for the Red Cross. In short, we were a highly educated and privileged middle-class family.

Such privilege enabled my mother to remain at home during the first five years of my life, and to dedicate her time to developing oral language within me. Her experience as a teacher and her high literacy skills enabled her to research the best methods for teaching deaf children. She regularly consulted Maria Montessori’s writings and my father made the equipment that is often used in Montessori classrooms. She made notes
on my progress, and regularly consulted with doctors, speech and language pathologists
and audiologists. I was outfitted with a hearing aid at 22 months which is a late
intervention. Before being fitted with hearing aids, I had become a good lipreader and
appeared to understand directions and short phrases. More importantly, upon being aided
with a hearing aid, it was discovered that I had an extraordinary capacity to discriminate
speech sounds in one ear which is not usually found in people with profound hearing
losses. Hearing aids, for the most part, can make sound louder but not always clearer. In
contrast, I have no ability to discriminate speech in my right ear and the ear remains
unaided for that reason. Many deaf people with profound hearing losses have little ability
to discriminate speech in both ears. Therefore, I possess additional privilege, that is,
audiocentric privilege, which allowed for the development of speech. Audiocentric
privilege, like white privilege, affords me access (however limited) to the hearing world
and its resources (Eckert & Rowley, 2013). Unlike many children with profound hearing
losses in both ears, I had a neurophysiological advantage of being able to discriminate
speech in one ear which I could exploit through auditory training and therefore develop
oral language.

I had a library, which contained a number of books far exceeding any personal
reading materials that any other member of my family possessed. I had an entire wall of
shelves reaching to five feet high and six feet across. Nearly every day, after an excursion
downtown, I came home with a new book. My mother bribed me shamelessly with
books: “If you do this, I will get you another book.” My own library was also
supplemented by weekly trips to the public and school libraries throughout my schooling.
My life of reading was supported by economic, social, cultural and family stability. My
mother cooked three hot meals a day, and we lived in clean and comfortable surroundings. My parents had a happy and stable marriage which also enabled them to contribute to the community in which they lived and taught. We were never wealthy, but we were able to take two out of province family trips and camped at local lakes in the summers. My siblings were born after I turned five as my parents put off having additional children until they were satisfied that they had done all they could for me.

My mother, with strong support from my father who was also a teacher, was a model therapeutic worker (Mauldin, 2016) whose own white middle class privilege (which included her own mother who also taught in rural country schools), teaching experience, intelligence, diligence and access to resources enabled her to seamlessly interface with the medicalized view of deafness as upheld by the auditory industrial complex consisting of doctors, surgeons, ear, nose and throat specialists, audiologists and speech and language pathologists (Eberwein, 2007; Mauldin, 2016). Moreover, her therapy-oriented mothering style was applied to my sister closest in age to me as my parents confessed that they treated her as if she were deaf too because by then, they were so immersed in deaf education. Consequently, my sister emerged throughout the K-12 system and university education as a distinguished scholar and educator with strong leadership skills.

I slowly became aware of my auditory privilege when I observed that other deaf children, who were born in the same age bracket as me (late 1950’s – early 1960’s), did not fare as well as me. The parents of these children, with my parents’ support and encouragement, tried to implement many of the strategies undertaken with me but did not meet with the same level of success as I had. Looking back, I now see the poverty, the
large families, closely spaced births, levels of education, unstable marriages, and obvious family dysfunctions mixed in with the inability to discriminate speech, an ability I was able to exploit with the support from my parents. In my mid-twenties, upon my entry into the deaf community, I began to see how the emphasis on oral rehabilitation with the goal of curing deafness inadvertently reproduced pre-existing social, cultural and economic inequalities, leading to the creation of a “deaf underclass – marked by the use of sign language or underdeveloped language” (Mauldin, 2016, p. 166). I had escaped this deaf underclass by possessing white and enough audiocentric privilege to navigate the K-12 system and acquire Canadian undergraduate and master level university degrees with no support such as notetaking, use of assistive amplification or ASL interpreting. I only experienced full access to course content at Gallaudet University, the only university for deaf people in the world located in Washington, D.C. and I was provided with a notetaker during my doctoral studies at the University of Regina.

In teaching deaf adolescents, I discovered that my life experience as a deaf woman, orally educated, having successfully navigated inclusive education environments without much support, acquiring American Sign Language (ASL), and becoming a member of a deaf community did not address the language learning needs of deaf adolescents. Even as I noted privately that my audiogram (even to this day) presented more hearing loss than those of the deaf adolescents I taught, I was stumped as to why I struggled to teach them. Even though we were all deaf, the lives, aspirations and knowledges of deaf adolescents were unintelligible to me. I had never experienced the difficulty in acquiring language in my early school years and I found myself on the other side of an abyssal line which divided those who had language and those who were
deprived of language (De Sousa Santos, 2007). The concept of the abyssal line was originally developed to emphasize the unintelligibility of those who reside in the Global North concerning the lives of those who lived in the Global South (De Sousa Santos, 2007). Similarly, a life with limited language was unintelligible to me (Andreotti, 2016). Instead, I had developed a coherent narrative, one that I told in *The Deaf House*, that reified the value of an oral education and the development of language (English and ASL) which enabled me to take my place in hearing and deaf worlds. Yes, I had been oppressed, victimized by audism, and had to work twice as hard as hearing people to earn grudging respect. Yet, I had become epistemically blind to what I could not imagine about the deaf adolescents deprived of language (Andreotti, 2016). I had to go back to the drawing board. In doing so, I had to toss out nearly everything I had learned about teaching deaf children and my own acquisition of English and ASL. Suddenly, the narrative I had relied upon in my work and personal life began to come apart. I had never felt so conflicted and if

the metaphor of a war is used, then the places of war are situated in the mind (the battleground), while the spaces in which the “fighting” is done are the third spaces between cultures, with the tools (the weapons) of intercultural communication and dialogue” (Pirbhai-Illich, Pete, & Martin, 2017, p. 237).

The first step was to develop the tools and to decolonize my own mind as to what it means to be without language. I had to learn to imagine the unintelligible. In moving away from postcolonial metaphors (the reason is later explicated in this dissertation), I had to stalk the virtual real. First, I had to engage in a process of transformation without collapsing into epistemic blindness enabling me to adopt a missionary fervour in righting
wrongs. My narrative of doing good for deaf people “while hiding from [myself, my] complicities in ontological and epistemological violences” (Pirbhai-Illich, Pete, & Martin, 2017, p. 237) began with interrogating the binaries in my life, work and educational practices.

**Binary Thinking**

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) stated, “we’re tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots and radicles. They’ve made us suffer too much” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 15). It is difficult not to be torn apart by binaries. Binarized thinking about what it means to be deaf still prevailed in my interactions with parents, siblings, colleagues, deaf friends, deaf professionals, deaf leaders, academics, administrators, and the students in my classroom. Deaf education is hampered or stymied by binarized thinking which results in different opinions on how to develop language in a deaf child. For instance, a group of professionals support the medical model of deafness by advocating for auditory habilitation of young profoundly deaf children using cochlear implants and auditory verbal therapy. An opposing group of professionals advocate for the cultural model of deafness which promotes early acquisition of American Sign Language as a protective measure against the enormous challenges in acquiring language if technological and medical interventions fail (Humphries, et al., 2012). Within the cultural model, the deaf child is socialized to become a member of the deaf community and is educated within a bilingual bicultural framework (Ladd, 2003). In many cases, biomedical interventions are not the only solution to deafness as evident in the migration of deaf adolescents and young deaf adults to the deaf community in the hope of being able to communicate with ease and to experience sociality perhaps for the first time.
(Bechter, 2008). Prior to the deaf child reaching adolescence or adulthood, heeding to the wisdom of the deaf community, a tiny minority, subalternized through the persistent dysfluency in the dominant language (English), and chronic oppression hardly seems an attractive choice to many parents, teachers and administrators (Mauldin, 2016).

Binarized thinking also resulted in a stalemate in the province of Saskatchewan, a hiatus of twenty-seven years where little was done to address the increasing polarities in deaf education (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016). This neglect resulted in the compilation of complaints issued by parents, educators and other stakeholders concerning the continued violation of human rights for deaf people and the age-old controversy over which language and culture the deaf child is to be immersed in (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016). The SHRC report outlines the present polarization between language and cultural choices: 1) membership in deaf culture which uses ASL to communicate and to learn and 2) immersion in the hearing world to the exclusion of fraternizing with other deaf children to develop oral language (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016).

Furthermore, binarized thinking about language choices in deaf education has had an insidious effect upon me as a deaf educator of deaf adolescents in a small resource program in a city school in Saskatchewan. Working within a deaf diaspora context away from large and vibrant deaf communities, I found myself often emotionally collapsing under the weight of the auditory industrial complex as I became an ambivalent colonial subject attempting to straddle the hearing and deaf worlds (Bhabha, 1984; Emery, 2015). The bridge metaphor that people (mostly hearing) enthusiastically offered to me, suggesting that I become the bridge between both worlds, never seemed adequate to what
I was facing daily: the continued oppression of deaf children and youth who used sign language to communicate and learn. I had to find a way out of the binarized thinking that impacted me personally and professionally. I needed to find a new lens with which to view my own complicity in the oppression of the deaf students and to examine pedagogical practices especially in the areas of my own ontological position, language teaching, and the curriculum with which I was required to teach.

**Dissertation Components**

This dissertation is ambitious. I investigate posthumanism onto-epistemology (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2005; Coole & Frost, 2010; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Haraway, 1991) as a potential paradigm within which binaries dominating deaf education, my own pedagogical practices, and the lives of language-deprived deaf adolescents can be collapsed, and new tools developed for future research in deaf education. This dissertation is rhizomatic (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) in that it affords several points of entry at multiple levels, that is, the personal, the classroom where I teach deaf adolescents, the social and political arena, and the academy. For instance, I provide a personal narrative about my becoming a posthumanist researcher. I also provide forays into arts-based research (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Barrett & Bolt, 2013; Hickey-Moody, 2009; 2013; Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013) using personal and classroom arts data. To this end, I explore arts-based assemblages enabling me to examine my ontological positioning, epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices as a deaf educator, researcher and member of the deaf community within a posthumanist frame (McLure, 2013; Snaza & Weaver, 2015; Somerville, 2016). These experimentations with posthumanist thought are either published or are in the process of being published.
Moreover, this dissertation addresses the historical development of posthumanism, posthumanist methodology and affective pedagogy, and posthumanist policy. Three chapters in this dissertation provide outlines of the tenets of posthumanism as applied to onto-epistemology, methodology and pedagogy.

**Dissertation Goals**

The goals of this dissertation are more straightforward: I aim to 1) chart my own journey in becoming a posthumanist researcher concerning the education of deaf children and youth by providing a narrative inquiry contained in the introductions to each chapter, 2) test fundamental tenets of posthumanism with regard to ontological, epistemological and theoretical assumptions to guide arts-based methodology concerning classroom initiatives pertaining to language and literacy interventions to language-deprived deaf adolescents. Critical posthuman methodology (Braidotti, 2013) applied to arts-based assemblages may guide the dismantling of the binaries that have contributed to the current state of deaf education in Saskatchewan which previously compromised my pedagogical practice (Weber, 2018b in press) and 3) evaluate the potential of posthumanism toward a paradigm shift in deaf education suggesting directions for future research, policy and practice. I will, in short, explore how posthumanism can drive change in pedagogy, policy and practices in deaf education.

**Dissertation Research Questions**

The dissertation reads as a rhizomatic document. This means that research questions that are related to the dissertation goals outlined in the previous section are addressed in three ways: 1) the provision of a narrative inquiry which prefaces each chapter in the dissertation. This narrative inquiry attempts to chart my journey in
becoming a posthumanist researcher. The Introduction, the sections to each chapter, and Chapter 1 contains a narrative inquiry. 2) the provision of studies that contain arts-based data. Chapters 3, 5, 7, 8 and 9 contain the studies that provide posthuman methodological experimentations to study arts-based data; and 3) the exploration of central tenets of posthumanist onto-epistemology, methodology and affective pedagogy in Chapters 2, 4 and 6 as contributing to a potential paradigmatic shift within deaf education. I provide below, an outline of the chapters that employed arts-based data and the research questions used in each of these chapters. I will also explain how the research questions support the overall dissertation goals.

Chapter 3 makes use of arts-based data which I generated in response to a protracted conflict with educational interpreters in the classroom where I teach. The research question posed for this study was: How does the same arts-based data perform when the same narrative concerning border crossing between identities, languages and communities is diffracted through posthumanist theory, which considers matter to be intelligent and self-organizing and agential (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013). In posing this research question, I test the fundamental tenets of posthumanism, that is, the intra-actions between animal, earth and machine by diffractively reading the arts-based data which was presented in a previous study and interpreted according to post-colonial constructs.

In Chapter 5, I attempt to remove humanism from arts-based data in response to the research questions: 1) what can the interstice reveal about the desires and beliefs of the assemblage in which the fox-wife (a nonhuman) is placed concerning the use of sign language? 2) What does the fox-wife (a nonhuman) do with sign language in an assemblage? 3) What are the affects of the assemblage (including nonhumans) presented
in *The Pear Orchard*? The removal of the binaries between human, nonhuman, animal, earth and machine in this study tests the efficacy of critical posthuman methodology pertaining to sign language ideologies.

In Chapter 7, the arts-based data is examined for its lines of flight concerning resistance within a deaf diaspora. I ask: What are the lines of flight appearing in a cartography containing affects, conscious and unconscious, abject and otherwise, in the deaf diaspora in Saskatchewan that enables resistance to oppressive practices concerning education of the deaf living and learning in a deaf diaspora? The inclusion of abject affects makes for an accurate cartography and detecting lines of flight is a methodological experiment that guide the dismantling of binaries dominating deaf education.

In Chapter 8, I ask: What does *The Deaf Forest* art installation reveal about the translanguaging instinct and translanguage spaces concerning deaf people and their responses to varying levels of understanding? Here I rigorously eschew binaries in the application of attributes of a deaf translanguage space with reference to intra-actions between installation elements and the gallery visitors. In doing so, I use posthuman methodology with respect to translanguage between hearing, deaf and hard of hearing people.

In Chapter 9, I test the critical posthuman tenet of the cybernetic triangle by comparing a policy document on deaf education that is formed by cognitive imperialist discourses characteristic of Age of Enlightenment values to the play, *Deaf Crows* which contains intra-actions between animal, earth and machine. I ask: 1) how does cognitive imperialism influence Saskatchewan language planning documents concerning deaf
education and 2) how may deaf spaces contribute to pluricultural spaces and therefore contribute to plurilingualism for deaf children and youth, and 3) what would be the salient features of a posthumanist plurilingual planning policy for deaf children and youth with attention to deaf spaces? In doing so, I compare humanist and posthumanist inspired ontologies and epistemologies which, in turn, provide suggestions for future policy development.
SECTION 1: SEEING MY WHITE AND HEARING PRIVILEGE

Despite the possession of white privilege and to a certain extent, audiocentric privilege, I came to understand that I paid a price in my striving to become a part of the hearing world. I did not understand this until my mid-twenties, when I was beginning to develop anorexia. Success in the academic world did not guarantee psycho-social development and like Valente (2011), a deaf academic who faced similar mental health challenges, I began to discover that my hard-earned facility with the majority language (oral and written English) did not land me the desired social and community connections that would allow me to feel at home in the hearing world. Instead, I had become reclusive, socially awkward, numbed to my own feelings and lacked empathy for other people. My mother often chastised me for my self-centeredness, which I could not comprehend. I thought I was doing my very best to do what was required of me. The slow development of social skills, empathy, and capacity for caring continued well into my thirties.

In the early years of my teaching, I did not understand that knowing is relational (Palmer, 2017) and continued to feel and act from the abstracted knowledge found in books. I did learn social behaviours from novels I had read but because I had limited opportunities to interact with people beyond the few friends I had, I struggled to exercise many social behaviours which would allow me to interact with people I didn’t know well. Living in isolation for most of my life, surrounded by books, art, and a few loved ones, I thought my way through dilemmas and problems quite ably. I survived through the overuse of reasoning as the approach to problem solving. Other ways of knowing such as
sensation, intuition, imagination were poor cousins. Endowed with white privilege and copiously reading classical English literature, I had unconsciously formed values associated with the Age of Enlightenment. I had immersed myself in a hegemonic world reinforced by literature produced by an imperialist empire (Gramsci, 1971). Even though I had joined the deaf community several years earlier, I continued to embrace neoliberal values promoting self-sufficiency, independence, functional separateness, and physical autonomy (Longmore, 2003). I was unaware of what my own deaf experience had to offer me and the deaf adolescents I taught:

… some people with disabilities have been affirming the validity of values drawn from their own experience. Those values are markedly different from, and even opposed to, nondisabled majority values. They declare that they prize not self-sufficiency but self-determination, not independence but interdependence, not functional separateness but personal connection, not physical autonomy but human community. This values-formation takes disability as the starting point. It uses the disability experience as the source of values and norms. (Longmore, 2003, p. 222)

Throughout my life as a profoundly deaf person and my practice as a deaf teacher, however, two things continued to propel me toward the relational. First, my parents taught me the importance of social justice and advocacy that addressed larger social issues such as poverty, exploitation of women, sexism and racism. Living on Treaty Six lands, hearing my father (a son of immigrant German Russians) tell compassionate and engaging stories about conflicts between First Nations people and white settlers, witnessing my parents’ welcoming of immigrants into our home which included a British
family from Jamaica, Vietnamese boat people, Iraqi Muslims, East Indians from India and Nigerians into our home, and watching my mother write letters concerning the uranium mining, genetically modified foods, and exploitation of women all contributed to my passion to serve those who are marginalized. My parents celebrated my own decision to join the deaf community at the age of 25 after witnessing my frustration and isolation while negotiating inclusive education environments. My parents’ embrace of my decision to join the deaf community and learn ASL seemed an effortless transition for them who were once diehard oralists (those who advocated only for the use of residual hearing, auditory rehabilitation, speech and lipreading). My joining a tiny, highly marginalized community seemed a very natural outcome of their own commitment to marginalized communities in general. Moreover, my decision to join the deaf community brought relief to them as they knew that I was struggling to find my place in the hearing world despite the many accolades I received. They were aware of my stunted development in the social arena and knew I needed to belong to a community that was readily accessible to me.

Secondly, inspired by copious reading, I engaged in creative writing and visual art since early childhood which often felt like an endless stabbing in the dark, mysterious forays into the vast regions of my own self. I used art to explore my feelings about my deaf experience and to determine my own path in life. Art pulled me into the realm of the personal, enabling me to cope with anxiety which dogged me as I navigated the world with limited audiocentric privilege (Eckert & Rowley, 2013). As I repeatedly encountered audism, I wrote and created art as a way of bolstering my own self, which at that time, was bereft of a strong deaf identity and ties to the deaf community. Audism,
from which audiocentric privilege is exercised, is defined as: “a schema of audiocentric assumptions and attitudes that are used to rationalize differential stratification, supremacy and hegemonic privilege” (Eckert & Rowley, 2013, p. 105). This schema is further broken down into institutional audism, metaphysical audism and laissez-faire audism. Eckert and Rowley (2013) define institutional audism as “a structural system of exploitative advantage that focuses on and perpetuates the subordination of Deaf communities of origin, language and culture” (Eckert & Rowley, 2013, p. 106).

Metaphysical audism

is a stratifying schema that promotes differential treatment by linking human identity and autonomous being with audiocentric assumptions that are used to rationalize the subordination of Deaf Communities of origin, language and culture. Audiocentric privilege also appears as laissez faire audism, a post-modern apology which claims recognition of Deaf humanity but through the denial of Deaf autonomy coupled with a social evolutionary goal to end Deaf-centric structures, schemas, and praxis ends up perpetuating a dehumanization of Deaf American communities” (Eckert & Rowley, 2013, p. 107).

Unaware of the impact of audism on my own life, I wrote furiously to dispel my own inner demons. I wrote a volume of poetry and a creative non-fiction memoir through which I attempted to address the pervasive feeling of being divided. I thought I could think and write my way into being whole, undivided, and unitive. The arts enabled me to make sense of the world around me. Yet for most of my life, in favour of the neoliberal paradigm which emphasized the supremacy of quantitative research, I saw most arts-based research as fuzzy, self-absorbed, and “overwhelmingly cathected to who
speaks” (Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 96). In other words, my own preoccupations with what I was feeling and thinking as a deaf woman and as a deaf teacher did not seem as significant as the quantitative research studies on language development in deaf children and youth. Those studies seemed weightier, somehow, and more significant than my own artistic practice which seemed to focus on myself as the centre of everything.

In my early years of teaching deaf adolescents, while I was (at that time) reasonably fluent in ASL, knowledgeable about deaf culture and had several years of teaching, research and writing experience, I began to suspect that I was bereft of inner, social, political and cultural resources necessary in a becoming a deaf intercultural educator of deaf children and youth. On the one hand, I had plenty of theories to explain what was going on in the classroom and within my inner self, but I couldn’t match the theories to practice. I could not dispel the feeling that I was divided in half and I could not get the two halves of myself to talk to each other. In addition to being able to sign fluently and speak English fluently, I was also positioned between two competing desires: the desire to go out and liberate deaf people who need sign language to communicate and learn, and the desire to retreat into one’s self and leave all else alone. I felt straddled between my social and personal orientations as I questioned my own motivations for wanting to “help” deaf people. Despite my missionary urges to help a group of people whom I considered less fortunate, I also realized that being creative was far more energizing, satisfying and motivating than attending endless rounds of meetings with government officials, educational administrators and deaf leaders, trying to advocate for a tiny marginalized community unknown to most people. The deaf community in Saskatchewan did not have the critical mass or the cultural capital to drive change. Yet,
engaging in the arts seemed self-indulgent, a trajectory that perhaps would lead away from the urgent need to provide access to language and to stem the tide of language-deprived deaf children and youth. Nothing seemed more urgent than lobbying government officials who often remained mired in inaction as evident in the court case of Ryley Farnham of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, a nine-year old child who emerged as severely language deprived despite standard interventions including cochlear implants, speech therapy, mainstream placements, and eventually Signed English (Child and Family Services Act and [R.A.F.], 2005). In contrast, the arts seemed impractical and irrelevant to this gargantuan task of convincing those in power to do something to remove the challenges of acquiring language.

I felt trapped between four motivations: 1) living among deaf people and experiencing the benefits of belonging to the deaf community deaf, 2) living among hearing people and enjoying the fruits of my own audiocentric privilege (I can hear some and can speak fairly well) 3) using my creativity, and 4) my passion for social justice. Nothing ever seemed to match up as I lunged between these four motivations that claimed my attention. My quest to dismantle these separate boundaries began at first with attempting to bring the social and personal together in my teaching. Three of the four motivations did not seem to be requirements for being an effective teacher of the deaf; the fourth motivation, living among hearing people, only served to reinforce the deaf and hearing binaries which dominated my teaching. Confronting binaries in my own life, seeing how one binary trumped the other and my struggle to merge two opposites was the beginning of my walk toward posthumanism (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013).

My early attempts at establishing a posthumanist classroom (Snaza & Weaver,
2015) was riddled with naivete and misconceptions concerning posthumanism. I had not yet understood that posthumanism was not about thinking my way into a new way of living but living my way into a new way of thinking (Nouwen, 2002). While reading Barad’s *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (Barad, 2007) and later, Braidotti’s *The Posthuman*, (2013), I had developed the vague notion that it was about bringing opposites together and forging new relationships between seemingly opposite concepts, movements, and energies. In doing so, I fashioned a solution to bring my passion for social justice and creativity (as in art), and deaf and hearing binaries together. At that time, I had little understanding of my newfound interest in posthumanism as I had a vague notion that this theory would reduce the tensions I experienced daily.

Initially, I resorted to autoethnography to explain to myself, what was happening in the classroom as I sought to create an arts-based, social justice intervention using theoretical constructs associated with culturally relevant arts education (CRAE) (Hanley, Noblit, Sheppard, Barone, & hooks, 2013). The following is a paper that is currently being prepared for publication in the Language, Culture and History Journal (Deaf Empowerment Issue) edited by Dr. Grushkin and Dr. Monaghan. The article does not yet explore posthumanism but through autoethnography, I indirectly lay the foundation for bringing together seemingly irreconcilable binaries (deaf-hearing, art-social justice) and outline the practices I adopted in the resource room. I describe my early forays in fostering relationships, empowering students, and practicing intercultural pedagogy. This chapter provides the springboard from which I proceed to explore posthumanism in earnest. The journey of my becoming a posthumanist researcher, initiated in error, confusion, misconceptions and an overinflated sense of my own importance, begins with
the exploration of how I began to live into a new way of thinking as a teacher of the deaf in teaching and learning with deaf adolescents, deprived of language access. I began to grasp how the deaf students always had exhibited enormous potential and desire to learn as I slowly learned to establish a posthumanist classroom.

Initially, this living into a new way of thinking felt uncomfortable and risky. In the writing of this paper, I begin to confront my own self inflation in thinking I had to shoulder the responsibility for everything that went on in the classroom. I began to consider myself as part of a web of interrelationships and consider the culture provided by the deaf community as providing the values by which I began to teach deaf adolescents: self-determination, interdependence, personal connection and human community (Ladd, 2003; Longmore, 2003). I suggest that such values pave the way for the consideration of posthumanism as providing a paradigm shift in deaf education, policy and practice.
CHAPTER 1: DEAF WAY OUT OF NO WAY

Introduction

I present an autoethnographic account of my struggle to become an intercultural (Pirbhai-IIlich, Pete, & Martin, 2017) deaf educator in teaching significantly language-deprived adolescent deaf students in the context of a deaf community diminished by language planning policies. Snoddon (2009) suggests that language planning policies concerning deaf children in Canada are designed to suppress the use of ASL in the classroom and the value of deaf culture. The students, having been educated in elementary classrooms in inclusive education settings, arrived in the secondary school resource room program (where I teach), bereft of academic literacy skills, resigned to failure, listless and passive as they waited for direction from the adults in their world (parents, teachers, and sign language interpreters). Moreover, they exhibited the usual attributes associated with facing enormous challenges in acquiring language: difficulty with memory, executive function, delayed social and emotional development, and limited abstract thinking (Humphries, et al., 2012). Although the students were dedicated hearing aid and cochlear implant users, they also exhibited limited expressive oral English skills; if they did sign, most of their signing was patterned from the Signed English and or Pidgin Sign English (PSE) used by previous interpreters. The students struggled to form their handshapes and they were challenged with signing errors in placement and movement. Many of them, at 14 years of age, had ever met a deaf adult until their encounter with me, a deaf teacher. Their parents had never been introduced to the small deaf community nor to any adult deaf people. Until this juncture, the students’ lives primarily consisted of school and family interactions.
Background

I had already been teaching in this program for ten years and found the most recent cohort to be the most challenging. The provincial school for the deaf had been closed in 1991 and the Saskatchewan government focused on providing deaf children access to their education through sound (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990; Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016). The primary intervention to hearing loss included the provision of auditory testing, hearing aids, cochlear implants, and auditory habilitation through the Saskatchewan Pediatric Auditory Rehabilitation clinic affiliated with the University of Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Pediatric Auditory Rehabilitation Center, n.d.). If efforts at auditory habilitation failed, then Signed English is provided by school divisions within inclusive education environments (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990). Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (SDHHS), a nonprofit agency, provides instruction in ASL to preschool aged deaf children and their families upon request (Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, n.d.). According to the present executive director of SDHHS, financial support for early childhood family services provided through SDHHS remains small and unstable (Gillies, 2018). The overwhelming support for auditory habilitation of deaf children and youth resulted in the decreasing viability of the deaf community as it aged without connections to the younger deaf generation, the continued ideological stance of professionals associated with auditory habilitation (audiologists, speech and language pathologists, teachers of the deaf committed to oralism and Signed English (only if oralism failed), the crisis in finding trained and qualified interpreters to work in educational and community settings, and the provision of educational services placed
under the sole authority of school boards (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016). The closure of the school for the deaf 27 years ago, resulted in an uneven patchwork of services according to the resources, policies and programming offered by individual school boards (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016). The students I had received came from a variety of locations throughout Saskatchewan in their earlier elementary years. While other successful oral deaf students were increasingly placed in inclusive educational settings with supports supplied by the school division, the secondary school resource program where I taught continued to receive more and more deaf students who were struggling to learn and access the Saskatchewan high school curriculum. The continued focus on inclusive education created an increasing underclass including

Poorer, non-white children for whom the CI [cochlear implants] “fails” because of inadequate resources (e.g. economic or rural urban divides) or an inability to comply with long term therapeutic labours (especially if sign language is discouraged from the outset, then they may end up without any language at all, which creates additional development problems) and immigrant families whose children do not receive CIs or receive poor follow up care….these disadvantages occur not only because of differences in parenting styles but also because of biases that professionals in implantation may have against non-middle class parenting styles, non-English speaking families, and Deaf families (Mauldin, 2016, p. 166).

The resource program, once envisioned as a support centre for all deaf students immersed in inclusive education environments, became a depository for deaf students who were not
successful in inclusive education environments while the more successful deaf students were placed in other schools. Upon my arrival in this teaching position, I was told by the school division to meet the needs of these struggling deaf students and to redevelop the program accordingly (Weber, 2003). Furthermore, the province no longer provided a transition program for deaf high school leavers which resulted in their stymied efforts to access post-secondary education and training (Pirbhai-Illich & Weber, 2011). Many newcomer Canadian deaf students arriving in Saskatchewan in their late teens are only able to access one or two years of schooling within a school division before being released into the world of employment. In Saskatchewan, the deaf underclass also continued to grow with increasing number of hearing losses in First Nations children and youth who must receive their education on reserve schools or in rural communities.

In short, the deaf education landscape was bleak after twenty-seven years of optimistic and unbridled oralism. Having been raised as an oral deaf person in inclusive education environments from K to 12 and at universities across Canada, I also found the goal of being a successfully integrated oral deaf person wanting. Despite my excellent speech skills, I just had too little hearing to function comfortably beyond a one to one listening environment. Being in the first generation of deaf children to be mainstreamed, a child of parents who were both educators, white and middle class, I quickly blazed my way through mainstreamed education environments. I mostly succeeded because of white privilege (McIntosh, 2015) and subscription to meritocracy associated with individualism (Graham & Slee, 2008). To this day, I am still lauded for having paved the way for deaf children to be integrated into mainstream settings (Weber, 2013).

In the hope of a new life, I learned ASL, attended Gallaudet University, a
university for deaf people, and inspired by my involvement in the Deaf President Now movement at Gallaudet University in 1988, I was poised to return to Saskatchewan and teach at the residential school for the deaf and to experience belonging to a community for the first time in Saskatchewan. Despite becoming a teacher activist joining forces with many deaf organizations in Saskatchewan to prevent the closure of the school for the deaf, my dreams were dashed two years later. The school closed due to the Ministry of Education’s decision to place the responsibility of educating deaf children within each child’s own local school boards (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990). My deaf colleagues left the province to secure teaching positions in other stronger and vibrant deaf communities (Carbin, 1996). Ironically, in the hope of belonging to a community at last, I came into a deaf community on the brink of collapse.

As I felt my own deaf identity wobble endlessly after the closure of the school for the deaf, I often wondered how could deaf children and youth obtain social capital through me and a severely diminished pool of deaf role models whose culture and language were under severe threat? (Cawthon, Johnson, Garberoglio, & Schoffstall, 2016; Ladd, 2003). After several years at temporary jobs and contracts, I finally secured a position as a resource room teacher in a small program for deaf and hard of hearing youth in another small prairie city 500 kilometers south of the city where the school for the deaf had been housed. There, the deaf community comprised mostly of deaf people over the age of 65. At that time, the current president of a local association of the deaf predicted that the association would last only another five years because of the lack of young people available to move into the executive positions on its board (Birley, 2016). Although I continued to serve on the boards of deaf organizations, wrote research reports
on behalf of the deaf community and actively lobbied the provincial government for the use of ASL and deaf culture as significant pedagogical resources, my efforts resulted in very little change. Furthermore, the deaf community in this small community seemed like a wounded animal, unable to rise again.

Left behind, I wondered how was I to go on without my deaf colleagues? In the provincial school for the deaf in Saskatchewan, I saw deaf teachers mesmerize their students through ASL storytelling while a curtain magically lifted before my eyes. I had never seen communication flow with such ease. I had never seen deaf children and youth engaged in deep discussion with their peers and teachers. I saw deaf leaders and professionals labour tirelessly to bring about change for deaf education. They were distressed about the high rates of failure in deaf education since the mean reading level was grade four for deaf high school leavers (Mitchell, E, & Qi, 2012). In contrast, at Gallaudet University, the only university in the world for deaf people, I caught glimpses of a curriculum that was shared among deaf people which included learning about human rights, language rights, oppression, deaf arts, deaf culture, deaf history, ASL, and deaf literature (Bauman, 2008; Carbin, 1996; Gannon, 2012; Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1984). My work with deaf teaching colleagues and my time at Gallaudet University led me to view deaf people as competent, innovative, creative and resourceful.

I came to understand that I was grappling with three curriculums: one I had devised for myself during my school years, the one provided by the Ministry of Education which I was to teach, and the deaf studies curriculum developed by the deaf community. As an educator, I was charged with the mission of delivering the Ministry curriculum which emphasized the importance of reaching the norm (Graham & Slee,
as established by hearing, white, middle class educators and administrators. Most of the curriculum was Western Eurocentric in focus, where deaf students were expected to learn about the accomplishments and achievements of hearing people (Au, 2012).

Ironically, my ability to teach the Ministry sanctioned curriculum became compromised. Accessing interpreting and notetaking services for my own professional development became riddled with time consuming issues concerning funding and availability. These professional development opportunities aimed to improve my skills, knowledge, and ability to deliver the standard curriculum. Yet my ability to convince administrators, teaching colleagues, and government officials of my need for sign language interpretation to be delivered on a consistent basis was hampered by my excellent one on one communication skills. As Valente (2014) says of his effort to convince a senior academic at his university that he needed a sign language interpreter for a presentation: “I know I said the usual line ‘I can’t hear as well as I speak’. I explained the whole damn concept to her in our initial two-hour meeting, but what was I expecting? Was I really expecting that she’d get it? In the end, who’s the real dumbass?” (Valente, 2014, p. 32). Thus, I was stranded between three curriculums, one derived from my own voracious reading, the other from the deaf community, and the third curriculum sanctioned by the Ministry of Education. I had access to the Ministry curriculum once as a student and now as a professional educator in the quest for legitimacy and equal footing with my hearing colleagues. Not having equitable and consistent access to professional development, however, created another knowledge gap between me and my teaching colleagues. This form of discriminatory practice provided me with the impetus to reflect more deeply upon what as I was doing.
After years of considerable lobbying efforts, report writing, and creative writing, I concluded that policy developers, educational administrators, professionals associated with the provision of services to deaf children and politicians were generally not moved by research. The ideology associated with habilitation of hearing through speech and auditory verbal therapy and the use of cochlear implants dominated the deaf education discourses in this province (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016). The deaf community remained a quintessential anomaly being silenced and on the verge of dying out.

**Revitalization of the deaf community and ASL: Tentative beginnings**

I engaged in creative writing to maintain my sanity and to sustain hope for myself and the deaf students. I even wrote a volume of poetry, *The Pear Orchard* in 2007 and a creative non-fiction work, *The Deaf House* in 2013. *The Deaf House* explored the Saskatchewan deaf education landscape, my own struggles with retaining a deaf cultural identity, raising hearing children, and teaching in the program where I am presently ensconced. None of these actions brought about any real change in this barren landscape. I had thought that my academic skills, publications, research experience and teaching experience along with my solidarity with the deaf community would make me powerful and would enable me to go places and do great things for the deaf. And this personal grandiosity worked for a while. I thought I had earned my right to be exempt from audism which is essentially prejudice against those who do not measure up against standards exacted by hearing people in terms of behaviours, beliefs, speech and language (Eckert & Rowley, 2013). I had done well and placed myself, so I thought, out of noble urges in solidarity with the marginalized deaf.
It is not surprising that, after the success of *The Deaf House* in 2013, I found myself on the verge of collapse. I faced a personal and political crisis. The exhaustion of labouring as the only culturally deaf teacher in the entire province, having to repeatedly explain to hearing teachers and administrators even basic or rudimentary knowledge associated with deafness, sign language and the deaf community, seeing little change in policy and programming for deaf students, and watching nearly every student graduate from my program to take on menial part time employment which placed them far below the poverty line or rely on social assistance had brought me to a standstill (Pirbhai-Illich & Weber, 2011).

*The Deaf House* precipitated within me, a moral crisis of epic proportions. Valente describes his downfall after his success with his autoethnography, *d/Deaf and d/Dumb*, “Life is most surely on the up and up. In an underprivileged world, I’ve now become one of the most privileged. How can any superhero crash and burn at a time like this?” (Valente, 2014, p. 26). In addition, I had received a new cohort of struggling language-deprived deaf adolescents and was profoundly disturbed at my inability to empower them. I questioned my ability to teach them even though I had been teaching in that program for over a decade. How was I going to find the “way out of no way” which “is the oft-used phrase in the African American tradition of tenacity and hope that rings true for all people” (Hanley, Noblit, Sheppard, Barone, & hooks, 2013, p. 2).

**Theoretical Considerations**

In the fall of 2014, I reluctantly started doctoral studies in the Faculty of Education, University of Regina. I wanted to uncover why I was so ineffective as an educator of the deaf and as a leader in the deaf community. I went into my studies feeling
angry and resentful at having to work even harder than ever before to figure out where I had gone wrong and continually asked myself, “Why does this matter so much?” I was convinced that I was going to expend much time, money and energy on a course of studies which would yield highly uncertain results. As a failed leader and lobbyist, I was already exhausted. I had no idea that the work of critically unpacking these issues would slowly dissolve my naivete.

My reading began with Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2000). I learned that being chronically powerless and feeling defeated in the hearing world had primed me to scout out avenues for gaining personal power in the deaf community and to secretly maintain my deficit perspective. Freire (2000) tirelessly warns about self-appointed leaders of marginalized and oppressed communities who ended up oppressing their communities even more. While I vehemently supported the right of deaf children to access ASL as an instructional language, I was also attempting to impress those who held the power through approximating what they wanted in terms of speech, language, pedagogy and curriculum by parading my own achievements in oral language, writing, education, and teaching.

Through my readings of Ladd (2003) and Spivak (2005), I came to understand that I was a subaltern elite whose knowledge of deaf culture, ASL and personal deaf experience was either repeatedly submerged and or annihilated in the face of the dominant knowledges which preferred the knowledges espoused by white, hearing males committed to scientific paradigms emanating predominantly from the Age of Enlightenment (Burbules & Peters, 2004). I was beginning to reflect on border epistemologies (Mignolo, 2000) which pointed to the existing local knowledges despite
globalization and which remained enveloped in the interstices between minoritized worlds such as deaf, First Nations, Spanish, Black, LGBTQ, and immigrant populations. I also came to learn about deaf epistemologies (Moores & Paul, 2012). Finally, I discovered research on deaf geography and deaf spaces which encouraged me to view my classroom as a potential deaf space which afforded interactions and activities markedly different than spaces dominated by hearing people (Gulliver, 2009; Friedner & Kusters, 2015). In short, I came to see myself as a border crosser who needed to develop an understanding of the interstices where I spent most of my time (Anzaldua, 1987) and from which I negotiated my way through the multiple intersecting worlds, that is, white, deaf, and hearing, and the deaf from other minoritized populations such as First Nation and New Canadians who had fled from war torn and economically deprived regions of the world.

I came to understand that my efforts as a lobbyist, a deaf leader and an educator were doomed because I was externally and internally colonized by those who were ideologically committed to converting deaf children into hearing children regardless of their speech and hearing abilities. All my skills, education, experience and potential as an educator and leader had made me somewhat acceptable to most hearing colleagues but never fully so. Often, I was relegated to the margins, crossing borders when allowed into their spaces. In these spaces, I was anxious to appear reasonable, supportive of all language and communicative options for the deaf and took care not to demand too much in the way of interpreting supports. In doing so, I remained an ambivalent colonial subject resorting to mimicry to survive (Bhabha, 1984). While I was anxious to appear neutral in supporting all language and cultural options for deaf children and youth, I also
privately thought about my own struggle to develop social competence and my witnessing of the struggle of previous deaf students in the resource program to obtain a foothold in the hearing world. Rather than sharing these experiences with many hearing people and teaching colleagues, I remained silent and mimicked what I thought my hearing colleagues and administrators wanted to hear: that they were doing a great job supporting deaf children and youth in inclusive education environments. At the same time, I openly supported the deaf community’s desire to revitalize ASL in the hope of transmitting the language to younger deaf children and youth. In addition to not fully belonging to the hearing world, I didn’t feel fully embedded in the deaf community either, but I often foisted myself as a leader upon the deaf community. I then worked closely with other deaf organizations to increase the viability of ASL and deaf culture as pedagogical choices. I couldn’t envision any other way to be in the deaf community. Despite my actions, I felt I had come too late into the deaf community. Like Valente,… the everyday realities of my communicative differences place me squarely outside of the margins of both Deaf and hearing worlds. It also kicks up the torment of always being the different one in the group. After all, as d/Deaf and d/Dumb closes out, now I’m supposed to “more fully start living in both places” (Valente, 2014, p. 144).

Inspired by Valente’s (2014) account of his personal torment while attempting to cross the borders between hearing, deaf and spaces between deaf and hearing worlds, I began to seek out ways of living in the liminal space (Anzaldua, 1987) between deaf and hearing worlds. The liminal space between deaf and hearing worlds enabled me to develop the ability to “hold multiple social perspectives while simultaneously
maintaining a centre that revolves around fighting against concrete material forms of oppression” (Cantu & Hurtado, 1987, p. 7). Drawing upon Anzaldua’s work concerning border crossings and liminal spaces, I wrote the following in a journal entry:

This centre is a psychic space where I draw upon images, memories, thoughts derived from the conscious and unconscious realms, a space that is unknown to hearing and deaf. Like Anzaldua in her between border spaces (1987), I sense a pervasive feeling of being haunted, of being followed by a malevolent being who also desired my healing. When I become a non-person during my excursion to the deaf and hearing spaces, I became blinded, bereft of a plan. Disoriented, I struggle find my way back over the border into safety, into my own liminal space. A being, similar to Anzaldua’s serpent Coatlicue, (Anzaldua, 1987) lays dormant within me, ready to strike when I am in danger. This part of myself heals me in that it will validate my experience which cannot be corroborated or appreciated by most hearing and deaf persons and will destroy my fragile and carefully built relationships with hearing and deaf people through its insistent defense of myself (Weber, 2017).

Like Anzaldua (1987), I continued to commit myself strongly to both hearing and deaf worlds, working to prevent, ameliorate and liberate deaf children and youth from oppressive educational practices. Living in a border terrain between the deaf and hearing worlds resulted in having to examine my innermost self. I discovered that I had alternately blamed myself and blamed the students, whose mean reading level was below or at grade four, a reality commensurate with research on reading and writing levels of deaf high school leavers (Mitchell, E, & Qi, 2012). I had located these problems in the
personal realm even though I was aware of political, cultural and social contexts that contributed to the deficit view of deaf people. Somehow, I had remained convinced that the fault lay within me, the students and their parents. I had adopted the deficit lens typically held by educators toward special needs children and their parents (Valente, 2011). By positioning the deficit lens on myself, I acted from the individualist paradigm, an outcome of humanist and modernist discourses stemming from the Age of Enlightenment (Burbules & Peters, 2004). My own individual achievements required that I adopt the persona of a superwoman (Valente, 2011).

Life in liminal spaces, I discovered, is not easily accessed through quantitative data. I had to resort to other ways of doing research. I had to find another way of explaining what I saw and felt in my role as a teacher of the deaf. I became suspicious of my own facility with the English language. I was too gifted at writing and research. I found myself groping in the middle of my first semester of my PhD program for a new way of expressing what was within me and made a bargain with myself. Even though I was an untrained artist, I would create an art piece at the end of every week during my first academic year in response to a book or paper I was reading at the time. At the end of the school day, on late Friday afternoons, I pulled out my art supplies and positioned myself just to “make something”. I began every session by recalling something I had read during that week from my doctoral studies that had stood out. Then, I quickly proceeded into simply creating with the materials I had at hand. I was attracted mostly to mixed media as I felt most confident in that art genre. I also felt that collage work would afford me the most expansiveness and experimentation. I found myself covering entire canvases with paint, and then clipping photos from magazines, rifling through cans of
small beads, packages of feathers, and discarded earrings. I was mostly fascinated with texture and experimented with various thicknesses of acrylic paint, making homemade gesso, and using tissue paper as part of the collage work. I tried to suspend judgement about the quality of my artwork and finished the work when I felt it was done. I posted some of my work on my FaceBook page during the fall and in my research blog (https://jwresearchblog.wordpress.com/).

After completing the artwork for that week, I had no difficulty discerning the relationship between what I had created, the concept that I held in my mind during that week, and the struggle toward finding an ontology and epistemology which would shape my research. At the same time, while reflecting and reading about the relationship between art and my own feelings about my postdoctoral readings and journey positioned against the backdrop of political, social and cultural contexts, I began to explore visual literacy (Anstey and Bull, 2018; Bezemer and Kress, 2016; Cope and Kalantzis, 2012; Serafini, 2014) arts based education (Baldwin and Fleming, 2003; Hanley et al, 2013) arts based research (Barone and Eisler, 2012; Barrett, 2013; Barrett and Bolt, 2007; 2013; Bahktin, 1984; Boal, 1977; Edgar, 2004; Ellis, 2004; Garoian, 2013; Grosz, 2008; jadodzinski and Wallin, 2013; Hickey-Moody, 2013; Hickey-Moody and Page, 2016; Hicks, 1991; Leavy, 2015; Sun Lee, 2016), my doctoral readings in postcolonialism and poststructuralism (Bhabha, 1984; Darder, 2002; Dussell, 2013; Freire, 2000; McLaren, 2015; Pennycook, 1998; Mignolo, 2000; Said, 1979, Spivak, 2005; and my experience of being marginalized along with the deaf students whom I taught.

Below is a montage of the artwork I created between 2014 and 2016, the first two years of my doctoral studies. Time pressures, lack of studio space, teaching full time,
being the co-artistic director of our newly struck theatre group (Deaf Crows Collective), producing plays and an arts installation and immersion in writing the dissertation did not afford any further opportunities for my own artistic practice. I have given titles to each of the art pieces in the montage (they are numbered) and indicated the concept(s) that I had been reflecting upon at the time of creation. A quick survey of the titles indicates a journey in which I was sifting through postcolonialism and poststructuralism. The last two pieces in this series came when I realized that border crossings were possible between animal, human and machine, which was conceptualized during my readings on posthumanism (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

The relationship between the art pieces, my readings and my pedagogical practices began to coalesce in the writing of this dissertation. Due to this intensive incubation period, I was able to write the dissertation quickly almost effortlessly. I felt that the artwork had established neural pathways in my brain with which to make connections between the disparate strands I was attempting to bring together.

Below is a montage of the artwork I created during this time. There are twenty-four art pieces in this montage. For the sake of clarity and size of images, I have split this montage into two groups: 1) Images 1 – 11 and provided a title for each image and an explanation of why and how I created this image, and 2) Images 12-14 accompanied by titles and descriptions as well.
Figure 1: Montage of artwork created by Joanne Weber – Images 1 - 11
1. The Ear/Eye House - After Poe (1843) *The Tell-Tale Heart*

   I had the sense of the eye being confined inside a gothic house. What was the eye seeing? Or not seeing? The sternness of the eye suggested a haunted presence, something under erasure.

2. No mark upon her – After Said (1979) *Orientalism*

   My eyes were being opened to the painful legacy of Christianity relation to populations known as the “Other”. The presentation of the Madonna as unscathed by the vicissitudes of life had long bothered me and I wished to point out the beginning of the Virgin’s annunciation as the initiation into scars and sorrow. I placed traces of vegetative life (fruits and flowers) along with grass (made with gel skins) to honor the fertility of this woman and the very fertility of the moment. I created a golden spotlight connecting the round belly of the angel and the Virgin’s robes to suggest that the moment was a bodily moment, a relational moment, rather than a cool discussion about her becoming the mother of God. I also reversed the position of the two figures and established a vector between their eyes, the angel being bathed in full light looks up into the Virgin who is in the dark about what is to come.


   I felt the need to go back and look at ways in which I was assessed and how I was assessing deaf people. I was also reflecting upon Andreotti’s proposal to address the oppressive structures brought about by colonialism.

At the beginning of my doctoral studies, I created a collage that nearly concealed Hildegard’s long gaunt androgynous face seemingly swathed in cloth as she watches over a pond of floating plants, shells, animals, and mesh. She seemed a woman of sorrows watched over what has been discarded and dismissed. Water seemed to flow from her neck, shoulders and chest as if she was water itself, or a water witch, a selkie, or sea fairy. For the first time I began to see Hildegard’s proclivities as including the material world. In addition to cultivating herbs and plants for medicinal purposes, she wrote treatises on medicine, the human body, and sexuality. Some scholars say she predicted a catastrophic environmental crisis in the far future (Fox, 2012). Hildegard, in her visionary artwork, seemed to point to an intimate relationship with the body, earth and plants. She seemed much larger than anything I had considered before, which is a point that Andreotti (2011) makes concerning hidden structures, power matrixes and relationships.


I was reflecting Bhabha’s ambivalent colonial subject and the use of mimicry to survive marginalization. After creating this piece, I realized that I needed a strong and supple backbone to withstand the effects of marginalization and oppression.


Before initiating this art piece, I thought about postcolonial metaphors to deaf education. Through my reading of Pennycook’s accounts of how colonialism is reproduced in sites away from Britain which was the seat of imperial power, I came to
appreciate how cultural production promoting colonialism is currently enmeshed within education, governance, politics, and economics.


I began to struggle with how oppression of deaf people was different than oppression of other marginalized and oppressed cultures and how I was going to refrain from postcolonial metaphors. I considered the clouds to be a ceiling which constrained the turbulent funnels arising from the field.


I began to reflect on our local deaf community history as contrasted to the Deaf empowerment tropes I had absorbed upon entering the deaf community. I was looking at ways not to get caught up in global discourses but to remain true to my own history, life in the borders between Deaf and hearing worlds. The red clumps of acrylic paint at the bottom right represented local communities cast against a sea of shimmering waters and elongated bars all floating the same way.


I became entranced with Anzaldua’s work and began to think about her archetypal references, such as the Coatlicue serpent. I began to think about excavating layers of the psyche. The old woman in the lower layer has a crown which needs to be excavated by the younger woman in order to continue her resistance against marginalization.

I began to think about crossing borders and what was on the other side. I constructed a collage with a bird that held labels written in reverse. I thought about the mirror image being the other side of our attempts to define, label, restrict, what we see and know. I wondered how to get beyond text and image. This image provoked a discussion with my supervisor, Dr, Fatima Pirbhai Illich who suggested that “with the mirror, the lens used to look at the bird is the same regardless of whether the image is backwards and so we continue to define or label with the same standards. One needs to suspend one’s own lens to view from the other side.” (Pirbhai-Illch, F, 2015)


I was beginning to form the idea, that like Anzaldua, that I would always be travelling toward something unknown and in the far-off distance. Not being able to discern whether the object is a crown or an island on fire garners possibilities for interstitial spaces and knowledges found in those spaces.
Figure 2: Montage of artwork created by Joanne Weber – Images 12-24

I began to confront how I still felt haunted by the dualisms present within me. I was reading Fanon who clearly presented a divided self as an outcome of colonization. I began to contemplate how one decolonizes the self while remaining in oppressive environments.


I felt that the written word was collapsing with me to form an inchoate mass. I couldn’t see anything beyond poststructuralism and postcolonialism and yet I knew there was something beyond poststructuralism. I experimented with thick paint and surface textures with using paintbrushes and crushed paper towels. Afterwards, I saw the collapse of post-structuralism in the lines formed at the left side of the image into an abyss on the right side of them.


I felt as though the top of my head was lopped off while my body was being controlled by forces I couldn’t understand or overcome. I used my grandmother’s photograph to indicate the disconnectedness between my body and head. My grandmother died two weeks before I was born, and I am still trying to cobble together the story of her life from fragments as few people want to talk about her. I made the connection between postcolonialism and the necessity of keeping oppressed people in dark about how they are being marginalized.

I was continuing to grapple with my commitment to my faith tradition and wanted to find something more expansive and a compelling reason for me to stay in that vein. I re-read my tattered copy of the Mandelbaum Gate and decided to use the ripped, torn-out pages to construct one of my favorite passages in the novel. I used the ripped pages to form a wall behind trees which grew brilliant red oranges. I underlined key passages in the fragmented pages which made me think of the confluence of young people from the three Abrahamic faiths, Jews, Christians, and Muslims who congregated to dance and drink late at night away from prying eyes of people who wanted to wage war. McLaren (2015) refers to Jesus in his Pedagogy of Insurrection in a similar way, emphasizing inclusivity and love.


I was exploring psychoanalysis in the work of Kristeva and was thinking about how deafness causes one to be an abject rather than a subject as it appears unassimilated within the lives, families and communities of deaf people. Bluebeard struck me as the evil force that must eradicate deafness in innocent deaf people in the same way that the wives are butchered in the story. The key of the last wife struck me as the very key (assimilation of the abject) that would liberate deaf people.

I was thinking about the notion of confinement. Anzaldua chose to go inside herself in order to survive her border crossings. In doing so, she arrives in a space inbetween. I began to wonder what was in that interstitial space for me as a deaf teacher between hearing and deaf worlds. I realized that my classroom is not the monk’s cell in which I was supposed to stay and learn everything. I sure learned a lot though, and I’m staying as long as I am needed. I somehow got the idea that a lid was being twisted off a jar though, with shards of light leaping out of the jar. Where is it going? To my new cell I suppose. But it is a movement from post structuralism to something else…. I’ve not been able to solve problems in my work for a lot of complicated reasons, and I am not excited by post structuralism’s penchant to describe just what is, and to look for the ways to disrupt things. Ladd says, there is a continuous holocaust of minds that are destroyed when the deaf are not provided with language. Yet full frontal attacks don’t work; post structuralism seems too anemic so there’s got to be something in the middle here…. and perhaps it may be more than just deaf education.


I was maintaining my readings in literacy research and studies during this time and was struck by the notion of teachers thinking they had understood everything about teaching reading without considering the lives of the students whom they taught. The sparkles over the gaggle of girls indicate their untapped knowledges. I found myself trying to give hope to a group of German school girls dressed in ethnic costume. They are fading away because no one has given them much attention. The blue sparkles indicate interest in their lives, thoughts and feelings.

I had begun to consider how research on deaf children and youth is colonized and found myself confronting knowledge that was held back for the first time. I will provide a fuller commentary on this artwork later in this chapter.

20. Seeing things that are not there – After Bauman and Murray (2014) *Deaf Gain - Raising stakes for diversity.*

In creating a flowerpot with flowers and the illusion of the same flowerpot below a dividing line with twigs, leaves and petals arranged in the opposite direction, I began to wonder, what does the deaf person, in approaching the world through vision, contribute to the hearing world? I was reminded by the unusual facility of some of my students who struggled enormously with language acquisition and at the same time, were able to track the trajectory of items that regularly traversed the classroom such as keys, papers, books, objects and art supplies. In the context of busy, noisy and visually stimulating classrooms, they could be relied upon to retrieve small and obscure objects in split seconds.


I began to entertain the notion of the carnivalesque and wondered if ordering the world according to vision did, indeed, reverse the order of classroom pedagogy. In pasting a collage of feathers and beads with the court jester positioned squarely between the eyes of the mask, I realized that inverted order of things reveal knowledges not common to most people. The falling away of the balls that the jester had presumably been juggling indicated a falling away of expected roles and routines.


I posted this image along with these words in a Facebook post:
Something is giving way to spring… I think I’m getting out of the post structuralism huddle. Not that it was wrong, bad, or useless, but it is limited… I’ve been feeling my way through this class… trying it on for size, trying to figure out how it can be useful, and it certainly can be used in dealing with deaf ed issues. But there is an opening away from it… somehow…and I feel more connected to indigenous ways of knowing… but not there yet either… hence this off-center mandala… pieces have yet to be put into place and things need not be so neatly patterned or structured (Weber, 2015c)


I wrote the following while reading Braidotti (2013):

I saw her [Hildegard] as having a head of flames. Pouring globs of yellow, purple, green acrylic paint on white paper, and running my nails through the painting, thinking to create a face I realized that Hildegard was literally on fire within her mind, her heart, and intellect. Being able to run through the paint quickly with my fingers and intuitively knowing when to stop, I felt I had found Hildegard at last. She was sheer energy and capable of moving in any direction. Moreover, as the flames fanned out beyond the contours of her face, she was utterly relational through the crossing of borders imposed by the limits of her own head (Weber, 2016b)


This piece was created in the fall of 2017 and is the last in the series of artworks in response to my readings. By fall 2017, I knew I wanted to use posthumanism and now was looking for ways to apply it to deaf education. I wrote:
I am now starting to be more deliberate and taking time with my art. This is no longer a stream of consciousness thing I was doing on a weekly basis last year. This took about two weeks of picking at it for a few minutes now and then.

Somehow, I want this to be about border crossings re: Deaf spaces in the world (Weber, 2016c).

This journey of making art enabled me to find an onto-epistemology that addressed the questions posed within the art work. Particularly, one piece, titled “Forest Holding Back” in response to Tuhuwai-Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2012) hit me with the force of a hurricane:

*Figure 3: Weber (2014) Postcolonialism*
The artwork suggested a knowledge that had been restrained, and which had been pushing up against the bars, a captivity to which I had subjected myself in my efforts to appease the colleagues and administrators I worked with and the policy developers to which I had appealed. The suggestion of violence explicit in its blood-soaked leaves, an inchoate mass barely held back by the trunks of the tall trees made me realize that there was a force coalescing within myself, waiting for my entry into its forbidding darkness. I intuitively understood that if I entered this forest, that is, this liminal space between deaf and hearing worlds, I would find “a way out of no way” (Hanley, Noblit, Sheppard, Barone, & hooks, 2013, p. 10). Already making art was giving me a language I couldn’t access through print English. Making art also revealed knowledges that couldn’t be picked up through quantitative data (Barone & Eisner, 2012). I began to think about using art to address pedagogical issues that had left me stymied and powerless for most of my teaching career.

**A Way out of No Way: Culturally Relevant Arts Education**

I considered three aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy as elucidated by Ladson-Billings (1995): 1) the raising of student achievement by using home and school languages and culture; 2) increasing the cultural and social wellbeing of deaf students 3) and enabling the students to perform a cultural critique of the world around them using new understandings of ASL and deaf culture. Since my decision to learn ASL and to become a part of the Saskatchewan deaf community, I increasingly absorbed the cultural values, behaviours, awareness of history, traditions and the linguistic features of ASL within the context of the local deaf community in Saskatchewan and during my year at Gallaudet University. I embraced a cultural-linguistic model which proposes that the
signing communities are collectivist in nature and not cultures extolling individualism (Ladd, 2003). I had become aware of oppressive educational practices (Ladd, 2003) that deprived children of full access to language and opportunities to be a full participant in a deaf collective culture and at the same time, fully engage with the hearing world.

Through immersion in deaf culture and ASL, I felt transformed through my involvement with the deaf community which afforded the opportunity to develop social skills, exercise leadership skills and to communicate with ease, all of which I could not do in the hearing world. The deaf community has much in common with other oppressed language minorities, where damage enacted upon their own children affects the quality of life of those communities. Such double oppression can be observed in the experience of indigenous, enslaved and colonized peoples. The clinching factor in this argument is that the primary battleground for those communities, for the quality of their future lives, is education. And so it is with Deaf communities. Their priorities are not focused on increased disability allowances, or access to buildings and so on, but for Deaf children to receive an appropriate Deaf-centered education in their own language, so that the quality of life within the collective culture can be maintained and enhanced. At the same time, they continue to make the case for majority societies to include sign languages on their national curricula in the hopes that these children will grow up to become bilingual adults, and thus the two sets of communities will be able to collectively interact for the first time (Ladd, 2003, pp. 16-17).

I wondered how I was to draw upon deaf culture when none of the students had been
enculturated or exposed to adequate ASL linguistic models? And how was I going to provide a deaf cultural space in which deaf culture and ASL could flourish? None of the students had ever experienced deaf spaces either at home, at school or in multiple locations outside of school such as a deaf organization, a deaf club or a deaf event held in a conference room. The Saskatchewan deaf community had become greatly diminished since the closure of the school for the deaf in 1991 (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990; Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016).

The symbiotic relationship between culture as embedded in deaf spaces and language, reminded me of my Gallaudet university days where I had picked up ASL in the context of a large, healthy vibrant deaf culture. My experiential understanding of the interrelationship between deaf spaces, deaf culture and ASL was confirmed through my readings of histories of deaf community life, deaf education and deaf individuals situated in deaf cultural spaces such as residential schools, deaf clubs, deaf organizations, and transnational deaf events (Bauman, 2008; Carbin, 1996; Emery, 2015; Friedner & Kusters, 2015; Gulliver, 2009; Humphries & Padden, 2005).

Moreover, as a deaf teacher embedded in the deaf community and now fluent in ASL, I had picked up the expectations associated with belonging to a collectivist culture (Ladd, 2011). I had adopted the intergenerational responsibility characteristic of deaf teachers to pass on deaf authored knowledges from older deaf generations (Kusters M., 2017), the commitment to moral principles exercised by deaf culture (Ladd, 2011), particularly the principle of ensuring understanding among all deaf students (Friedner, 2016), and the commitment to improving the quality of life for deaf people (Ladd, 2011). I knew that I could not have been able to participate in a collectivist culture such as the
deaf community had I not become fluent in ASL first. The relationship between ASL and the deaf culture was indeed symbiotic.

Prompted by my readings on deaf diasporic theories (Emery, 2015; Friedner & Kusters, 2015; Kusters, De Meulder, & O’Brien, 2017), I also began to think about language revitalization (Davis J., 2016; Mckee, 2017) and translingual communities (Canagarajah, 2013; Garcia, 2009). Living and working within a diaspora context, such as the small midwestern Canadian city far from large and vibrant deaf community, I thought about the need for a critical mass of deaf people and cultural capital. In searching for new models of community, language and culture, I considered recent and tentative forays into deaf diasporic research and theories advanced by deaf academics (Emery, 2015; Friedner & Kusters, 2015; Kusters, De Meulder, & O’Brien, 2017). The study of deaf spaces (Gulliver, 2009; Gulliver & Kitzel, 2016), international deaf encounters (Friedner & Kusters, 2015), global south deaf communities (Friedner, 2017; Kusters, 2009; 2012; Moriarty Harrelson, 2017), sign language ideologies (Green, Kusters, Moriarity- Harrelson, & Snoddon, in press), deaf ontologies (Friedner, 2016; Kusters, De Meulder, & O’Brien, 2017), deaf epistemologies (Moores & Paul, 2012) are recent contributions to the development of deaf diasporic theories.

Finally, I wondered how to develop a curriculum that would incorporate a language and a culture of which parents, administrators and educational interpreters knew little. An overarching worry was: would my attempts to provide a culturally relevant pedagogy to deaf students without fully informed permission from the school administration and parents be considered unethical? Did they really know and understand the implications of introducing ASL and deaf culture? I proceeded anyway
after securing nominal support from parents and administrators.

Hanley, Noblit, Sheppard, Barone, & hooks (2013) propose a pedagogical model of culturally relevant arts education (CRAE) which allows for the use of imagination and creativity in employing the arts to effect social change. The outcomes of this model are: to increase intrinsic motivation and ownership, positive identity development and provide empowerment through bringing about social justice (Hanley, Noblit, Sheppard, Barone, & hooks, 2013). Six pedagogies are required to drive this model toward these outcomes, three of which are specific arts pedagogies: arts production, arts integration and aesthetics, and three non-arts culturally relevant pedagogies which include: contextual teaching and learning, critical pedagogy and multicultural education (Hanley, Noblit, Sheppard, Barone, & hooks, 2013). In my classroom, not all pieces of the CRAE model were developed at the same time but all were integrated as I progressed in my doctoral studies, increased my understanding of ASL linguistics, engaged in deaf community collaborations and the local arts community. The two years of CRAE adaptation and development began with a pilot project with two artists in residence, Chrystene Ells and Berny Hi, using art to teach literacy related tasks such as reading, writing, computer literacy, ASL storytelling, and visual storytelling. The second year consisted of a fully integrated culturally relevant arts education program resulting in a collaboration between the students, deaf adults, a parent of a deaf child, the artists in residence and myself toward the development and production of a theatrical play, Deaf Crows (Ells, Hi, & Weber, 2016) at a local professional theatre.
Figure 4: Deaf Crows Collective (2016) - Murder of Deaf Crows: Alex Bristow, Jacqueline Fink, Shayla Tanner, Allard Thomas, Taylor Schwab, Tyson Zacharias

*Deaf Crows* (Ells, Hi, & Weber, 2016) played two nights in Regina, SK to two packed houses at a local professional theatre and three sold-out audiences at the SoundOff Festival featuring deaf drama produced by Canadian deaf actors in Edmonton, Alberta. Based on the success of the play, *Deaf Crows*, a non-profit deaf theatre and arts company, Deaf Crows Collective, was established. This company includes adult and student actors and relies on grants and donations for its future performances and art projects.

**The Making of Deaf Crows: Curriculum Changes**

The making of *Deaf Crows* necessitated over a year and a half of preparatory work. I began discussions about visucentric learning (Kusters & O’Brien, 2017) by asking
students whether they had been asked to use their eyes more than their ears or vice versa. The students began to deconstruct their experiences of being engaged in conversations with other people who emphasized the superiority of hearing over seeing and how they felt as failures when sign language (signed English) was finally provided to them. Engaging in visual literacy projects and reflecting upon the wealth of information to be gained through seeing, the students created this class poster:

![Class Deconstruction Project poster](image)

**Figure 5: Class Deconstruction Project by Deaf Crows Collective Artists and Actors: Alex Bristow, Jacqueline Fink, Nay Htoo, Shayla Tanner, David Volk**

I also developed credit courses in ASL that would be offered through the school board where I was hired. These courses introduced the grammar, syntax, semantics and pragmatics of ASL to which they had never been exposed. I set up a small filming studio in my classroom and required the students to create ASL videos along with closed captions for their English and ASL assignments.

Eventually I introduced concepts such as audiocentric privilege (Eckert &
Rowley, 2013) which enables hearing people to assume superiority over deaf people, audism, which promotes evaluation of deaf people according to norms, beliefs and languages held by hearing people (Humphries, 1977) and the auditory industrial complex, which can be seen as a conglomeration of professionals and services such as audiologists, surgeons, speech and language pathologists and cochlear implant clinics (Eberwein, 2007; Eckert and Rowley, 2013). I taught the students about the oppression of the deaf community, (Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1984) American deaf culture as supported by Gallaudet University, and biographies concerning successful deaf adults. Eventually, the students understood that I was not a hearing person who just couldn’t hear very well. Rather, I imparted deaf cultural knowledge, values, and historical awareness of linguistic and cultural oppression (Gulliver, 2009; Gulliver & Kitzel, 2016) into the classroom.

We collaboratively started to develop a curriculum emphasizing visual storytelling, ASL literature, and reconstructing selected English literature that often made seeing and deaf people invisible. The students learned drawing, painting, colour mixing, art techniques and different styles of art including gothic art, impressionism, expressionism, abstract art, making three-dimensional art, visual storytelling, creating ASL poetry and videos, puppet fabrication and mask making, stagecraft, miming, physical theatre and scriptwriting. Within the scope of project-based learning, fairy and folk tales were reinterpreted according to the deaf experience using visual storytelling techniques, filming, and ASL storytelling. The students also met various artists from the local community and attended local performances. Assessments were teacher generated, focusing on multimodal literacy skills (Cope & Kalantzis, 2012) inherent in the processes within the Deaf Crows theatre play development and production.
Deaf Spaces and Deaf Crows

During the making of Deaf Crows, I began to discover the ways I had become complicit in perpetuating the injustices imposed upon deaf youth. Instead of blaming government officials, parents, and other educators, I confronted my own complicity, which surfaced again and again during the development of Deaf Crows. For instance, in working with the artists, I found myself competing with the students for the artists’ attention and affirmation. I volunteered answers to the artists’ questions quickly before the other students had time to formulate a response. I also became disruptive to the conversations the artists were trying to have with the students. I came to realize that I had continued to position the students as unknowing and ignorant to assert my own knowledge and expertise. I was looking for validation from the artists quite possibly because I wasn’t getting it anywhere else in my profession or in my whole life despite my achievements. For the first time, I came to understand why deaf people, in meeting with government officials, were so eager to share their stories of oppression and how they thought that their story was going to be so powerful, therefore bringing about a change of heart to those who had the power to make key policy changes. We thought that the power lay in our stories and our experiences and in whoever told the best story, the most articulate story, the most complete story, and the most moving story. The community often engaged in bitter battles as to who was going to be able to go to these meetings with high ranking officials in the government. Competition for attention in the government meetings often happened with one deaf community leader monopolizing the conversation only to be usurped by another leader telling virtually the same story and making the same points. In reflecting on my own behaviour in the classroom, the scales fell away from my
eyes. We were using these government meetings to secure personal validation and approval in the guise of advocating for deaf children’s right to access their education. No wonder our efforts at lobbying consistently failed.

My actions in silencing my students were surprisingly automatic, and I had to consider how I had been conditioned from early childhood to please any hearing person who might ask a question, make a request, or demand a response. Instead of the building the community of students in the hopes of producing a play, I found myself asserting individualist values and emphasizing my own performance. I found this insight to be quite painful. I wrote in a blogpost, “I have had to learn to take a back seat and allow the students to own their space. And they’ve owned it like flowers popping up in a meadow” (Weber, 2016). This painful awakening led me to review the research on the creation and maintenance of deaf spaces and deaf geographies (Gulliver, 2009; Friedner & Kusters, 2015; Moores & Paul, 2012).

The deaf space has a life of its own (Gulliver, 2009; 2013; Gulliver & Kitzel, 2016) as it can grow, secrete structures, encounter other spaces, and develop ways of countering other spaces. Deaf spaces can include spaces of the mind where it refers to memory, identity, language, culture, communication, and deaf citizenship (Gulliver & Kitzel, 2016). In addition to sharing deaf history, culture, literature and ASL, I realized that I secreted deaf space by emphasizing community building behaviours and de-emphasized individualist behaviours. Collectivist behaviours are very difficult to develop after fourteen years (or in my case, much longer) of learning in inclusive education environments where the narrative of individual achievement is predominantly upheld by families, educators, school administrators, and policy makers (Graham & Slee, 2008;
Ladd, 2003; Valente, 2011). In contrast, deaf spaces are characterized by a “shared experience of living a deaf life among a hearing majority. This in turn may contribute to the mutual intention to make the interaction work” (Crasborn & Hiddinga, 2015, p. 63). Therefore, there is a critical moral dimension to deaf spaces because the desire to communicate is supported by “the bodily, linguistic, cultural and cognitive turning of one’s self toward one’s interlocutor(s). I have called this turning moral orientation because it is moral in the sense of relational as well as moral in the sense of socially valued and expected” (Green, 2015, p. 72) The building of the Deaf Crows play incorporated this moral orientation and reinforced collectivist values.

During the rehearsals of Deaf Crows, preserving the deaf space to honour the needs of the deaf whose first language was ASL was initially challenging. Addressing shifting power balances in a stage environment and classroom that contained two hearing interpreters, two hearing artists in residence unversed in ASL and deaf culture, and an assortment of oral deaf, hard of hearing and signing deaf students began with actively shifting classroom dynamics. For instance, I had to repeatedly encourage everyone to come up to the front when wishing to speak so that sightlines would not be obscured. There was also the issue of speech and sign often being unintelligible and much effort was expended in sorting out what was being said or signed. I found the task of normalizing the deaf space was most difficult when hard of hearing and hearing students who preferred oral communication occupied the same space. The artists in residence would often forget to honour the needs of the deaf signers and unwittingly gave preference to the students who would use oral English. At the same time, the deaf adults adopted an egalitarian approach to the play direction and wanted to contribute their
direction to the artists’ direction of the play which often resulted in frustration, conflict and the prolongation of several rehearsals to the point where coordinated activity often became unmanageable. Being vigilant concerning these orientations and pointing out these inequalities as they occurred during the rehearsals and in my discussions with the artists in residence after the rehearsals, enabled me to maintain the deaf space which was crucial to the success of the play.

**Implications and Conclusions**

Nearly twenty-seven years of advocacy to preserve ASL and deaf culture resulted in failure while the CRAE model inspired a theatrical production, *Deaf Crows*, a play which features the same content and issues presented previously by myself as a failed lobbyist. *Deaf Crows* played five evenings to packed theatres in Regina and Edmonton. High ranking officials in the field of education, who attended the play, then facilitated the hiring of deaf personnel in the school system, and allocated resources toward the development of in-house ASL-English bilingual reading materials for deaf adolescents. Furthermore, there was a substantial increase in volunteers (hearing and deaf in the school programs). Since the performance of *Deaf Crows*, the number of registrations for community ASL classes doubled. ASL interpretation is now offered at other theatre performances in the community which is unprecedented. Finally, the public library donated gallery space for an installation exhibit to be created by the original *Deaf Crows* performers and new incoming students, titled the “*The Deaf Forest*” which was exhibited in the fall of 2017.

We may now have the attention of key stakeholders, because the play is about empowering the self, seizing agency and control of one’s future. The voices of the deaf
students are heard because I now locate myself in the margins of the classroom, no longer competing with them for validation. I no longer teach out of despair alternating with the need for attention but working and teaching in a site of resistance – “as location of radical openness and possibility” (bell hooks, 1990, p. 55 cited in Hanley et al, 2013, p. 158). This interstitial liminal space is also defined by Brueggeman (2009) as “inbetweenity”, where

tough, opportunistic, interesting, and sometimes even beautiful things grow in the cracks of structures seemingly well established and impenetrable; the cochlear implant cyborg might just be a crack-dweller. It will take far more than an implant to make deaf identity (whatever it may be) go away (Brueggeman, 2009, p. 16).

Becoming an intercultural educator, adopting the CRAE model, and working with language-deprived deaf youth, deaf adults, and parents to express their frustrations, hopes and dreams may make a way for a new generation of hybridized cochlear implant and ASL users, living out their lives in a liminal space which presents limitless possibilities (Brueggeman, 2009). At the same time, the greatest legacy of the older deaf community to this liminal space is their gift of language, culture, history, traditions, and its collectivist orientation.

Furthermore, the *Deaf Crows* experience enabled me to identify my skills and weaknesses, and the parts of myself I wanted to use rather than attempting to do everything and be all things for the deaf community. For instance, I discovered that despite my many years of experience in program and project administration, I neither had the aptitude or the inclination for it. During and after *Deaf Crows*, I started to make some conscious decisions about what I was prepared to do in future endeavours and was
prepared to let things fall apart if others did not take up those responsibilities. To my surprise, a deaf organization, after several years of being defunct, devoted to the promotion of ASL and deaf arts and literature, resurrected shortly after the *Deaf Crows* performance (Warren, 2016). In addition, parents of deaf students began to inquire how they could get involved in the deaf community and to offer their support in fundraising for future *Deaf Crows* productions. Another artist from the community is also volunteering with continuing CRAE activities this fall. Indeed, a new community is beginning to develop in support of deaf culture, ASL and deaf literature.

Finally, can CRAE fully revitalize ASL and deaf culture in this province? No. We still struggle with capacity building, resource development (namely qualified and trained interpreters, professional deaf educators, and new deaf community leaders). We are still an aging population and the youth have made tentative steps with *Deaf Crows*. They will need more intensive support and development to take their place as community leaders. The energy, however, unleashed from my examination of my commitments, in acknowledging my complicity, understanding my positionality as primarily in the border space between deaf and hearing worlds, and adopting CRAE presents small but fragile possibilities for the revitalization of the deaf community and ASL. Indeed, there is a deaf way out of no way (Hanley, Noblit, Sheppard, Barone, & hooks, 2013).
SECTION 2: FROM ME TO WE TO IT TO ENTANGLEMENT

The triumphalist strain in this first chapter is detectable beneath the activities I undertook in my classroom with the support of the artists in residence in the effort to collapse the binaries between art, social justice, hearing and deaf in language and literacy education for deaf adolescents. My newfound pedagogical practices felt more comfortable, but it was not enough. My reliance on postcolonial metaphors such as the term “ambivalent colonial subject” (Bhabha, 1984) seemed too cheap and easy. Already, I was too fond of ideas and postcolonialism (Darder, 2002; Dussel, 2013; Freire, 2000; McLaren, 2015; Said, 1979; Spivak, 2005) seemed like another sweet in the academic candy store. O’Brien (2017), a deaf scholar, warns of the overreliance on terms coined with the support of postcolonial theory, advertently placing the auditory industrial complex consisting of hearing aid and cochlear implant manufacturers, ear, nose and throat specialists, surgeons, audiologists, speech and language pathologists, and teachers of the deaf in the centre against whom we signing deaf would rail. Deaf studies is currently shifting its focus away from addressing hegemonies (Gramsci, 1971), power imbalances (Darder, 2002; Dussel, 2013; Freire, 2000; McLaren, 2015; Said, 1979; Spivak, 2005) and inequalities between deaf subjects and hearing colonizers expressed in terms coined by deaf and hearing academics such as audism (Humphries, 1977) in order to bring about decolonization, and therefore empower deaf people (Kusters, De Meulder, & O'Brien, 2017). In letting go of the deaf identity politics, north American conceptions of deaf culture, and the postcolonial metaphors, deaf academics are proposing a focus on deaf ontologies and epistemologies. Deaf studies are no longer focused on how deaf people are oppressed but on how deaf people live, think and what they do.
Moreover, in using autoethnography, I still presented myself as the prime mover who used culturally relevant arts education to reshape a program for deaf adolescents. In other words, I was still in control and remained the centre around which everything revolved. Exhausted, I spent that summer after school was out, feeling angry and depressed about all the work I had to do to bring about *Deaf Crows*, to motivate parents and the deaf community into supporting the deaf adolescents. I felt overwhelmed at the prospect of continuing this work. I resented at having to work throughout the summer, doing the bookkeeping, sending emails, maintaining the network of newfound supporters and even mailing out promotional items. I dreaded the next project which entailed fundraising to take the *Deaf Crows* cast and crew to Edmonton, Alberta to perform in the SoundOff Festival featuring deaf theatre in February of the following year. Between the two artists and myself, we were a burned out and exhausted trio.

Furthermore, the newfound practices did not account for why intercultural arts education proved effective or how it disrupted hegemonic control of deaf education. Rather, the chapter reflects the outcomes of the intervention, making me look like a saviour hellbent on a messianic mission. In short, I was guilty of relentlessly pursuing the illusion that universalizing and definitive truths could be found in data, ripping it away to formulate new categories and labels to come up with readymade solutions to pedagogical practices which then could be replicated anywhere (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). In doing so, I had inadvertently reinforced Western hegemony in the pursuit of the one size fits all solution (Spivak, 2013).

I had to go back to the drawing board. I knew I wanted to do something with art, research, deaf education, and social justice. I became more convinced that heavily used
positivist, constructivist, critical and post-structural research paradigms did not account for the slippages, leakages, enfoldments, lingering questions and hauntings which accompanied the data concerning deaf education and deaf people (Lather, 2007; Mertens, 2007). Deaf subjects are notoriously difficult to investigate due to shifting patterns in populations, locations, sign language usage, varying availability of data from parents, health, education, government and non-profit organizations (McKee, 2017). Moreover, deaf people possess varying levels of hearing losses, speech and sign abilities, and affiliations with hearing and deaf organizations (McKee, 2017). Research in the deaf community is also problematic because of fear, mistrust, and anxiety about being viewed primarily as people with a disability to be cured rather than a people who are culturally and linguistically diverse (McKee, Schlehofer, & Thew, 2013). Moreover, Hynds, Jacob, Green, & Faircloth, (2014) note that deficit identities are forced on deaf youth through the medicalization of deafness and the disability or impaired status associated with medical diagnosis (Obasi, 2008; Smiler & McKee, 2007). Pathologizing practices are common within the medical world, ascribing "deficiencies or impairments" to those "perceived as different," consequently creating "a new class of diagnosable symptoms" (Shields et al., 2005, p. xix). Marginalization can also occur for D/deaf youth within their own family communities, whereby they experience isolation as their hearing parents/caregivers and siblings may not learn to sign or communicate with them (Valentine & Skelton, 2003). This isolation can also occur within the workplace and within D/deaf communities, particularly when there is pressure to conform to a cultural ideal (Smiler & McKee, 2007; Valentine & Skelton, 2003). What is
missing from our reading of this research is how Indigenous D/deaf youth resist such marginalization processes and develop strength identities from within their own communities that contribute to their well-being and ongoing development (Hynds, Jacob, Green, & Faircloth, 2014, p. 178).

In other words, the focus on how deaf people, and in this case Maori deaf youth, experience oppression puts under erasure the ways in which indigenous deaf youth resist marginalization; in short, on what they do, how they live, and how they resist. In the search for causes, relationships, and outcomes, data on what deaf people do and how they are positioned in their communities often remains hidden, perhaps only discerned in data slippages, leakages, enfolding, lingering questions and hauntings (Lather, 2007). A focus on ontologies and epistemologies (Kusters, De Meulder, & O'Brien, 2017) might point to this data otherwise hidden.

Furthermore, the use of the postcolonial and poststructuralist research paradigms to describe the deaf experience is problematic. O’Brien (2017) writes:

In the past, Deaf Studies academics, to define and frame the field, have borrowed approaches and theories from disciplines as diverse as disability studies, feminist and women’s studies, Black studies, and queer studies (see Bauman 2008, Brueggemann 2010, and Friedner 2010 for examples of this multidisciplinary engagement and also see Ladd 2003). These borrowings usually are justified on the grounds of shared experiences of oppression or exclusion. Deaf ontologies, however, are not only the result of discrimination due to an inability to hear, but also due to the preferential focus given to visual and tactile experiences, languages, and ways of understanding the world. This means that the rather
simplistic comparisons with the discrimination and oppression explored in the
disciplines mentioned earlier has limited potential. Not only this, but such
comparisons also erase the specific experiences of people used as comparison
groups, which could be interpreted as inflicting epistemic violence on these

Moreover, current trends in research compromises many parents of deaf children. Parents
are often locked into two choices when it comes to considering their child’s future. The
biomedicalization engine is larger, has more resources, and is pervasive in their view that
the deaf child is defective and must be cured. Biomedicalization of deafness is a
hegemonic force, promoting the stigmatization and pathologizing of deafness. The deaf
cultural critique (Mauldin, 2016) is a tiny David, flinging stones at a behemoth, arguing
or pleading for its continued existence and viability, for the value of sign language
toward the nurturance of a whole deaf child and participation in deaf and hearing
community life. Many deaf scholars have been working around the clock, borrowing
theories, building constructs to shore up the feeble attempts of deaf David against his
hearing Goliath. In the meantime, many parents must either respond or react to
biomedicalization of deafness either through compliance or dissent (Blume, 2010;
Mauldin, 2016).

The result is often the imposition of deaf studies concepts that seek to empower
dead people but do not necessarily empower parents of deaf children. Rather, deaf culture
concepts often form a container which leaks (Pfister, 2015). Parents receive little nuanced
information about what individual deaf people do every day and how they construct their
languages, identities, cultures and worlds. For this reason, research must take on an onto-
epistemological turn that is performative. Instead of attempting to describe and reflect upon what one thinks all deaf people are doing, posthumanism opens a way to think about “becomings” as a series of intra-actions with animal, humans, earth and machine (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). These intra-actions open the way for the “becoming deaf” available to individual hearing and deaf people alike thereby stemming the tide of endless binarizing and polarizing groups of people. The following chapter helped me to understand what I had essentially done with CRAE, that is, how I engaged in creating more binaries which left me exhausted and resentful.

At the same time, I was still drawn to posthumanism. What could posthumanism do for deaf education? How could posthumanism restore sanity to myself, and to the students I served? CRAE seemed to provide some answers. How could I continue this journey? In the following chapter, I search out the philosophical, onto-epistemological development of posthumanism to assure myself that I was on the right track.
CHAPTER 2: POSTHUMANIST ONTO-EPISTEMOLOGY

Introduction

Posthumanism cannot be understood without a review of what human beings have done to assure themselves that they are indeed the center of the world in which they live, that is, anthropocentrism. Anthropocentrism is the continual reference to the human as the dominant species who determine what is truly real within the material, social, cultural and political realms on this planet (Braidotti, 2013, p. 60). For example, human beings have viewed themselves as the only species capable of agency, thereby exploiting resources of living and non-living matter and populations referred to as the “Other”, who were once considered subhumans (Fanon, 1963; Pennycook, 1998; Said, 1979). The human existence as defined by white European males provides meaning, direction and the future for all species and therefore brings other species, living and non-living matter, even other races of human beings under subjugation (Braidotti, 2013, p.52).

Within the history of this planet, the Anthropocene Era occupies a sliver of the geological timeline. Although definitions abound as to when and how this Anthropocene Era came about, the consensus among many scientific societies is that the Anthropocene Era is characterized by human exploitation of natural resources in pursuit of wealth, an activity supported by the dominance of an Eurocentric paradigm beginning in the Late Middle Ages or early Renaissance (Dussel, 2013). The Eurocentric paradigm justified the imperialist race for new land and resources, the colonization of subjugated peoples and advanced capitalism (Braidotti, 2013, p. 24, 53-54). The neoliberal ideology of the free market is supported by the exploitation of land, people and natural resources (Fanon, 1963; Freire, 2000; Dussel, 2013; McLaren, 2000; 2015).
The Anthropocene age is characterized by its impact on the biodiversity of this planet thereby precipitating the extinction of many life forms (Braidotti, 2013, p. 66). In addition, geological history is impacted by human activities, including war and pollution, thereby causing the exodus of many non-human species into areas previously unpopulated (Braidotti, 2013, p. 83, 127, 187). Climate change is another result of the anthropocene era in which global warming is causing massive changes in weather systems, which promote relocations of human and non-human species to more favorable climates to address needs for food, clothing and shelter (Braidotti, 2013, p. 81). These characteristics suggest a geo-morphism, that is, profound geological changes resulting from the engineering by humans acting as a geological force (Braidotti, 2013, p. 81). The earth’s long history suggests that anthropocentrism has not always dominated the entire life of this planet (Braidotti, 2013, p. 66). Rather, the Anthropocene era positioned after the Holocene Era is dominated by the development of the Western world, that is, its complex economic, social, political, scientific technological, and cultural activities (Braidotti, 2013, p. 25, 52; Herbrechter, 2013; Snaza & Weaver, 2015).

A review of the epistemological history of the Western world enables us to see posthumanism as a minor strain entwined throughout the humanisms and anti-humanism appearing during the modernist and postmodernist eras. Posthumanism is an onto-epistemological positioning of the human in more equal relationship to animals, humans, machine and earth rather than occupying the top rank of a hierarchy subjugating animals, earth, machines and humans categorized as “other” (Braidotti, 2013; Coole & Frost, 2010; Haraway, 1991; Herbrechter, 2013). Pennycook (2018) tempers this argument by suggesting that while it may be a “step too far to place things above humans in an
ontological hierarchy, there are good arguments for a balanced settlement” (Pennycook, 2018, p. 119). Not having a balanced settlement results in a mere narratology of things without reference to conceptual schemes, discourses, social and cultural constructions (Pennycook, 2018).

Humanism is a western Eurocentric notion that man is at the apex of all creation, responsible for the management and exploitation of all living and non-living things including subjugated people, machines and plants (Braidotti, 2013; Coole & Frost, 2010; Haraway, 1991; Herbrechter, 2013). Anti-humanism is the response to the arrogant claims of humanism through the attempt to decenter the human as the sole arbiter of reality (Foucault, 1988; Heidegger, 1977). Not all humanisms will be discussed in this chapter because there is no one linear narrative of humanism (Braidotti, 2013, p. 51). I will, however, attempt to establish a thread between the dominant Eurocentric humanism (Burbules & Peters, 2004; Dussel, 2013) that gave rise to modernism (Burbules & Peters, 2004), postmodernism (Burbules & Peters, 2004) and the anti-humanist (Foucault, 1988; Heidegger, 1977), transhumanist (Herbrechter, 2013) and the post-humanist philosophical and political strains (Braidotti, 2013; Coole & Frost, 2010; Haraway, 1991; Herbrechter, 2013) which all compete for recognition in our trajectory toward a posthumanist society (Braidotti, 2013; Coole & Frost, 2010; Haraway, 1991; Herbrechter, 2013). I will begin the discussion of liberal humanism with a view to establishing the linkages to posthumanist thought today.

**Humanism**

There are many humanisms which come from their own philosophical traditions in dialogue with the social, economic, political, cultural, and religious elements of society
at certain periods of history (Braidotti, 2013, p. 50. Humanism, in all different philosophical traditions, developed in response to modernism. Modernism developed in response to the ideological shift away from the Catholic and Christian world views in two ways. First, the philosophical form of modernism describes the social, political, cultural, and technological and scientific advances beginning in the late 1600s (Burbules & Peters, 2004). At the end of the Middle Ages, legal, social and religious forces endeavored to place the human as enshrined within natural law governing his/her activities (Braidotti, 2013; Burbules & Peters, 2004). Secondly, in the early 1900’s, modernism arose as an artistic movement preoccupied with breaking away from classical and traditional forms of art (Burbules & Peters, 2004). This chapter focuses on the philosophical movements buttressing humanism as driven by social, cultural, political and economic developments which placed humans at the apex of creation.

The philosophical form of modernism began in the Renaissance with the move from medieval Christianity which upheld God as the centre of all human activity. The Renaissance push to explore other continents including the New World and to obtain its treasures thereby subjugating whole peoples to the effects of colonization reified the power of white European males in dominating all species and mineral resources (Dussel, 2013; Fanon, 1963; Mignolo, 2000; Pennycook, 1998; Said, 1979). The modernist grand narrative, that is, the placing of human activity at the forefront along with an unbridled confidence in the power of humankind to define itself and to rule the world cemented the anthropocentrism of that era (Burbules & Peters, 2004). Modernism is founded upon grand narratives in support of anthropocentrism, allowing for the dominance of white, male European over trade, science, technology, warfare, and peoples subjugated through
colonizing activities (Dussel, 2013; Fanon, 1963; Mignolo, 2000; Pennycook, 1998; Said, 1979). In response to modernism, secular humanism began to replace the stronghold of Christianity as the dominant ideological, cultural and social system to rule Western Europe. Secular humanism arose in opposition to the control over social, cultural and economic capital exerted through the symbiotic relationship between the Catholic church and European monarchs during the Age of Enlightenment (Burbules & Peters, 2004; Mansfield, 2000).

Later, the legacy of the Enlightenment, including the Cartesian split between the mind and body, the ability to use reason as the primary characteristic dividing humans from other life forms, and the democratic notions of freedom, democracy, and human rights as the outcome of the French and American revolutions all contributed to the development of humanism (Braidotti, 2013). This form of humanism came to be known as positivist humanism (Mansfield, 2000).

Eventually, the positivist humanism associated with modernism came under Rousseau’s scrutiny in the mid 1700’s (Mansfield, 2000; Rousseau, 1953; 1968). Rousseau, in reaction to excessive emphasis on reason, proposed the notion of the individual’s feelings as sufficient evidence of individuality (in contrast to the emphasis on the intellect), paving the way for the later Romantic period, epitomized by Romantic poets such as Shelley, Byron, Keats, and Browning who all emphasized the importance of feeling and sensibility (Mansfield, 2000; Rousseau, 1953; 1968). The Romantic humanism and positivist humanism are strangely linked in that both movements reinforce the presence of individual subjectivity (Mansfield, 2000). In this way, the romantic and positivist strains of humanisms formed an uneasy partnership to cement the hold of
modernism over the world and to buttress the claims of anthropocentrism (Burbules & Peters, 2004).

The human subject, during the early philosophical modernist period beginning in the early Renaissance era, outlining positivist and romantic humanism was untroubled; human subjectivity was shared and reinforced as primarily free, autonomous and rational (Mansfield, 2000). Descartes proposed that the human was a fully conscious being who can create, choose and arrange all knowledge in their world according to reason (Descartes, 1970; Mansfield, 2000). Within secular humanism, the human subject was fully rational and conscious without any unconscious desires (Descartes, 1970; Mansfield, 2000). Consciousness and reasoning were to be preferred over every other form of sensation or impulse (Descartes, 1970; Mansfield, 2000). Immanuel Kant’s notion of the subject presupposed that every sensation, object, element, or thought must cross into the human intellect before it can be declared to exist (Kant, 1929; Mansfield, 2000). The human intellect, then represents what exists, and in declaring the human being to be the final arbiter of reality, proponents of humanism served to entrench anthropocentrism. The modernist belief in the human being’s innate abilities as an interiority that distinguishes him/her from other species, established humanism and therefore anthropocentrism as determining what is real (Snaza, 2015). Even structuralism, as an outcome of humanism, reinforced the notion that the individual's subjectivity is formed by innate patterns of development according to biological, physical, social, and cultural scales (Burbules & Peters, 2004).
Structuralism

Structuralism, a movement beginning in the early 1900s and continuing until the late 1960s, promoted the belief that there is a cohesive structure that underlies all fields of enquiry including linguistics, history, anthropology, psychoanalysis, psychology, politics, human development, and cultural studies (Burbules & Peters, 2004). Structuralism supported stage or developmental theories which explained underlying structures within human development. The progression through these stages propelled human beings as superior species endowed with the privilege and responsibility of ruling the planet (Burbules & Peters, 2004). French structuralism began at the beginning of the 20th century, in the early 1900’s with the work of de Saussure (1916) and Jakobson (1973) in their study of linguistics (Burbules & Peters, 2004). French structuralism suggested that inner laws governed linguistics and by extension, all forms of human endeavours including arts, politics, government, the sciences, and technology (Burbules & Peters, 2004). Levi-Strauss (1968) proposed that anthropology contained similar unconscious structures which dictated the behaviour of humans and societies and stressed its applicability to all social sciences (Burbules & Peters, 2004). Barthes (1972) took up the same proposition and applied it to his study of myths, particularly emphasizing structural similarities among symbols, signs and representations within myths emanating from a variety of cultures and religions (Burbules & Peters, 2004). In 1963, Lacan (2006) and Althusser (2005) began a dialogue between Marxism and psychoanalysis (Burbules & Peters, 2004). Even Foucault (2002) began his career exploring the applicability of structuralism to a range of political and social movements (Burbules & Peters, 2004). Jean Piaget (1971) closed the era of structuralism with his stage theory of cognitive
development which swept the educational field by storm (Burbules & Peters, 2004). By elucidating the stages of cognitive and sensorimotor development, Piaget (1971) asserted the role of structuralism as innate within human development and extended his theories to mathematical, physical and biological, psychological, linguistic, anthropological studies and philosophy (Burbules & Peters, 2004).

**Anti-Humanisms**

Postmodernism is mostly associated with the movements in the arts and cultures in response to the dismantling of grand narratives particularly during the latter half of the 19th century to the mid-20th century. During the postmodern era, the philosophical attempt to decenter the human being and to question modernist grand narratives is called anti-humanism because these efforts fail to completely address underlying anthropocentric foundations of humanism. Anti-humanisms generally arose in dialogue with the post-modernism, which dismantled humanist inspired foundational narratives and structuralist theories in the attempt to dislocate the human from his/her dominance over all species and living and non-living matter. Anti-humanisms question the foundations of Western thought through the arts, architecture, literature, political systems, and cultural activities.

Furthermore, anti-humanism is characterized by skepticism about the role of humans as agentic but does not go far enough to replace anthropocentrism with an alternative. Consequently, anti-humanisms in its multiple forms serve as one half of binaries in opposition to the various forms of humanisms. The formulation of yet another anti-humanism in its attempt to dislocate the human from his/her place within the modernist narrative inadvertently reinforces anthropocentrism. In this sense,
anthropocentrism is likened to a many headed hydra that grows back quickly after each beheading.

There are three phases of anti-humanist thought: 1) the postmodern thinkers who challenged modernist suppositions about the nature and role of the human subject (Darwin, 1979; Freud, 1913; Heidegger, 1977; Marx, 1990; Nietzsche, 1968); 2) the poststructuralist thinkers, including feminist philosophers who engaged in the linguistic turn to decenter humans in all realms of activities (Butler, 1993; Deleuze, 1983, 1995; Derrida, 1978, 1981; Foucault, 1988, 2002; Kristeva, 1982, 1984; Lacan, 2006; Lyotard, 1984, 1988) and 3) the latest wave of anti-humanist thinkers who propose the decentering of language by decrying logocentrism, phallocentrism, and anthropocentrism in favor of non-normative, post foundational humanism representationalism (Barad, 2003; Braidotti, 2013; Ellsworth, 1992; Gore & Luke, 1992; hooks, 1984; Lather, 1991, 2007; Spivak, 2005; St. Pierre, 2013). I will explore each of these phases in the next section.

**Phase 1: Postmodernism and its Anti-humanisms**

Late Enlightenment philosophers began to shake the anthropocentric foundations of modernism beginning with Nietzsche, who was one of the first philosophers to challenge the anthropocentrism buttressed by modernism and who attempted to decenter the human being as the apex of all life forms by introducing nihilism (Braidotti, 2013; Herbrechter, 2013; Nietzsche, 1968; Snaza, 2015). Nietzsche questioned the arrogance of humanity within the Eurocentric paradigm which in turn began a strain of humanist, anti-humanist and posthumanist enquiry (Herbrechter, 2013; Nietzsche, 1968). The glaring faults associated with humanism such as the issues of slavery, colonization, Napoleonic wars, the rise of social problems occasioned by the industrial revolution, paved the way
for the dismissal of universalising narratives and grand theories that would explain the human condition (Braidotti, 2013; Burbules & Peters, 2004; Herbrechter, 2013; Snaza, 2015). In short, the anthropocentric foundation of the modern world was shaken (Herbrechter, 2013).

In response to the disenchantment with the promise of modernism, Nietzsche wrote of the coming overman, a superior human being, capable of overcoming the anthropocentric foundations of humanism (Nietzsche, 1968). Nietzsche predicted that the coming overman will act from an entirely different set of impulses and will transcend the anthropocentric foundations of the Western World (Nietzsche, 1968). There is, however, a schizophrenic element to anti-humanism beginning with Nietzsche’s objection to the glorification of human activities including its penchant for Christianity (Herbrechter, 2013). Herbrechter (2013) suggests that Nietzsche’s overman “despises sickness, glorifies strength, will and power and plays with nihilistic fire while giving over to his unbridled megalomaniac instincts to provoke ‘weak’ into moralist judgements about him” (Herbrechter, 2013, p. 32). The overman, however problematic, bears the vestiges of early posthumanism but essentially remains anti-humanist in orientation (Herbrechter, 2013).

The work of Freud (1913), Marx (1990) and Darwin (1979) ushered an era of questions concerning the origins of species, the presence of the unconscious within humans and the capacity of capitalism to control and organize the industrial world (Braidotti, 2013; Mansfield, 2000; Herbrechter, 2013). The work of these thinkers (while not postmodern) served to question the supposition that the mind is entirely rational hence demarcating the humans from animals, and that capitalism is entirely benevolent
and benefits all life forms on the planet (Burbules & Peters, 2004).

Building upon Nietzsche's work (Nietzsche, 1968), Heidegger (1977) initiated a more sophisticated form of anti-humanism by suggesting that the academy had not yet fully attended to the question of what it means to exist (Heidegger, 1977). This question is formulated independently of the social, cultural, religious, political and material theories that attempt to interpret human existence. In asserting the presence of the human being as immersed in the world along with its attendant social, material, cultural and political realities, Heidegger (1977) suggests that we are not autonomous individuals supported by the ballast of theoretical assumptions and grand narratives (Heidegger, 1977). Rather, we are simply here in the world, not separate from others or things in the world (Heidegger, 1977). Heidegger’s emphasis on essence and being in the world surrounded by other essences (as opposed to structures and theories exposing these structures) served to dislodge the anthropocentrism of structuralist thought (Braidotti, 2013; Herbrechter, 2013; Heidegger, 1977) but still focused on the essences associated with being human above other essences in the world by establishing phenomenology as a way to describe the activities and preoccupations of being human in the world.

Being mired in contradictions, anti-humanism often selects various aspects of humanism with which to challenge or mobilize people into action (Braidotti, 2013). The attempt to decenter the human from the excessive dominance of the Western world as exercised through hegemonic rule still refers to the humanist tradition, especially the notions of freedom, individualism, autonomy and self-determination (Braidotti, 2013). The positive aspects of humanism informing emancipatory and progressive politics contain a dark side, that is, an
individualism breeds egotism and self-centeredness; self-determination can turn to arrogance and domination; and science is not free from its own dogmatic tendencies. The difficulties inherent in trying to overcome humanism as an intellectual tradition, a normative frame and an institutionalized practice, lie at the core of the deconstructive approach to the posthuman (Braidotti, 2013, p. 20).

The anti-humanist position is riddled with contradictions because it still engages in the dualisms between man and his environment, giving rise to various anti-humanisms that attempt to establish a world order based on divisions between different factions of humanity, machine and animal (Braidotti, 2013). Radical anti-humanist positions will extol the notion of freedom but at the expense of something else, usually a population that has been categorized as the “Other” (Braidotti, 2013).

Such radical anti-humanist positions are often short-lived and have devastating consequences for populations referred to as the “Other”. For instance, the rise of Fascism, Nazism, and Communism in Europe during and between the two world wars and the Cold War are anti-humanisms which banned schools of thought such as Marxism, psychoanalysis, the work of critical theorists associated with the Frankfurt school and the work of Nietzsche (Braidotti, 2013). Anti-humanism within the American context is apparent in the ironic switching of sides in its opposition to the Vietnam war in the United States in response to the rise of Communism (Burbules & Peters, 2004). American anti-humanism is mostly characterized by its resistance to racism, imperialism and the apolitical world of academia entrenched in the past and appears oblivious to social ills (Braidotti, 2013). Today, however, anti-humanism in the guise of neoliberalism is supported by populist movements supporting advanced capitalism, a homogeneity in
cultures and languages as supported through globalization, and policies which serve to further marginalize populations categorized as the “Other” (Braidotti, 2013).

In summary, postmodernism and its antecedent anti-humanisms dismissed the claim to the universal powers of reason, accompanied by the development of Western democracy, paving the way for poststructuralism which is an anti-humanist philosophical response to the pseudo-scientific propositions associated with structuralism. Poststructuralism turns to language to further decenter the human subject (Burbules & Peters, 2004; Foucault, 1988). Here the use of language and its still humanist discourses become the primary channel through which the anthropocentric foundations of the Western world are deconstructed (Burbules & Peters, 2004).

**Phase 2: Poststructuralism and Postcolonialism**

Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism refuted the structuralism proposed by theorists in the fields of philosophy, linguistics, history, anthropology, aesthetic theory, Marxism, studies of popular culture and literary criticism, that is, their claims that primarily linguistic structures that would account for developmental stages and political, social and cultural structures within the fields of study (Burbules & Peters, 2004). Poststructuralism began as a philosophical movement instigated by Nietzsche (1968) and Heidegger (1977) in response to structuralism proposed by Levi-Strauss (1968), Althusser (2005), Lacan (2006) and Barthes (1972). Poststructuralism is contained within the postmodernist movement but addresses the academic treatment of issues pertaining to structuralism while postmodernism can be described as a movement in response to the cultural, social
and political activities promoted by the modernist era (Burbules & Peters, 2004).

Foucault (1988) delinked individual human actions from universal theories by showing how human thought, actions and decisions are socially constructed through participation in discourses which serve to distribute nodes of power. Discourses, rather than theories, define human action, subjectivity and consequences throughout history (Foucault, 1988; Mills, 2004). Here, Foucault devises concepts such as biopower and governmentality to describe processes once governed by those in power (such as kings and queens) passed to governments concerned with the social, cultural and health of its citizens to rule through discourses used by human beings to guide and regulate each other’s behaviours and decisions (Foucault, 1988). The human person is produced by discourses promulgated by dominant social systems designed to control and manage whole groups of people (Foucault, 1988). The human according to Foucault (1988) is not free or autonomous but is constructed according to discourses that surround him or her. Discourses can be changed at any time; hence the human person does have agency but not according to the previous association of the rational faculty with freedom and autonomy as promoted by Enlightenment philosophers. In this way, discursive structures have the power to create new knowledge (Foucault, 1988).

Through the study of discourses, that is, the linguistic turn, Foucault and other poststructuralist philosophers, Lacan (2006), Derrida (1978; 1981), Lyotard (1984; 1988), and Deleuze (1983; 1995) position the human subject as embodied, engendered, and malleable according to discourses concerning normalization and individualization (Burbules & Peters, 2004). Poststructuralism had an extraordinary impact on the academy, spawning innovations in grammatology, deconstruction, genealogy,
semanalysis, resulting in several studies of the inner workings of human institutions such as factories, schools, government agencies, medical offices, universities, prisons, clinics, and the family (Burbules & Peters, 2004). Poststructuralism has also supported the work of feminist theorists such as Butler (1990; 1993), Kristeva (1982; 1984), Lather (1992; 2007). Critical race theory, feminist theory, black feminist theory, queer theory, disability theory, discourse analysis, postcolonial theory belong to the constructionist research paradigm supported by the work of poststructuralist researchers (Lather, 2007).

Some of the key ideas from poststructuralism are the deconstructed notions of universalism, essentialism, exceptionalism, and the human subject with view to establishing social constructionist theories. Within poststructuralism, most theorizations of the self since the Enlightenment are premised on the agreement that the self does not contain a unique essence (Mansfield, 2000). Rather, the subject is a product of social and cultural discourses (Foucault, 1988). The subject never emerges free from these discourses and is governed according to power/knowledges produced about the subject (Foucault, 1988). Foucault (1988) suggests that the self is not as free as they feel but may engage in multiple forms of resistance by changing discourses and engaging in actions contrary to expectations held by large institutions. Much of the work of poststructuralism challenges anthropocentrism and attempts to remove humans from their essentialist roles in the material world by decentering the agency of humans to direct their affairs (Burbules & Peters, 2004). Poststructuralism also questions the relationship between humans and forms of governmentality. Within poststructuralism, technology is not regarded as euphoric or apocalyptic (Herbrechter, 2013).
Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism is not an anti-humanist position but shares a similar position in relation to humanism because, for the most part, it relies on humanist categories to advance support for marginalized people suffering from the effects of colonialism. Postcolonialism concerns itself with the ongoing effects of colonization long after colonizers have withdrawn from occupied territories (Dussel, 2013; Fanon, 1963; Freire, 2000; McLaren, 2015; Mignolo, 2000; Pennycook, 1998; Said, 1979). Colonized or subjugated peoples continue to struggle with imposed colonial practices as evident in globalized trade relationships, (McLaren, 2015) replacement of cultural, social, linguistic, ethical and religious knowledges with those of dominant colonizers (Freire, 2000; Darder, 2002; Pennycook, 1998; Said, 1979; Spivak, 2013) and the accruing social, economic, political and cultural controls that continue to oppress, direct or control minoritized populations (Mignolo, 2000; Dussel, 2013). Increasing migration of minoritized populations around the world also affect postcolonial theorizing particularly in the teaching of English as an additional language (Canagarajah, 2013). Even populations of relocated people such as African Americans living in the United States struggle with the pervasive hold of colonization as promoted by southern plantation owners (hooks, 1984). In Canada, people of First Nations descent contend with sovereignty rights, land claims, violated treaty agreements, and the continued impoverishment through economic, health, education, and justice channels in Canadian governance (St. Denis & Schick, 2005).

Said (1979) introduced the notion of orientalism as a lens through which colonizers view their subjugated peoples as irrational, exotic, foreign, and possessor of
knowledges that could be exploited for further gain, primarily in the English and French academies. Pennycook (1998) explores the dominance of English as a world language and the subsequent repression of local languages and cultures. Mignolo (2000) explores the tensions between the local knowledges produced by those living in the borders and the knowledges imposed by globalization. Anzaldua (1987) highlights the intricacies of border crossing between Mexican, Spanish, Chicano and Latina cultures. McLaren (2015) traces the ongoing struggle between the colonized and the colonizers for economic, linguistic, and cultural resources that would enable populations categorized as “Other” to regain an equal footing with dominant cultures. Spivak (2013) continues to deconstruct theoretical positions developed by postcolonial theorists with a view to avoiding essentializing of cultural knowledges and languages during the process of achieving liberation from ongoing colonizing presences. She argues that adopting Western epistemes (chiefly borrowed by humanist theorists in support of modernism and even post-modernism) does not empower those who work toward liberation and explicates how adopting Western epistemes can further perpetuate oppression (Spivak, 2013). Dussel (2013) challenges the notion of the Eurocentric paradigm as the world paradigm through his analysis of how philosophical and ethical systems outside Europe and mostly within the Third World, contributed to the rise in Western hegemony and argues for the reinstatement of a non-Eurocentric paradigm to create futures that are free of Western hegemony.

In summary, postcolonial thinkers suggest the bypassing of the Western world and the limitations of Eurocentrism to rescue subjugated epistemologies. They reject the humanist and ethnocentric notion of the classical European as fully rational and living
according to universal laws and principles. Postcolonial thinkers aim to dismantle the
notion of the human as derived from the Western modernist and postmodernist traditions
by developing terminology that address the domination buttressed by ruling masculine,
white, rationalist, scientific categories. Postcolonialism fills the gaps posed by
poststructuralists in that their notion of unsterilized and fragmented subjectivities does
not allow for recognition of contexts specific to colonial subjects (Freire, 2000; Fanon,
1963). Here, Spivak (2005) urges that postcolonial thinkers must remain faithful to the
colonized subjects as subaltern and as locked into dual positions: that of being
unrecognized or reflecting an earlier subjectivity as oppressed throughout history
(Spivak, 2005; Mansfield, 2000).

Braidotti (2013), however, suggests that the legacy of postcolonial thinkers is
limited by their reliance on humanist categories within and outside the Western tradition.
For instance, in their critique of the increasing homogenization of cultures, identities and
languages, they still fashion concepts according to the fundamental questions surrounding
what it means to be human, thereby advancing anthropocentrism. Furthermore, some
postcolonial theorists, in using social constructivist approaches, do not deal with the
temporal and spatial shifts brought about by anthropocentric activity (Braidotti, 2013).
Generally, postcolonialism keeps anthropocentricism within its sights while striving to
question the suppositions of humanism concerning its role and place in the world
(Braidotti, 2013; Herbrechter, 2013). Anti-humanism inherent in postcolonialism
ironically draws from humanist principles associated with freedom, autonomy,
Phase 3: Crisis of Representation

Representationalism privileges the use of language to describe what exists as if there is a one to one correspondence between the description and the described object (Barad, 2007). Little or no account is made of the anthropocentric lens inherent in such descriptions (Barad, 2007). Representationalism is an Enlightenment episteme, originating with Kant’s belief that the human’s ability to perceive and describe what is before him/her confirms its existence (Kant, 1929; Mansfield, 2000). Conclusions of this nature has brought about a crisis of representation. Lather calls it “working the ruins”, suggesting that qualitative and quantitative data produces leakages, slippages, folds, creases, and interstices, often defying the desire for exactitude, precision and certainty (Lather, 2007). The crisis of representation has brought about the ontological turn to the body in the hope of correcting the lens of reflexivity and a renewed emphasis on qualitative data to approach more faithfully, what is real (Lather, 2007). Barad (2003) suggests that language in the post-anthropocene era is overrated in that human activity is invariably described according to the turns in language, semiotic systems and culture to the exclusion of matter. She suggests a “material turn” to displace the agency that emanates from the human preoccupation with language, discourses, identity and culture (Barad, 2003).

In response to the crisis of representation, the proliferation of new critical epistemologies promoting interdisciplinary studies, incorporating intersectionalities such as gender, queer, feminist, ethnicity, culture, class, race, disabilities, technology in the form of new media studies propose a dizzying array of human subjectivities to account for what may have been lost in representationalism (Braidotti, 2013; Herbrechter, 2013;
Mansfield, 2000; Barad, 2007). Therefore, many feminist theorists present these human subjectivities as unstable and complex (Ellsworth, 1992; Gore & Luke, 1992; hooks, 1984; Lather, 2007; Spivak, 2005; St. Pierre, 2013). The crisis of representation resulted in the movement away from defining humans according to structured and stable boundaries and toward highlighting the multiple and shifting identities with increasing recognition of the slippages that occur between identities (Lather, 2007).

Lather (1992) cautions that the creation of emancipatory spaces with a view to eradicating binaries should not be achieved using Enlightenment epistemes which favored the use of positivism, that is the use of reason to name, classify and liberate oppressed people. Rather, Lather (1992) emphasizes the need for a subjectivity that is non-dualistic, in which neither the idealized selves shaped by social, linguistic, cultural and political structures, nor the romanticized lone individual who forges his own blazing path are extolled as definitions of subjectivities. The subject is placed in multiple, shifting, and contradictory sites through which identity is forged through the effects of living within these interstices (Lather, 2007).

The crisis of representation has affected research paradigms, including interpretivism, constructivism, and the emancipatory (critical) which in turn, are yielding to post paradigms including poststructuralism, postcolonialism, posthumanism, queer studies, disability studies, critical race studies, feminist studies, even pushing past to a post-post as postulated by Lather (2007). In other words, the post paradigms have striven to dismantle the grand narratives associated with human achievement, teleology, aspirations, and superiority to a multitude of questions, perceptions, and whose efforts are characterized by their efforts to counter anti-humanism as well as humanism. In
summary, the crisis of representation has brought about anti-humanisms characterized as non-normative, post-foundational defined by the absence of a stable and structured human subject (Herbrechter, 2013).

**Transhumanism**

The return, away from the poststructuralist and postmodernist deconstruction of the human subject, to real bodies and real materiality engages several discourses, including those concerning technology (Haraway, 1991). Such discourses are essentially neo-materialist and the union of humans and robots are a dominant discourse reliant upon the mode of representation (Braidotti, 2013). In short, the crisis of representation has been deepened by the development of robotics, prosthetic technologies, artificial intelligences, neuroscience and biogenetics toward the creation of hybrids, that is, enhanced humans with cyborg characteristics (Haraway, 1991). The advance of transhumanism dovetails with social, cultural, political and economic interests such as advanced capitalism which often funds the research and development needed to enhance and or prolong human life (Herbrechter, 2013). Transhumanism entertains the possible evolution of the human species to higher order beings such as the cyborg who will employ artificial intelligence in additional to the wetware (the brain) of human beings (Herbrechter, 2013). Traditional boundaries between human and machines are becoming blurred and the increase in technologizing of life forces is a reworking of the question of what it means to be human (Braidotti, 2013; Haraway, 1991; Herbrechter, 2013). Responses to the prospect of humans evolving into transhumans have ranged from wild optimism to declaration of apocalyptic scenarios where robots rule the earth (Braidotti, 2013; Herbrechter, 2013). Herbrechter (2013) notes the emergence of a power struggle between different interests
concerning the development of the transhuman ranging from the economic, military, scientific, religious and or moral.

Braidotti (2013) notes that technological advances in science, health, medicine, and education have shifted the politics of representation, that is, power differentials between gender, race and class to technologically mediated points of reference which is neither organic/inorganic, male/female, or especially white. Advanced capitalism is a post-gender system capable of accommodating a high degree of androgyny and a significant blurring of the categorical divide between the sexes. It is also a post-racial system that no longer classifies people and their cultures on grounds of pigmentation... but remains nonetheless profoundly racist (Braidotti, 2013, p. 98).

Questions concerning the transhuman continue to be framed in anthropomorphic terms and invites comparisons between humans and transhumans as in cyborgs or enhanced human beings (Herbrechter, 2013). Transhumanism remains the provenance of advanced capitalism and neoliberal forces which promulgate the continuation of anthropomorphism. Haraway (1991) in her Cyborg Manifesto, lists the new dualisms that have supplanted the old dualisms characteristic of the postmodernist era to demonstrate the fundamental anti-humanist stance inherent in transhumanism, calling them the “informatics of domination” (Haraway, 1991, p. 162).

Braidotti (2013) counters the new dualisms proposed by transhumanism by stating that “posthumanism is the historical moment that marks the end of the opposition between humanism and anti-humanism and traces a different discursive framework, looking more affirmatively towards new alternatives” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 37). Although I have focused on what posthumanist is not, through the review of humanist and
antihumanist movements, I now turn to explicate a posthumanist frame developed by Braidotti, one that sweeps up the best developments from humanism, modernism, post modernism, post structuralism, postcolonialism, anti-humanism and transhumanism and which advances hope for the future.

**Posthumanism**

Because anti-humanism continued to engage directly with humanist suppositions and epistemes, current forms of posthumanism (Barad, 2007; Barrett, 2013; Bennet, 2010; Braidotti, 2013; Franklin, Lury, & Steacey, 2000; Grosz, 2008; Hayles, 1999) position themselves as a completely non-anthropocentric frame beginning with the work of Haraway (1991). While anti-humanism actively works to remove the humans from their essentialist moorings, posthumanism works from the premise that humans are already removed from their essentialist position in the world (Herbrechter, 2013). More recent efforts of posthumanism include the maneuvering of insights gleaned from postmodern, poststructuralist and postcolonial thinking to decenter and recenter the human in equal juxtaposition with animal, machine and living and non-living matter (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Haraway, 1991).

Posthumanism, in stepping beyond the confines of humanist and anti-humanist narratives, must formulate and reformulate its position in response to the ever-evolving humanist and anti-humanist positions taken up by thinkers in each century including our own. In short, posthumanism abandons anthropocentrism altogether. To do this, posthumanism is a process always in dialogue with various forms of humanism and anti-humanism to expose anthropocentric roots and at the same time, absorbing the best of humanist and antihumanist thought into its posthumanist frame. Therefore, the common
reference for thinking about the future of this planet, is relationships with species and citizenry, in fact, all humans (Haraway, 1991; Herbrechter, 2013). Posthumanism, therefore, is the invitation to consider the “discourses and representations of the non-human, the in-human, the anti-human, the inhumane and the posthuman [which] proliferate and overlap in our globalized, technologically mediated societies” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 1). Posthumanism is not an outgrowth of humanism, postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism; rather, posthumanism is characterized as a process in response to shifting questions raised by postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism along with developments in science, technology, and capitalism with view to unseating humanity at the apex of the inhabited world.

In attending to the dazzling achievements in science, technology, and advanced capitalism, and with the help of selected postmodernist, poststructuralist and postcolonialist writers, posthumanism begins to address the impending destruction of our planet (Braidotti, 2013; Ellsworth & Kruze, 2013). For this reason, posthumanism signifies a complete break from the European paradigm, particularly with its notions of universalism and rational subjectivity (Braidotti, 2013; Herbrechter, 2013; Snaza, 2015). Posthumanism, in drawing from the contributions of anti-humanisms inherent in postmodern, poststructuralist and postcolonial, and feminist thinkers, is now in the position to address the problems, questions, and dilemmas created by centuries of modernism which continues today under the forms of neo-liberalism and advanced capitalism (McLaren, 2015). Critical posthumanist thought is founded upon its overarching claim that anthropocentrism is already removed (Braidotti, 2013; Herbrechter, 2013). Therefore, the foundation of posthumanism as a world view is not
anthropocentric but zoecentric which promotes the consideration of the non-human (Braidotti, 2013). The alternative to anthropocentrism is a zoecentric world which allows for the materialist, secular, grounded and unsentimental response to the opportunistic trans-species commodification of Life that is the logic of advanced capitalism. It is also an affirmative reaction of social and cultural theory to the great advances made by the other culture, that of the sciences (Braidotti, 2013, p. 60).

Furthermore, the absence of anthropocentrism places the human subject within a world paradigm untrammeled by Western hegemony (Dussel, 2013; Ellsworth & Kruze, 2013). Placement within a world paradigm (as opposed to a Eurocentric paradigm) calls for a different ethics, one that aims to liberate many people and species excluded by globalization governed by Western hegemony (Dussel, 2013; Gramsci, 1971). Braidotti (2013) argues that humanism is restricted by narrow definitions of what it means to be human, considering the existing differences in locations, particularly between the centers and the margins (Mignolo, 2000). Posthumanism calls for an enlargement in thinking about life in companionship with other species (Haraway, 2008). Posthumanist ethics consider the critical and material links between scientific truths (Braidotti, 2013).

Posthumanist interdisciplinarity develops from consideration of discourses and the webbed nodes of power (Braidotti, 2013). Posthumanist subjectivity is enlarged by feminist post-structuralists, post-colonial theorists, sensory politics and the work of Deleuze and Guattari toward in a zoecentric world (Braidotti, 2013).

Haraway’s (1991) essay, “A Cyborg Manifesto” is a foundational text for posthumanist theorizing (Snaza & Weaver, 2015). Haraway (1991) presents the cyborg as
a cybernetic organism, that is, a hybrid of machine and organism which brought about three boundary breakdowns in the history of science and technology: 1) the reduction of the boundary between animals and humans to a “faint trace” according to the findings made through biology and evolutionary theory (Haraway, 1991, p. 152); 2) the suggestion that the machine and human link is haunted in that the divisions between human and machines is entirely ambiguous in the advent of self-developing, artificially intelligent, and externally designed machines and; 3) the imprecise boundary between matter and non-matter, often exemplified through the ubiquity of the electronic chip embedded in most human operations. Haraway speaks of her cyborg myth as “about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work” (Haraway, 1991, p. 154). She advocates for a cyborg world that might be “about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinships of animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints” (Haraway, 1991, p. 154). Haraway’s proposition calls for a posthumanist ethics in which all life forms are related and grounded in each other’s realities (Braidotti, 2013; Coole & Frost, 2010).

Posthumanist Ethics

Feminist thinkers have contributed to posthumanist ethics by introducing a new materialism that is embodied and embedded within multiple, shifting locations (Coole & Frost, 2010; Lather, 1992; Barrett & Bolt, 2013; Haraway, 1991; Bennet, 2010). Feminist thinkers, in building upon the work of post-structuralism, developed more astute theories and tools for explaining and uncovering the knowledges, movements and outcomes associated with power (Braidotti, 2013). In arguing that the abstract ideal of humans is
founded upon classical notions of humanity, that is the white, European male, feminist critiques have introduced the notion of the interrelationships between species (Haraway, 1991). Through feminism, the posthuman human subject is now presented as a “complex and relational subject framed by embodiment, sexuality, affectivity, empathy and desire as core qualities” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 26). Therefore, a posthuman ethics is guided according to the multiple locations of power, now in complex, scattered and productive forms (Foucault, 1988). The presence of non-unified identities and multiple allegiances serves to displace anthropocentrism and pave the way for considerations of interfaces between humans and non-human entities, that is, assemblages of humans and machines (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Here, relationality is multifaceted through the ethical consideration of biogenetic codes and digital prostheses inserted in the human body (Braidotti, 2013; Haraway, 1991). The ethical relationship between humans and living matter such as animals, plants, microorganisms, DNA is also emphasized within posthumanism (Braidotti, 2013; Ellsworth & Kruze, 2013).

Furthermore, consideration of the webbed nodes of power within the critical posthuman tradition also includes the inhuman manifested by culturally invented monstrosities, including the current fascination with vampires, zombies, and robots who subvert human existence for their own purposes. Haraway (1991) suggests that the cyborg myths are about liminal transformations. The posthuman subject is the ‘other’ to the inhuman, abject realities which embodies fears, desires, and speculations concerning the inbetween states between the human and nonhuman (Braidotti, 2013; Herbrechter, 2013). Here, postcolonial studies have contributed much to the understanding of the liminal states associated with being ambivalent colonial subjects (Anzaldua, 1987;
The posthuman subject is a collection of liminal selves who must engage with notions of humanisms and anti-humanism and their manifestation in the world (Gough & Gough, 2016). Therefore, a posthumanist ethics would consider the existence of the abject selves, that is, culturally invented monstrosities, and liminal selves.

**Posthumanist Onto-Epistemology**

Barad (2007) proposes a posthumanist onto-epistemology, which counters epistemological and ontological suppositions about the relationship between humans and their animal, plant and mineral counterparts which is described as binarized, hierarchical and dominated by Western hegemony. Instead, intra-actions with sound, bodies, lines of sight, bodily limitations, surfaces (hard or soft), building construction, matter (living and non-living) in addition to the languages, semiotic resources, identities and communities are of equal importance. Hence the importance of these entities is rearranged in that they all receive equal attention and are of equal value when considering intra-actions between them (Barad, 2007).

Posthumanist onto-epistemology proposes that matter, humans, animals, technology are always in entanglement, negotiating with other another in a rhizomatic fashion (Barad, 2007; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Rather than approaching living and non-living as contained in binarized thinking organized in hierarchical categories which often lends to coarse-grained analysis where positions, policies, decisions, and perceptions are drawn in broad scope and a “one size fits all approach” is developed, posthumanism directs attention to rhizomatic entanglement. Intra-acting within this entanglement assumes that boundaries between entities are blurred and indefinite (Barad,
Thus, while intra-action suggests the negotiations between entities that are finite and bounded, it also proposes an open-ended process in which every interaction is configured and reconfigured (Barad, 2007; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Within this entanglement, one is not able to sharply differentiate between what is created or renewed, what has begun or is returned, or what is continuing and what has stopped, what is here or not here, and finally, what is the past and future (Barad, 2007).

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) propose an alternative to the arboretum classification schemes of ontology and epistemology by emphasizing that much is unseen, unknown and unobserved. Leaves, branches, fruit, seeds are immediately observable and represented while roots, particularly those of rhizomatic plants are entangled, without beginning or end, and whose multiple nodes are difficult to trace. A feature of the rhizome is its open-endedness (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Multiple portals of entry and exits suggest that the rhizomatic map is about performativity as opposed to the tracing of human activity according to cultural and social constructions (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

**Posthuman Performativity**

Within the humanist, anti-humanist and transhumanist paradigms, the anthropocene determines what is knowable. Barad (2007) turns representationalism on its head by proposing that future research engage in posthuman performativity to understand the intra-actions between humans, animals, and matter, living and non-living. Performativity is diffractively read rather than reflectively represented as a series of correspondences between description and their items (Barad, 2007; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). For instance, insights from sciences including sound studies, neurolinguistics,
neurobiology, cognition, social sciences including deaf geography, deaf epistemologies, sensory politics, language development, classroom pedagogies, and linguistics form a grate through which a material-discursive phenomenon is diffracted and studied. This would involve lifting out a material-discursive phenomenon from an entanglement to be diffractively studied (Barad, 2007; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). In the case of a deaf person’s intra-actions with sound, vision, objects, bodies and matter and within this entanglement, the person is not deaf or hearing, nor subject or object. Determinate boundaries defining who is the deaf person have yet to be specified until revealed through the diffractive study of intra-actions emanating from material discursive phenomena lifted out from the entanglement (Barad, 2007). Even the instrument used to make the “cut” from the entanglement is part of the entanglement and is to be studied as part of the material discursive phenomenon (Barad, 2007). Here, posthuman performativity considers every action including the form, use and effect of the apparatus as used in scientific experiments (Barad, 2007).

Within diffractive analysis, emphasis is on the “crucial intra-actions among these forces that fly in the face of any specific set of disciplinary concerns” (Barad, 2003, p. 810). Diffractive analysis entails the reading of insights gleaned from disciplines such as the sciences and social sciences through each other in the same way that the wave patterns observed by Neils Bohr moved in and through each other, causing different readings of intra-actions between quantum particles (Barad, 2007). These intra-actions contribute to the understanding of agential realism which is an account of all intra-actions between all bodies (human and non-human) and the material discursive practices in which they are engaged (Barad, 2003; Ellsworth & Kruze, 2013).
Posthuman performativity assumes that subject and object do not pre-exist prior to examination (Barad, 2007). For instance, the deaf person is not a separate entity but entangled in a web of relationships. The deaf person in crossing borders between deaf and hearing worlds, negotiating matter as in animal, machine and earth, semiotic resources, languages, identities and cultures is “marked” in ways not uncovered by representationalism. Diffractive analysis, then, sidesteps binarizing discourses while engaging in multiple entanglements containing diverse intra-actions with sound, matter, languages, identities and communities.

**Deaf Posthuman Performativity**

There are two opposing ontological assumptions concerning the deaf person: 1) the deaf person is disabled and needs a cure to take their place in the hearing world and 2) the deaf person is not disabled but is a member of a minoritized language and a cultural group and possesses a first language and an identity with which to navigate hearing and deaf worlds. Both positions are presented as stark choices to parents of deaf children (Mauldin, 2016). Each position on the binary poses a threat to the other. Many people in the deaf community view the latest advances in biogenetic engineering and cochlear implantation as a threat to its continued existence (Emery, 2015; Ladd, 2003; Blankmeyer Burke, 2017). Many activists in the deaf community have been focusing on their rights to use sign language, the preservation and revitalization of deaf culture, and critiquing the medical script on deafness (Mauldin, 2016; Kusters, De Meulder, & O'Brien, 2017). The auditory industrial complex associated with the habilitation of deaf persons including the provision of cochlear implant surgery, auditory training, auditory verbal therapy and placements in inclusive education learning environments considers the concerns of the
deaf community as impeding progress in creating opportunities for the deaf child to become fully integrated into the hearing world (Lee, 2016). Cochlear implantation strives to eliminate the negative effects of disability and serves as a form of enhancement to the human (Lee, 2016).

The biomedical enhancement of a human part that is flawed (Lee, 2016) provokes consideration of whether there is a moral imperative to effect a cure of the disease or broken part of the body. The choice not to undergo cochlear implantation may be construed as the refusal to comply with biomedical treatment. Biomedical enhancement of the body falls under the transhumanist paradigm which suggest that humans can, with the assistance of biomedical technology become enhanced and possess superior powers than previously held (Herbrechter, 2013).

Discourses concerning hearing loss have shifted from deafness emanating from a broken or damaged body part to the brain as the site of optimal language development (Mauldin, 2016). The interface with the cochlear implant technology and the brain promote discourses concerning the coupling of the body and technology as suggested in the transhumanist paradigm (Braidotti, 2013; Haraway, 1991; Herbrechter, 2013). Mauldin (2016) suggests that these discourses concerning cochlear implantation are ideologically motivated through their focusing on the capacity to shape neuronal structures and neural pathways thereby shaping the deaf brain into that of a hearing brain capable of learning spoken language. The argument that sign language would wire the brain to function against spoken languages remains uncorroborated as there is no robust body of evidence suggesting that sign language interferes with the development of oral language (Knoors & Marschark, 2012).
Medical professionals working within the transhumanist paradigm, may view many parents, who chose not to have their deaf child undergo cochlear implantation, as violating the obligation to treat their child with biomedical interventions including gene therapy (Blankmeyer Burke, 2017). Many hearing and deaf parents of deaf children are judged as already failing parents if they do not comply with the therapeutic labours associated with the development of spoken language after cochlear implant surgery (Mauldin, 2016; Valente, 2011). Moreover, those parents may be judged as not good parents of deaf children if they refuse medicalized treatments for their deaf child (Lee, 2016). While many deaf parents of deaf children refuse cochlear implants for their deaf child on the basis that they can provide full access to a sign language and establish a neuro-cognitive foundation upon which spoken language can be later built (Hall, Levin, & Anderson, 2017; Humphries, et al., 2012; 2016; Mauldin, 2016; Pettito & Jasinska, 2014), proponents of cochlear implantation argue that not providing cochlear implants to deaf children impedes their ability to develop spoken language (Mauldin, 2016). Mauldin (2016) notes that most successes associated with cochlear implantation come from white upper middle-class families who have financial, cultural and social capital with which to engage in the long and arduous therapeutic processes associated with cochlear implantation and follow-up activity.

Within the posthuman paradigm, these binarized ontological assumptions concerning the deaf person represent both sides of a coin, that is, anthropocentricism. While the auditory industrial complex driven by advanced capitalism promotes transhumanism in the form of enhanced hearing such as biogenetic engineering and cochlear implants, the deaf community employs humanist discourses by extolling the
diversity, ingenuity, and deaf gain obtained using American Sign Language and participation in the deaf community (Bauman & Murray, 2014). I suggest that these humanist and transhumanist positions share similar assumptions and beliefs: 1) that access to language (English and ASL) is always consistent and guaranteed in all locations and at all times; 2) that language (English and ASL) is a bounded system and therefore must be strictly divided from each other or be considered in terms of additive and subtractive bilingualism (Canagarajah, 2013; Garcia, 2009); 3) that matter (living and non-living) has no role in language production; 4) that identity (deaf, hard of hearing and hearing) is socially constructed and finally; 4) that there exists a dominant community to which all must belong in order to accrue social, cultural and economic capital.

Posthumanist onto-epistemology may provide tools to address these assumptions by first removing their anthropocentric foundations. To deconstruct the assumptions upon which the binaries are built and maintained, alternative onto-epistemologies associated with being deaf can eliminate the binarizing that persists today to the detriment of deaf persons.

The move toward practices, actions and doings rather than developing descriptions of phenomena as static or unchanging is characteristic of posthumanist performativity. In the following, I present a thought experiment in the form of an imaginary conversation where I am attempting to counsel a grief-stricken parent of a newly diagnosed deaf child:

Usually, there are two ways to receive the news that your child has a profound hearing loss. First, you can see it as a loss of hearing and the opportunity to be immersed entirely within the hearing world or as a cultural opportunity for your child to have two
languages (English and ASL) and two long roads open up before you, demanding that you invest enormous sums of energy, time and money into your child so that she can become sufficiently “hearing” or “Deaf enough” to take his/her place in the world that is governed by primarily hearing people and/or to belong to a community of people who have successfully coped by using sign language and belonging to a sociolinguistic and cultural community. Or there is another way. What if the child you hold in your arms is not hearing or deaf? What if you were to view this child in terms of what he can do, what his body can do within the increasing complications of his life as he grows and develops? What if you think about what his body can do, what other bodies including material, living and non-living, can do in relation to each other? (Braidotti, 2013). Will you let what he can do within his entangled existence guide your own entangled decisions? How can you and your child in entanglement with matter, human and nonhuman, be open to the intra-actions presented by matter that can reorganize itself? (Barad, 2007). Unless someone or something attempts to define the limits or boundaries of who you and your child are, essentially, you are not individual entities endeavoring to secure a place in the world. Rather, you and your child are already in the world as entangled material discursive phenomena, as relationships in process, already becoming, already in relationship with matter, living and non-living. There is no hearing or deaf world to aspire to.

Barad’s work (2007) on agential realism and intra-action may contribute to a renewed understanding of material-discursive practices concerning use of technology (cochlear implants and hearing technologies), sign language, sound, vision, bodies, objects and materiality, both living and non-living which is often guessed at and
presumed upon by personnel (ear, nose and throat specialists, surgeons, audiologists, speech and language pathologists, and teachers of the deaf) working within the auditory industrial complex (Eberwein, 2007). Posthumanist performativity considers the deaf person as always moving through entanglements and as being produced by and producing intra-actions. This calls for the consideration of the rhizome of deaf children (Valente & Boldt, 2015) to further the conceptualization of deaf posthumanist performativity.

**Conclusions**

Within the rhizome of the deaf child, there are many ways to be deaf which affords a kaleidoscopic view of the multiple, shifting material, physical, emotional, technological and political landscapes within entanglement (Brueggeman, 2009). Garoian (2013) expands upon movements within the rhizome, defining the sudden switch from being within a community to finding oneself on the edge of a community as being in an anomalous position. Such movements are not outcomes of individual decisions or differences but are the result of unpredictable decisions or actions of a group (Garoian, 2013). The anomalous position allows for a non-binarized perspective on what it means to be deaf since “the categories of “hearing” and “deaf” hide the tremendous range of differences and potentialities that exist among those who are classified under each” (Valente & Boldt, 2015, p. 568). Furthermore, the rhizomatic space focuses on what a deaf person can do, rather than upon the deficiencies associated with hearing loss as established by the hearing world (Valente & Boldt, 2015). A rhizomatic view of the deaf child allows for political and creative agency toward becoming animal, machine, earth (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) and in Garoian’s view, becoming community (Garoian, 2013). In this way, new potential arises for learning and agency within the entanglements
or rhizomes through which the deaf person may move (Valente & Boldt, 2015). Thus onto-epistemology emphasizing the performativity of the deaf posthuman subject may allow for new methodologies and affects concerning the education of a deaf child.
SECTION 3: THE CYBERNETIC TRIANGLE

By now, I had written a published article (Weber, 2015b) outlining my efforts to renegotiate my own identity as a deaf teacher in my early years in the resource program (Phase 1). In that article, I focused on the difficulties I was having in working with three of the four educational interpreters assigned to work with me in the resource program. These three interpreters would not respond to my requests to use ASL with the students who required it, to support my teaching classes to selected deaf students within the classroom, and to engage in extracurricular opportunities for deaf students held during lunch hour at the school. These educational interpreters regularly interrupted my teaching to tell me that I was teaching too much or too little, I was confusing the students, or I was introducing too much change. I had been directed by the division office to bring about change because of their perception that the program did not fully serve the deaf students, who at that time, were experiencing difficulties in being placed in solely inclusive education environments. I found the daily drama consisting of tensions, terse statements, outright refusals, instructing students behind my back not to use ASL signs, huddling in corners with glances placed my way, exhausting and discouraging. Despite my consultations with and encouragement from school administration, my teaching colleagues and division supervisors, there was little I was able to do to dissolve the tension between myself and the interpreters. There seemed to be an unspoken standard to which I was held, and I could not understand what this standard was until I read about audism which is defined as the comparison of the deaf person to hearing people according to language usage, behaviors and cultural values (Eckert & Rowley, 2013; Humphries, 1977). We struggled in this fashion until five years later, the interpreters...
either retired or moved to other positions in the school system, leaving behind one interpreter who had stalwartly defended me and my actions.

This experience prompted me to write an article during my first year of doctoral studies using postcolonial constructs, particularly the ambivalent colonial subject and the use of mimicry to survive a very difficult and protracted toxic environment (Bhabha, 1984). Using arts-based autoethnography (Barrett & Bolt, 2007; Ellis, 2004; Garoian, 2013; Leavy, 2015), I wanted to get beyond the overt audism that I felt had been leveled against me (Humphries, 1977) and uncover ways in which I had contributed to this conflict, including my own inability to perceive things from their point of view (Weber, 2015). The article included four conclusions:

1) language policies can have a profound impact on the lives of deaf individuals and those who work with them; 2) subaltern knowledges concerning the strengths and richness of ASL and deaf culture remain suppressed; 3) the conflicts between educational administrators, deaf teachers and parents remain for the most part incomprehensible until placed against colonial discourses concerning deaf people and the 4) the contents of dialogue between myself, my colleagues and educational administrators not only needs to change but the terms [such as audism, audiocentric privilege, language planning, anti-oppressive training] need to be introduced into the conversation (Weber, 2015b, p. 109).

After the publication of the article, I felt that it was limited by the postcolonial theories to which I had referred during its preparation (Bhabha, 1984; Freire, 2000; Mignolo, 2000; Pennycook, 1998; Said, 1979). Somehow, I remained as the oppressed deaf teacher
charging the educational interpreters, colleagues and school administrator with audist and oppressive practices. While not wanting to deny the veracity of these claims, I wanted a better description of what had really happened. I began to read the work of deaf scholars (Friedner, 2010; 2014; 2016; Friedner & Kusters, 2015; Kusters, De Meulder, & O'Brien, 2017; Kusters, 2009, 2012; Moriarty Harrelson, 2017; O'Brien, 2017). I came to consider how deaf people in Saskatchewan in living far away from large and vibrant deaf communities, might have other “affiliations, identities, and sites of belonging that are less than visible” (Friedner, 2017, p. 137). Instead of relying on static epistemologies generated by the American deaf community and the use of terms such as “Deaf culture”, “Deaf identity”, “Deaf community” and “Deafhood” with which we deaf scholars are attuned to looking for specific things belonging to those categories, I began to entertain the multiple ways in which deaf people negotiate spaces rather than subscribing to identity markers established by the North American deaf community (Friedner, 2017). Deaf scholarship should be about what deaf people do and how deaf people imagine and produce their futures (O'Brien, 2017). Deaf studies and the deaf community have long been in the position of having to defend the raison d’etre for sign language and deaf culture to counter hearing hegemonic practices concerning deaf education (O'Brien, 2017).

I began to consider how I, a deaf teacher, moved throughout my day, negotiating with material, cultural, social, and linguistic resources, students, parents, administrators and deaf adults. In my increasing engagement with posthumanism, I had to move away from binaries often constructed by oppressed people, particularly terms such as the deaf as oppressed and the hearing people as oppressors (O'Brien, 2017). This was
extraordinarily difficult considering how I continued to witness the devastating effects of limited access to language within current models of educational service. Containing my anger was and continues to be an extraordinary challenge. Today, still out of anger, I asked in my blog: “So how does the thinking in deaf education get to be so old, so stinking, so rancid while the deaf student who isn’t going to be oral flounders beneath our noses?” (Weber, 2017). I remember vividly, an ASL instructor telling us to remove anger first before proceeding to do any advocacy work within the deaf community. Her challenge remains as fresh as it did nearly 25 years ago.

While the focus of many researchers has been on prevention, strategies, and standards of excellence, significant numbers of students still came into my classroom, listless, passive, functionally and academically semi-literate accompanied by behavioral and mental health concerns. In response to the wide variability in outcomes due to cochlear implantation, Humphries et al (2012) argue for harm reduction by recommending that ASL be introduced as an intervention alongside cochlear implantation and auditory rehabilitation. Doubtless, the situation is urgent, but the waves of identity politics initiated by deaf activists particularly in the northern hemisphere was and continues to be, for the most part, ineffectual in stemming the tide of language-deprived adolescents. Shifting the research paradigm seemed in order, a change in direction from researching ways to fix or cure deafness to challenging Western hegemony that continues to misrepresent what deaf people do with their lives (Kusters, De Meulder, & O'Brien, 2017).

Moreover, the crisis of representation contributed to the misguided notions concerning how deaf people learn and live. Researchers used the lens of representation to
describe what they thought was happening to deaf people concerning language
acquisition, deaf education, and the deaf experience. By now, I was keenly aware of the
crisis of representation and could see its effect on my work with deaf students. I began to
consider how researchers in the deaf education field could address the crisis of
representation announced by the academy by seeking out post-post research paradigms
since post-structuralism failed to account for slippages, erasures and enfoldments that
were appearing everywhere in qualitative data (Lather, 2007). In the pursuit of data inside
slippages, erasures and enfoldments, I had to put aside the autoethnographic triumphalist
account of the success of culturally relevant arts-based interventions I had initiated in my
own classroom. I now wanted to assess the usefulness of posthumanist theories in
studying what had really happened between me and the educational interpreters. In doing
so, I wanted to address the concerns of deaf scholars and my own practices concerning
language-deprived deaf adolescents.

In my fumbling toward posthumanism, I somehow latched onto the cybernetic
triangle of animal, earth and machine (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). I had finished a second
reading of A Hundred Years of Solitude (Garcia Marquez, 1971) and explored the
possibility of doing border writing concerning deaf and hearing border crossings (Hicks,
1991). The relationships between animal, machine and earth and the continuous
movement between territorialization and deterritorialization in A Hundred Years of
Solitude, led me to wonder if posthumanism afforded an entirely different lens, a new
way of seeing things. Maybe I was seeing things incorrectly in my attempt to bring
together hearing-deaf binary and the creativity-social justice binary. The magical realism
in A Hundred Years of Solitude led me to consider the possibility of adopting a whole
new lens, one that invited me to consider my own connections with animal, earth and machine. Perhaps there was a different way to bring together my passions for creativity and social justice and resolve the deaf-hearing binary.

Moreover, after reading Jackson & Mazzei’s *Thinking with Theory in Qualitative Research* (2012), I became curious about the difference between poststructural, postcolonial and posthuman readings of the same data. How would data appear through the lens of posthumanism theory? In the following chapter I present a reinterpretation of arts-based data I had used in a previous paper using a postcolonial lens (Weber, 2015). This way, I combine my initial reading and thinking about the cybernetic triangle to explore arts-based data situated in a posthumanist framework. At the time of writing this dissertation, both papers have been published (Weber, 2015; 2017). The following chapter is a version of the published article in the Synnyt/Origins Journal (Weber, 2017).
CHAPTER 3: REINTERPRETING ARTS-BASED DATA

Introduction

How one interprets data in arts-based autoethnography may change depending on the lens through which the researcher views the data. After using classic postcolonial theories (Fanon, 1963; Pennycook, 1998; Said, 1979) to interpret the art images in a previous study (Weber, 2015), I reinterpreted the same images according to posthumanist theory, namely the work of Barad (2007) and Braidotti (2013) in a study, which was about a challenging experience of teaching deaf and hard of hearing adolescents with hearing sign-language interpreters in a tutorial setting. Initially, I examined arts-based data through a postcolonial lens (Weber, 2015). I portrayed myself as a border crosser between deaf and hearing worlds, having to negotiate identities, languages and communities. After reading recent critiques of postcolonial theory (Braidotti, 2013; Spivak, 2013), I realized that my thinking was still dominated by multiple binaries, such as hearing versus deaf, oral English versus sign language, and American Sign Language (ASL) versus signed English.

This chapter will refer to the previous study (Weber, 2015) to compare the impact of postcolonial and posthuman theorizing using the same arts-based data. In that previous study, I used artwork in addition to personal journals as data to tell a more nuanced and compassionate version of an unresolved conflict that occurred between me and my interpreting staff. In that 2015 arts-based autoethnography, I examined how I negotiated my professional and personal identities as a culturally deaf teacher in an inclusive educational environment in light of postcolonial theory (Weber, 2015). Binarized
thinking was demonstrated mostly in the first study’s findings: 1) the need for compassion for the interpreters who promoted one pedagogical choice concerning identity, language, and culture contrary to my own pedagogical beliefs; 2) the articulation of how all of us have been oppressed by the demands of the hearing world; 3) the rejection that I and the deaf students be “hearing” at all costs. Binaries were strewn everywhere. As a result of examining posthumanist theory (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013), which provides the possibility for different and even more nuanced interpretations, I now believe that the continued presence of binaries in the previous study contributes to the stalled progress in the improvement of deaf-education services in Saskatchewan for 27 years (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016).

I had created three pieces of art work during this troubling time (2003-2007) and an additional three pieces (2007-2015) to better understand my own feelings about the conflict I was having with three educational interpreters; two of whom were mothers of deaf adolescents who had successfully completed high school and had gone on to complete post-secondary education. The mothers attributed their deaf children’s success to the use of signed English (which is a sign system that attempts to replicate the structure of spoken English) and to their participation solely in the hearing world to the exclusion of involvement in the local deaf community. The two mother interpreters actively resisted my attempts to introduce ASL and deaf culture into the program. They interrupted my lessons to inform me that I was incorrect in my pedagogy and language usage, warned students not to adopt ASL signs, and made private complaints to the administration about my performance. Despite support from the administration, my conflict with the interpreters was never resolved, and we endured working together in this toxic
environment until the mother interpreters moved to other positions within the school division or retired.

After publishing the 2015 study, I began to think about border crossing between deaf and hearing worlds and realized that the conventional descriptions of border crossing as in crossing from one territory to another (Mignolo, 2000) didn’t apply to my own deaf experience. For instance, I crossed borders by merely switching between different settings on my hearing aid while remaining in the same physical location. I also crossed borders by adopting ASL with certain students and using a pidgin signed English along with my voice with hard of hearing students (though not all students were addressed in the same manner at the same time) who were all situated in the same space. I crossed borders when I spoke only without using sign language with parents, hearing administrators and teaching colleagues who came into my classroom. Turning my back to a group of students was another border crossing. In my border crossing, I was continually constructing and dismantling spaces with quarter turns, removal of obstruction of sightlines, standing in front of certain objects and avoiding other objects such as windows, switching hearing aid settings, sign language varieties, and selective use of voice. I was border crossing through my body, in and out into the material space which I occupied.

Brueggeman (2009) describes this border crossing as ‘inbetweenity”, a subjectivity commonly experienced by among deaf people who speak and sign (Bechter, 2008; Brueggeman, 2009). Moreover, I realized that my border crossing was materially, politiciy, culturally and socially motivated. For instance, I sought to protect myself from scrutiny by turning my back, so my voice or signing would not be comprehended. I
spoke in voice only to hearing people who did not sign out of deference to their needs for communication. I used ASL with students who did not benefit from oral English or Signed English. I used ASL signs in English word order to provide visual support for hard of hearing or oral deaf who benefited from visual support in case they missed a word. I removed items from sightlines such as chairs, flowers, heaps of books and clutter to reduce visual noise. I was living in multiple worlds which often changed in a matter of seconds. I then realized that the postcolonial lens I had used in the previous study was inadequate to understanding the conflict between the three (mostly the two mother interpreters) interpreters and me. Perhaps I was not border crossing in the binarized ways to which I was accustomed; rather, posthumanist theory allowed me to reconceptualize border crossing, not only between humans of diverse ability, but also between humans, animals, and non-living beings (including the earth and machines).

Perhaps a more nuanced conceptualization of border crossing could contribute to a better understanding of this difficult stage concerning the interpreters and me. To this end, I began to conceptualize an ontology: As a teacher, I am a border crosser between the deaf and hearing worlds, negotiating identities, language, and communities. From this ontology, I could see how my cooperation and engagement with matter as agentic, positions me to sidestep binarizing discourses while engaging in multiple worlds containing diverse intra-actions with sound, matter, languages, identities, and communities. I considered a posthumanist framework that emphasizes the intra-actions of material realities with social, cultural, and political entities (Barad, 2007) to reinterpret this conflict with two educational mother-interpreters.

The artworks displayed in this study were created in the school year 2003-2004
and in 2014 in preparation for this study. I made the first three images in my home in response to the difficulties I was experiencing with the mother-interpreters. I felt exhausted, depressed and anxious upon arriving home from what I felt to be a toxic environment in the classroom where I taught. I felt that I had walked into a war zone and was immediately shunted into the enemy camp. During a hiatus in my advocacy work with deaf leaders to address deaf education issues (precipitated by the closure of the school for the deaf in 1991), I focused on raising my two daughters. I discovered, after 12 years since the closure of the school for the deaf in 1991, the interpreter mothers had vivid memories of my actions in those days and placed themselves in opposition to me. (I had a vague recollection of meeting one of them). Their memory had a long reach, it seemed, despite my inactivity as an advocate over the past 12 years. Their vehement opposition to my teaching deaf students had me feeling disoriented and confused. I also resented how I was unable to show or express how I had changed or even the new insights I had gleaned from my period of inactivity. To counter the feelings of inadequacy, I wanted to excavate my thoughts and feelings about what was going on in the classroom. I felt that artmaking would reveal a path I could take to address the seemingly hopeless conflict I was placed in.

**Onto-Epistemology**

Barad (2007) proposes a posthumanist onto-epistemology that counters epistemological and ontological suppositions about the relationship between humans and their animal, plant, and mineral counterparts as binarized, hierarchical, and dominated by Western hegemony. In performing a diffractive analysis of the arts data generated during this study, I attempted to articulate my own border-crossing interactions without resorting
to binarized categories.

**Methodology**

For this study, I used original artwork (six images) which were explored in the previous study (Weber, 2015). In this reinterpretation of the data collected for my study (Weber, 2015), I present the artwork as material-discursive phenomena (Barad, 2007) rather than as items with finite and discrete boundaries. Material-discursive phenomena consist of entanglements that are rhizomatic in nature, with no distinction between subject and object until one makes a cut and lifts out a section from the entanglement (Barad, 2007).

Prior to this cut, subject and object do not pre-exist (Barad, 2007) nothing, including me, is an exclusive entity, but, rather, all things are entangled in a web of relationships that are constantly evolving through open-ended processes in which every intra-action is configured and reconfigured. Within this entanglement, one is not able to sharply differentiate between what is created or renewed, what has begun or is returned, or what is continuing and what has stopped, what is here or not here, and finally, what is the past and future (Barad, 2007). I intra-act with sound, vision, objects, bodies, and matter, and within this entanglement, I am not deaf or hearing, nor subject or object. Determinate boundaries defining who I am are specified through making a “cut” that lifts a material-discursive phenomenon out and away from the entanglement for the study. Arts-based data are the material-discursive phenomena or the “cut” that I examine to reveal how I am entangled (Barad, 2007) as I cross borders.

The cut reveals the entangled rhizomatic crossings of borders between identities, languages, and communities (Valente & Boldt, 2015) complicated by intra-actions with
sound, matter (living and non-living), bodies, rules of engagement, uncharted territories, identities, cultures, and languages. An illustration is provided below:

![Figure 6: Weber (2015) The Bird Woman lifted out from the assemblage containing intra-actions between humans, animals, earth and machine](image)

Furthermore, the cut as artwork enables us to entertain new ways of relating to animals, the earth, and machines as it promotes non-hierarchical relationships between animal, earth, and machine (Braidotti, 2013). In this study, I use Braidotti’s discussions concerning Deleuze and Guattari’s theorizing of becoming animal, earth, and machine (Braidotti, 2013) as a point of entry into material-discursive phenomena, that is the artwork. The findings in this diffractive analysis of the arts data will refer to Braidotti’s (2013) interpretations of cybernetic triangle as originally posited by Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

**Research Questions**

In this study, I considered the following question in the hope of eliminating binarization: How does the same arts-based data perform when the same narrative
concerning border crossing between identities, languages, and communities is diffracted through posthumanist theory, which considers matter to be intelligent and self-organizing and agential (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013).

**Findings**

Becoming machine.

I became distraught over the escalating conflict between the mother interpreters and myself, and in addition to keeping a daily journal, I created art to excavate my feelings. The image below, which I titled, *Opera Glasses* (Weber, 2005) provides a material-discursive phenomenon (Barad, 2007) including paper, acrylic paints, crushed cereal, water colors, markers, and popcorn kernels.

![Image](image_url)

*Figure 7: Weber (2005) Opera Glasses*

The image suggests a cyborgian existence where there is a seamless switching between two states dominated by the ear or the eye. The bar across the enlarged pupil suggests a reliance more on hearing through technology, while the smaller unobstructed eye suggests the use of vision when accessing the world through an interpreter. Here, my eyes are equally integral to my body; therefore, they are partnered with my hearing using lipreading, visual cues, lighting, facial expressions, and visible emotions.
Here, sound as matter is agentic in that it forces me to switch in and out of listening through obstruction of sight lines, poor lighting, foreign accents, muffled sounds, and speech. My access to sound is characterized by unpredictability, instability, and rapid reorganization of my relationship with matter. Rearranging the environment, moving to more suitable locations, switching to different programs within my hearing aid, waiting for the noise to pass, clearing sight lines of obstructions such as flowers, plants, paper, and microphones, planning to frequent environments without hard surfaces, staying out of direct sunlight and away from windows, and being aware of obstacles when walking and lip-reading all distinctly influence intra-actions with material, social, cultural, and political entities. My relationship with matter, living and non-living, is, then, profoundly entangled rather than binarized. Returning to the narrative of the unresolved conflict, I could present myself as a “cyborg” (Brueggeman, 2009) navigating material shifts literally every second with speech, hearing, vision, and sign language.

The second image below, Two Trees (Weber, 2015), is another material-discursive phenomenon which further explicates the entanglement through which I zigzag between my body and technology.

Figure 8: Weber (2014) Two Trees
The white tree suggests the ghostly background of unseen electronic circuitry facilitating hearing and electronic networks as found in the interface between the brain and hearing technologies. This ghostly tree touches a biological life form (the head) within a neural network, while the more realistic fruit tree (which suggests earth) provides the organic matter through which the hearing technology connects. Note that only small connections are made in the image in anticipation of greater connections in the future, for hearing technology is currently highly experimental and is prone to failure or limitations. The presence of blue in the lower half of the head (animal) suggests an amniotic-like environment indicating newer life forms.

**Becoming animal.**

Braidotti (2013) suggests that shared ties of vulnerability with the animal and plant world place the human in non-hierarchical relationships in which emotion, rather than reason, becomes the bond between species. The sense of shared vulnerability heightens empathy needed for care and survival of all living matter (Braidotti, 2013). The material-discursive phenomena provided by the artwork below reveals the capacity for empathy. Here, in *Swans in Flames* (Weber, 2005), I am the second swan accompanying the first swan.

![Figure 9: Weber (2005) Swans in Flames](image)
We are gliding in a roiling body of water, alight with flames. Here, I possess certain attributes of the swan, and the swan also possesses some of my attributes. I am mirrored by the swan, who is essentially a nomadic bird looking for nests, food, and water.

Empathy for each other is revealed in a shared vulnerability of being categorized as “othered” in being consumed or controlled for research and scientific processes as animals (Braidotti, 2013). This empathy inherent in becoming animal is more prescient in this second material-discursive phenomenon depicted below, entitled Bird Woman (Weber, 2015).

![Figure 10: Weber (2014) Bird Woman](image)

Here, the woman is becoming merged with animal as depicted by the blue bird feathers atop her head. The green stripes crisscrossing the woman’s head suggest being encased inside a neural network (machine), while the yellow fragments and coils of red suggest a network of organic (earth) matter interspersed within the green technological matrix.

The image calls for empathy toward animals sacrificed to science. As animals are routinely used for laboratory testing concerning the cure of diseases, the cochlear implant
emerged as an innovative laboratory experiment that quickly coalesced into wholesale implantation in deaf children and youth without initial widespread approval of medical authorities and governing bodies (Blume, 2010). Despite significant gaps in the research concerning the effect of implantation on school performance or psychosocial development (Blume, 2010), deaf children became guinea pigs for future testing and the development of subsequent generations of cochlear implants.

Rather than imposing the binary of the oppressed/oppressor on the mother interpreters and myself, I examined the ways we have been marked through our dilemmas and choices pertaining to language and belonging to the deaf community or the hearing world. Furthermore, I might have avoided “rational” arguments such as the proffering of research papers, evidence, and resources supporting my pedagogical decisions to use ASL. Rather than drawing from rational constructs concerning the legitimacy of ASL, I might have acknowledged the mother interpreters’ pain occasioned by historic policy decisions (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990; Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016). They had been rejected by other educational professionals whose advice they had held in high esteem, for eventually adopting signed English with their children, an option grudgingly provided to deaf children who failed to develop oral English skills. Relying on empathy rather than rational arguments would have mediated this difficult period of our working lives.

Becoming earth.

If matter is intelligent, self-organizing, and agentic (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013), then matter is capable of intruding and facilitating key moments within material-discursive phenomena. Konturri (2013) proposed the notion of a “particle-sign” to
describe an aspect of material-discursive relationships between matter, such as paint, paper, canvas, glue, and the artist that is unintentional on the part of the artist (Barad, 2007; Konturri, 2013). In *Black Pond* (Weber, 2007), the particle sign emerges in the image below in the unintentionally overly thick application of black gesso on the riverbanks of a fruit-tree orchard and the waters that run by it.

![Figure 11: Weber (2007) Black Pond](image)

The dark biological matter in the riverbank and the bushes suggests regenerative and relational activity, absorbing the fragmentation of the flashing mirrors. The “thickness” of the materiality of life is presented as an active response within the entanglement of mirrors, trees, fruit, fading light, and moonlight. Previously, I had interpreted the flashing lights reflected in the mirrors as portraying sound as broken and fragmentary (Weber, 2015). A diffractive reading of the particle sign concerning the thickness of the black gesso, however, suggests otherwise. George Veditz, the founder of the National Association of the Deaf and ardent activist once remarked in sign language that “[a]s long as we have deaf people on earth, we will have signs” (Veditz, 1913). The thickness of the
human body in response to fragmentation in sound has resulted in the development of sign language, which is a remarkable attempt to reorganize sound, vision, bodies, and matter to develop a life of meaning within a community of humans, animals, earth and machine. Sign language as a means of reorganizing in response to auditory fragmentation could have led me to remind the mother interpreters of the ways in which animals, technology, and the earth miraculously conspire to accommodate, organize, and generate new forms of life and living.

Becoming earth requires a nomadism (Braidotti, 2013), which refers to traversing between specific paths, nodes, decisions, units of meaning, and directions, without beginning or end or without finite boundaries producing subject and objects (Barad, 2007). The image below, Bird Hat (Weber, 2015), depicts me becoming animal, which entails nesting grounds and flight paths as well as subjection to seasonal demands.

![Bird Hat](image)

*Figure 12: Weber (2014) Bird Hat*

The hat suggests the neural pathways provided by the ability to switch between using sign language and using technology. The ability to fly high above geographical spaces and to nest upon the earth or in trees is paralleled by the ability to see certain relationships between the self and matter as in animal, machine, and earth, and at the
same time, remain inside the entanglement between animal, machine, and earth.

Conclusions

A posthumanist framework with a specific focus on artwork as material-discursive phenomena (Barad, 2007) and the interpretations of Deleuze and Guattari’s becoming animal, machine, and earth provided by Braidotti (2013) provided a way out of overly simplistic and polarized discourses dominating the conflict between me and the mother interpreters (Mauldin, 2016). The presence of a woman throughout the entire cybernetic triangle suggests a shifting in positionalities. First, we see the back of her head and inside her head, then we see the outside of her head (still at the back) and finally we see the bird hat (which she wears). The shifting head positions in Two Trees reveal the complex neural entanglements as in the two trees within her head, the entanglement of The Bird Woman’s hair with blue bird feathers in becoming animal, and the Bird Hat indicating the bird woman in flight but tethered to the earth in search of a nest. These positions all represent border crossings within my own deaf body in response to negotiations with animal, earth and machine.

Artwork interpreted according to a posthumanist frame (Barad, 2007) can provide richer, more nuanced, and fine-grained analysis that seeks to overcome binarizing discourses concerning language choices, identity development, and community membership. Posthuman themes, such as becoming animal, machine, and earth (Braidotti, 2013), can be applied to diverse topics, including the education of the deaf. Specifically, in this study, the posthumanist frame of the material-discursive phenomena as made visible as a cut-out from the entanglement and as artwork opens new points for discussion and fresh approaches to difficult topics; it also lends itself to the reduction of
polarizing debates. Most importantly, the posthumanist frame may allow for the elimination of binaries concerning language, identities, and communities and enable new directions in research.
SECTION 4: THE AGENCY OF DATA

By now, I was becoming more comfortable with posthumanist methodology and literally sailed through the cybernetic triangle in the previous paper with ease. Was it supposed to be that easy? A swapping of postcolonial metaphors with posthumanist metaphors? What was I really doing? My tentative foray into posthumanist methodology helped me understand that I did not fully grasp posthumanism or even posthuman methodology. Yet, the swapping of postcolonial metaphors with posthumanist metaphors concerning the cybernetic triangle had not been a mere literary exercise. I was learning to conceptualize different relationships between animals, earth and machines (Haraway, 2008). Instead of seeing the hearing aid as something which served me and my quest to hear, I considered how it supported and limited me and how my access to sound through the hearing aid necessitated a symbiotic relationship. I now looked at birds differently because in becoming animal, I considered the energy and freedom of birds to come close to the ground and soar high into the sky. The energy and intensities associated with becoming birds, afforded me greater flexibility and freedom. In considering earth, I was able to conceptualize the geological and plant life not as resources to be manipulated and exploited, but as entities to be protected and cared for. Moreover, I learned to consider becoming earth as forming companionship with objects and nutrients. Haraway (2008) writes:

> urgent work still remains to be done in reference to those who must inhabit the troubled categories of woman and human, properly pluralized, reformulated, and brought into constitutive intersection with other asymmetrical differences.

Fundamentally, however, it is the patterns of relationality and, in Karen Barad’s
terms, intra-actions at many scales of space-time that need rethinking, not getting
beyond one troubled category for a worse one even more likely to go postal. The
partners do not precede their relating; all that is, is the fruit of becoming with:
those are the mantras of companion species. (Haraway, 2008, p. 17)

My paper was an early attempt at considering those associated with earth, animals and
machines as companion species. In adding the work of Barrett, (2013), Barrett & Bolt,
McLure (2013), and St. Pierre (2013), to my reading list, I began to consider the
possibility that material entities had agency, that it pushed back and therefore was
performative.

Fearing that I was on the edge of some flaky notions and unsure of how this
would relate to deaf education, I continued to experiment with art materials with the
intent of entering a relationship with them. How could I engage in a relationship at such
an elemental level? I decided to start in an area in which I had the least control. As an
untrained artist, I had so little knowledge, control, and therefore little agency concerning
the materials I used. I made homemade gesso out of glue and baby powder and smeared it
on a large 3 foot by 2-foot canvas. I tore off tissue paper (the kind that is used for
wrapping bought store items) and laid, twisted, bunched, and molded it into the still wet
gesso. At that time, I had the vague conception that I would create branches and leaves of
a tree. After the canvas dried, the surface was pocked with textures ranging from
elongated lines to circular formations consisting of fine lines. My first impulse was to add
to the texture by painting the entire surface with a watered pink, using short strokes to
cover and work the paint into the crevices created by the textured layer of tissue paper.
Then I decided to mix up a small container of watered cerulean blue paint and simply pour it on the canvas. As I poured, I watched where the paint would flow, now guided by the textured layer of tissue paper. A face appeared, that of a gargoyle or a man weathered by suffering. There was an opening for me to shape thin sardonic lips. I found the man’s eye further up in a rounded spiral of tissue paper and used a combination of brown and blue to create an eye socket and eye. The question emerged as to what to do with his head. I found several elongated strips of tissue paper shaped over this head and thought I could make a hat. The “hat”, however, had an “eye” shaped by a similar rounded spiral and I quickly shaped the hat into a salmon draped over the head of the man.

I named the picture, “Fisher King” since I was familiar with the Grail legends concerning a fisher king who was wounded in the thigh. He allowed his kingdom to collapse into ruins because he was consumed by this perpetual wound and could only feel better when he was fishing. How I had come to create a picture of a man with a wet slimy creature on
his head? What could it possibly mean? Did the salmon inform the thinking of the battered man? Were the man and the salmon in a relationship I could only guess at? I could only conclude that I had become submerged in the negotiating between myself and the artistic materials such as homemade gesso, paint, tissue paper and the resulting dried surface to create something far beyond what I had intended, conceived of, or thought about in prior to creating the piece.

I knew that most children and untrained artists engage in this kind of activity. I knew that most artefacts of this type are usually tossed aside in the favor of something more polished, controlled and predictable. Because I have never received any formal training as an artist, I am not bound by rules, principles, expectations, stock of imagery, or even metaphors (including the hackneyed reference to “silence”) that would provide documentation of the deaf education field. I simply followed my intuition and felt I was hovering over an inchoate mass of ideas, shapes, forms, colors, and images. I came to recognize my art making process as nomadic which I expound a great length later in this dissertation. In Garoian’s words, I engaged in a play of similitude to which Foucault is referring represents the contingent and liminal research of art making whereby a range of possible understandings exceeds the limiting assumptions of binary logic. In doing so, the play of art research constitutes an associative intelligence, which frees the artist from the limiting assumptions of linear thought and opens thresholds to liminal spaces where a range of ideas and images, and their prosthetic associations are possible. The liminal, where prosthetic emergence and play in art occurs, constitutes a virtual, in-between space where knowledge and understanding is prone to
slippage, ambiguity, and indeterminacy (Garoian, 2013, pp. 1475-1480).

In the light of Deleuze and Guattari (1987)’s question, what can a body do? I often thought about arts-based data can do to resolve the moral crisis that grips deaf education as well as the rest of the world. The moral crisis is heightened through the persistent referral to binaries, categories and labels with which to dictate and view the actions and lives of deaf people. Braidotti (2013) writes of complexity imposed by trans-disciplinarity within posthumanism and how these complex entanglements can offer lines of flights that address the evolving needs of a deaf child (Valente, 2015). Being an untrained artist enables me to be a nomad and to discern lines of flight that would provide new directions for research and pedagogy in deaf education.

The creation of this work confirmed for me, the agency of data, material entities, machines, sound as energy, plant life and mineral formations. Moreover, I began to understand that agency occurs in degrees according to time. Some agency is exerted quickly, and some agency is exerted over eons of time as in the formation of geological strata. All agency exerted by humans, animals, machine and earth (living and non-living things) occur in an assemblage characterized by perpetual movement, negotiations, decisions, arrangings and rearrangings. Nothing is static in an assemblage, including human beings. Moreover, I realized I had to allow the data to speak for itself, to inform me, and to guide me (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). In other words, I had to consider the possibility that data had agency. I began to seriously consider posthumanist methodology and the question as to what a posthumanist researcher must look for in an assemblage. The next chapter explores posthumanist methodology, how to conduct research and values associated with posthumanist methodology.
CHAPTER 4: POSTHUMANIST METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Qualitative research remains, for many subject specific journals in education, dominated by anthropocentrism, placing the human person at the apex of what is knowable, and as a fully conscious subject (Braidotti, 2013; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016; Mansfield, 2000). Traditional and conventional qualitative methods associated with qualitative research such as interviewing, observation, field notes, and data collection may not be appropriate within the posthuman frame (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016; McLure, 2013; Somerville, 2016). Within the interpretivist research paradigm, for instance, the use of language replaces the penchant for numbers as associated with positivist/empiricist methodology (McLure, 2013). Words replace numbers or become quasi-numbers as evidenced in the coding, thematic interpretations, manipulation, ordering in binaries and hierarchies, and categories, and labelling (McLure, 2013). The linguistic mirroring of what is observed, qualitative or quantitative in nature, lends to the power of social constructionist and realist theories and beliefs to shape the understanding of the world (Barad, 2003; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016; McLure, 2013). Ultimately, the anthropocene determines what is knowable.

The practice of reflexivity within qualitative research is an attempt to address the crisis of representation (Lather, 2007; Jackson & Mazzei, 2008; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). Hence in representing research subjects, determining whose voice is represented in the data, defining subjectivity, that is the “I”, and the creating of categories and labels are all problematic in qualitative research (Lather, 2007; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016; Jackson &
Mazzei, 2008). Acts associated with representing, that is recording data through the validation of the senses, verification and data collection using scientific and technological apparatuses, interviewing and observing subjects, triangulation of data, and constructing of categories and themes, is assumed to provide an accurate reflection of social or natural phenomena (Barad, 2007; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). Qualitative researchers have attempted to counter the issues associated with reflexivity by articulating ways to be “more embodied (Sparkes, 2007), political (Jones, 2005), truthful (Ellis, 2001; Ellis & Bochner, 2000), experimental (Bochner & Ellis, 1996) and reflexive (Ellis & Bochner, 2000)” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2008, p.299).

The question then arises: does the practice of reflexivity produce good research, or does it grant authority on the part of the researcher who proceeds to control and manipulate data by defining categories and labels? (Lather, 2007; Jackson & Mazzei, 2008; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). In other words, the practice of reflexivity seems to reinforce the humanist, anti-humanist and transhumanist paradigms which continue to uphold the anthropocene as the sole arbiter of reality and as authoritative.

Barad (2007) turns representationalism on its head by proposing that research engage in posthuman performativity to understand the intra-actions between humans, animals, and matter, living and non-living. Barad (2003) suggests that performativity, rather than representationalism, is the basis for posthumanist methodology. Here, the premise of performativity is that subject and object do not pre-exist prior to examination or analysis (Barad, 2007). For instance, before analysis of data, the human is not a separate entity but entangled in a web of relationships that are always in an open-ended process in which every intra-action is configured and reconfigured. Measurements
associated with time and space cannot account for when and how discursive material phenomenon came about and disappeared. The past and the future positioning, the multiple locations and the unpredictability of beginning, stopping, and ending associated with intra-actions of material discursive phenomenon, defeats the assumption that the very act of representing adequately captures the intra-actions occurring within the material discursive phenomenon (Barad, 2007).

Posthumanist subjectivity is not defined according to the locations, positionalities, and identities of the human subject but according to the boundaries drawn around the human subject for the study (Barad, 2007). These boundaries enable the researcher to study the posthuman subject as cut away from the assemblage with view to what that assemblage looks like in that moment (Barad, 2007). The focus is on how the posthuman subject is performative in his/her intra-actions within that assemblage in that freeze frame (Barad, 2007).

For instance, the deaf posthuman subject intra-acts with sound, vision, objects, bodies, and matter as part of the entanglement and within this entanglement, they are not deaf or hearing, nor subject or object (Barad, 2007). The deaf posthuman subject is viewed through a temporary drawing of boundaries and is returned to the assemblage which is always in movement (Barad, 2007). Determinate boundaries defining the deaf posthuman subject have yet to be specified until revealed through the study of intra-actions (Barad, 2003; 2007).

Feminist theorists are now exploring the work of Deleuze and Guattari, feminist science studies, and epistemologies to develop posthumanist non-methodologies that generate concepts out of diffractive analysis that would recognize the complexity and
instability of the human subject and overcome the binaries that are characteristic of humanist, anti-humanist and transhumanist theorizing (Braidotti, 2005; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). Barad (2007) is one of the leading scientist-philosophers in exploring the ramifications of new materialism on social, political, cultural, and ethical contexts arising from anthropocentrism. In opposing representationalism and the practice of reflexivity, she proposes agential realism and posthuman performativity as the foundation of post-paradigmatic research to come.

**Agential Realism**

The emphasis on the “crucial intra-actions among these forces that fly in the face of any specific set of disciplinary concerns” leads to the consideration of agential realism (Barad, 2003, p. 810). Agential realism is an account of all intra-actions between all bodies (human and non-human) and the material discursive practices in which they engage (Barad, 2003, p. 810). Agential realism presupposes that matter is vitalist, self-organizing and agentic. Barad (2007) bases her insights on her study of Neils Bohr’s work on wave patterns moving in and through each other, causing different readings of intra-actions between quantum particles (Barad, 2007). Agentic realism accounts for the relationality between living and non-living matter whose borders, properties, and meanings produce and continually produce each other (Barad, 2007).

Agential realism is present in the material discursive practices containing the intra-actions occurring between materiality such as sound, vision, objects, bodies, living and non-living things including technology. For instance, as a deaf posthumanist subject, a dedicated hearing aid user, with speech and sign skills, I switch between states that require more listening (still significantly limited) to sound as in traffic, alarm bells, music
and human voices emanating from one or two people, often against a noisy background that is often uncontrollable and states that require increased reliance on vision when accessing a conversation in a group through a sign language interpreter. I often manipulate the settings on my hearing aid to control for severe tinnitus (a masking program), highly noisy environments, conversation, and music. These manipulations occur between 15 to 30 times a day, depending on the buildup of moisture in my ear, the demands of my family, workplace, casual interactions, and immediate environments. Often, I will turn my hearing aid off to escape the demands of traffic noise, loud music, and large gatherings of people and to retreat within myself. When I use a sign language interpreter, the hearing aid becomes inconsequential and I suspend the need or desire to listen. Even though I may be aware of the environmental noises (including speech around me), my inner state becomes very quiet, almost meditative as thoughts and interpretations appear more quickly and easily while content is being interpreted.

Sound as energy is agentic in that it forces me to switch in and out of listening through obstruction of sightlines, poor lighting, foreign accents, muffled sounds and speech. My access to sound could be described as an electric cord being plugged and unplugged from an electric socket frequently and without warning. This hearing state is characterized by unpredictability, instability, and rapid reorganization of my relationship with matter. This often includes rearranging the environment, moving to more suitable locations, switching to different programs within the hearing aid, waiting for the noise to pass, clearing sightlines of obstructions such as flowers, plants, paper, and microphones, planning to frequent environments without hard surfaces, staying out of direct sunlight, away from windows, and being aware of obstacles when walking and lipreading someone
at the same time. In addition, my hearing aid is programmed to cut out noises that are deemed intolerable for my ears which often results in a queer splicing of human speech and environmental noise. Non-living matter (as in hearing technologies) then is designed to protect me by interrupting as well as augmenting sound waves. My relationship with humans, sound, living and non-living matter is, then, profoundly entangled along with social, cultural, medical, and technological discourses, expectations, languages, cultures, and communities through which I move daily. The researcher maps the posthumanist subject, while moving through assemblages producing and being produced by humans, sound, living and non-living matter. All these elements constitute material discursive phenomena. Diffractive analysis of material discursive phenomena entails the reading of insights gleaned from disciplines such as science and the social sciences as well. Material discursive phenomena are found in rhizomatic configurations of living and non-living matter, sound as energy, humans, and animals (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Posthuman subjectivity is a process involving continuous and complex negotiations within the context of a rhizome (Braidotti, 2013).

**Rhizome**

In studying posthumanist performativity, the researcher learns to think with the world rather than thinking about the world (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Holland, 2013). The origin of this principle is attributed to Spinoza whose monist physics is explored in depth by Braidotti (2013). Spinoza advocated for a worldview in which everything is considered as “one”, that is, not subjected to planes of division, binaries, categories, and hierarchies as advocated by Enlightenment philosophers (Braidotti, 2013). The monistic universe rejects dualisms and invokes the self-organizing, vitalist and agentic powers in
all matter, living and non-living, including humans (Braidotti, 2013). Within this worldview, nothing is opposed to each other, particularly culture or technological mediation. Here, the posthumanist researcher uses rhizomatic thinking inspired by neomonalism as a tool to think with the world (Holland, 2013) rather than using representation as a tool to think about the world. Thinking “with” the world necessitates acknowledging the rhizomatic structures in the world which lend itself to a posthumanist performativity.

In opposing the endless bifurcation inherent in developing trees and branches, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) declare, “we’re tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They’ve made us suffer too much” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 15). In contrast to a tree structure where a trunk is held fast to the earth by large roots and is extended by branches, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) propose the rhizome to be a more accurate representation of the flows of power, desire, activities, decisions, and intra-actions between humans and non-humans. The rhizome consists of spatial multiplicities with many passageways, seen and unseen, linking various concepts and examples beneath the linearity of thought imposed by language (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Holland, 2013). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) define the principles of rhizomatic activities: multiplicity, heterogeneity, connection, rupture, and cartography. Multiplicity occurs when different elements in the rhizome co-exist without any organizing structure. A heterogeneous connection is not traced back to an origin but is an open system which can be entered at any point (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Multiple connections in the rhizome are always in the process of forming random and haphazard linkages and intersections between semiotic chains, materiality, humans, animals, plants, and machines (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Ruptures in the form of tears, breaks, and broken nodes
restart again on an old or new line of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). A cartography of a rhizome includes lines of flight which is defined as that which resists territorialization, that is, the movement to stratify and codify activities in support of principles, laws, and rules which order the activity in the rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). I will expand on this definition of lines of flight later in this chapter.

To think with a rhizome, an accurate cartography is necessary (Braidotti, 2005; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). This involves mapping the intricacies of the rhizome as it performs according to lines of flight, territorializing, deterritorializing, and reterritorializing actions. A map opposed to tracing is

entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real…it can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political act or as a meditation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12).

Ultimately, mapping allows for the identification of lines of flight which signal potential change. Moreover, mapping has multiple entryways with which to enable an accurate cartography of intra-actions occurring within the rhizome. Finally, the rhizome enables one to think with the world rather than about the world.

Posthumanist Research Terminology Concerning the Assemblage

Borrowing from geological studies, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest that the assemblage be viewed as lodged between stratum which, in theory, represent the layers exerting influence on the assemblage itself. The assemblage is essentially tetravalent as it is positioned between different strata and is defined by territorializing and
deterioralizing actions (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Possessing four sides, the assemblage is located between two horizontal strata as if it were the filling in a sandwich (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

**Upper Stratum**

The upper crust is the stratum that provides structures, rules, and captures whatever is within reach. Deleuze and Guattari described upper strata as “judgements of God” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 40). At risk of oversimplification, the upper stratum endeavours to territorialize the assemblage by asserting rules, structures, and binaries that attempt to control the intra-actions between humans, sound as energy, animals, machines, and living and non-living matter. The upper stratum might also be conceptualized as the plane of organization (Holland, 2013). For instance, Deleuze and Guattari name capitalism as an ultimate territorializing force as it contrives to profit from all strata and organizes human activities toward the generation of profit (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). For this reason, advanced capitalism is often associated with the upper stratum (Braidotti, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

**Double Articulation**

All strata engage in double articulation, a term originating with the field of linguistics, meaning the intra-actions between the expression and content (Holland, 2013). While the content consists of bodies, things, or objects that become submerged in physical systems, organisms, and organizations, the expression includes the categories, icons, and symbols that comprise semiotic systems (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Strata separates content and expression “in the pincers of a double articulation assuring their
independence, and real distinction and enthroning a dualism that endlessly reproduces and redvides” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 143). The attempt to resist the double articulations is known as deterritorialization.

**Territorialization, Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization**

The two vertical sides of the assemblage are those areas that are in the process of being territorialized or deterritorialized (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The territorializing side of the assemblage serves to stabilize and the deterritorializing side serves to blur or dissolve the assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Both sides may territorialize or deterritorialize at the same time or alternately. Territorializing within the strata coordinates the functioning of different species by organizing functions and regrouping forces (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). For instance, the desire for immediate meanings, judgements, and categories is the bid to colonize, control, and manage all life and matter, living and non-living (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The function of territorialization is to keep members of the same species apart and to allow for the co-existence of several species along with inert matter within the assemblage (Holland, 2013).

Deterritorialization aims to disrupt and redirect the investments of all matter, living and non-living, humans, animals and sound as energy elsewhere in the assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Holland, 2013). While relative deterritorialization occurs in the minor shifts and changes to an already established material discursive phenomenon, such as improvisation of a jazz standard, absolute deterritorialization results in a line of flight characterized by creativity and movement toward the human that is yet to come which is described as a “becoming” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

There is always the danger of reterritorialization which is the attempt to regulate
or recode the creative lines of flight, by shifting flows of desire and creating a dominant single flow in the stratum. Again, stratum is built up with a view to organizing, controlling and regulating activity. The collection of humans, animals, matter, living and non-living and sound as energy engages in flows of desire consistent with the agendas imposed by reterritorializing forces such as advanced capitalism. Movement through the stratum contains within itself, flows of desire that aim to territorialize, deterritorialize, and reterritorialize.

Affects

Deleuze and Guattari draw from Spinoza’s definition of affect to mean an ability to affect and to be affected by another. Affect is “a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. xvi). Affects as intensities correspond with the flow of desires through the assemblage, directing and re-directing its path. The result is not a feeling or an emotion but an intensity as the outcome of an experience of being produced by or producing one another. After the affect, “thinking emerges through signs and symbols that stand in for the things that were materially and emotionally felt or experienced” (Barrett, 2013).

The affects within an assemblage are also known as an abstract machine which can be diagrammed (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Diagrams are not representational but map the intricate topologies of affects appearing within the assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Currently, the diagramming of affects is complicated by technological developments that serve to extend the sensorimotor dimension of the body (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Since affects are, in themselves, do
not produce meaning or knowledge, it becomes necessarily to consider the ethical and political outcomes arising from affects (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). For instance, digital media, prostheses, and neural implants all serve to produce neurological affects whose ethical and political outcomes need further theorization (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013).

The “affective turn” consists of exploring affects which cannot be narrowed down to a specific action or agent that produced it in the first place. Rather, affects are grasped it in their manifestations (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Deterritorialization occurs with decoding of familiar affects within the stratum. Here, the decoding enables the affect to take on a different intensity, either diminished or enhanced thereby precipitating the deterritorializing of the assemblage. Desire now flows in different directions, which may appear unfamiliar in appearance, speed, and location. For instance, decoding common sense might be an unconventional strategy employed by capitalist forces to entice consumers into buying a brand of soap. Another form of deterritorialization is apparent in improvisation which may open a creative line of flight. A form of deterritorialization occurs in the struggle of minority cultures, languages, and identities, while defined as bounded states, to decode familiar affects associated with Western hegemony and therefore “trigger uncontrollable movements and deterritorializations of the mean or majority” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 106). Deterritorialized flows of desire serve to disrupt colonizing practices, particularly the desires of those who wish to identify with their oppressors and to participate in oppression of other humans, animals, and matter, living and non-living, and sound as energy (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).
**Lines of Flight**

Within absolute deterritorialization, new lines of flight appear in movement toward something that is yet defined, that is, the human that is to come rather than being locked into static binaries (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The lines of flight are always in motion, moving away from the prescriptive categories imposed by upper stratum. The researcher must zigzag between flows of desire, hovering over the meta-stratum to discover the lines of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

**Plane of Consistency or Plane of Immanence**

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) seem to use the terms, plane of consistency, plane of immanence, metastratum and Body without Organs (BwO) interchangeably when describing its location within the assemblage. While meta-strata contain matter, life, and culture as substrata (Holland, 2013), the assemblage is positioned between the two strata, that is the upper stratum and the metastratum (also known as the plane of consistency) (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The assemblage is between two layers, between two strata; on one side, it faces the strata (in this direction, the assemblage is an interstratum), but the other side faces something else, the body without organs or plane of consistency (here it is a metastratum). In effect, the body without organs is itself the plane of consistency which becomes compact or thickens at the level of the strata (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 40). The multiple layers of strata reach down to the plane of consistency which contains matter, life and culture (Holland, 2013) and which knows nothing of differences in level, orders of magnitude, or distances. It knows nothing of differences between artificial and the natural. It knows nothing of the distinction between contents and expressions or that between forms and
formed substances; these things exist only by means of and in relation to the strata (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 69-70).

Communication between stratum is undetermined as there is no “lesser, no higher or lower, organization; the substratum is an integral part of the stratum, is bound up with it as the milieu in which change occurs, and not an increase in organization” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 69). There is no telling how, when, and which stratum will communicate with each other (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The meta-stratum is teeming with life in its intricate intra-actions between matter, living and non-living, humans, animals, machine, and sound as energy.

**Body without Organs**

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) issue a challenge to posthumanist researchers: “Find your body without organs. Find out how to make it” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 151). A body without organs (BwO) is conceptualized as a holographic cutaway of expressions and contents in which stratification and destratification, territorialization and deterritorialization, and coding and decoding compete for dominance. Here, making a body of organs involves experimenting with intensities (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). For instance, experimenting with intensities might involve exploring the intense affective interpersonal relationships such as medieval courtly love (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Holland (2013) proposes that Deleuze and Guattari’s coined phrase “Body without Organs” (BwO) is better understood as Body without Organization. The BwO also contains the unconscious which influences and shapes desires along with the movements of other actors whether they are human, animal, earth, machine or sound as energy (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The unconscious within the BwO is not individual
but collective in that it produces unconscious desire (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Therefore, the unconscious realm is an actor in the BwO along with other actors, living, non-living, human, nonhuman (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The confluence of conscious and unconscious desires therefore produces and is produced by all actors, living, non-living.

Experimenting with intensities within the BwO involves dis-organ-izing, destratifying, thereby freeing it from attempts at unification, identifications, and identity formations to identify the flows of desire throughout. Desire in its varying intensities, is the dominating characteristic of the BwO (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The flows of desire within the BwO can include life affirming action along with the desire for one’s own destruction and that of others (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Desire flows throughout the BwO in multiple directions. On the one hand, the BwO produces flows of desire which can often become overcoded and territorialized (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). At the same time, other desires can remain uncharted in the BwO as “permeated by unformed, unstable matter, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 40). Furthermore, desire is territorialized in the BwO, not as a collection of desires but as a collective desire.

The organizing principle of the BwO is survival as it “constantly eludes that judgement, flees and becomes destratified, decoded and deterritorialized” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 40). Survival is the preoccupation of all matter. Living and non-living matter including animals and humans must self-organize in response to various forces to ensure survival in varying degrees (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Holland, 2013). For instance, geological matter’s “survival” is slow, takes place over centuries in adjusting to
forces of weather, geological movements, and cosmological forces and is differentiated within few degrees (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Holland, 2013). In contrast, the genetic codes within organic life propel self-organization in response to threats concerning survival (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Holland, 2013). Within the human species, survival is organized through symbolic representations including a range of semiotic resources such as sounds, objects and images in addition to language (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Holland, 2013). Social organization to ensure survival involves similar and dissimilar strategies among all species (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Holland, 2013).

Within the BwO, the development of survival strategies within social species devolves to individuals within species who continue to experiment with the knowledge derived from the group in the first place (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Holland, 2013). Then individuals within species, particularly the anthropocene, become credited with the development of strategies for survival. Yet many solutions regarding survival used by humans had their origins in animal species (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Holland, 2013). These solutions advanced by individuals within the human species become coded through language, that is the symbolic order of representation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Holland, 2013).

Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize the earth as a body without organs (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Therefore, any strikes to the earth such as ripping or tearing away resources that would ensure profit for human beings is visualized as visceral blows to the body without organs. The effect of this imagery serves to rearrange desire, causing desire to flow in unprecedented directions, thereby deterritorializing the capitalist machine that is intent on profiting from the earth’s resources. Observing territorializations and
deterritorializations with view to becoming animal, machine, and matter, living and non-living, rather than creating anthropomorphic and anthropocentric descriptions of earth, serves to redirect flows of desire. Positioned between the upper stratum and the BwO, assemblages engage in deterritorialization to destratify, to open new lines of flight and new possibilities for the future, that results in the becomings of animal, earth and machine.

**Assemblage**

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) define the assemblage as agents of self-organization contributing to stratification. The assemblage is a compilation of humans, animals, organizations, language, the senses, buildings, rules, laws, discourses, inert matter, technology, plants, sound as energy and chemical compounds all in intra-action with each other. The assemblage is agentic in that it acts as a whole. Within the assemblage, these actors, human and non-human affect each other and do not determine directions or decisions according to individual will.

Assemblages may be viewed as territories in which acts of territorializing are investments of energy toward maintaining or disrupting the boundaries imposed by the upper and lower strata. The assemblage itself contains two aspects: machinic and expressive (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The machinic aspect is comprised of bodies as living and non-living actors in intra-action with each other, that is, producing and being produced by each other (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The expressive aspect is about the acts and statements generated by the collective activity of the assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Such expressions involve coding certain behaviours, rituals, decisions, and actions to render the assemblage as a definable territory for all participants, living
and non-living (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Finally, territories also serve as passages to other assemblages. It is possible to enter and exit assemblages at different sites and to belong to multiple assemblages at once (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Over time, assemblages can become stratified, coded, and organized (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

To escape the binarized, linear trajectories of thought as found in humanisms, anti-humanisms and transhumanism, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) define the human person as embedded within the assemblage, who along with other components of the assemblage, act, move, make decisions in intra-action with each other. The human person is always in the state of becoming according to his/her intra-actions with other components of the assemblage, rather than a static entity defined according to certain characteristics, identities or states. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) insist:

> We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 257).

Assemblages can also reveal what a body can do (or not do) (Braidotti, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Posthuman assemblage theory enables the exploration of how intra-actions between animal, machine and earth are immersed in ongoing negotiations including the actions of decentering and recentering, coding and recoding, and deterritorializing and reterritorializing (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Instead of the humanist person as a static, knowing subject, the posthuman is in an assemblage of human and non-human actors (Braidotti, 2013).
Assemblages are characterized as wholes defined by relations of exteriority, that is, that parts of the assemblage cannot be reduced to a single function but can be parts of multiple wholes (Dittmer, 2014). How these parts function, and what their capacities are can provide a fresh understanding of commonly binarized problems (Dittmer, 2014). Here, “it is the assemblage that acts: it is the entanglement that pressures and produces reconfigurings; it is the intra-action of the material and discursive that produces a distributed agency between and among human and nonhuman entities” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2016, p. 3). The assemblage arranges or fits together disparate elements, opening the way for new territorial and spatial orientations and therefore new realities (Jackson & Mazzei, 2016). In this way, the assemblage is agentic rather than the lone individual (Jackson & Mazzei, 2016).

In the assemblage, the posthumanist researcher looks at how human and nonhuman intra-act in ways to produce each other with view to “dislodging the anthropocentric impulse that continues to inhere the meaning of artistic praxis and creativity” (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 180). An assemblage consists of animal, earth, human, and machine selected from the body without organs to determine “a flow through the ways in which boundaries blur, morph and dissipate, as well as through multiple entanglements that (re)define and decenter the human” (Bone & Blaise, 2015). Here, the researcher is directed to enter an assemblage, cultivate an awareness of human and nonhuman agents, to observe closely, the flows of desire and to discover new lines of flight.
Interpretation of Post Humanist Data

In her explication of post-qualitative research methodology, that is methodology beyond the interpretative and linguistic turn, Koro-Ljungberg (2016) warns against the easy interpretation of data. The posthumanist ontological turn demands a move beyond humanist ontology and entails a study of the entanglements between humans, nonhumans and matter, and the materiality of language (Braidotti, 2013; McLure, 2013; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). Here, lines between methodologies blur as researchers are encouraged to work within and against and beyond existing methodologies (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). This calls for theorizing methodologies as one continues to exercise creative and artistic experimentation as part of scholarship (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). Becoming comfortable with unfinished thought and practice, uncertainty and engaging in the search for affects which in turn, perform intensities is characteristic of posthuman methodology (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016; McLure, 2013; Somerville, 2016). Here the posthumanist researcher attends to data present in “a flux, the liminal space, at the limit of words and things, as what is said of a thing (not its attribute or the thing in itself) and as something that happens” (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016, p. 17). In circumventing the desire to establish meaning cobbled together from ethnographic data, the researcher engages in multiplicity of meanings, processes of meaning making, and generating more questions than answers (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). For this reason, posthumanist research is concerned with liminal spaces (Snaza & Weaver, 2015), looking for something that is yet unthought or unconceived as opposed to uncovering what has been present all along (St. Pierre, 2013). The presence of affects signals erosion, collapse, problems, further questions concerning data (St. Pierre, 2013).
In contrast to the humanist researcher’s attempt to explain, define, and establish meaning from collected data, data within posthumanist methodology is agentic. Data can glow (McLure, 2013), leak (Lather, 2007), flow in multiple directions and even express its wants (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). Data can guide analysis as in grounded theory, contribute to the formation of research questions, challenge researchers, confound language, and emerge unexpectedly (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). Within an assemblage, glowing data appears at the boundaries of language and the body (McLure, 2013). Somerville (2016) asks “if we think of language through the lens of materiality, how would we understand the emergence of language differently?” (Somerville, 2016, p. 1166). The selection of small segments of data manifesting various levels of intensities, that is, affects, indicate emerging movements within the assemblage (Somerville, 2016). Affects then hint at the agency of data in directing the researcher.

In attending to the agency of affects as data, the posthumanist researcher uncovers multiplicities in the data and analysis (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). Releasing control of the data leads to consideration of the ways in which data shape the researchers and research and the ways in which pre-existing knowledge shapes the data (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). Determining what the data wants encourages reflection upon the positioning of the data and its role in the research. Researchers can never really know what data wants and thereby produce analysis that is tentative, uncertain and open to reinterpretations (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). Such methodology is fluid as it thinks with the assemblage, thereby becoming part of the assemblage (Barad, 2007; Koro-Ljungberg, 2016; McLure, 2013; St. Pierre, 2013). Learning to think with theory, with the data in the assemblage and being a part of the assemblage are some of the tasks of the posthumanist researcher.

**Methodological Instructions (Deleuze and Guattari)**

Rather than representing what is thought, felt, observed and palpated by individuals or whole groups of people, the focus of posthuman research is on what can a body do and on the identification of affects which occur within performative actions (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Posthumanist research then can open new lines of flight. Even though this goal is ambitious, the proposed methodology is described in modest tones:

Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a new plot of land at all times (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 161).

Within this cryptic paragraph, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) provide a methodological foundation that circumvents the continual temptation to revert to anthropocentricism. In keeping with the tentative and experimental nature of Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) methodological suggestions and the work of jagodzinski & Wallin (2013) who offer an arts-based research methodology based on DeleuzoGuattarian philosophy, I will now explore arts-based research methodology toward exploring posthuman performativity.

**Arts-Based Research**

In supplementing and in support of the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), jagodzinski & Wallin (2013) offer a DeleuzoGuattarian inspired critique of arts-based
research methodologies and a proposal for future directions in arts-based research. To begin, jagodzinski & Wallin (2013) deliver a scathing critique of arts-based research by claiming that most forms of arts-based research are anthropocentric, and at its worst, rely on humanist foundations. The role of the artist remains hinged to praxis, or rather to the notion of a creative and intentional consciousness operating ‘behind’ the object of its production. Herein, the field continues to exert a paranoiac desire to ground artistic production in a historically stable and commonly accepted point of reference” (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 167).

At the same time, the schizophrenic impulse to disrupt strata through interrogating class, race, gender and ability promotes the proliferation of identities, positionalities, and intersectionalities (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). The continual reference to the self, one’s memories, and interpretations suggest an anthropocentric bias in which the human is the primary arbiter of what is real, knowable, and therefore actionable in a landscape of subservient subjects including humans, animals, sound as energy and living and non-living matter (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Furthermore, the focus on hybrid identities, multiple identities, increasing numbers of subjectivities is premised on the ability to accurately represent a dizzying array of highly intricate, rhizomatic and complex realities (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Within this relentless hunt for meaning, arts-based research (including arts-based autoethnographies) ultimately refer to the human as the sole author of what is knowable (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Art, then, should not be theorized as an object but as an event that doesn’t produce epistemologies (as many arts-based researchers would claim) but ethical orientations that counteract the territorializing par excellence committed by advanced capitalism (Deleuze
The relationship between art and research concerning posthuman performativity is driven by the question: what can art do? (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013) This question directly opposes the question behind much current arts-based research: what knowledge art can reveal? This question that reverts to representationalism and serves to shore up anthropocentric foundations of arts-based research (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Here, desire is socio-political, capable of generating paranoiac sensibilities such as fascism or schizophrenia in the manufacture of the subject as a multiplicity “that remains overwhelmingly cathected to who speaks” (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 96). Rather, posthumanist arts-based research asks ethical questions concerning ontology, that is, the movement of actors, living and non-living in assemblage (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013).

Arts-based research within the posthumanist frame can develop a focus on the “people that is to come”. The artist’s development of an imaginary self can bring forth emerging fantasy structures which in turn inform ethics situated as an event, a “transversal informative act that escapes productionist logic of modern power” (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 3). Gough and Gough (2016) discuss methods that would best serve critical posthumanist theorizing, including autobiography while cautioning the importance of moving away from the “individualized, liberal humanist version of subject” (Gough & Gough, 2016, p. 3). Gough and Gough (2016) also propose narrative experiments, that is, rhizosemiotic play in which concepts are created with view to exploring the cybernetic triangle of animal, machine and earth. Furthermore, Barrett (2013) highlights the role of personal experience in arts-based data that aims to remove anthropocentric foundations:
Experience operates within the domain of the aesthetic; knowledge produced through aesthetic experience is always contextual and situated since it involves direct sensory engagement with objects in the world. Artistic experience, therefore, occurs as a continuum with normal processes of living and is derived from an impulse to handle objects and to think and feel through their handling. What emerges from this process is the aesthetic image – an image that is heterogenous in that it permits a knowing that exceeds what can be captured by the symbolic (Barrett, 2013, p. 64).

The aesthetic image is capable, then, of generating data that can produce more than what can be expressed by language. The examination of the data created through art and which constitutes posthumanist arts-based research involves the charting of affects as they flow throughout the assemblage. Affects are non-original, in that they are not created by a sole artist but act within the assemblage. For this reason, affects stand alone and at the same time, produces connections with what is yet to come (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). The presence of affects within the assemblage enables the arts-based researcher to engage with arts data as agentic.

**Arts-Based Assemblage**

Within the arts-based educational research paradigm, the artist within the posthuman frame, is charged with the task of creating a world or an assemblage to bring about deterritorialization (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Arts-based research must survey the “impersonal force of art and its interface with the material organization of the social field” (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 108). Here, art does not produce new knowledge but intensifies what it might mean to think and act as an assemblage in intra- action with
the BwO. The flows of desire play a critical role in posthuman arts-based assemblage (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Mapping the flows of desire enables the artist to zigzag between the technological, artistic, cultural and institutional dimensions as well as the nature/nurture of biology (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Thus, art is produced by the assemblage and is witnessed by the artist who attempts to map what is in the assemblage.

**Posthumanist Arts Based Autoethnography**

Is there room for arts-based autoethnography within posthumanist research? While many arts-based researchers try to dislodge the focus on the human self through forms of radical autoethnography employing phenomenology and poststructuralism as theoretical frames, the results fall within the anti-humanist dichotomy, “repeating a subjectivity that serves current neo-liberal and capitalist ends” (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 3). The assemblage is machinic in nature, in that it moves and acts, thereby relegating the individual voice as to one of the many actors, living and non-living in the assemblage. For this reason, the role of unconscious desire as produced by the assemblage is often neglected and untheorized in arts-based research (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). It is argued that traditional forms of autoethnography does not serve this goal (Huff & Haefner, 2012).

Autoethnography requires the situating of self in relation to culture in the relaying of experience, emotions and actions (Denzin, 2003). Autoethnography within a posthuman assemblage requires a different lens in addition to the traditional definitions of autoethnography (Denshire & Lee, 2013). Writing across multiple spaces, temporalities and reconstructing materialities of every day experience poses unique challenges in overcoming literal descriptions of material artifacts in accompaniment with life
experience (Denshire & Lee, 2013). Multiple retellings from different perspectives, temporalities, locations, culture, and histories prevent the return to the authorial self (Denshire & Lee, 2013). The assemblage prevents the retelling of the role of the professional as hierarchized or presented in heroic terms without “shadows and contradictions, struggles and failures” (Denshire & Lee, 2013, p. 232). Denshire and Lee’s (2013) retelling of the role of the professional in occupational therapy is then situated in assemblage in which bodies, institutions, professionals and practices are viewed as performative.

Writing arts-based autoethnographies with the aim to expose the complexities of class, race, ability and gender does not allow for placing the human researcher within a non-hierarchized frame nor the blurring of distinctions between subject and object (Barad, 2003; Braidotti, 2013; jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Jackson and Mazzei suggest that the autoethnography has “exchanged transcendency for transparency” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2008, p. 299). Transparency would involve a “re-telling that acknowledges the constraints of “one” telling, that theorizes the ethics of such tellings and that works the limits of the narrative “I” (Jackson and Mazzei, 2008, p. 299). Rather than attempt to describe ways of knowing possessed by the researcher, the autoethnographer must question his or her expectations concerning “voice” or the narrative “I”, their own authority and privilege in hearing and relaying stories and attend to why certain stories are told and not others (Jackson & Mazzei, 2008). Otherwise, “art is reterritorialized upon the personal narrative of the artist, the intentionality of a conscious creator, or the metaphysics of genius” (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 167).

Life writing in the assemblage has been dismissed as impossible as writing about
other species, human and non-human in the assemblage can lead to the epistemic violence concerning those categorized as the Other (Haraway, 2008; Spivak, 2005). If critical posthumanism, however, looks at how human and non-human actors in the assemblage produce and are produced by each other, then the relationships between human and non-human actors can be extracted for closer examination. The writing about the entangled self within the assemblage, also in relationship with animals might be feasible such as posthuman animalographies (Huff & Haefner, 2012). In her work, *When Species Meet*, Haraway (2008) places companion species within an assemblage featuring human, machine and animals in intra-action. Furthermore, she places these intra-actions in a biological, historical, social, political context as she explores how animal-human intra-actions are guided by global capitalism (Haraway, 2008). Exploring the BwO concerning the performativity of touch, Haraway places her dog, her father in a wheelchair and herself in a non-hierarchical arrangement (Haraway, 2008). Even the metal frame of the wheelchair used by her father is a companion species; here the human body is a hybrid of metal and flesh (Haraway, 2008). In doing so, Haraway presents the multiple instances of boundary crossing between human species, non-human species and non-living matter that cannot be contained or represented within generic categories.

Haraway, in providing some of the seminal texts for posthumanism, contributed to the development of methodological values for the posthumanist researcher (Haraway, 1991; 2008). Researcher objectivity in the posthuman frame requires that the researcher seeks the subject position, not of identity, but of objectivity; that is, partial connection.

There is no way to ‘be’ simultaneously in all, or wholly, in any of the privileged (subjugated) positions structured by gender, race, nations and class. And that is a
short list of critical positions. The search for such a ‘full’ and total position is the
search for the fetishized perfect subject of oppositional history… (Haraway, 1991,
p. 193).

Warned by Haraway’s god-trick (Haraway, 1991), that is the claim to kinds of knowledge that are authoritative, objective and universal, Friedner (2017) questions some of the foundational concepts established by deaf studies scholars in United States such as deaf culture, deaf identity, deaf community and deafhood which have ended up being teleological goals serving to empower American deaf people and therefore have become epistemologically frozen positions (Friedner, 2017; Grech & Soldatic, 2014). Friedner (2017) questions the borrowing of postcolonial metaphors to describe the oppression of the deaf community and highlights the need for more accurate, new ways of accounting for the oppression of the deaf community specific to locations, temporalities and the deaf body. Hence, the methodological values outlined in the next section serve as a guide for the future posthumanist researcher with a view to researching deaf children and youth.

Posthumanist Methodological Guidelines

Researching with the posthumanist paradigm entails the adoption of critical posthumanist methodological guidelines (Braidotti, 2013). Here, I review methodological guidelines proposed by Braidotti (2013) using the critical posthumanist theories. Her guidelines include the provision of: 1) cartographic accuracy, 2) transdisciplinarity, 3) combining critique with creative configurations, 4) principle of non-linearity; 5) powers of memory and imagination and 6) the strategy of de-familiarization. Here, the emphasis on producing new knowledge while attempting to establish transparency through reflexivity statements, is supplanted by a focus on ethical, political and moral orientations
in exploring posthuman performativity (Braidotti, 2013). Braidotti (2013) positions these values as essentially nomadic. Nomadic thinking is about mapping the lines of flight, identifying opportunities for deterritorialization while zigzagging over the BwO and moving through assemblages (Braidotti, 2011). Hence the aptness of the term, nomadic.

*Cartographic Accuracy*

Cartographic accuracy is the provision of a thorough account of the present phenomenon, including the revealing of power locations embedded within space and time (Braidotti, 2013). Within nomadic theory, this entails thinking globally but acting locally. Analysis begins at the micro-instances occurring within one’s own intellectual and social practice (Braidotti, 2011). The accuracy of the cartography requires keen attention to when the deaf posthumanist subject is disempowered and empowered and to the flows of desire emanating from the intra-actions between the stratum and the BwO. A posthuman frame, however, would aim for a more accurate cartography (Braidotti, 2013) which takes into the account “what is missing [that] is the obscene underside of the official narratives, the affect of life, the microminutilal ‘writing’” (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 75). Within a posthumanist approach, cartography is a tool to counter advanced capitalism as the great nomad, promoting the mobility of products throughout the world in weblike structures aided by the internet (Braidotti, 2011).

*Trans-Disciplinarity*

Trans-disciplinarity, in investigating posthuman performativity, supports the posthumanist value that no one discipline can provide a universal claim to knowledge of the posthuman subject. Explanations of complex intra-actions rather than universal
claims dominate descriptions of trans-disciplinarity. Complex singularities are the result of entanglement in which multiple identities are currently commodified by advanced capitalism in a schizophrenic sense (Braidotti, 2011). To engage in trans-disciplinarity, affirmative empowerment of alternative differences is mapped through processes inherent in becoming woman (gender), becoming-other (race), and becoming animal, insect and earth. Being nomadic assures that assemblages drawn from multiple disciplines will serve to collapse boundaries among the becomings. Ultimately, interdisciplinarity is bound up with becoming nomad which is inclusive of all other becomings, that of woman, animal, earth and machine (Braidotti, 2011).

**Creative Figurations**

Braidotti (2013) suggests that post humanist critiques be combined with creative figurations which involves the development of creative metaphors and alternative descriptions of the subject as dynamic and zigzagging between polarities commonly assigned to people and phenomena (such as male/female; black/white; local/global and hearing/deaf). To express the nomadic subject in becoming woman, animal, earth and machine, there is the need to map the situated, embedded and embodied positions, resulting in alternative representations and social locations (Braidotti, 2011). Creative figurations are not concept-driven but are inbetween states touched upon while perpetually zigzagging. A figuration in this case is a “living map, a transformative account of the self” as grounded in geopolitical, historical and social locations (Braidotti, 2011, p. 14).
**Non-Linearity**

Thinking about processes rather than concepts evokes the methodological principle of non-linearity (Braidotti, 2011). Furthermore, thinking through flows and interconnection involves eschewing concepts in favour of finding ways to express processes, fluidity, inbetween flows of data, experience and information (Braidotti, 2011). Braidotti adds that non-linearity is “a method that replaces linearity with a more rhizomatic style of thinking, allows for multiple connections and lines of interaction that necessarily connect the text to its many ‘outsides’” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 165).

**Powers of Memory and Imagination**

The creation of an assemblage allows for the mapping of web-like, scattered and node-like configurations where memory and imagination are applied in narratives that serve to de-territorialize stable identities (Braidotti, 2013). In the attempt to undo the static authority of the past, memory is redefined to include traces of afterthoughts, leftover sensations, flashbacks and mnemonic traces (Braidotti, 2011). Imagination is used to assess such affects associated with data. Past associations involve remembering, in the form of “creative reworking” of events that occurred chronologically or that have been recorded and retrieved (Braidotti, 2013, p. 166). If posthuman time is conceived as non-linear in which dividing lines between creation and renewal, beginning and returning, continuity and discontinuity, past, present and future are erased, then imagination is necessary to release the possibilities inherent in lines of flight with assemblages (Braidotti, 2013).
**De-Familiarization**

De-familiarization involves a retreat from dominant and normative narratives reinforced by Western hegemony to situate the subject in a non-hierarchical relationship capable of infinite relationships with other humans, non-human, organic and non-organic life forms. A radical posthumanist ontology will agree to embrace a minitorian and nomadic stance, one that rejects the traditional view of self as “missionary” and as emanating from the cultural centre of the world, that is, Europe (Braidotti, 2013).

This point is crucial to feminist and anti-racist democratic politics, in that the nomadic subjects-in-becoming develop alongside the discourses and practices of the “others” of postmodernity and engage with them in a creative manner. Nomadic theory requires, however, a high degree of self-reflexivity precisely because it does not engage with discourses and practices of otherness in a mimetic or consumerist manner. It rather cuts a more creative path through these discourses in a nondialectical manner. It does so by giving priority to the undoing of the dominant model of subjectivity and thus putting on the spot the discourse of the Same, the One (Braidotti, 2011, p. 33).

De-familiarization would serve to disrupt colonized discourses about what makes a human subject (Braidotti, 2013). Detaching from dominant representational practices and even from memories forming self-representations results in a nomadic sensibility, a willingness to reinvent the self as the “Other”.
Conclusions

Many research methodologies concerning deaf people have been problematic because many researchers use a colonized and therefore a deficit lens in constructing their research studies and in their choices of methodologies (Mertens, 2007). Ladd (2003) notes that the medical model of deafness (including the development of speech and hearing through residual hearing, the use of cochlear implants and augmented listening technology) receives most available funding dedicated to the cure of deafness. In contrast, the tentative suggestions of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) serve as a methodological template for arts-based research within a posthuman frame. The study of intra-actions between matter, living and non-living, charting the flows of desire in becoming animal, human, earth and machine holds promise for the decolonization of western based research on deaf subjects that use European epistemes. As researchers begin to grapple with the desires of deaf people to form their own destinies in partnership with hearing allies, the movement from representation to performativity allows for the inclusion of materiality which often impact deaf people in such dramatic and direct ways. Until posthuman performativity begins to take hold in the minds and hearts of researchers, the field of deaf education continues to be shredded by binaries that polarize researchers, educators, parents and deaf activists (Kusters, De Meulder, & O'Brien, 2017). Posthuman theory, methodology and affects will become potent tools with which the deaf, in becoming nomad, and therefore can take their place in the world.
SECTION 5: REMOVING THE HUMANISM FROM ARTS-BASED DATA

By now, I had become convinced of the necessity of removing the human from the apex of creation, as the sole arbiter of reality, and the remanding of powers to control, dominate and oppress other species and populations, including minoritized populations. I had just finished reading the scathing critique of arts-based research by jagodzinski & Wallin (2013) and became convinced that the artist must endeavour to remove humanism from the artist created assemblage. Jagodzinski & Wallin (2013) launched a proposal to steer arts-based research away from its current propensity to represent what is seen, thought and felt through the artist’s personal experience, that is research that is “overwhelmingly cathected to who speaks” (Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 96). The authors suggest, “what is implied in the fettering of sense and representation is a transcendent world beyond material percepts and affects” (Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 160). Masny (2013), proposes transcendental empiricism, which means that

Immanence exceeds what is directly perceived, given or experienced. Moreover, immanence refers to life not pre-given; it is pre-personal. It is a virtual which is then actualized and assigned presence. Both actual and virtual are real. It is virtual thought and when actualized, thinking happens to us. It is an event filled with experiences that opens thinking into unpredictable directions. (Masny, 2013, p. 223).

In eschewing representational modes of art and art-based research, the posthumanist researcher veers away from using art as in autobiography, identity politics, and meaning making to emerge in chaos as a whole person, “Amidst it all I am there! Identity persists!”
Art resembles the world from which it emerges!” (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 162).

The posthumanist artist and researcher must want “the lost, the incomprehensible, and the absurd to be restored to him” through composing work that expresses what might be thought rather than returning to what is representational and therefore predictable (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 165). What might be thought when considering the activities in an assemblage is the hallmark of transcendental empiricism. After reading jagodzinski & Wallin (2013), I began to consider the possibility of removing myself as a deaf person or at least reduce the importance of my deaf experience by raising to equal stature, animal, machine and earth within the assemblages through which I moved. I pondered: How I was to research deaf people without referring to deaf people?

Furthermore, since I had written an autoethnographic piece interrogating the evolution of my own sign language practices and ideologies, I wondered how would oppressive practices such as the suppression of sign languages, or policing certain varieties of sign languages to maintain linguistic purity be presented as performative? In response to an invitation to contribute a chapter to a work on sign language ideologies, I wrote an autoethnography which positioned me (again) as the center around which sign language ideologies swirled. Again, I was forced to conclude in favor of a binary: I was an oppressor and oppressed literally in the same breath. My recent foray into the onto-epistemology of posthumanism led me to wonder if I truly did have a bifurcated self. If I accepted that I was always in movement within an assemblage, improvising as I went along, I couldn’t have a self occupied by multiple binaries.

Secondly, jagodzinski & Wallin (2013) comment on the role of desire within the assemblage, emphasizing that desire, conscious and unconscious, is manufactured by the
assemblage as a whole rather than being determined by the actions of individual entities (human, animals, machine and earth) within the assemblage. Removing the anthropocentric bias concerning desire of human beings to control all relationships necessitates the question as to what art can do as opposed to the age-old question of what art can mean? (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). The desires expressed by the assemblage can be detected in the appearance of affects which point to the “nonhuman becomings of the human” (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 171). Therefore, I couldn’t have conflicting desires within me if the desires, unconscious and conscious, were moving through the assemblage and appearing as affects. I found myself quite taken with the notion that binaries are ultimately not sustainable within an assemblage except in the attempts to territorialize, deterritorialize and reterritorialize. Even so, the movements between all three forms of territorialization are in perpetual motion. 

During the time of reading jagodzinski and Wallin (2013), the preparations in which the deaf students and their parents, staff and artists in residences and I had undertaken to fundraise and to plan for a trip to Edmonton to perform at the SoundOff Festival took an unexpected turn. The dread I had entered the fall semester concerning the work that I would have to do to move the Deaf Crow Collective further ahead in the theatre world was overtaken by an assemblage of artists in residence, teachers of the deaf, parents, deaf community adults, ASL students and the deaf students as they planned fundraising events, logistics of travel, and connections with the Edmonton deaf community. The trip felt like a holiday; most of the logistics inherent in the planning was taken over by parents, school supervisors and deaf adults. I found myself moving within this assemblage of cast, crew, bus, bus driver, hotel room, deaf club, interpreters, boxes
of props and costumes, demands of new and unfamiliar stage layouts, deaf and hearing audiences and finding new and unexpected connections concerning the *Deaf Crows* performance and how we were all working to deterritorialize the deleterious effects of the auditory industrial complex which had imposed enormous challenges concerning language acquisition upon the adolescent deaf students whom I taught. Slowly, it became easier to remove myself from being the center of attention, from being in control, and thinking that my own actions could make or break the trip. I saw literally before my own eyes, how the assemblage moved as one and how actions within the assemblage, inappropriate and appropriate, entwined, enfolded, disappeared and appeared in responses to attempts to territorialize and deterritorialize. The image that appeared in my mind was that of an anthill, where ants crawled, carried, disappeared, reappeared, followed and broke away from each other. There was no visible leader in the anthill of our assemblage.

Upon my return from the SoundOff Festival, I suddenly considered a book of poetry as a potential posthumanist text. I had written about a fox-wife who attempts to negotiate affects associated with becoming deaf with her hearing husband (Weber, 2007). Was the creation of fox-wife a posthuman text pointing to the removal of the deaf human subject from the assemblage? Furthermore, how were her desires concerning language negotiated in the arts-based assemblage I had created? The SoundOff Festival experience and my readings in posthumanist methodology and arts-based research as inspired by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) were enabling me to see with a new lens. The following chapter is a tentative foray into deeper methodological territory, that is, living into different way of becoming that did not revolve around me as the prime mover of a movement toward liberation and hope.
Using an arts-based posthumanist lens (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013) I diffractively analyze arts-based data (poetry) concerning my evolving beliefs and practices concerning the use of American Sign Language (ASL) in response to Western domination and control of language usage in populations categorized as the Other, through their proliferation of dualisms, binaries and categories concerning language acquisition (Canagarajah, 2013). I offer a rhizoanalysis (Masny, 2013) of a book of poetry called, *The Pear Orchard* (Weber, 2007) which offers lines of flight concerning sign language ideologies.

**Background**

The arts-based exploration of my own sign language ideologies within a unique microcosm of ideologies and attitudes surrounding sign languages in Saskatchewan, Canada is an outcome of my practice as a teacher of the deaf in varying locales and currently in a small resource program for deaf adolescents. I am a profoundly deaf teacher, having been educated in mainstream education environments throughout my entire schooling including elementary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions save for one year at Gallaudet University from 1987 to 1988. Fluent in spoken English, I am a late signer, having entered the deaf community at the age of 25.

There are ideological conflicts concerning the use of sign language to enable deaf children to learn and access the curriculum and the use of bio-technology such as cochlear implants to promote the development of listening and speaking skills in the majority language (English in North America). Educational and language policies
concerning education of the deaf in Saskatchewan have not been favorable to the use of ASL within instructional settings. The Task Force Committee on Education of the Deaf (1989) and the Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, (1990) recommended the use of signed English with deaf children and youth who needed additional supports to oral habilitation. Furthermore, the Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, (1990) proposed that the use of ASL in the instructional setting be piloted. This proposed project had never received support from the Ministry of Education or any school division to date (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016). The lack of support for ASL resulted in the exodus of deaf professionals and paraprofessionals upon the closure of the provincial school for the deaf. In addition, due to the placement of existing students enrolled at schools for the deaf in Alberta and Manitoba, the numbers of fluent ASL speakers were greatly reduced (Carbin, 1996; Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990). The closure was prompted by the recommendations of the Saskatchewan government’s Task Force on Deaf Education (1989), in support of the increasing movement toward education of deaf students in their home communities provided by local school boards (Saskatchewan Task Force Committee on Deaf Education, 1989).

I had already written an autoethnographic paper titled “Interrogating local sign language ideologies in the Saskatchewan deaf community” on the formation of my own sign language ideologies within a 28-year period (Weber, 2018c in press). These sign language ideologies were shaped by my professional training as an educator of the deaf, my own early acculturation into becoming a speaking deaf adult and my ongoing sign language acquisition beginning at the age of 25. In that paper, I conclude that while I was hampered by my own negative view of ASL, my sign language practices eventually
trumped my beliefs concerning sign language acquisition.

In this conclusion of the paper, however, there appears to be an unexplored liminal space, an interstice between sign language practices and sign language ideology, and while I was frank enough in my admission of continued grappling with a deficit perspective concerning ASL, the paper presents me as having a divided self in relation to sign language ideologies. I now wonder, did my sign language practices really trump my sign language ideologies? Is my representation of myself as essentially divided, accurate? To avoid binarizing myself and others, and the perpetuation of dualisms and categories in qualitative research paradigms strongly influenced by Western epistemes (St. Pierre, 2013), I apply posthumanist theory to arts-based data.

**Onto-Epistemology**

In this chapter, I wish to turn to the interstitial space between sign language practices and beliefs, as there may be a hidden narrative that may be made visible through the posthumanist frame which is built upon Spinoza’s premise that the universe is essentially monist, that is, all is one, that there is no division, between living and non-living entities. In moving away from representation, I examine posthumanist performativity concerning the intra-actions of humans, animals, earth and machine. Posthumanist performativity is about locating myself as the deaf posthuman subject in an assemblage including material, human and nonhuman entities which are agentic, self-organizing and vitalist (Barad, 2003; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Hence, dualisms, divisions, bifurcations, categories or labels characteristic of standard qualitative research have no place within the posthumanist frame (St. Pierre, 2013). In doing so, I remove myself as the sole arbiter of reality and through my intra-actions with animal, earth, and
machine, I come to see myself as produced by and producing other human and nonhuman actors through an assemblage concerning sign language ideologies and practices within an assemblage of material and non-material entities.

**Theory**

The turn away from anthropocentrism, that is, the reference to the self as the authority in determining what is real, enables me to refer to myself as cyborg, one who intra-acts with animals, earth and machine

A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction” (Haraway, 1991, p. 149).

As a cyborg, my intra-actions with humans, animals, plant life, earth, and sound as energy is profoundly entangled. I must negotiate meaning through adjusting lighting, sightlines, guessing at what is being said, asking for repetition of information (if the speaker exhibits above average patience), demonstrating understanding or not, switching my hearing aid on and off when in noisy environments, and asking for American Sign Language interpreting when the demands of listening exceed both my capacity and the energy required to patch together broken sounds, words and phrases in the English language. Despite being fluent in all modalities of English (speaking, listening, reading and writing), I have been denounced for learning sign language and using ASL interpreters by professionals working with deaf children and youth because I was once the poster child for oralism in the province (Weber, 2013). At the same time, some hearing colleagues have expressed dismay and impatience at having to accommodate me
by wearing a microphone attached to an additional listening device (FM system) which augments my ability to hear. Furthermore, I am often thrust in environments where everyone is speaking at the same time despite my persistent efforts to remind them not to. Here, the assemblage is producing and is produced by desires, unconscious and conscious, concerning my hearing loss.

These intra-actions along with the material forces shape the transmission of sound as energy such as the presence of hard surfaces, noisy heels, humming lights, scraping chairs, brightly lit windows, and objects obstructing sightlines such as microphones in front of a speaker’s mouth, the back of people’s heads, furniture, trees, buildings, cars, windows, bushes, shrubs, and computer monitors. There is a shape shifting quality concerning my negotiations with a variety of environments which may puzzle people. Often, I am assumed to be vacant, hyperalert, cunning, lazy, unintelligent, uncooperative and vague in my responses to the demands of these negotiations. I often fake understanding through smiling or nodding, or later puzzle over the words or signs I’ve been given by others.

**Research Questions**

For this chapter, titled “Cyborgs and Fox-Wives: Interrogating Sign Language Ideologies”, I investigate three questions: 1) what can the interstice reveal about the desires and beliefs of the assemblage in which the fox-wife is placed concerning the use of sign language? 2) What does the fox-wife do with sign language in an assemblage? 3) What are the affects of the assemblage presented in *The Pear Orchard*? Doing things with language presupposes an undivided singularity as opposed to splitting the question into as to what one thinks and believes about ASL and what one does with ASL.
Methodology – Cartography

The artist within the posthuman frame, is charged with the task of creating a world (an assemblage) in which human and nonhuman intra-act in ways to produce each other (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Sign language ideologies are not the property of the human actors but also of the other non-human actors in the assemblages including animal, machine and earth. I engaged in arts-based research to examine the affects produced within an assemblage about sign language ideologies. In the assemblage, the posthumanist researcher uses arts-based data with view to “dislodging the anthropocentric impulse that continues to inhere the meaning of artistic praxis and creativity” (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 180). This involves creating an accurate cartographic map of affects and desires within the assemblage. Cartography is the mapping of the assemblage, the flows of desires and the presence of affects within the assemblage. The map is not a tracing of objects in location and time but “fosters connections between fields, the removal of blockages” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12). In posthumanist arts-based research, the artist is charged with the task of creating affects that encourage humans to move toward becoming non-human as in becoming animal, machine and earth. Becoming nonhuman is not to adopt the physical qualities and behaviours associated with animals, machines and earth but to adopt the rhythms, speeds, intensities, and spatial orientations characteristics of the nonhuman (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013).

The use of poetry from The Pear Orchard as arts-based data enables me to interrogate the evolution of sign language ideologies produced by intra-actions between human and nonhuman actors in the assemblage, that is, a fox-wife, her human husband
and the mysterious “Other”. The performativity of all actors within the assemblage suggests perpetual movement, a continuous shifting between identities, locations, and desires while producing and being produced by others.

The fox-wife is a cyborg: “we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics” (Haraway, 1991, p. 150). Moreover, “cyborg politics is about the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of phallogocentrism” (Haraway, 1991, p. 176). Perfect communication assumes that one always expresses and receives perfectly the message conveyed by the other (Haraway, 1991; Pennycook, 2018). The shape-shifting I had elucidated in this chapter concerned the cyborg’s struggle for language as they are shaped by intra-actions with humans, earth, and machines within an assemblage. Here, in the struggle for language, “the assemblage … acts: it is the entanglement that pressures and produces reconfigurings; it is the intra-action of the material and discursive that produces a distributed agency between and among human and nonhuman entities” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2016, p. 3). The assemblage arranges or fits together disparate elements, opening the way for new territorial and spatial orientations and therefore new realities (Jackson & Mazzei, 2016). In this way, the assemblage is agentic rather than the lone individual (Jackson & Mazzei, 2016). Here, the fox-wife is the stand-in for the cyborg located in the complex interweaving of the human and nonhuman (animal, earth and machine).
**Findings**

Over a period of twenty years (1987-2007), I constructed a world or an assemblage through poetry. In 1987, inspired by a reading of *Sylva*, a novel by Vercors (1963) I began with the creation of a nonhuman, a vampiric fox-wife in the shape of a woman who marries a human farmer. Vercor’s fable on the duality of being a fox-wife and a human within the same body easily transposed into my mind, the conflicted binaries of being deaf and hearing. In later years I further constructed the fox-wife as a shapeshifter known as the kitsune according to Japanese folklore (Bathgate, 2004). Here, the shapeshifter shares a great deal with other forms of metamorphosis (henshin), a theme whose striking ontological repercussions make it a fundamental element in mythic discourse the world over (O’Flaherty, 1984, pg. 3). [This] metamorphosis represents a kind of “ontological scandal”; a grotesque challenge to the taken-for-granted boundaries (natural and social) that constitute our sense of cosmic order (Bynum, 2001, pg. 179) … Unfettered by the pigeonholes of quotidian existence, the metamorph asserts an undifferentiated continuity behind the distinctions we take for granted, an experience of transgression that poses both the threat of chaos and the promise of liberation (Bathgate, 2004, pp. 8-9).

In this assemblage constructed within the volume of poetry called, “*The Pear Orchard*” (Weber, 2007), the fox-wife, as a supernatural creature, inhabits the bodies and lives of artists, scientists, saints, a Celtic warrior, philosophers, writers, fictional characters, musicians, feminists, and biblical characters and the body of a fox. The assemblage reaches far into historical locales, events, and time frames ranging thousands of years and
finally moves out onto a Saskatchewan farm where the fox-wife interrogates the language used between herself, her husband and a mysterious “Other”.

Material objects such as the pear, a pear tree, pear orchard, a polluted pond, and buildings such as cathedrals, farmhouses, and art galleries also shift shapes and purposes through intra-action with the characters in this landscape. For instance, the pear orchard itself is confined by walls, bedrooms inhabited by lovers, the snows of winter and even inside a woman’s body. The individual pear appears in a variety of contexts and is used in novel and startling ways by different characters. The dry farmer’s field, the farm kitchen and barns, the seasons, including the grain harvest, mark the solar and lunar cycles. Within this assemblage, data that glows appears at the boundaries of language and the body (McLure, 2013).

The struggle between the fox-wife and her husband is over language, over which language they will use between each other, how they come to develop a language between themselves and how they will use language with the other in the nomadic trajectory of becoming deaf. In short, it is about what the actors do with language in the assemblage of actors, living and non-living whose beings are presented in a nonlinear fashion through zigzagging throughout history, biology, agricultural practices, animal behaviours, art traditions, religion, mythology, hagiography, and psychoanalysis. In this assemblage, actors appear and reappear to provide a poetic interrogation into the slow development of sign language ideology over a period of twenty years (1987-2007).

**Assemblage**

In 1987, despite my so-called successes in the hearing world, I came to embrace sign language to survive the persistent thinking of myself as a fraud and feelings of
isolation and depression. At first, I was immersed in a dizzying confluence of ASL signs which I struggled to comprehend. The frustration, confusion, and anxiety evoked strong memories of trying to navigate a world that was littered with broken phrases and incomplete thoughts always in spoken English and now again as a beginning student of ASL. I wrote of a pear orchard in which the fox-wife, appearing as a young deaf woman, wanders, enduring hours of boredom, subject to the expectation that she sits throughout endless conversations to which she is not privy. Meanwhile,

…she takes her place in the world,

has a body, a body like everyone else’s.

Her mother says, the lights are only flashes,

fragments leading to half formed ideas,

a sudden brilliance swallowed by darkness.

Yet broken lights are better than silence.

At least they ward off boredom,

you can play with them in your mind,

look at the trees spangled with hanging mirrors,

such loveliness should compensate for the pears that cannot be eaten,

you’ll never fully grasp their meaning, their enunciation,

their place in conversing

or even in books…

Her mother tells her,

be satisfied with shimmering lights,
think of them as fairies flying among the trees,

for the fruit of the orchard, my dear, was never meant for you. (Weber, 2007, p. 7)

In struggling with affects associated with broken sounds, flashing lights signifying very little or nothing at all, the fox-wife has no place to go but to turn over things in her mind. The shimmering lights, the spinning mirrors, the heavy fruits are only half formed ideas, and she “paws her thoughts/ before language as if they were fond old tricks. /They are chickens easily devoured, /eggs sucked quickly into my mouth/farmers outsmarted and hounds/ thrown off my scent (Weber, 2007, p. 81).

The fox-wife wanders through a historical landscape populated by Western European figures. She begins to inhabit the bodies of medieval noblewoman, Heloise, Boadicea, the philosopher Simone Weil, writer George Sand, musician Fanny Mendelssohn, scientist Marie Curie, literary characters including Catherine Earnshaw of Wuthering Heights, Isolde the Fair, Lara of Dr. Zhivago, the subjects of paintings by Geertgen Tot Sint Jan, Jan Van Ecyk, Rembrandt, Renoir and Michaelangelo’s sculptures. The fox-wife has a penchant for occupying bodies of saints and arguing with them: Teresa of Avila, St. Augustine, Hildegaard of Bingen and Dorothy Day. She stages her dilemma concerning the use of sign and spoken languages in the context of the biblical drama of the Annunciation and Mary’s dialogues with Elizabeth and Zachariah. The assemblage is the collection of the flickering lights of the pear orchard, that is, the affects producing and produced by the bodies of literary, historical and spiritual figures. Essentially, the fox-wife is a nomad (Braidotti, 2011), zigzagging between affects produced by bodies, historical periods, and at the same time, negotiating and shifting the intensities within the affects to direct flow of desires, unconscious and conscious
concerning sign language ideology. As she shifts shapes, occupies different bodies, assumes different voices and positionalities, she causes other affects to shift shape too. In doing so, the affects associated with the pear leads to a performativity concerning becoming earth.

**Becoming Earth**

There are many affects associated with the pear as language which adopts varying rhythms, speeds, intensities, spatial orientations and even different purposes. For instance, the medieval noble husband indicates his preference for the separateness of the two languages between him and his fox-wife: “This is the way he likes it, /a language of touch/for the deaf and dumb. /She nods in agreement. /lies in their cool tomb, her body/a misplaced cipher in both languages (Weber, 2007, p. 10). Moreover, he tells her “…Your broken words throb/in my ear, let my language come between us, /hard as a young green pear” (Weber, 2007, p. 13). The pear as language is originally used an instrument of sexual desire and domination, first introduced by her husband, and sparks an inchoate desire as the fox-wife’s attempt to predict her future by peering at a pear tree as if language would direct her life. The pear later morphs into a womb; its linguistic property now holding forth promise of new life. At the same time, becoming pregnant is an expected duty of a medieval noblewoman and the pear located within her womb and in the headdress, that she wears, bears a tentative quality: “I’ve worn my pear headdress faithfully (it is so heavy these days)” (Weber, 2007, p.23) and at the same time it is smashed fruit in her womb: “how can you steep yourself in my womb, float in the tea/of menstrual blood, broken leaves, torn flowers and smashed fruit?” (Weber, 2007, p.23). The removal of the pear headdress informing her nascent awareness of the politics of
language within her body now contradicts the hegemonic control exerted by her husband who favors a monolingual policy that English be the international language facilitating industrial, political, cultural and social relationships (Canagarajah, 2013). The fox-wife is beginning to resist the language imposed by her husband, as the language to be shared between the two of them.

In her nomadic zigzagging throughout history, the fox-wife angrily confronts St. Augustine who stole pears only to smash them under his feet when escaping from the garden. The fox-wife confronts desire in the form of a destroyed pear: “you smashed the fruit against the stone wall/you ought to have wanted a pear/that would run down your chin, /one that would have reminded you of me, /just one” (Weber, 2007, p. 20). The lack of desire to communicate in multiple languages and to share linguistic repertoires results in the adherence to one language to be shared by all people, results in wasted opportunities for conviviality (Canagarajah, 2013). The waste of pears is contrasted with the fox-wife’s relentless hunt for a shared language and potential fragments of understanding which could bring about more new connections enabling belonging and community. The fox-wife attempts to mend the contentious relationship with her husband by coaxing him to look at her sign language:

Here is a pear to stay your hunger,
as we wake slowly to the silence,
learn its nouns, parse its verbs,
the whorls of silence will be laid down…
When you roll the seeds under your tongue,
I will become yours again. (Weber, 2007, p. 22)
The sign language, however fragile in its beginning, doesn’t stick and the husband, a restless master builder, leaves his fox-wife to raise their daughter alone. The fox-wife worries about her ability to maintain sign language now that it is no longer in use: “All around her is decay, the golden translucent skin of the pear/is mottled with black cuts, sprays of spores, and ripening orange” (Weber, 2007, p. 25). Yet, the fox-wife knows, that her language is not dead, that despite her fears, language resides in herself despite her locations, positionalities, boundaries determined by political, social and cultural entities. She speaks to her mother who has now morphed into the caregiving affect displayed by the deaf community who has passed sign language to the fox-wife.

Mother, now that you’ve let me be deaf,
scraped your womb of its dank winter trees,
cleared the unkempt patches,
you’ve let me be a pure seed begun in you,
a room of buried longings.

Your passion sang long and hard for me,
this lushness beginning in the spring orchard.
My longings begin their fleshly protrusions,
my most wild need is heard
and is not yours, but mine
as the dream of pears accompanies me
through your seasons until the burst of my deaf body,
a blossom through your floor,
my limbs, strong green vines push through your windows,
straining with the flesh of my stray desire:

Let me be deaf, hold my ear to your breast,
let me see how the pear orchard grows. (Weber, 2007, p. 22)

The transmission of language within a social context contravenes the Enlightenment notion that language comes from an inner essence and is the result of individual cognition. The emphasis on named languages as an innate quality of the individual gives way to the suggestion that “languages are not characterized as linguistic objects, containing lexical or structure features found in cognition but are constructed according to political and social boundaries” (Garcia, Otheguy, & Reid, 2015). The shape shifting qualities of the fox-wife as she crosses borders between geographical, historical and temporal realms serve to reinforce that language is socially constructed using multiple linguistic repertoires and with the purpose of facilitating intimacy, connection and belonging. She is everywhere and possesses mobile linguistic resources with which to use in the multiple locations and temporalities. Her possession of mobile resources defies the hegemonic effort to standardize languages through purification, codification and prevention of the sharing of multiple linguistic meanings and conventions (Canagarajah, 2013).

**Becoming Deaf**

The pear orchard and all things European now vanishes from the fox-wife’s world to be replaced with a jaundiced view of her husband who now owns a farm:

After days of following him with obsequious cant,

I wonder as I collapse into a cacophony of vowels

before him, should I give in,
wear this white shift, use a fork,
sleep in his fresh sheeted bed
curled between his head and knees.

Shall I never again gather the bones of a chicken

The fox-wife resists language, as a bounded system, with discrete components to be
learned in tightly structure pedagogical interventions, which is immediately hierarchized
(Canagarajah, 2013) with the human husband being endowed with a superior language.

The fox-wife suggests code meshing which is the borrowing and swapping of
resources within multiple languages including linguistic phrases, grammatical structures
and additional semiotic resources to negotiate meaning (Canagarajah, 2013). The desire
to communicate, to facilitate cohesion among diverse languages, communities and
peoples is the impetus behind code meshing (Canagarajah, 2013). This desire is apparent
in the fox-wife’s pleading:

You could point, mime, gesture?
dance, or scribble a few words on a notepad.
Whatever I get from that
will be good enough, won’t it? (Weber, 2007, p. 82)

In adding a semiotic resource to her repertoire (the images that she creates to accompany
her husband’s stories) in the hope of developing a way to communicate fully with her
husband, she signals a break from the Eurocentric notion of reason, liberalism, and the
supremacy of the English language (Pennycook, 1998). The fox-wife’s pleading voice,
however, give away her uncertainty about the proposed code meshing. She asks: “Will it
be good enough?” The farmer husband does not respond. The fox-wife continues in her attempts to appease the angry husband:

I’ve copied the text faithfully,

wouldn’t dare change a word,

I’ve gone beyond language,

given them a visual edge.

I’ve made you famous.” (Weber, 2007, p. 82).

The fox-wife’s attempt to enhance her husband’s words with accompanying visual representations is a beginning of the attempt to use additional semiotic resources to communicate with her phonocentric husband. Becoming deaf includes the development of a linguistic repertoire essential to negotiate meanings with diverse language users:

deaf people make use of different modalities in their communication and thus manage greater communicative repertoires. Thus, they do not only exploit the iconic nature of sign language lexicon and grammar… but they also profit from their continuous existence in nonsigning, speaking environments. We suggest that this adds to available communicative strategies they have at their disposal (Crasborn & Hiddinga, 2015, p. 63).

Semiotic resources include the visual, material, contexts, gestures, and other modalities used to negotiate meaning. Not everyone will have full fluency in a language, but everyone can make use of semiotic resources to negotiate meaning with other diverse linguistic speakers (Canagarajah, 2013).
**Becoming Other**

An unexpected ally comes to the fox-wife’s aid, the presence of a mysterious “Other” who is an integral part of the prairie landscape where she now inhabits with her farmer husband: Sensing the support provided by the “Other”, the fox-wife says to the mysterious other:

and you’d shift your feet in shy politeness, receiving pain and absurdities in my soaring hands, in my broken vowels, the queer pitch of my voice shattering the broken tongue” (Weber, 2007, p. 88).

The sacrificial element on the part of the mysterious “Other” involves a direct confrontation of English as a hegemonic language and the consequences of such confrontations. The fox-wife observes:

You fought for me, for us, for our language, for the word in me while others shook their heads. You were shunned, you had gone mad, people said. Somewhere you died, I discovered. Your body disappeared from a sod shanty

Here, the willingness on the part of the mysterious “Other” to negotiate meaning using incomplete language repertoires aided by additional semiotic resources has political and ethical dimensions (Canagarajah, 2013). The emphasis on the correct production of lexical and structural features of bounded languages reduces opportunities for translanguaging between multiple languages (Garcia, Otheguy, & Reid, 2015). Translanguaging enables one to develop a general linguistic proficiency where the language learner engages his/her full repertoire toward the mastery of a bounded language. Only if one embraces the other’s language, can communication, intimacy and belonging be possible.

Anxious for a swift conclusion to her tormented years, the fox-wife says to the mysterious “Other”:

There is language between us now.

In the ring of our bodies, we are finally human.

I thought it was such a good idea,

It makes so much sense

that two good people get together, build a life.

You speak, I can sign” (Weber, 2007, p. 87).

She is now reconciled to the two solitudes, her desire for intimacy fading into an acceptance of what is between her and her husband. She will do the work of translanguaging even if her husband will not. Within the fox-wife, the boundaries of language seem to have crumbled or been deterritorialized to embrace a political ethical
orientation that embraces the material and social settings in which language functions. In other words, in opposition to the notion of languages as bounded within communities, language is a function of contact zones (Canagarajah, 2013). Canagarajah (2013) writes of the orientation in which ready-made meanings are replaced by collaborative co-constructions including semiotic resources borrowed from diverse languages and symbol systems. The fox-wife will initiate co-construction which comes from her desire to achieve a pragmatic purpose between diverse language users and includes objects, bodies, setting and participants to create meaning (Canagarajah, 2013). In this way, within the fox-wife, language is now shared between herself, her farmer husband and the mysterious “Other”. She is able to reconcile seemingly binarized positions concerning her relationship between her husband and addresses the “Other”: “it was you who I loved/before I caressed the body of my husband’…/These days I fight alone with the word in me” (Weber, 2007, p. 88). Now, due to her decision, language does not remain as a static property between the intimate couple.

But she is not satisfied. The call of the body and the materiality of their world encroaches upon this private inner space she has carved out for herself and she approaches her husband again.

On the edge of the coulee,
I stalk your field.
I must have your body again.

How you held me,
traveled the universe in my eyes, my naked body, warm, dark.
You flung open fearlessly,
the door to the richest province of my being,

Your broad hands gathering at every stride,

every wild and verdant flower, 

the secret varieties, 

the strange and pungent odours, 

random in all their beauty. (Weber, 2007, p. 85)

The sudden about face when she reflects further on her previous mad rush toward certainty occurs in the fox-wife’s decision to “withdraw ever so slightly. /My eyes search over the vastness/of the coulee at my feet” (Weber, 2007, p. 85) is indicative of her shift toward materiality. The answer is out there in the assemblage, in the intra-action with the vastness of the prairie, in the performativity of the assemblage always in motion rather than a frozen moment within time. The fox-wife finds herself postponing decisions as she becomes aware of the stillness of the landscape. She is now willing to be in movement toward something that is yet defined, that is, becoming deaf.

The fox-wife is now able to return to her farmer-husband and confidently speaks of the hold of Eurocentrism. She can speak of the journey as performative, of her intra-actions with Eurocentric artefacts, and her line of flight away from its hold on her. She can present to her husband, a much fuller and richer understanding of language beyond the preoccupations with linguistic systems, cognitive orientations and forms toward linguistic practices in contact zones. Moreover, she can fully reveal who she is to her husband:

Envy, too long have I loved you,

admired your portraits,
refined your stories,
borrowed your clothes,
imitated your speech,
my path was a labyrinth
whose green walls once blocked my return to you,
my husband now aghast at my tail,
my upturned nose,
the fiery shock of hair,
my small dainty hands should have warned you

of what I’ve come to know what you will soon know,
how I stalk a language of the body,

In being profoundly entangled with sound as energy, bodies, material objects, sightlines, movement, the fox-wife is performative as she strives to negotiate meanings with others using multiple and mobile semiotic resources. As a cyborg, she combines the uncombinable. Haraway (1991) remarks:

These are the couplings which make Man and Woman so problematic, subverting the structure of desire the force imagined to generate language and gender and so subverting the structures and modes of representation of ‘Western’ identity, of nature and culture, of mirror and eye, slave and master, body and mind (Haraway, 1991, p. 176).

The fox-wife in her desire for intimacy, becomes comfortable with ‘partiality.” She is satisfied with what she can receive, believing that her life is just as full, as vital and
agentic as any other human who possesses full hearing. The fox-wife will continue to negotiate meaning with multiple others.

Lovely, I am deaf born,
a fox twinned with the hearing,
a shadow colony settling noiselessly among these stubborn Russian Germans,
thrift and hard work.
Long ago in Russia,
wolves, dark shadows in the sparse birch haunted the rich bourgeoisie frozen inside the turrets of onion roofs.
Lovely, I dart out from the ice crusted homes out onto the prairies toward the wolves in dark consent. (Weber, 2007, p. 90)

The dark consent of the fox-wife is the agreement to be profoundly entangled with all human and non-human actors in the assemblage, to negotiate meanings with others who may be dangerous and threatening to her.

Conclusions

The fox-wife is confronted with the assemblage’s desire that she assimilate by adopting English as the hegemonic language. Within the interstices in this assemblage, she wanders, attempting to assimilate by inhabiting bodies of major Western figures. Wandering the Eurocentric landscape, experimenting with visual, written, gestural forms of communication between her and her husband, and grieving over the loss of the
“Other” who promised her acceptance all contribute to her efforts and commitment to engage in translanguaging activities. In other words, her commitment to translanguaging evolved as a performativity, rather than thinking about language, and then deciding what to do with language. In doing so, she subverts the classical notion of being a unified subject committed to modes of representation which perpetuates categories, labels and dualisms, including the mind-body split. In investigating this cartography, one eschews the question of whether practices trump beliefs as I entertained in a previous paper concerning sign language ideologies (Weber, 2018c in press).

At the same time, the fox-wif...
Moreover, the fox-wife as a posthumanist subject, is a collection of liminal selves which contribute to performativity through assemblages, while inhabiting the borderlands, spaces inbetween the categories, labels, assumptions, and representative modes of thinking (St. Pierre, 2013). Anzaldua (1987) suggests that such liminality where the uncombinable are combined, is a state of perpetual psychic unrest to be documented by poets and artists. Anzaldua’s call to poets and artists may be construed as the call to examine performativity of cyborgs, non-humans such as animals, machines, and earth within assemblages. After all, deaf or not deaf, we are all cyborgs.
SECTION 6: FREEING DEAF CROWS FROM CAPTIVITY

Again, we Deaf Crows played to three consecutive sold out audiences at the SoundOff Festival in Edmonton and returned to Regina, Saskatchewan exhausted but euphoric. We had done it again as we had managed to capture the hearts of parents, administrators, the deaf community and the artist community. We received many offers from theatres across the country to perform.

During that semester, we started an arts installation project called *The Deaf Forest*. The project of removing humanism from arts-based interventions curiously took on a new life of its own as students and staff began to identify affects associated with different types of trees and with states associated with being hearing, hard of hearing and deaf. The new project just didn’t have any reference to humans other than states associated with degrees of hearing loss and mostly focused on creating environments using animals and earth, generating affects to be discerned by the gallery visitor. I found myself referring back to what I had written in the last chapter about the presence of liminal selves within an assemblage, moving throughout the borderlands, spaces in between the categories, labels, assumptions, and representative modes of thinking.

I pondered this fragile collection of liminal selves within the assemblage through which we Deaf Crows were moving, appearing and disappearing at times within the school division and the community contexts at times. Is the collection of liminal selves within ourselves and within the assemblage doomed to remaining fleeting, transitory and tenuous? At the same time, I began to wonder about freeing the arts-based program from its position as a fringe program within a special needs program often shunted to the side in consideration of the needs of the larger mainstream population, which in
Saskatchewan, is predominately characterized as white settlers.

Within the resource room, the culturally relevant arts education (CRAE) program (Hanley, Noblit, Sheppard, Barone, & hooks, 2013) still felt like a basement level program, a bilingual program that was shunted to the margins of a large school board dedicated to providing inclusive education programs for all people with disabilities (Flores & Garcia, 2017). At the same time, due to the interest stirred by *Deaf Crows*, registration in community ASL classes under the auspices of a non-profit agency, Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, had doubled. Hearing people had become enthused about learning ASL. Moreover, a strong sense of déjà vu began to settle over the deaf community as the government, as part of their initiative to rein in their overspending, announced significant cuts to education funding provided to school boards who, in turn, cut services to preschool aged deaf children (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2017b). Hearing aid services to the general populations were axed and audiologists received their layoff notices while Ear, Nose and Throat specialists joined the protests against the cutbacks (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2017d). As in 1991, the deaf population was the first attacked in the beginning of budgetary restraints in 2017 (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990).

Sign language acquisition for deaf students in a congregated program had become a basement program while ASL language acquisition in the large hearing community had become a boutique program (Flores & Garcia, 2017). The *Deaf Crows* cast, and crew became proud of their accomplishments, but hearing people, agencies, and interpreters continued to profit from coordinating, interpreting, and providing ASL language acquisition to the hearing population in the form of sign language classes, cultural
gatherings, ASL interpreted drama performances in the community and promotional items. Flores & Garcia (2017) in observing a similar phenomenon in Latinx communities, argue that neither pride nor profit are sufficient in improving the living conditions of Latinx communities. This is because both tropes position the locus of social change at the level of individuals in ways that obscure the structural barriers confronting Latinx children and communities. Pride suggests that improving the self-esteem of Latinx and other minoritized students will improve their academic achievement. Yet, a bilingual teacher seeking to do this must confront the larger school context that has often relegated these students to the basement, alongside broader societal messages that devalue and marginalize these students and their communities. In a similar vein, profit suggests that marketing bilingual education to powerful parents will increase the status of these programs. Yet, the stark inequalities that exist between the different stakeholders may lead to the exclusion of the minoritized students they were originally created to support (Valdez, Freire, & Delavan, 2016). The limitations of both pride and profit stem from their lack of attention to the broader structural barriers confronting Latinx communities (Flores & Garcia, 2017, p. 16).

Despite the impact of *Deaf Crows*, I continued to struggle with significant lack of support for the program and felt even more marginalized than ever. During that spring, I taught eleven high school classes, including two classes I had never taught before, to ten students without any prep time available because of staff shortages. I begged for additional staff and was encouraged to engage in some very creative problem solving which did not cost my employer a single extra dollar. Indeed, the success of *Deaf Crows*
did not result in benefits directly to the students who still did not receive full access to the curriculum or the school community. Meanwhile, I continued to meet many people outside of the school in casual encounters who were enrolled in sign language courses and who were eager to practice their newly developed ASL skills with me. The sum of people who were enrolled in these classes easily tripled the number of deaf students who continued to struggle with uneven, inadequate access to ASL in the classroom.

As I worked with the students to create the upcoming art installation called *The Deaf Forest* to be displayed in the following fall semester, I wondered how posthumanism could contribute toward providing a way out of the basement and boutique dilemma (Flores & Garcia, 2017). Somehow, I wanted to move the *Deaf Crows* into a position where we could comfortably say to those endowed with power to direct our lives:

We are much greater than your limited perceptions of us. You want to split us into two camps: signing and speaking camps and win your little war. Twenty-seven years later, we Deaf are much stronger, more generous, and more advanced than you in understanding our lives, potentialities of hearing, speaking and signing. (Weber, 2017).

How could posthumanist pedagogy lift the *Deaf Crows* out of the basement or free them from captivity? While I was gluing, cutting, sewing, and arranging to pick up used paint, scraps of fabric, plastic tubing, and stuffing used in quilts, I began to wonder how pedagogy based on affects in the assemblage would serve to empower the *Deaf Crows*. My initial efforts were tentative. I really wasn’t sure at that point, after that exhausting semester, whether *Deaf Crows* was sustainable despite the new partnerships being
developed between hearing and deaf communities. I worried that what we were doing wasn’t going to be enough to grab the attention of those who had the power to impact our lives including the auditory industrial complex, government officials and educational administrators. I still lacked the language to describe what was going on in my classroom and the ability to uncover lines of flight that would serve to deterritorialize the attempts by important stakeholders to control, contain, restrict and to push us back into an ignored and neglected marginalized state. The following chapter is an exploration of affective pedagogy and its potential for driving change to the well-established basement and boutique binary that continues to dominate deaf education.
CHAPTER 6: AFFECTIVE PEDAGOGY

**Introduction**

The work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) has prompted an “affective turn” in educational pedagogy (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2016). Within the classroom, affects appear as states indicating “feeling, intensity, richness, playfulness, desiring, passion, excitement, rage, suffering, life, becoming” (Albrecht-Crane, 2003, p. 563). In thinking with affect, “something valuable, critical, something political … happens when we relate affectively across the spaces of our classroom” (Albrecht-Crane, 2003, p. 563). Desire produces affects and, in turn, is produced by affects, a tautological circle, as “desire is never separable from complex assemblages that necessarily tie into molecular levels, from the microformations already shaping postures, attitudes, perceptions, expectations, semiotic systems, etc.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 215). The interplay between desires and affects is the result of productions by and with material and embodied elements of the assemblage including all living and non-living matter. Giving embodied forms to inner desire produces affects that are dynamic, which bear social, cultural and political outcomes (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2016).

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), affects are more than feelings that occur when experiencing a constellation of events, processes, or even a singular instance. Rather, affects can be better described as intensities or energies which correspond to occurrences within an assemblage, which in turn, influence a body’s (living or non-living) capacity to act (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Affects are transformative in that they can be defined as taking on something or changing in relation to an experience or
encounter (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Affects contribute to flows of desires which in turn influence the movements within assemblages (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Flows of desire are not always positive; affects can be heightened or diminished according to flows of desire (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Affective pedagogy is first and foremost, a material and embodied pedagogy (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2016). Barad’s (2007) contention that matter is agentic, self-organizing and vitalist informs the relationship with the deaf body within an assemblage. The complex intra-actions with other bodies, objects, sound, social and cultural milieu allows the deaf person to be produced and to produce as they move through assemblages. Moreover, how the deaf person senses and feels in their doings allows for the events where bodies, senses, and worlds recombine endlessly in the creation of new happenings (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2016). Here, affects allows for the mapping of social and political realities and possibilities for change. The affects arising from medicalized discourses concerning deafness (Mauldin, 2016), belonging to the deaf community, the use of sign language (Ladd, 2003), and the dysphoria experienced on a daily basis by those who may also choose to navigate the hearing world through use of technology (Crowley, 2012) all contribute to an affective pedagogy. Thus, affects might enable the deaf student to examine what they can do and consider what degree of agency is possible in the assemblages within which they move (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2016). Here, not only the personal agency but the agency of others, including sound, objects, other bodies (living and non-living) and in the case of arts education, the materials associated with making art, is considered.

Affects are produced by things and produce matter as well. In discerning the role
of matter as vitalist, self-organizing, and agentic, non-living things are ascribed with “thing power” (Bennet, 2010, p. 1) or agentic capacities. The thing power cannot be fully described but is absolute. That is, the thing-power has an impersonal life of its own (Bennet, 2010). Furthermore, the thing power has the capacity to act, to make things happen, and to produce affects (Bennet, 2010). While things may appear inert, a posthumanist researcher learns to glimpse an energetic vitality inside of things which cannot be fully defined through language, signs and symbols (Bennet, 2010). While the effects of this vitality may be very subtle, other effects may be very dramatic. Examples of the range of affects within matter include spontaneous structural generation in inorganic matter such as water producing tsunamis, laser beams, and crystals at the molecular level (Bennet, 2010).

**Becoming Molecular**

Differences between agentic capacities (or thing powers) are flattened or read horizontally within posthumanism instead of the humanist inspired arrangement of categories and hierarchies in which agentic capacities is arranged from the least to the most agentic (Bennet, 2010). The result is the examination of an ecology in which living and non-living matter, humans, and animals are placed in equal relationship to each other. The role of humans within this ecology can be assigned as human power placed on more equal terms with other thing powers. Human power includes intersubjective connotations, memories, and affects that produce and are being produced by all living and non-living agents within the assemblage. Bennett (2010) qualifies humans as “walking, talking minerals…a particularly rich and complex collection of materials” (Bennet, 2010, p. 11). This view of human persons allies with Deleuze and Guattari’s charge to move toward
the molecular rather than the molar (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The difference between the molecular and the molar is not one of size but perspective (Holland, 2013). For instance, molecular is associated with the plane of consistency beneath the assemblage and which

knows nothing of differences in level, orders of magnitude, or distances. It knows nothing of differences between artificial and the natural. It knows nothing of the distinction between contents and expressions or that between forms and formed substances; these things exist only by means of and in relation to the strata (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 69-70).

The molar on the other hand is associated with the plane of organization otherwise known as the upper stratum in the assemblage. The molar within the upper stratum is about organization of living and non-living matter using rules, structures and binaries (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

In moving toward the molecular, in which molecules are always in process of forming combining and recombining to produce and to be produced by others, “affects are becomings” arising from the molecular (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 256). For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari insist that:

We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it composing a more powerful body (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 257).

Becoming molecular is the precursor to becoming animal, machine, earth or other
becomings. The very act of becoming molecular is not equated with the ideal of becoming molecules or in the case of becoming animals, becoming an actual animal (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Rather, affects as becomings is about adopting the function of something else rather than becoming something else or imitating something else. Becoming something else is to “extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are closest to what one ‘is becoming, and through which one becomes’” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 272). For instance, Braidotti (2011) defines becoming woman as an association with the “topological positions, degrees, and levels of intensity, affective states. The becoming woman is the marker for a general process of transformation: it affirms positive forces and levels of nomadic, rhizomatic consciousness” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 36).

**Becoming Minitorian**

To engage in becomings, whether it be becomings of a man, a woman, animal, earth, machine or even an insect, one must first become minoritarian: “all becoming is becoming-minitorian” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 291). In this regard, the term, majority, is associated with dominance, organization, categories, and hierarchies which are manifestations of the upper stratum in the assemblage. Being cognizant of male white privilege, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) note that the first becoming is that of becoming woman (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Women, children, animals, plants and molecules are minitorian. To this roster, I add “becoming deaf” as a minoritarian position subjected to ubiquitous audiocentric privilege (Eckert & Rowley, 2013). Moreover, my intra-actions with bodies, sounds, sightlines, living and non-living relegate me, a deaf teacher, to the periphery of most human activity within the school, home and hearing community. My
own living at the margins, even within the deaf community, is particularly advantageous in implementing an affective pedagogy toward deaf students as the margins are locations that allow me to move toward becoming minoritarian and therefore becoming deaf (Braidotti, 2011).

**Becoming Nomadic**

Within the assemblage, continuous movement inherent in displacing or deterritorializing requires the commitment to becoming minoritarian. Such movement is nomadic. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) evoke the image of one hovering over the body of organs (BwO), discerning flows of desire as a nomadic activity. Here, just being a minority, however, is not enough: it is only the starting point. Crucial to becoming-nomad is the undoing of the oppositional dualism majority/minority and arousing an affirmative passion for the transformative flows that destabilize all identities (Braidotti, 2011, p. 41).

To escape from the dualisms inherent in being oppressed, that is, the pressure to become like the dominant rulers or oppressors or to remain within the oppressed groups, the nomad must learn to initiate multiple ways of belonging and thereby reinvent the self on a continuous basis (Braidotti, 2011). To this, one must think differently about the dualisms inherent in the majority versus minority or master versus slave relationships. Desire that is envious and resentful of the privileges afforded to the dominant groups needs to be replaced by lines of flights that pose another way of becoming. In this way, “all the action is on the margins” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 41).

Braidotti (2011) does recognize that minoritized people do need to go through a phase of identity politics, to establish stable identities, because the starting points of
nomadic actions are at different stages. In the end, however, the eschewing of role reversals, that is, formerly oppressed people now being in dominant positions of power allows for the continual movement in becoming nomadic (Braidotti, 2011). This is also a task set for people belonging to minority groups who must learn to place themselves on the periphery of their own groups (Braidotti, 2011). Being nomadic is a state designated for all locations and temporalities (Braidotti, 2011). Therefore, the continuous travelling between identities, locations, and languages confirms the diasporic existence as the starting point of identity formation for the nomad (Braidotti, 2011).

**Becoming Deaf**

In considering affects associated with becoming deaf, any person, deaf or hearing, who is engaged in becoming nomadic, can cross between multiple becomings, such as becoming woman, becoming animal, becoming earth or machine and can also participate in becoming deaf. Such crossings between multiple becomings are characterized as non-unitary, multi-layered and dynamic (Braidotti, 2011). In the multiple becomings, the zigzagging paths between communities result in the erasure and recomposition of boundaries between communities, others and the self (Braidotti, 2011). In attending to the deep chasms between hearing and deaf people concerning language, identities and communities of belonging, becoming nomadic holds much promise.

Crowley (2012), a late deafened academic and who does not identify with deaf culture, writes of affects of dysphoria which is the heightened sense of vulnerability and precariousness as she continuously endeavours to cobble meaning from fragments of conversations, arguments, and sounds (Crowley, 2012). As a late deafened person, she faces stark choices: a life of isolation in choosing not to use technology or participate in
the hearing world which leads to a lifetime of nuisances such as managing hearing aids or cochlear implants, navigating the world of muffled voices, and developing strategies to cope with affects associated with boredom, anxiety and dysphoria. Her own capacity to engage in conversation, to participate in discussions, and having to rely on summaries and gestures extended by other benevolent people leaves her chilled, as if she were a non-person in a haunted landscape. Moreover, declaring one’s deafness in the world is not comparable for instance, to the euphoria associated with the declaration of ethnicity, sexual identity, or community belonging (Crowley, 2012). Rather, the affects associated with dysphoria necessitate the hard labour of being deaf in the hearing world (Crowley, 2012).

Crowley (2012) chooses to explore dysphoria as an affect that moves her toward becoming deaf. More simply translated, she engages in becoming deaf. In doing so, she considers the overcoding of disability as the object of someone else’s agenda and her own experiences as an expansion of her own self in support of the increased ability to survive the affect of dysphoria (Crowley, 2012). She writes of a pedagogy of affects, how it might multiply questions and contribute to transformations of the assemblage which holds the promise of being something more (Crowley, 2012; Crowley & Hickey-Moody, 2012).

I will now discuss affective pedagogy and how certain aspects of affective pedagogy has influenced my own practice as a deaf teacher working with deaf adolescents. Currently, much of my practice consists of culturally relevant arts education initiatives designed to encourage deaf students in their personal trajectories toward becoming deaf. Each student will manifest his or her becoming minoritarian and deaf in
different ways. Their individual becomings allow me to think and work with differing audiological levels of hearing losses along with identity, language and community choices.

**Actionable Affective Pedagogy**

As a deaf teacher of the deaf, I am charged with establishing the affectus which increases or decreases the power of acting on bodies and materials (Hickey-Moody, 2009). The processes inherent in being produced and producing others is called the affectus (Hickey-Moody, 2009). Affectus is the process of change in which one thing changes another thing or person (Hickey-Moody, 2009). Deleuze and Guattari’s methodological instructions also contain direction for affective pedagogy below:

Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a new plot of land at all times… (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 161).

These processes constitute the foundation of affective pedagogy, in that the teacher designs the affectus through which affects can produce or be produced by all living and non-living elements of the assemblage (Hickey-Moody, 2009). Therefore, affectus is a relational practice that enables the production of knowledge (Hickey-Moody, 2009). The affectus is operated by the affected bodies in the classroom and in doing so, students are affected and are affecting other bodies (Hickey-Moody & Kipling, 2016).

Art practices, for instance, such as literature, music, movement, theatre, bring about affects and generate affectus which is the enmeshment of individual,
‘human’ subjective traits with a non-human medium (word-sound-movement) and it is this enmeshment that is a kind of pedagogy: rhythmic trace of sensation incorporated into the body-becoming (Hickey-Moody, 2009, p. 274).

In establishing the affectus, I consider my role as a deaf teacher and how my own deaf identity will produce and be produced by other identities expressed by deaf students who may have never met a deaf teacher until their entry into high school. I will also consider how my own narratives concerning becoming deaf (in the Deleuze/Guattari sense) are different and are always changing in response to other stories, beliefs, and actions. My narratives of acculturation into the deaf and hearing community narratives are profoundly different than those of deaf students in the province of Saskatchewan. As a young adult, I became exposed to the American Deaf community, Deaf studies, Deaf culture, and ASL at Gallaudet University. Here I use the capital “D” as a cultural artefact produced by white Deaf Americans (Friedner, 2017). The capital “D” denotes deaf culture as originating in Eastern United States and fanning outwards to include the entire country and Canada (Lane, 1984). The “D” also signifies the deaf authored knowledges that have found their way into cultural production mostly associated with attendance at schools for the deaf or in deaf spaces where sign languages native to the deaf community are used (Gulliver, 2009). Since my return to Canada, I have lived in deaf communities under threat of annihilation due to the increase of cochlear implants, inclusive education placements and aging deaf activists. While deaf studies continue to yield valuable insights into ontologies, epistemologies and pedagogical practices, a posthumanist education and affective pedagogy invites me to consider what is cartographically accurate and specific to locations, temporalities and deaf bodies moving through assemblages.
affectus stemming from an accurate cartography includes affects associated with the 1) language ideologies and practices 2) the deaf body and 3) locations and temporalities associated with deafness.

**Affects Within Language Ideologies and Practices**

Many deaf and adolescents are struggling readers and have incomplete mastery of spoken and signed language, whether it be oral English, American Sign Language or the language from their country of origin. Many deaf students are often marooned between languages and sedimented in habitual perceptions and ways of doing that restrict their learning (Cadwallader, 2012; Hall, Levin, & Anderson, 2017; Humphries, et al., 2012). Consequently, many are discouraged learners, reluctant readers or writers. Many deaf adolescents have parents who strived to fulfil the prescriptive advice given by the auditory industrial complex in the hope of a cure for deafness (Blume, 2010; Mauldin, 2016). In Saskatchewan, there are strong linkages between early childhood services including referrals and follow up services for cochlear implants and K-12 school services as a small group of professionals who serve in all these settings (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016; Saskatchewan Pediatric Auditory Rehabilitation Center, n.d.). The outreach capacity of the cochlear implant and audiological services into the educational milieu is also a prevalent model in United States (Mauldin, 2016). Some families have given up hope for their deaf adolescent to be integrated into the hearing world and often retain the shame of being the already “failing parent” despite their best efforts (Valente, 2011). The predominance of a language ideology promoting spoken English as the only language that could open doors to life opportunities including education and employment presents enormous challenges to many deaf students.
Currently, the case for language deprivation to be recognized as a neurodevelopmental disorder with sociocultural origins is being developed (Hall, Levin, & Anderson, 2017). The suppression of access to sign language stems from the belief on the part of many professionals that sign language interferes with the development of spoken language. Therefore, less than 8% of deaf children receive sign language in the home and many are exposed to sign language only after failing to achieve fluency in oral English skills (Humphries, et al., 2016). Consequently, many deaf children acquire cognitive deficits which prevent them from learning in school. Furthermore, lack of access to language ensures incomplete mastery of a first language, thereby rendering the learning of a second language as problematic (Penicaud, et al., 2013; Mayberry, Chen, Witcher, & Klein, 2011; Davenport, et al., 2016). Additional symptoms associated with language deprivation include language dysfluency, funds of knowledge deficits, difficulties with executive function and disruptions in thinking, mood and/or behaviour resulting from restricted access to language since birth up to age five (Hall, Levin, & Anderson, 2017; Humphries, et al., 2012). Humphries et al (2012) argue that language acquisition occurs naturally when the language is fully accessible with the young child’s environment. Petitto (2014) confirms this in her research finding that signing activates the areas of the brain used for spoken language equally to the stimulus provided by spoken language, concluding that the brain does not discriminate between the hand and the tongue (Petitto & Jasinska, 2014).

Furthermore, a pedagogy which endeavours to track their reading skills, phonetic knowledge, use of reading and writing strategies, and social and emotional
understandings of the world around them, is dependent upon the view that language is the sole representative of thought (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Here, Deleuze and Guattari oppose the supposition that language represents thought and therefore becomes the thought itself.

It is language that is based on regimes of signs, and regimes of signs on abstract machines, diagrammatic functions, and machinic assemblages that go beyond any system of semiology, linguistics or logic…Behind statements and semioticizations there are only machines, assemblages, and movements of deterritorialization that cut across the stratification of the various systems and elude both the coordinates of language and of existence. That is why pragmatics is not a complement to logic, syntax or semantics; on the contrary, it is the fundamental element upon which all the rest depend (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 148).

In addition, Hans Furth (1966) argued: "As a final conclusion, the major significance of the reported findings for theories of thinking is the demonstration that logical, intelligent thinking does not need the support of a symbolic system, as it exists in living languages of society" (Furth, 1966, p. 128). In other words, abstract thoughts are abstract and do not necessarily correspond with the real world of things. It now becomes the question of how to see the deaf person: either in the humanist tradition defining the deaf person as participating in the world as a lone agent, an atomistic entity, deprived of language and therefore devoid of thought, or within the posthumanist frame in which the posthumanist deaf subject is performative, that is, a part of an assemblage, engaging in material and semiotic resources deciphering what is to be comprehended (Canagarajah, 2013).
Language ideologies and practices flow from humanist and posthumanist definitions of personhood. Recent research on translanguaging, and plurilingualism seem to align better with posthumanist performativity.

**Examination of Language Ideologies and Practices**

As a teacher of the deaf, I am to facilitate language development in deaf adolescents by building on the language foundations acquired in early childhood. Yet, I face unintelligible speech and signing in the classroom as they attempt to communicate with me, the interpreting staff and their peers. Much effort is made to sort out what is being said or signed. Many deaf adolescents use non-standard English, ASL or the language associated with their country of origin. Many deaf children and youth are disengaged learners and reluctant readers. In contrast, my own language acquisition as a profoundly deaf child had taken a diametrically opposite trajectory as I entered grade one with the language capabilities of a three-year-old child but managed to learn to read my way through all my schooling including university and graduate school. I had enough functional hearing in one ear to develop speech skills which afforded me the auditory phonological awareness necessary to decode text. Consequently, I become a voracious reader and therefore could not rely on my own narrative to teach deaf adolescents. But I could relate to them because of some shared deaf experiences. Deaf people in encountering others often experience a bond because of a shared experience of deafness which is noted as DEAF-SAME (Friedner & Kusters, 2015).

Initially, I relied on our shared deaf ontology to address the students, that is, the feeling of DEAF-SAME produced when two or more deaf people share their deaf experiences and feelings concerning their deafness (Friedner & Kusters, 2015). I was a
convert to the deaf community as a young adult and had become convinced of the necessity of ASL and deaf culture to my own wellbeing and wanted to share that conviction with the students. Our shared deaf ontology enabled me to exercise my strong feeling of intergenerational responsibility within my pedagogy, that is, a drive to help them develop the social and cultural capital granted by deaf and hearing communities (Bourdieu, 1991; Kusters M., 2017). I wanted to transmit a positive, vibrant ontology of deafness, one that would allow them to develop their strengths and entertain hope for their futures.

**Deaf Epistemologies**

I made use of deaf epistemologies which draw upon deaf authored knowledges, deaf spaces, visual learning styles, cognition, and linguistic impacts of life lived primarily through vision (Hauser, O'Hearn, McKee, Steider, & Thew, 2010; Holcomb, 2010; Ladd, 2003; Paul & Moores, 2012). Deaf epistemologies are activated in deaf spaces, as arising from the relationship with the body and other bodies as the site of language, culture, beliefs, norms, history and traditions (Batterbury, Gulliver, & Ladd, 2007). Historically, culturally deaf teachers were conscious of deaf knowledges through their sustained interactions in their commitment to, and personal reflections about the deaf community in which they are situated and their position within the hearing world (Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1984). Deaf epistemologies contribute to the creation of an environment of high expectations (Ramsey & Smith, 2004), harness the power of storytelling (Sutton-Spence & Ramsey, 2010), capitalize on visual epistemology as applicable to both deaf and hearing (Hauser & McKee, 2012), promote collective cultural behaviours attributed to membership in the deaf community (McDermid, 2009), design physical spaces and use
eyes to direct exchanges in the classroom (Bahan, 2008; Ramsey & Smith, 2004).

The students learned to negotiate their relationships with me, a deaf teacher who could speak well but did not have as much available hearing (even with amplification) as they had with their cochlear implants and hearing aids. They began to realize that they could not easily communicate with me through speaking and began to use multiple linguistic repertoires in their negotiations with me. Soon the necessity of communicating clearly with me began to produce affects that would result in even greater intensities. The mood lifted from overall passivity, dependency, and disinterest in each other, events, and the material objects that surrounded them, to an active, cheerful, and hopeful environment accompanied by many outbursts of tears, anger, frustration, and despair all in continual motion. In short, my presence as a deaf teacher was an affect that galvanized them into negotiating with me with by using their linguistic repertoires.

Yet, the use of deaf epistemologies and our mutual feeling of DEAF-SAME did not bring about the hoped-for changes in deeper understanding and appreciation of print English or ASL. I was still operating from a deaf/hearing binary, that is a missionary effort to bring the students into the deaf “fold” through use of ASL and deaf cultural behaviours to which they had never been previously exposed. In other words, their DEAF-SAME was not my DEAF-SAME. While DEAF-SAME can produce the affect of likeness and affiliations with other deaf people from different cultural, social, economic, religious, ethnic backgrounds (Friedner & Kusters, 2015), I began to suspect that I was caught in a binary concerning language acquisition which prevented me from seeing the students as posthumanist subjects as performative, engaging in linguistic, material and semiotic resources to navigate their way through the hearing world and later, the deaf
world which I was about to introduce to them (Canagarajah, 2013). I began to examine my own language ideologies and practices and discovered that I had adopted ideologies that are positioned within the humanist frame.

*Language Ideology Within Humanist Paradigms*

Many of the arguments concerning language acquisition of deaf children are shaped by neoliberal discourses emanating from the humanist paradigm which promoted languages as separate entities and defined according to geographical locations and stable communities (Canagarajah, 2013). Language, idealized as a bounded system, with discrete items as components to be learned in tightly structured pedagogical interventions, is immediately hierarchized (Canagarajah, 2013). The promotion of standard English as the dominant language for trade, economic and policy development research, multinational operations and marketing overshadow the additional minoritized languages spoken by most people on this planet (Canagarajah, 2013).

Urciuoli (2016) suggests that when languages and identities are objectified in neoliberal discourses, that is, presented as objects that people possess, these items are subject to market forces. If the individual person ran oneself as a business, then the accrued language skills becomes marketable (Urciuoli, 2016). Furthermore, languages and identities then become bounded, and clearly defined by gatekeepers or experts and easily packaged for sale (Urciuoli, 2016).

Canagarajah (2013) provides a summary of the monolingual ideology, namely the assumption that 1) language is grounded in one community and/or as emanating from one geographical location, 2) one language provides one identity, 3) language is a bounded system containing discrete units, 4) languages must be kept separate from each other in
order to provide optimal conditions for learning and to maintain purity of the language, 5) the origin of language resides in individual cognition rather than social contexts and 6) language usage is assessed according to mastery of grammar rather than according to practice within ecological contexts (Canagarajah, 2013). Similarly, proponents of bilingual bimodal education for the deaf often overlook the multiple origins and repertoires that contributed to the development of ASL in their drive to establish ASL as a legitimate language and a language of instruction (Snoddon, 2016). The protectionism associated with revitalizing and maintaining of American Sign Language and deaf culture can contribute to the perception that languages are discrete and bounded (Snoddon, 2016). The backfiring of such protectionism emerges in the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission report where parents reported being told by a professor of audiology that learning ASL was not a viable option because ASL was a complex language and required years of study to achieve fluency (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016). ASL, in being viewed as discrete and bounded, is presented as barrier to language acquisition to parents who are exploring ASL as an option for their deaf children (Snoddon, 2016). Hence language ideologies and practices continue to impact on the potential of deaf students to acquire more language long after the window for optimal language acquisition has closed. The attempt on the part of minoritized communities to preserve and maintain their languages can be supported by translanguaging and plurilingualism which serves to disrupt the power imbalances resulting from granting power to certain languages and dismissing other languages as unworthy of power and resources (Snoddon, 2016).
Translanguaging and Plurilingualism

Languages are not true linguistic entities because their boundaries are established on non-linguistic grounds (Garcia, Otheguy, & Reid, 2015). Rather, they are “groupings of idiolects of people with shared social, political or ethnic identities that, once so grouped, are described using linguistic terms that tend to give the mistaken impression that the grouping was based on linguistic grounds in the first place” (Garcia, Otheguy, & Reid, 2015). The return to the individual speaker and the study of his/her idiolect, that is, his or her own linguistic objects containing structural and lexical features makes way for translanguaging (Garcia, Otheguy, & Reid, 2015). Here, the idiolect becomes the basis for translanguaging rather than language as a bounded system (Garcia, Otheguy, & Reid, 2015).

Translanguaging allows for the use of the individual speaker’s linguistic repertoires in multiple languages, a freedom often afforded to monolinguals who can easily employ their linguistic repertoires in multiple settings (Garcia, Otheguy, & Reid, 2015). The emphasis on the correct production of lexical and structural features of bounded languages reduces opportunities for translanguaging between multiple languages (Garcia, Otheguy, & Reid, 2015). The view of languages as essentially bounded according to their social and political contexts necessitates the evaluation of students according to their grasp of the lexical and structural features of that language (Garcia, Otheguy, & Reid, 2015). General linguistic proficiency is often confused with proficiency in a bounded language and often places students at a disadvantage when being evaluated (Garcia, Otheguy, & Reid, 2015). Translanguaging, on the other hand, enables the student to develop a general linguistic proficiency and to engage his/her full
repertoire in the classroom toward the mastery of a bounded language (Canagarajah, 2013).

Plurilingualism, on the other hand, concerns the partial competencies in a specific language. People who are plurilingual may exhibit a limited mastery of languages but engage in strategies and competencies with the intent to enrich their linguistic repertoires (Council of Europe, 2001). Pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures include awakening to languages, intercomprehension between related languages, integrated didactic approaches to different languages studied and intercultural approaches (Candelier, Daryai-Hansen, & Schroder-Sura, 2012). Introducing a formal study of ASL through credit classes within the secondary school course roster is an example of awakening deaf adolescent students to bimodal bilingualism (using sight and sound although not simultaneously). Switching in and out of English and ASL according to linguistic demands and needs of the students allows for intercomprehension between bimodal languages. Comparing discourse strategies, phrases, and expressions characteristic of bimodal languages useful for developing facility in print English is an example of an integrated didactic approach. The implementation of intercultural approaches proved to be more challenging because of the highly polarized language ideologies in deaf education. The incorporation of non-linguistic subjects along with communicative competence and the synergies between the pluralistic approaches (Candelier, Daryai-Hansen, & Schroder-Sura, 2012) pointed a way to implement non-binarized approaches to plurilingual teaching. This meant capitalizing on the visucentrism, that is, the strong visual orientation exhibited by deaf people regardless as to whether they sign or don’t sign (Kusters & O’Brien, 2017). The use of visual strategies
to engage with the world has biological and sociocultural origins as the development and use of peripheral vision, spatial processing and ways of organizing visual information is specific to deaf bodies (Kusters & O’Brien, 2017). The use of non-linguistic resources in language teaching opens a way for affective pedagogy.

**Affectus Within the Classroom**

While I had adopted many features of translinguaging and plurilingualism both in my instruction and in my classroom, I wanted to experiment with the use of non-linguistic content within an arts-based approach to language teaching. In planning the affectus, I engaged in several conversations with artists and the interpreting support staff in my room. I told them I wanted an intervention that was visucentric and would allow the use of existing linguistic repertoires and materialities in arriving at deeper and richer linguistic understandings. For instance, I had never been able to successfully teach the concept of metaphor to hard of hearing and oral deaf students who had considerably more spoken English language skills than the present cohort that I am teaching. I concluded then, that the current students would not have in-depth linguistic structures to comprehend metaphors because they relied on surface language structures, basic reading skills, were dependent upon simple sentences and therefore possessed simple thoughts. I consulted and used workbooks and worksheets to no avail. At that time, I began to wonder if the conventional thinking about language deprivation held true, that is, deaf children and youth deprived of language at an early age would never be able to comprehend complex language structures such as the use of metaphors, similes and other literary devices such as personification. Further reading, however, convinced me that metaphors are embodied and arise from sensori-motor experience (Kovecses, 2010;
Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Taub, 2001). I needed a different intervention, one that would produce the desire to learn metaphors and in turn provoke being produced by that same desire.

The artists in residence and I decided to teach visual storytelling affects concerning the emotional and semiotic properties of line, shape, tone and colour when applied to a story arc. After several exercises and activities on a smaller scale, we began a project entailing making a shadow puppet movie about dinosaurs in Saskatchewan. Puppet fabrication, development of a storyboard with specific attention to line, shape, tone and colour, story scripts and shooting the film in a professional film studio served to rework the limits of the deaf body, the material environment, therefore reconstructing agency. The project as a pragmatic, embodied, and material intervention involved working with materials: paper, glue, paint, clay, canvas, physical theatre, puppetry, while conversing in ASL and spoken English. Here, art is a posthuman project that acts on bodies within Deleuze and Guattari’s (1994) thought, and affect is the means through which this posthuman pedagogy occurs. Or to put it another way, affect is the way in which art speaks and the materiality of voice is part of the way art speaks. In this theoretical context, art has a politically effective capacity, the capability to rework a body’s limits, to reconfigure individual arrangements of structure/agency, augment that which a body is (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2016, p. 10).

During the development of the movie making project, the selection of metaphors and symbols through visual storytelling and movie making processes enabled the students to spontaneously identify metaphors as I spoke in English or signed to them in ASL. They
shouted out frequently (and still do), “oh that’s a metaphor!” Their interest and enjoyment of language which they had previously felt little hope of fully mastering, had become an affect which arose from material and embodied intra-actions. Here, affective pedagogy considers visucentric affects, not only in intra-action with material entities, but as a mode of cognition, one that is subjective in relation to an experience or encounter with the affect (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2016).

**Affects Within the Deaf Body and Deaf Biosociality**

Medical discourses are used to describe, define, and guide people toward expected behaviours designed to approximate norms established for conduct (Foucault, 1988). Foucault (1988) describes the power exerted by medical discourses as biopower which enables people to be governed without the imposition of autocratic rule. The functions of the body are ordered according to political discourses concerning vision and hearing and therefore are subject to power/knowledge relations (Siisiäinen, 2016). These political discourses are imposed upon a deaf body at birth and continue to regulate his/her body through governmentality concerning the primacy of audition. The deaf body is governed through biopower, which comprises of interventions exerted by the auditory industrial complex consisting of surgeons, radiologists, speech and language pathologists, ear, nose, and throat specialists, and teachers of the deaf to create a person compelled to hear regardless of his/her ability to do so (Eckert & Rowley, 2013).

**Hearing Biopower**

Governmentality reinforces what is normal; efforts at normalizing the deaf body means to restore hearing, or at least, provide technological and therapeutic supports toward being integrated into the hearing world (Davis, 1995). For instance, Mauldin
(2016) reports on the discourses used to secure compliance of parents whose children received cochlear implants (CI). Regularly scheduled phone calls, meetings, therapy sessions, team efforts all served to create a CI community consisting of parents, their children and the professionals (surgeons, audiologists, speech and language pathologists, teachers of the deaf, radiologists) who serve them (Mauldin, 2016). The primary thrust of these discourses generated by these professionals is that without the compliance of the parents, CIs would not be successful (Mauldin, 2016). Within these discourses, little mention is given to the variety of reasons accorded to CI failures. Researchers concede that cochlear implant outcomes are highly variable and that the presence of auxiliary services, parental supports, the child’s age at the time of implantation, language modality are all contributing factors (Humphries, et al., 2012; Peterson, Pisoni, & Miyamoto, 2010; Raeve, 2010).

Despite the variability in outcomes of cochlear implantation (Peterson, Pisoni, & Miyamoto, 2010), Bruin and Nevoy (2014) reported in a study of parents of deaf children, that the terms “normal”, and “usual” dominated the parental discourses when asked to discuss the language and communication choices they had made for their deaf children. The parents in their study often referred to the norm, the desire to have their child become “normal” and to become part of the hearing world (Bruin & Nevoy, 2014). Hence, their ready cooperation with the auditory industrial complex (Eckert & Rowley, 2013) which is poised to measure and correct deficits in hearing to approach homogeneity as established by norms (Bruin & Nevoy, 2014). The emphasis on normalization makes way for governmentality, which is defined by Foucault as the power to govern evoked through appraisal, assessment, monitoring and evaluating of behaviours
established by certain norms (Foucault, 1988). The power of the norm, for instance, is what entices hearing parents to adopt auditory rehabilitation for their deaf child without considering sign language and enculturation into the Deaf community (Mauldin, 2016).

**Deaf Biopower**

Moreover, counter discourses in response to audist discourses in which deaf people are evaluated according to their ability to approach the “norm” that is, the ability to approximate the hearing, speaking and behaviours of hearing people (Eckert & Rowley, 2013) are beginning to resist dominant discourses. Foucault’s observation that resistance is always tied to power suggests that no one is outside of power (Foucault, 1988). The analogy of a fisherman’s net containing nodes of powers and resistances in which we are caught comes to mind here. Foucauldian analysis suggests that despite the prevalence of the medical discourses stemming from the audiocentric privilege and the auditory industrial complex as providing technology as the ultimate solution to the dilemma of deafness, the deaf body has its own means of resistance and is able to exert power and disrupt audist discourses (Foucault, 1988; Friedner M., 2010).

In fact, the audiogram is a two-pronged measurement instrument which either introduces the deaf child into medical discourses that dominate the hearing world, and or introduces the deaf body to the deaf community at any stage in their lifetime (Friedner M., 2010). The audiogram, in addition to measuring decibels and frequencies of hearing loss, is also measure of the “biopower” which allows deaf people to shape their lives according to their vision as the primary avenue to the world and to live within the imposed restrictions placed by audism in education, healthcare, social justice systems and social welfare systems (Friedner, 2010). This alternative biopower allows for the
insurrection of subjugated knowledges through resistance by deaf people (Friedner, 2010).

For instance, modes of resistance exercised by deaf people in the past included signing behind their teacher’s back, during recess, and in private spaces in defiance of the explicit orders by their teachers not to sign (Deegan & O'Connell, 2014). This persistence in using forbidden sign language kept a subjugated knowledge alive, an insurrection that provided the impetus for the formation of “deaf spaces” as found in deaf organizations, residential schools for the deaf, and yearly deaf banquets (Gulliver, 2009). Such subjugated knowledges point to the existence of biopower and therefore a deaf biosociality (Friedner, 2010). Friedner (2010) defines deaf biosociality as based on shared experiences associated with hearing loss which leads to the formation of community life complete with expectations concerning values, language and behaviours. Induction into deaf biosociality is a form of resistance, whereby the deaf individual encounters the subjugated knowledges associated with deaf community, culture and sign language and therefore chooses to “awaken” and undertake a metaphorical journey from darkness to light (De Clerck, 2011). Awakening moves a deaf person from being powerless, restricted by the limits of hearing and spoken language to an existence where communication is fully accessible and where one can be at ease (De Clerck, 2011). There, within deaf spaces, an alternate form of governmentality exists.

Deaf governmentality has similar features to governmentality as observed by Foucault (1988) except that the “norm” to be reached is that of a deaf adult who can function in both hearing and deaf worlds according to their abilities and needs. The norm within the deaf community is shaped by the high premium placed on communication and
collectivism (Ladd, 2003). The deaf individual in the deaf community is expected to become fluent in ASL, participate in deaf community events and contribute to the wellbeing of the deaf community (Ladd, 2003). Learning how to function in a community and to attend to expected behaviours from deaf people is often a challenge for those who have been dismissed as failing to meet norms expected of hearing people (Weber, 2015). The deaf body is therefore, harnessed by the biopower and biosociality available within the deaf community, which in turn, provides an insurrection of subjugated knowledges and an alternative governmentality (Friedner, 2010). Friedner (2017) advocates for the return of the term “deafness” to be used as the basis for deaf studies with a renewed focus on the deaf body, deaf biopower, deaf sociality which allows for shared ontologies and epistemologies among deaf people. Deaf bio-sociality, that is, social formations based on shared biological experiences becomes the affect in the deaf classroom rather than the striving to emulate an imported Deaf culture from the white American perspective (Weber, 2015).

Affectus Within the Classroom Assemblage

My classroom continues to be characterized by constant movement, intra-actions with deaf bodies, environmental sounds, spoken and sign language, sightlines, materials, and the contours of the room. The classroom is a redesigned space previously allocated for teaching students with multiple disabilities who required toileting and feeding care. The classroom now contains a kitchen, laundry facilities and two alcoves, one that serves as a film studio, and the other as a storage space for teaching materials. Due to the small size of the classroom and the growing number of students (now eleven and will increase to seventeen students in the fall of 2018), the folding tables and chairs are stacked and
reassembled throughout the day in different configurations according to need. I do not have a desk but a stand where I place my laptop and a few books. After a short lecture on a reading strategy, or discussion on a shared text we are studying, or a current event, or a writing task, the students return to their project-based learning activities which often require the use of laptops, paper, scissors, paint and other art supplies as needed. They log in to Google Classroom to acquire their instructions and support materials for the project. The students obtain their own art supplies and clean their spaces upon finishing their assignments. At other times, they discuss key terms and assignments with each other, deciphering together what is required of them. They move around tables to talk to each other, sometimes congregating at the front of the room, writing down words and reviewing definitions or reconstructing concept maps I have given them in a previous lecture. Time appears suspended. Bells announcing the end of a class period and the beginning of a new period are often ignored. Some students ask for a break from time to time, to go to the bathroom or to retrieve something from their lockers. Meanwhile, other students come to me for short consultations, clarifications on the task to be done, and explanations of concepts and words. I move around the classroom, stopping to laugh with them, or listen to a recap of something they are struggling with. At the same time, another student fills a water jug to fulfil her duties to look after the classroom garden for that week, a short mini-break from her writing.

Another group of students are in the film studio area, standing against a green screen, making ASL videos to accompany a literary text. Meanwhile, I gather a small group of EAL students who are learning English and ASL for the first time and teach them to analyze ASL and English sentences in preparation for a writing assignment. The
co-teacher with whom I work, consults with the students about their reading log as all the students are required to reading 40 books during the school year. The project-based learning includes a variety of topics in the areas of English, Social Studies and Science to be worked upon at any time throughout the day. The students are given the freedom to work at their pace. Short lectures and group discussions are reserved for the first half hour of the day, after which students are to progress on their own or in small groups. Students are rarely off task and there is conviviality throughout the day. Ladd (2011) observed deaf classrooms taught by deaf teachers were very often a place of great fun and joy, giving off a very tangible underlying air of celebration. The multitude of ways in which Deaf educators interwove real life with the materials they were teaching and succeeded in engaging the children in exploration and discovery were underpinned by an unstated sense of triumph against the odds. Ladd (2003) discussed the Deaf cultural concept of “1001 small victories”, where each piece of information gleaned from or something about the hearing world is seen as a victory in itself. This is very much what happens in many Deaf classrooms; it permeates the very air that one breathes there (Ladd, 2011, p. 380).

I suggest, however, these intra-actions are not primarily due to my presence as a deaf teacher but point to the use of an affective pedagogy which allows for a new vision of inclusion in which activities are designed and delivered with hearing artists in residence, a hearing co-teacher, the staff interpreter, volunteers (deaf and hearing) and students. Here, the deaf body and deaf biosociality are affects that engage deaf and hearing alike and make spaces for all epistemologies including those emergent or subjugated
knowledges possessed by marginalized people.

A substantial portion of the day is devoted to creating individual and community art. The classroom along with support from the adult deaf community and a deaf elder, Allard Thomas, has become the Deaf Crows Collective which produced *Deaf Crows*, the play in 2016, *Nay’s Story*, an ASL poetry and puppetry performance in the fall of 2016, *The Deaf Forest*, an art installation project displayed at a local city art gallery and at the school division office in the fall of 2017 and *Apple Time*, a theatre play in June 2018. The students’ desires and my desires concerning identity, community and language became affects in the classroom and provided the impetus for the art and theatre projects. The material, social, cultural and linguistic resources in the classroom provided multiple opportunities that were rhizomatic in nature. Moreover, the multiple opportunities transcended our identities as hearing, deaf, and hard of hearing, suggesting that the posthuman is embedded within multiple belongings, as a relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity, that is to say, a subject that works across differences and is also internally differentiated, but still grounded and accountable. Posthuman subjectivity expresses an embodied and embedded and hence partial form of accountability, based on a strong sense of collectivity, relationality and hence community building (Braidotti, 2013, p. 49).

In thinking with students who are in various stages of becoming deaf, the assemblage in the classroom produces new desires and affects in addition to affects and desires governing their deaf bodies in other locations. All of us are engaged in the trajectory of becoming deaf, a nomadic journey that allows us to approach entanglements as they
occur.

The affects in the classroom came about using an affective pedagogy founded upon arts production where deaf youth learned to explore their own deaf experiences. In this space, art materials, sound, ASL, computers, all became non-human teachers, which act to increase or decrease their capacity to act and shape their intra-actions with other bodies (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Hickey-Moody, 2009). For instance, during the sessions with the artists in residence, the students studied the crow as a potential metaphor for their shame in being deaf. Eventually, the crow became an affect, that is, a becoming animal, through which students could share their experiences of being bullied, shunned, forgotten, and shamed. As the students researched the crows, they discovered a class of birds known for their intelligence, empathy, and community sensibilities while at the same time, were shunned for their carrion natures and raw bird sounds. This affect enabled the students to tell their own deaf stories through the production of a theatrical play, *Deaf Crows* at a local professional theatre (Ells, Hi, & Weber, 2016). The cast and crew of *Deaf Crows* also included four deaf adults and a parent of a deaf child from the deaf community in our city. *Deaf Crows* played two nights to two packed houses at a local professional theatre in the city and to full houses at a deaf theatre festival in Edmonton, Canada, in February 2017, several months later. The *Deaf Crows* cast included actors from the deaf community who had grown up in residential schools, who were fluent in sign language, taught sign language classes and assumed deaf leadership roles at the local, provincial and national levels. The deaf adults and students compared their deaf experiences without reference to concepts generated by white American Deaf studies which would have divided the cast into people who claimed to be
culturally deaf, and those who were undecided in favour of being or did not want to be culturally deaf. The affectus, in the creation and production of *Deaf Crows* allowed for movement through a shared space in which affects associated with deaf biosociality, social justice and deaf authored knowledges could flourish.

**Affects Within Locations of the Deaf Body**

During the early years of teaching in the resource room program, as I became increasingly acculturated into the local deaf community, my increasing awareness of multiple identities and locations clashed with the singular hearing identities adopted by the students in the classroom (Weber, 2013). The acculturation of deaf children into the hearing world whereby the use of ASL and the deaf community is viewed as undesirable presupposes a stable identity, that is, being hearing and belonging to the hearing community. The deaf person may desire participation in the hearing world, but that participation can be brief, unpredictable and subject to factors that would facilitate or obstruct ease of communication such as the presence of background noise and the patience of hearing people (Leigh & Maxwell-McCaw, 2011). Yet the desire to belong to the hearing world is palpated, encouraged and supported by the auditory industrial complex (Eberwein, 2007; Mauldin, 2016). Through discourses provided by the auditory industrial complex (Eberwein, 2007; Eckert & Rowley, 2013) and through the inclusive education discourses (Valente, 2011), many deaf children and youth in inclusive education programs are never exposed to sign language and may view themselves as culturally hearing, thereby feeling at home in the hearing world (Leigh & Maxwell-McCaw, 2011). Leigh and Maxwell-McCaw (2011) note the presence of cultural marginality in which the deaf person feels neither at home in the deaf or hearing worlds
and exhibits confusion concerning identity, poorly differentiated understanding of self and other and difficulties with self-regulation and behaviours. A positive version of cultural marginality would consist of deaf individuals who are exploring their identities within both hearing and deaf worlds (Leigh & Maxwell-McCaw, 2011).

Again, my DEAF SAME was not the students’ DEAF SAME in terms of the multiple locations I traversed daily. I explored the locations of an acculturated deaf adult and possibilities to established a non-binarized position concerning the multiple locations and identities of deaf adolescents and adults. Border crossing between deaf and hearing worlds describes the deaf body in multiple locations such as the home, school, the mall, sports events, music events, places of worship, and work environments all which may be classified as predominantly hearing while the deaf world might be encapsulated by congregated schools or classrooms using ASL and adopting deaf cultural norms (Brueggeman, 2009). Here, deaf spaces (Gulliver, 2009; Kusters, 2009; Friedner & Kusters, 2015) and the deaf diaspora (Emery, 2015) and inbetweenity (Brueggeman, 2009), provide an account of locations otherwise invisible to the hearing world.

**Deaf Geography**

Recent geographers have moved away from measuring spaces as in geopolitical boundaries and are exploring how people use the spaces in terms of power imbalances, freedoms, and possibilities (Gulliver, 2009). The long tradition of acculturation associated with deaf schools, deaf clubs, deaf sports and cultural events (Humphries & Padden, 2005) have resulted in the conceptualization of a deaf geography which is comprised of deaf spaces (Gulliver & Kitzel, 2016). Deaf spaces occur through the adaptation of physical environments in which deaf people have control such as in deaf
clubs and where deaf authored and mediated knowledges are shared (Gulliver, 2009). Furthermore, sign language, deaf cultural values, traditions, and behaviours all flow from deaf spaces (Gulliver, 2009). Deaf spaces are not created with reference to hearing authored medical, scientific or educational history, but are established according to historical, social, physical, intellectual resources and events experienced and created by deaf individuals (Gulliver, 2009).

Deaf spaces contain, preserve and disseminate deaf authored narratives which are integral to the development of decontextualized thinking (Sutton-Spence & Ramsey, 2010) and assist in the development of personal, linguistic and social identities. Deaf authored narratives are often passed on by older children with standard ASL skills to less skilled signing deaf children and even their hearing teachers who may be limited in their sign skills. Signing deaf teachers use deaf authored narratives to teach social skills, strategies in navigating deaf and hearing worlds, and to interpret the hearing world through the lens of one’s own deaf experience (Kusters, de Meulder & O’Brien, 2017; Sutton-Spence & Ramsey, 2010). Deaf adults are also a source of deaf authored narratives to deaf children and youth in educational environments (Sutton-Spence & Ramsey, 2010).

**Deaf Diaspora**

Living within a deaf diaspora is characterized by a constant longing for respite from the hearing world through participation in deaf spaces that may either be temporary or permanent (Emery, 2015; Gulliver, 2009). The deaf diaspora contains attributes similar to widely defined diasporas such as the persistent reference to a homeland, maintenance of boundaries, and experience of dispersal (Emery, 2015). The presence of a deaf convert
culture (Bechter, 2008) suggests that for many deaf, the hearing world may consist of fleeting, temporary encounters with hearing people despite new developments in hearing technology, cochlear implantations, interfaces between technology and wetware (the human brain) as a form of deaf futurism (Friedner & Helmreich, 2012). In the meantime, cochlear implantation even in very young children results in variable outcomes thereby restricting access to spoken language (Humphries, et al., 2012). Moreover, cochlear implantation is available to mostly First World countries (Friedner, 2017) which thrusts those who may benefit from auditory rehabilitation into isolation. Many of these deaf children in the Global South, deprived of access to cochlear implants and therefore spoken languages, may find each other and therefore comprise a diasporic community away from large and vibrant deaf communities (Friedner, 2017; Kusters, 2009; 2012; 2014; Moriarty Harrelson, 2017). These deaf diasporic communities may contain values, traditions, behaviours, understandings and sign languages markedly different from large American deaf communities (Friedner, 2017; Kusters, 2009; 2012; 2014; Moriarty Harrelson, 2017).

I suggest that the Saskatchewan deaf community is best described as a diasporic deaf community. The dispersal of the deaf community in Saskatchewan occurred with the Deaf Education Advisory Forum’s decision in 1990 to act on one of the Task Force recommendations to close the provincial school for the Deaf and to send the remaining students at the school for the deaf either back to their home communities or to the Alberta and Manitoba schools for the deaf (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990; Saskatchewan Task Force Committee on Deaf Education, 1989). This dispersal also resulted in the voluntary exodus of several deaf teachers and paraprofessionals to
other provinces who were more receptive to the use of ASL in the classroom. More fundamentally, however, deaf people are often dispersed by being born to hearing parents and living within hearing families and attending mainstream schools in rural and urban communities often with little access to culturally deaf people (Ladd, 2003; Weber, 2012; 2013).

The presence of many deaf communities bonded by a shared language and subscription to the values of the deaf community is diminished due to the emphasis on cochlear implantation and inclusive education environments (Emery, 2015). Although deaf identities often intersect with other cultural identities such as black deaf, Asian deaf, LGBTQ deaf, Jewish deaf), the deaf homeland is constituted as a common deaf citizenship in which ex-mainstream deaf people are sojourners, seeking a place of belonging and acceptance (Bechter, 2008; Emery, 2015). Emery (2015) suggests that the deaf homeland is either real and or imagined and provides value, identity and loyalty based on the experience of being deaf (Emery, 2015). The homeland for deaf people can be constituted as temporary spaces or traditional permanent spaces such as a deaf school, a deaf club or deaf places of worship (Gulliver, 2009; Emery, 2009). Deaf people do not always control or operate these traditional permanent spaces; hearing administrators, missionaries, and philanthropists may have more control over these traditional deaf spaces than deaf people themselves (Emery, 2015). Control of deaf space is often contentious particularly when deaf people attempt to negotiate with often well-meaning administrators, missionaries and philanthropists who determine beforehand how the space is to be used, what policies are to be enacted, and who can be in the deaf space (Gulliver, 2009). Temporary deaf spaces, however, are entirely authored by deaf people and may
appear in pubs, coffee shops, banquets, on street corners, malls, conferences, public
transport, village gatherings or workplaces (Gulliver, 2009; Kusters, 2009; 2012;
Friedner, 2014). The deaf homeland is then defined as a temporal space characterized by
a sense of cultural agency expressed in yearning for contact with people of similar
beliefs, practices, language and values (Emery, 2015).

While the deaf diaspora consists of approximately 70 million people dispersed
through the world (World Federation of the Deaf, 2018), the homeland is an imaginary
yet experienced construct (Emery, 2015). When deaf people congregate in large numbers,
this homeland becomes experienced as the fulfilment of a yearning for full
communication conducted with ease within vibrant deaf cultures. Deaf events such as
conferences, Deaflympics (Deaf Olympics), camps, religious gatherings, Deaf expos
conducted at translocal and international scales reinforce the presence of this
transnational consciousness, both imagined and experienced. Temporary deaf spaces
become opportunities to develop identities by emphasizing their distinctiveness through
their sharing of sign language and membership in a deaf community (Emery, 2015).
Furthermore, temporary deaf spaces are informed by the experience of the deaf homeland
with view to sharing language, values, culture and experience of oppression (Emery,
2015). In other words, the deaf homeland is a north star to which deaf people can
gravitate, often overcoming many financial and social barriers to travel, congregation,
and association with other deaf.

**Deaf Convert Culture**

Many deaf adolescents stumble upon the deaf community during the final years of
schooling or as adults and often begin to learn sign language for the first time (Akamatsu,
Musselman, & Zweibel, 2000; Bechter, 2008). They undergo a conversion experience in which they learn how to belong and participate in a community after years of being isolated within their families and hearing communities (Bechter, 2008). Since most deaf signers are not born into families who sign, they often join the deaf community in their teen years or as young adults (Bechter, 2008). Therefore, they can be converts to the deaf community and to American Sign Language (Bechter, 2008).

Bechter (2008), however, suggests that the convert culture inhabited by deaf cyborgs who adopt ASL and life in the deaf community, is a confluence of deaf and hearing worlds, and argues for a deaf theory that would consider the very real material, social and ideological elements of the convert culture. In the deaf convert culture, the intersections between hearing and deaf worlds are relative and shifting (Bechter, 2008). This intersectionality determines the limits and recognition of the deaf voice and suggests that deaf culture is unbounded and constantly in flux. While deaf cyborgs join the convert culture, they also maintain strong ties with their hearing families and friends. They also participate in mainstream culture by perusing books, magazines, television, movies, and electronic games (Bechter, 2008). Therefore, the deaf voice is influenced by sustained contact with the hearing world as well.

Personal narratives concerning conversion to the deaf world comprise the core of the convert culture; membership is founded upon conversion processes and the negotiations that ensure prior, during and after conversion to the deaf community (Bechter, 2008). De Clerck (2007) traces the common narratives of the deaf person who moves from discourses concerning the value of oralism to discourses extolling the important of sign language and belonging to the deaf community. She describes the
movement as “waking up” from a sleep induced by oralism discourses promoting the deficit lens associating with deafness such as 1) the deaf can’t do anything 2) the deaf need to be controlled by hearing, 3) sign language is ugly or a monkey language, 4) deafness is a disability, 5) deaf people are to be ashamed for using sign language, 6) the suppression of discussions about what it means to be deaf (De Clerck, 2007). These discourses, once invisible to the hearing world, are made visible in the deaf world to oral deaf persons entering it for the first time; hence the conversionary nature of the deaf community. Furthermore, personal narratives may contain positive elements of the hearing world in dynamic interaction with the deaf world (Bechter, 2008). Such narratives concerning the conversion of the deaf person to the deaf community may indicate an ontological position that position the deaf cyborg in multiple, shifting, and unbounded entanglement characteristic of the posthuman subject (Braidotti, 2013; Brueggeman, 2009; De Clerck, 2007).

**Inbetweenity**

Brueggeman (2009), in reference to Haraway’s cyborg myth, suggests that border crossings between deaf and hearing world might consist of “transgressed boundaries and potent fusions” and that the cyborg cochlear implant user could be considered as a ‘crack dweller,’ living in a space where tough and opportunistic plants grow, where weird and beautiful fusions could happen” (Brueggeman, 2009, p. 16). If the onto-epistemological position as defined by the posthuman renders the deaf bilingual bimodal cyborg as a perpetual nomad (Braidotti, 2013), shifting in and out of subjectivities using multiple modalities in literally split seconds, then the posthumanist interpretation of “inbetweenity” might not be a defined space as suggested by her “crack dweller”
metaphor (Brueggeman, 2009). Rather, “inbetweenity” is more akin to a fluid which flows into and out of relationships with social, cultural, political, linguistic embodied and material realities appearing and disappearing at will (Braidotti, 2011). The nomadic self is an ecosystem of relationships rather than limited to occupying a point along the space and time continuum (Braidotti, 2011).

**Affectus in the Classroom**

The conception, design and construction of the arts installation project titled, *The Deaf Forest*, became the classroom affectus which generated several affects. The students and adults (hearing and deaf) in the classroom conceptualized the states associated with their experiences of deafness as being simultaneously hearing, hard of hearing and deaf. Based on the classroom dynamics described earlier in this chapter, the students discussed the changing positionalities occasioned by movements and negotiations of space usage associated with each state, even when in the same deaf space as in the classroom. Hence, the title, *The Deaf Forest*, despite the clear delineation of deaf, hearing and hard of hearing spaces.

When the artists in residence asked us to prepare abstract paintings of these states, the students, hearing and deaf adults and I depicted trees, rocks, jagged edges, triangles, circles, squares and varying hues of colour as associated with each state. The concepts associated with the arts installation project, *The Deaf Forest* were developed through several discussions about their identification of affects belong to the states associated with being hearing, hard of hearing and deaf. These affects were a result of their own lens afforded through their deaf experiences. Although the classroom affectus, that is, a catalyst to provoke minoritarian desires, would enable their becoming deaf, becoming
much more than being audiologically deaf, and becoming more than their language competency. While situated in multiple communities, the students often countered this affectus during their classroom time and during the construction of *The Deaf Forest*, often with resistance, incredulity, tears, anger, hurt and eventual acceptance of themselves as appearing and disappearing throughout the states associated with being hearing, hard of hearing or deaf.

*The Deaf Forest* affords various entries, crossings, retracings and multiple journeys by all visitors including those who created the art installation and invites physical and visual engagement with the affects associated with each state. *The Deaf Forest* does not offer encounters with hearing and deaf people in various locations. Border crossing is difficult to describe without resorting to binarized descriptions of locations, commitments and languages. During the construction and after the installation period was finished, I began to wonder if border crossings could be reconceptualized as intra-actions between humans of diverse abilities, animals, and matter, living and non-living (Weber, 2017). Furthermore, what if a deaf and hearing person could border cross in the same manner, at the same time, to the same location in their commitment to becoming minitorian? Or arrive at the same location through diverse pathways? What is the affectus that would enable border crossings between all species? I wondered if the best posthumanist ontological description of the multiple states and locations displayed in *The Deaf Forest* was indeed the deaf cyborg?

**Deaf Cyborg**

The deaf cyborg’s use of technology (cochlear implants, hearing aids, and hearing technologies), sign language, sound, vision, bodies, objects and materiality both living
and non-living, presupposes a hybrid existence. Cyborg politics, unlike identity politics which thrives on binary opposites, insist that traditional boundaries can be broken by “combining the uncombinable” (Cherney, 1999, p. 32). For instance, the identity categories denoting deaf/hearing and deaf/Deaf is problematic in that the essentialism extolled by leaders and activists promotes a fixation of identities which are otherwise characterized as hybrid, in flux, and perpetually changing (Friedner & Kusters, 2015). Hence the cyborgized individual becomes a border crosser negotiating differences between standpoints as opposed to remaining entrenched within binarized and essentialized identities that inscribe them in limited ways (Cherney, 1999).

Here, the deaf cyborg metaphor is apt in describing the ontological state of having to attend to what is common to all people, diversities among people and the general and specific all at the same time (Haraway, 1991; Haualand, 2017). Haualand (2017) remarks on the productive possibilities that arise from having to be one and many at the same time, in the juggling of identities and locations. Being confidently oneself as a deaf cyborg could produce this affect, one that was evident in the opening night of *The Deaf Forest* installation at the Dunlop Gallery. The installation seemed to embolden deaf, hearing, and hard of hearing individuals to attempt to use gesture, signs, and speech to communicate with each other concerning various aspects of *The Deaf Forest* and in spinoff activities such as the ASL poetry slam and the preschool ASL storytelling session (Anaquod, 2018; Kotzer, 2017; Martin, 2017a).

**Conclusions**

My work with severely language-deprived deaf youth positions me, as a deaf researcher, to consider what is in front of me rather than idealized states concerning
potential trajectories of learning within the deaf child. Yet research on deafness continues to be dominated by binaries. The topology of deafness is now becoming more variegated because of the efforts of deaf academics in countering the hegemonic claim that all deaf people must learn to speak, and that sign language remain an unfortunate choice if all efforts at aural rehabilitation failed (Ladd, 2003). Addressing the dualisms produced by humanist, anti-humanist and transhumanist paradigms involve changing the topography concerning deafness. Here, the commitment to becoming minitorian or becoming deaf enables an affective pedagogy. The affectus in the classroom produces affects such as enjoyment of metaphors within ASL and English, the creation of shared spaces with deaf and hearing people who have diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, having to be one and many at the same time, which all serve to deterritorialize binaries concerning language acquisition, the deaf body and locations of deaf subjects. Many desires initially presented as dualisms fighting for hegemonic control within humanist, antihumanist and transhumanist paradigms are now subsumed within the posthuman paradigm as the desires of deaf people and desires of hearing people for deaf people are integrated. An affective pedagogy may provide affects toward deaf posthumanist performativity in becoming minitorian, nomadic and always in encounter with living and non-living matter.
SECTION 7: RE-THINKING DEAF TROPES

The spring in which we returned from the SoundOff Festival and worked on *The Deaf Forest* had me sitting in a coffee shop nearly every noon hour pondering about the efficacy of the empowerment tropes that had come out of the American Deaf community in its flowering in the 1980s. We were creating an art installation with many of these tropes in mind such as Deaf culture, Deaf power, Deaf identity, Deafhood, and Deaf community. While I discussed these tropes with the students and the artists in determining the theme, the scope and presentation of this installation, I began to ask myself, what will the installation do to its viewers rather than what will it mean to its viewers? In posthumanist research, the researcher’s focus is not so much on the meaning the data reveals but on the agency of the data. In thinking about affective pedagogy, I found myself looking for affects imposed through actions in an assemblage between humans, animal and machines during the making of *The Deaf Forest* as opposed to creating meaning that would “educate” the viewers about deaf culture, ASL, and the deaf community. I kept these questions to myself while I continued to read the work of deaf anthropologists who wrote of the applicability of the ontological turn to deaf studies which considers how deaf people construct and populate worlds within worlds constituted by other subjects and objects (Friedner, 2017; Kusters, De Meulder, & O'Brien, 2017). The north American tropes associated with empowerment of deaf people, such as “Deaf power”, or “Deafhood” suggest a teleological orientation that defines what it means to be deaf (Friedner, 2017). Snaza (2015) further explicates this teleological orientation as bypassing the construction of worlds within the cybernetic triangle consisting of humans, animals and machines. The humanist goal of transforming the raw
human into a responsible and rational citizen, that is “humanizing” assumes that one is not fully human until educated preferably through many long years within an institution and is a narrative which is ultimately anthropocentric in nature (Snaza, 2015). A posthumanist perspective would be non-teleological because the task is that of forging “ways of being together that can resist and disrupt the global system that fucks us all over without forgetting that it happens in different ways to each singularity—human and nonhuman—and that these differences always matter” (Snaza, 2015, p. 21). I began to see that bypassing singularities weakened our efforts to empower ourselves and promoted binary thinking. For instance, the goal within current efforts at deaf empowerment is to end up with a “capital D” as in Deaf culture and Deaf identity, to become a member of the Deaf community, and to actualize a sense of Deafhood. These concepts are written in the singular, there is very little or no discussion of multiple deaf cultures, identities, and deafhoods, for example. They thus presume that there is one kind of Deaf culture, identity, and Deafhood. In analyzing deaf peoples’ experience through these concepts, there is the assumption that they are relevant for all deaf people in the world; and that if they are not currently relevant, they eventually will be. As such, these concepts are prescriptive ones that create normative d/Deaf worlds (Friedner, 2017). The play, *Deaf Crows* suggests such normative empowerment tropes. Yet, I am reminded of the scene where the deaf storyteller, feeling distressed by the bullying between deaf children and after having resolved the conflict, rushes back on the stage, and pours forth an anguished short speech from his hands:

It doesn’t matter if deaf can speak or sign or both. There are so few of us. We need to work together, to support each other. We are not hearing people or copies
of hearing people. We are deaf! (Ells, Hi, & Weber, 2016)

I began to wonder if living in a deaf diaspora away from large and vibrant deaf community did not afford the adoption of generalized tropes about deaf culture, deaf community, ASL and deaf empowerment. What might take the place of these prescriptive tropes? In this chapter, I return to the making of *Deaf Crows*, the performance itself, and the assemblage of human, animal, and machines to determine ways in which we, in a small diaspora deaf community, might employ modes of resistance.
CHAPTER 7: CAPTIVE SONGS OF RESISTANCE

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore how the reference to the deaf diaspora where I live and work and to the deaf homelands as situated in large and vibrant deaf communities is a means of resistance to oppressive education practices concerning the education of deaf children and youth. In the following chapter, I will construct a posthumanist cartography which explores affects within the context of Deaf Crows, a theatrical play which is an outcome of an arts-based affective pedagogy (Hickey-Moody, 2013) in a small resource program for deaf students in a western Canadian city. Within the deaf diaspora in Saskatchewan, Canada, far away from large and vibrant deaf communities, the processes inherent within the production of Deaf Crows, enabled me to move toward becoming an intercultural teacher (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2014; Pirbhai-Illich, Pete, & Martin, 2017) by exercising intergenerational responsibility (Kusters M., 2017) toward deaf students.

Intergenerational responsibility toward deaf students is characterized by an urgency for the cultural, social and intellectual wellbeing of deaf students and a commitment to dismantling barriers that obstruct their learning potential (Kusters M., 2017). I explore how affective pedagogy inherent in the development and production of Deaf Crows enabled the exercise of intergenerational responsibility as shared by deaf adults, hearing parents, and the resistance of oppressive educational practices toward deaf students. Specifically, I study the affects associated with the deaf students’ accounts of their deaf diaspora experiences with reference to the deaf homeland.

The presence of deaf diasporas resulting from closure of deaf schools and their reference to an imaginary and yet experienced homeland as a transnational presence
(Emery, 2015) presents possibilities for resistance within the education of deaf students who are isolated from more vibrant deaf communities. Today, most deaf students are educated in their home communities and are acculturated into the so-called “hearing world.” Therefore, these students are often deprived of access to the linguistic and cultural capital afforded by the deaf community on local, provincial and national scales (Humphries, et al., 2012). Despite inclusive education policies, the proliferation of cochlear implants, and the overall emphasis on hearing loss as an entity to be cured or habilitated (Mauldin, 2016), a significant number of mainstreamed deaf students eventually find their way into the deaf community and come to embrace the linguistic, cultural, social, and artistic achievements provided by the deaf community at all levels (Bechter, 2008).

The deaf diaspora and its referral to a deaf homeland provides a means of resistance to the medical model of deafness. The presence of a deaf homeland creates contact zones as evidenced in large international gatherings of deaf people, such as World Federation of the Deaf conferences and international and national sports events whereby deaf people can strengthen their identities, forge kinship ties, and return to their diasporic communities renewed and strengthened.

**Background**

As the only deaf teacher working with deaf children and youth in the province, I live and work in a deaf diaspora (Emery, 2015) where very few students meet adult deaf role models in school contexts. Furthermore, the students who do not fully access spoken English or American Sign Language (ASL) often exhibit varying degrees of language deprivation (Hall, Levin, & Anderson, 2017; Humphries, et al., 2012). Recent studies
indicate that if a deaf child does not have access to language in early formative years of development, cognitive deficits can develop which interfere with learning (Humphries, et al., 2012) and the acquisition of a second language such as English or ASL (Mayberry, Chen, Witcher, & Klein, 2011; Davenport, et al., 2016). As a deaf teacher, I continue to witness students’ difficulties with learning, and oppressive education practices such as withholding sign language until the student clearly demonstrates his or her inability to fully acquire English (Humphries, et al., 2012). Consequently, the mean reading level of the deaf high school leaver is at the fourth grade, which seriously impedes future employment and postsecondary education (Mitchell, E, & Qi, 2012; Pirbhai-Illich & Weber, 2011).

Furthermore, the exodus of several deaf educators and deaf assistants in 1991 as an outcome of a recommendation to close the provincial school for the deaf in Saskatchewan has significantly impacted my ability as the sole deaf teacher within the elementary and high school systems in this province, to exercise intergenerational responsibility (Kusters, M, 2017; Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990).

**Intercultural Teaching and Intergenerational Responsibility**

Intercultural teaching requires attention to the learning needs of diverse students (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2014), self-study (Garza, 2011) an examination of one’s own dysconscious audism (Gertz, 2008), racism (King, 1991), understanding of language planning in social and political contexts (Snoddon, 2009) and intersectionalities (Artiles, 2013; Bienvenu & Smith, 2007; Day & Maye, 2012; Pirbhai-Illich, Pete, & Martin, 2017) within diverse cultural contexts. In addition, in teaching deaf children and youth, deaf teachers exhibit a heightened sense of intergenerational responsibility to resist, disrupt
and remove “disabling barriers and oppressive practices in education and society and try to transmit positive experiences and attitudes about being deaf” (Kusters M., 2017, p. 241).

### Deaf Diaspora

Emery (2015) suggests that the deaf diaspora is a state that is outside the deaf homeland as real or imagined (Emery, 2015). The reference to the deaf homeland is perhaps a homing desire (Brah, 2005) which is shaped by international, national, provincial events in which deaf congregate and exchange information, deaf cultural knowledge, and share linguistic and social capital. In Saskatchewan, the homing desire is informed by deaf studies concepts that are developed and disseminated from deaf homelands such as Gallaudet University, international congregations such as World Federation of the Deaf, or Deaflympics, or arts festivals (Emery, 2015). The diaspora is also characterized by dispersal and maintenance of boundaries (Emery, 2015).

For instance, the dispersal of the deaf community in Saskatchewan occurred with the Deaf Education Advisory Forum’s decision in 1990 to act on one of the Task Force recommendations to close the provincial school for the deaf and to send the remaining students at the school for the deaf either back to their home communities or to the Alberta School for the Deaf in Edmonton (Saskatchewan Task Force Committee on Deaf Education, 1989; Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990). This dispersal also included the voluntary exodus of several deaf teachers and paraprofessionals to other provinces who were more receptive to the use of ASL in the classroom. Two rooms in the original R.J.D. Williams Provincial school for the Deaf in Saskatoon have been allocated for use by the Saskatoon deaf community. Hence the original building remains an
important diasporic landmark for the deaf community in Saskatchewan.

With regard to maintenance of boundaries, many stories about the deaf diasporic experience often are silenced by narratives extolling achievements of deaf individuals. Thus, stories of struggle, loss, perpetual challenges and dwindling resources are diminished. Crowley and Hickey-Moody (2012), like Snoddon and Underwood (2014), suggest that the current social models concerning lives of disabled people lack consideration of the real challenges involved in the self-care by people with disabilities, their families, caregivers and caseworker. For instance, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission report concerning the rights of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Saskatchewan includes a testimonial from an individual who is a cochlear implant user:

One person offered a compelling account of her process after having implants in pre-adolescence, stating “On the first day… I hated it… I took every opportunity to turn off my processor. After months and months of encouragement from my parents and teachers, I stuck it out and began to hear more.” That person saw the cochlear implants as life changing and pivotal to educational achievement and social inclusion. The two people who made statements about the positive impact of cochlear implants in later childhood emphasized the importance of family support as a crucial element in the success of the medical intervention.

(Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016, pp. 7-8).

On the other hand, there is little known about the resources required by the family to provide support for a deaf child. Mauldin (2016) suggests such resources are mostly acquired by middle to upper middle-class families who can financially sustain the mother as a therapeutic worker dedicated full time to developing language in a deaf child. For
this reason, many personal narratives of successful deaf adults tend to silence the stories
told by those who did not successfully navigate the mainstream environments (Valente,

For this reason, maintaining of boundaries between deaf diasporic communities
and the hearing community at large has relied on frozen epistemologies of Deaf studies
(Grech & Soldatic, 2014; Friedner, 2017), a form of strategic essentialism emphasizing
cultural and linguistic differences in deaf people and therefore promoting bilingual and
bicultural education of deaf children and youth (Ladd, 2003). Frozen epistemologies have
overlooked the daily experiences of what it means to live in the Saskatchewan deaf
diaspora. For instance, the SHRC report also included the experiences of deaf children
who were not as successful:

Many deaf children and their parents reported feeling isolated by the mainstream
approach. While there were submissions from individuals who excelled and felt
included, supported, and valued in mainstream educational settings, these were
the exception. Others also excelled in standard schools, though they believed their
success was despite the inadequacies of inclusive education environments in
meeting their needs. The low incidence of deafness exacerbates the isolation of
deaf students, as it is rare for students to be grouped in programs or classrooms to
make optimal use of educational resources. An especially moving photographic
image submitted to the Commission shows a young man seated in what appears to
be a storage room. It was stated that he spends a good part of his school day in
this room alone or with an Educational Assistant. (Saskatchewan Human Rights
Commission, 2016, p. 9).
The diasporic nature of deaf education in Saskatchewan calls for a different methodological approach and a unique dataset. In this study, I consider how the definition of Saskatchewan deaf education as a deaf diaspora and its relationship to the deaf homelands as the “north star” provides a means of resistance to exercise intercultural pedagogy and intergenerational responsibility (Kusters, M., 2016; Pirbhai-Illich, Pete, & Martin, 2017).

Nomadic Ontology

I consider the deaf diaspora (Emery, 2015) within a posthuman frame (Braidotti, 2011) by adopting a nomadic ontology to examine deaf performativity with view to resisting oppressive educational practices (Braidotti, 2011). A nomadic subject is characterized by movement and mobility therefore highlighting the importance of negotiations with embodiment, embodied and embedded materialities (Braidotti, 2011). For instance, I am deaf cyborg as a dedicated hearing aid user, fluent in American Sign Language and as a teacher, I flip in and out of states that require hearing, speaking, signing, vision, and often at the same time.

Nomadic zigzagging, rather, is not from deaf spaces into hearing spaces and vice versa. Nomadic zigzagging expands upon the early theorization on border crossing which considered the crossing between geographical territories, ethnic locations, and linguistic spaces in the tradition of Anzaldua (1987): “I am a turtle, where I go I carry ‘home’ on my back” (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 43). The diasporic identity is not marginal, or self-chosen (Braidotti, 2011). Rather, border crossing or zig zagging in the nomadic sense, suggests that we are all living in a diasporic state not only because of massive dislocations of people due to environmental disasters, famine, war and political conflicts, and effects of
globalization and advanced capitalism but due to the collapse of boundaries between humans and animals, living organisms and machines, and between living and non-living matter (Braidotti, 2011). Haraway (1991) identifies the breakdown of three boundaries in the past century, that is: 1) between human and animal, 2) organic life-forms and the machine, and 3) between the physical and non-physical. In short, we are all diasporic people, deaf and hearing alike. Binarized thinking is no longer a useful epistemological tool with which to think about the intra-actions between humans, animals, earth and machines.

I want to attend to the phrase, homing desire, as a complement to the deaf experience of zigzagging between the affects embedded in the local deaf community and the larger national and international deaf spaces or homelands. Activities within the diaspora include exchanges of people, information, cultures and commodities and may be guided by a homing desire possessed by those who are not able to return to their country of origin (Brah, 2005). Instead, contact zones within the diasporic experience overlap and are non-linear thereby lending itself to zigzagging (Braidotti, 2011).

Braidotti (2011) recognizes that minoritized people do need to go through a phase of identity politics, to establish stable identities, because the starting points of nomadic actions are at different stages. In the end, however, the eschewing of role reversals, that is formerly oppressed people now in dominant positions of power allows for the continual movement in becoming nomadic (Braidotti, 2011). This is also a task set for people belonging to minority groups who must learn to place themselves on the periphery of their own groups (Braidotti, 2011). Therefore, as an intercultural educator, I must always place myself on the edge of any group including the deaf diaspora and the deaf
homelands. Being nomadic is a state designated for all locations and temporalities (Braidotti, 2011). Therefore, the continuous travelling between identities, locations, and languages confirms the deaf diaspora existence as the starting point of identity formation for the nomad (Braidotti, 2011) and as a means for resisting oppressive practices within deaf education in Saskatchewan.

Posthuman Arts-Based Methodology

Within the arts-based educational research paradigm, the artist within the posthuman frame, is charged with the task of creating a world or an assemblage to bring about deterritorialization in which resistance of oppressive practices can take place (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Hickey Moody and Page (2016) suggest that art is a post-human project that acts on bodies within Deleuze and Guattari’s (1994) thought, and affect is the means through which this post-human pedagogy occurs. Or to put it another way, affect is the way in which art speaks and the materiality of voice is part of the way art speaks. In this theoretical context, art has a politically effective capacity, the capability to rework a body’s limits, to reconfigure individual arrangements of structure/agency, augment that which a body is or is not able to understand, produce, and to which it might connect (Hickey-Moody & Page, 2016, pp. 10-11).

To rework the body’s limits, I place deaf children and youth within a deaf diasporic context and consider affects within the assemblages contained within the deaf diaspora in Saskatchewan. While metaphor is to language as affect is to movement and mobilities within an assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), metaphor describes through comparisons and often remains static, affects are states indicating “feeling, intensity,
richness, playfulness, desiring, passion, excitement, rage, suffering, life, becoming” (Albrecht-Crane, 2003, p. 563). In thinking with affect, “something valuable, critical, something political … happens when we relate affectively across the spaces of our classroom” (Albrecht-Crane, 2003, p. 563). Desire produces affects and in turn is produced by affects, a tautological circle, as “desire is never separable from complex assemblages that necessarily tie into molecular levels, from the microformations already shaping postures, attitudes, perceptions, expectations, semiotic systems, etc.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 215). The interplay between desires and affects is the result of performances by and with material and embodied elements of the assemblage including all living and non-living matter.

Affects are more than feelings that occur when experiencing a constellation of events, processes, or even a singular instance (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Rather, affects can be better described as intensities which correspond to occurrences within an assemblage, which in turn, influence a body’s (living or non-living) capacity to act (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Affects are transformative in that they can be defined as taking on something or changing in relation to an experience or encounter (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Affects contribute to flows of desires which, in turn, influence the movements within assemblages (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Flows of desire are not always positive; affects can be heightened or diminished according to flows of desire (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

In this chapter, I also consider abject affects appearing through arts-based data. Abject affects are what is othered within the self as the “unassimilated, unpresentable, unrepresented and even the unthinkable” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 113). The abject is not
located in the individual as an unconscious actor. Rather, the abject located in the unconscious is shaped and produced by the assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The abject affect is often driven into the unconscious shaped by the assemblage and surfaces in various spaces throughout the assemblage.

To assimilate the abject affect, however, one must first become minoritarian: “all becoming is becoming-minitorian” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 291). In this regard, the term, majority, is associated with dominance, organization, categories, and hierarchies. Being cognizant of male white privilege, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) note that the first becoming is that of becoming woman (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Women, children, animals, plants and molecules are minitorian. To this roster, I add “becoming deaf” as a minoritarian position subjected to ubiquitous audiocentric privilege (Crowley, 2012; Eckert & Rowley, 2013). My own living in the Saskatchewan deaf diaspora is particularly advantageous in exercising intergenerational responsibility toward deaf students because the margins are locations from which I can assimilate abject affects into myself, the students and my pedagogy to resist oppressive educational practices and unjust structures (Braidotti, 2011). In this study, I explore how may the integration or assimilation of abject affects within affective pedagogy allow for resistance in the Saskatchewan deaf diaspora.

Arts-based research aims to uncover the abject affects produced by the intra-actions between hearing, deaf, animals, machines, living and non-living matter by first removing me from the position of the powerful roles of a teacher, a deaf adult who is endowed with white privilege, raised by parents who are educators and who can fluently speak English. I am not the focus of this piece. Instead, I propose the mapping of intra-
actions of deaf students along with animals, earth and machine.

Within this assemblage, I map (literally) the zigzagging between various elements of the assemblage (humans, animals, machine and earth) and have marked the yellow stars as the positive affects and the blue triangles to denote the abject affects which are found in various locations throughout. Mapping the affects embedded within the assemblage enables the zigzagging between the technological, artistic, cultural and institutional dimensions as well as the nature/nurture of biology (Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Here, art is produced by the assemblage which consists of intra-actions between humans, animals and machines rather than by a sole artist or a group of students in this case. All elements conspire to produce the art and to be produced by it (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

**Research Question**

The role of unconscious desire as produced by the assemblage is often neglected and untheorized in arts-based research (Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). What are the lines of flight appearing in a cartography containing affects, conscious and unconscious, abject
and otherwise, in the deaf diaspora in Saskatchewan that enables resistance to oppressive practices concerning education of the deaf living and learning in a deaf diaspora? Lines of flight are connective paths within the assemblage of human and non-human actors such as animals, earth, machine and plants that enable thinking differently (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) about current practices in deaf education.

**Cartography of the Saskatchewan Deaf Diaspora**

Below is a visual map, a cartography featuring the assemblage of the Saskatchewan deaf diaspora which will be the focus of study within this chapter. Human, animal, earth and machine entities within this assemblage arranged from the top left to bottom right, are items associated with the Saskatchewan deaf diaspora: 1) masks created by Alex Bristow, Jaqueline Fink, Fatima Nafisa, Shayla Tanner for use in the *Deaf Crows* play; 2) map indicating the presence of diasporic deaf communities in relation to larger and vibrant deaf communities in Canada, 3) a collage created by Alex Bristow which served as the organizing metaphor for the *Deaf Crows* play, 4) a photograph of the original school for the deaf in Saskatoon, 5) a murder of crows congregating on the snow covered ground, 6) a picture of various types and sizes of hearing aids, 7) a photograph of selected actors in the *Deaf Crows* play: Alex Bristow, Fatima Nafisa, Jacqueline Fink, Shayla Tanner, Taylor Schwab, Tyson Zacharias along with Allard Thomas, deaf elder and narrator in the play; 8) a logo from the SoundOff festival held in Edmonton, Alberta which promotes and celebrates the work of deaf artists and actors and 9) a logo from the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission who released an investigative report on human rights of deaf persons in Saskatchewan in 2016.
Findings

Within this cartography, there are several movements and negotiations:

Masks

The masks created by the student performers came after several months of experimentation with different art styles, forms and mediums. During meditation exercises derived from an imagination-based methodology, called imagework designed to
facilitate the creation of images and artefacts within individuals and groups (Edgar, 2004), the students created their masks. Imagework involves the letting go of one’s daily occupations and entering a deep state of relaxation in which images surfaces from the unconscious (Edgar, 2004). The imaginal world that arises from the unconsciousness is now becoming recognized by current anthropologists as capable of providing a critique of cultural, social and realities of the conscious world (Edgar, 2004). After deep relaxation exercises, the students spontaneously created grotesque masks without prompting or receiving feedback during the mask-making process (which was expressly forbidden by the artists in residence). In addition, the students explored their own personal metaphors in the context of creating dreamboxes that contained images arising from the relaxation exercises in which they had engaged. The dreamboxes explorations contained affects associated with crows, birds, forests, wolves, fairies, explosions, and robots which eventually coalesced into storytelling about their childhoods.

I was unprepared for the students’ tears, grief, anger, pain, and shame at being deaf. However, I was not surprised at their spontaneous outbursts of recognition, “hey, that’s my story too!” Although the stories were all too familiar, having experienced much of it myself, that is, containing accounts of bullying, isolation, being made to feel incompetent or stupid, not having the words or the language to comprehend classroom instruction, I found myself very uncomfortable with their stories of abjection. I interrupted them several times, attempting to smooth over the pain by reminding them of what they had achieved and showing off their accomplishments. The emerging student artists, however, persisted in their storytelling, while I reluctantly sat at the side of the room, letting the stories of abjection flow out from them. Like Anzaldúa (1987), I
realized that I had

spent the first half of my life learning to rule myself, to grow a will, and now at midlife I find that autonomy is a boulder on my path that I keep crashing into. I can’t seem to stay out of my own way. I’ve always been aware that there is a greater power than the conscious I (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 72).

Within this assemblage, abject affects within oneself and others became visible through the students sharing their experiences of bullying and discussions on feelings of shame associated with deafness, being grudgingly granted sign language upon failure to acquire fluent spoken English, unable to engage in playground activities with hearing children, and isolated within families and communities.

Map of Diasporic Deaf Communities

The appearance of the abject affects came after my initial efforts at teaching ASL and deaf culture through the locally developed courses provided by the school board which was met with muted enthusiasm from the deaf students. I introduced DVDs showcasing deaf culture, deaf leaders, and deaf history. Again, I saw the look of disbelief in their eyes. I brought in deaf adults to visit but the students viewed them with disinterest because they were older and signed in a way that not easily comprehensible. My attempts to refer to a deaf homeland such as Gallaudet University, Deaflympics, deaf camps, and to the history of oppression of the deaf community was met with polite disinterest. I came to realize that the presence of a deaf community in a far-off locale such as the culturally vibrant and rich deaf community in Washington DC was not going to inspire them when they couldn’t connect with the local deaf community whose average age was 65 or above. I wondered too, if they weren’t intimidated by my own
achievements as a deaf person which seemed out of reach for them. The superhero image that I presented before them in the classroom seemed more of a liability than ever when seeking to exercise intergenerational responsibility (Kusters, M., 2017; Valente, 2011).

Through the discussion of their personal experiences, images and dreams, the students began to learn about the Saskatchewan diasporic deaf community as related to other deaf communities in Canada. Many students were surprised to learn that there were larger deaf communities who possessed a greater critical mass and cultural capital. The students became aware of these deaf communities through their requests for *Deaf Crows* performances in Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Toronto. I would relay the contents of the emails requesting their performance and give brief background introductions to the deaf community persons and leaders in those larger deaf communities who had requested our performances. The students also became aware that many local deaf leaders in Regina and Saskatoon have predicted the closure of deaf organizations in Saskatchewan within the next five years. The students learned about how the remaining leaders in the diasporic deaf community struggle with burnout while caring for the economic, social, and cultural wellbeing of the remaining deaf people and developing programs for children and youth (Birley, 2016; Warren, 2018; Weber, 2013). This information was relayed to the students to highlight the differences in deaf communities across Canada and to establish a deaf homeland both real and imagined. Moreover, the students were invited to consider the viability of travelling to these deaf communities and giving a performance of *Deaf Crows*.

**Student Collage of a Crow’s Brain**

The students in my classroom explored the deleterious effects of enormous
challenges to acquiring language. In relaying information about language acquisition, I emphasized that it was possible to ameliorate many effects associated with partial language acquisition challenges through cognitive based activities designed to change one’s brain such as planning steps in a project, predicting consequences, developing empathy for others, using one’s vision to truly see as in drawing and painting, engaging in multiple forms of art-making, increasing reading and writing activities and developing expressive language skills through drama classes. At the end of each day, the artists and I provided feedback to each of the students as to how we saw their brains were changing. One student returned to school, having created a collage of a crow whose skin has been peeled back to reveal the broken and haphazard connections in his brain occasioned by the social and cultural challenges preventing access to language. The hope in his work, however, was apparent in the stitching of parts of the brain together, using buttons as anchors (Bristow, 2016). His artwork became the central organizing metaphor for *Deaf Crows*.

**Photograph of the Original School for the Deaf in Saskatoon**

The artists in residence and I brought in a deaf elder from the community who agreed to mentor these students by modelling ASL and sharing his stories of growing up. The students began to learn about the closure of the school in Saskatoon in 1991 and participated in constructing an extended metaphor of a deaf tree where crows congregated. The sustained metaphor of the tree being chopped down, and the dispersal of the crows allowed them to see themselves as part of the history of Saskatchewan deaf education. Eventually, this abject affect associated with crows enabled the students to tell their own deaf stories through the production of a theatrical play, *Deaf Crows* at a local
professional theatre (Ells, Hi, & Weber, 2016).

**Murder of crows**

During discussing dreams, stories, symbols and ways of expressing the stories that had emerged, the energies and behaviours of the crow became an abject affect, that is, a becoming animal through which students could share their experiences of being bullied, shunned, forgotten, and shamed (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The students researched crows as a potential metaphor for their experiences of abjection. At the same time, I worried, wondering whether the students could handle the abject affect of crows that they had identified as a potential metaphor. I knew that the abject affect producing and being produced by the crow was more than a metaphor. The metaphor, being flattened to a function of language, does not hold the same power as the abject affect produced by the crow which produces a sense of things to come, an unleashing of energy that enables a becoming minoritarian (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013) and in this case, becoming deaf (Crowley, 2012). The students discovered a class of birds known for their intelligence, empathy, and community sensibilities while at the same time, were shunned for their carrion natures and raw bird sounds. The students watched crow funerals on YouTube, discussed the crows’ capacity for community and pondered the phrase “a murder of crows”.

**Various Types and Sizes of Hearing Aids**

Simms (2017), in her vlog, 3R: Revisit, Rethink, Re-educate, comments on the etic perspective employed by hearing researchers and educators on what it is like to be a deaf student. The etic perspective emphasizes the capabilities of deaf students according to varying levels of hearing losses. For instance, a hard of hearing student with
intelligible speech can achieve spoken language and print literacy at higher rates than profoundly deaf students and can be placed in mainstream classroom without high levels of support such as an interpreter. Students who have a severe hearing loss, have intelligible speech and are reading at grade level can be placed in a mainstream classroom with assistive listening devices and with an interpreter. Profoundly deaf students are described as preferring “signs” but will speak when the occasion demands it, and the students who never adjusted to hearing loss, achieve at considerably below grade expectations (Kluwin & Stewart, 2001). Such descriptions of deaf students are quite standard (Simms, 2017) but may be cartographically incomplete. The students in being evaluated on their ability to speak, to hear, and to read and write English are described only in those terms. The posthuman perspective allows for a much more rich and accurate cartography.

Photograph of Selected Actors in the Deaf Crows Play:

The cast and crew of *Deaf Crows* also included four deaf adults, a elementary aged deaf child, and his mother who all belong to the diasporic deaf community in our city. The *Deaf Crows* cast also included actors from the deaf community who had grown up in residential schools, fluent in ASL, taught sign language classes and assumed deaf leadership roles at the local, provincial and national levels. The play, *Deaf Crows*, brought forth an outpouring of support, interest, and awareness of the hearing and Saskatchewan deaf communities and at the same time, attracted attention from the national and international deaf homelands. I received email inquiries about the play from deaf and hearing academics and performers as far away as Florida, New York and Texas (Daily Moth, 2016).
Deaf Crows played two nights to two packed houses at a local professional theatre in Regina, Saskatchewan and several months later, to full houses at SoundOff, a deaf theatre festival in Edmonton, Canada, in February 2017. The Deaf Crows student actors were invited to a party at the Edmonton Deaf Association’s building and were astonished at the clubhouse facilities including a stage, sound systems and lighting effects contributing to a disco dancing area, a bar, and games rooms. They met several deaf adults of all ages, many of whom were close to their age and interests. They had never seen so many deaf people in one space in all their lives.

Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (report)

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission released a report outlining claims of abuses of human rights of deaf people (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016) along with a description of the continuing binarization between those who advocate the development of oral English through the use of technology such as hearing aids and cochlear implants, and those who advocate for the acquisition of ASL as a first language within a bilingual bimodal educational framework. The SHRC commission further reported that:

Many parents and advocates believe the potential benefits of cochlear implants have been over-stated by healthcare providers. Some parents and advocates indicated that the lengthy wait for cochlear implants, and the lack of follow-up care, is a barrier for deaf children. A healthcare professional associated with the implant program reported that children currently receive cochlear implants at one year of age, but that this has not always been the case. The individual also stated
that devoting more resources to the program could reduce wait times and improve follow-up care. Parents who reported being discouraged against using ASL are of the view that their children were essentially deprived of a language during a critical window of development, and, because of that, their children struggled to acquire aural and oral language. They pointed to the detrimental effects of this deprivation, describing children who were socially and educationally isolated and who developed behaviour problems due to frustration over inability to communicate. A parent said, “Prior to accessing ASL support, my son was blatantly frustrated. He would bang his head on the wall… cry and… bite himself and others.” (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016, p. 7).

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission is the only report that includes narratives from parents, deaf children and deaf adults along with professionals (audiologists, teachers of the deaf, speech and language pathologists) who serve deaf people in Saskatchewan (Weber, 2018c in press).

Discussion

The abject affects associated with the varieties of deaf experience seemed to evoke a sense of a journey through which the deaf youth, the artists in residence and I were navigating with the purpose of becoming more alive and engaged in life. The deaf adults, students and I compared our deaf experiences without insistence upon concepts generated by white American Deaf studies which would have divided the cast of Deaf Crows into isolated intergenerational groups of people who claimed to be culturally deaf, and those who were undecided in favour of being deaf or did not want to be culturally deaf. To this end, I chose concepts carefully with view to addressing the specificities of
the deaf diaspora in which we were placed.

The creation and production of *Deaf Crows* allowed for movement through a shared space in which affects associated with becoming animal (as in becoming crow) which spurred the creation of deaf authored knowledges by those wholly immersed in the deaf diaspora. Intergenerational responsibility was exercised by the local deaf adults who had often experienced DEAF-SAME by attending events embedded in larger deaf communities or large deaf events such as conferences, expositions, and sports competitions (Friedner, 2017). DEAF-SAME in the play, *Deaf Crows*, was illustrated through the deaf storyteller, who distributed crow feathers to each student actor as an emblem of a brush with deaf culture (Snoddon, 2017a). The assemblage allowed for the straddling between the deaf diaspora and the deaf homelands in unprecedented or unpredictable ways.

During the performance of *Deaf Crows*, I continued to struggle with my own fear of the abject. I came to locate this fear in the excessive pride in my own individualism. Through sheer hard work, abundant parental support, and privilege, I pulled myself through the K-12 system and university. Through determination, steady work output, and focus, I became a triumphant success. The educational system rewarded me with many accolades, sentiments of how wonderful I was and how I had triumphed over adversity. This is a narrative that permeates our thinking. But this narrative did not allow me to attribute my success to the privileges that I had: stable family home, middle class values, parents who were educators, the provision of books, and moreover, the excusing of many responsibilities so I could study more, work harder, go out and excel some more. In other words, I did not learn how to function in a community. It was always about me and how I
was to continue earning my place in this world. My own ego became just inflated beyond belief (Weber, 2016).

In doing so, I came to understand that abject affects are driven into the unconscious because of missing “obscene underside of the official narratives, the affect of life” (Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 73). For this reason, the “virtual real of the diasporic imagination is not approached” (Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p. 73). For the first time, the etic perspective that had dominated my training as a teacher of the deaf gave way to a richer and nuanced cartography showing deaf students negotiating their way through assemblages containing humans (deaf and hearing actors), animals (crows), machine (hearing technologies) and earth (trees). In the classroom space, facilitated by the two artists and me, and the combination of art materials, sound, American Sign Language, computers, as non-human teachers, all increased or decreased the students’ capacity to act and shape their intra-actions with other bodies (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Hickey-Moody, 2009).

**Conclusions and Implications**

The integration of the abject affects through examination of our deaf diasporic experience and referral to the deaf homeland as a North star, enabled me to exercise intercultural pedagogy and intergenerational responsibility (Kusters M., 2017; Pirbhai-Illich, Pete, & Martin, 2017) by identifying a line of flight that would allow me, deaf adults and the students to make our voices truly heard outside of meetings with government officials which were primarily conducted behind closed doors and ineffectual. The line of flight indicated a path between the medical model which limited narratives only to those who successfully became integrated into the hearing world, and
the frozen epistemes such as Deaf pride, Deaf culture, Deafhood, Deaf empowerment promoted by the American Deaf community. Rather, the line of flight in this assemblage suggested close attention to the Saskatchewan deaf diasporic experience and existing connections to deaf homelands as a north star. Within this line of flight, the North Star points to what is desired or longed for, not only a description of the Saskatchewan deaf experience. In following this line of flight, we created a “little public” (Hickey-Moody, 2013) as a means of resistance through the arts. Little publics can develop out of artistic practice that incorporate affects and enhances community engagement which in turn promote changes in educational policy (Hickey-Moody, 2013).

In the creation of little publics (Hickey-Moody, 2013), the deaf diaspora and reference to the deaf homelands, whether real or imagined, is a starting place for deaf nomads committed to resistance (Braidotti, 2011). Border crossing through hearing and deaf worlds is replaced by zigzagging between affects (including abject affects associated with deafness) arising from intra-actions between humans, animal, machines and living and non-living matter (Braidotti, 2011). Abject affects associated with deafness are to be assimilated into self and assemblages (Anzaldua, 1987; Braidotti, 2011; Kristeva, 1982).

Moreover, abject affects form local knowledges in combination with American Deaf epistemologies. Perhaps one of the greatest contributions of the deaf diaspora is the language of impairment, limitations, and abjection which needs to be included in discussions on deaf subjects (Friedner, 2017). Here, deaf studies concepts as found in American Deaf Studies cannot be applied immediately to local contexts. “Becoming deaf” may be a more fitting phrase than “deafness” or Deaf/deaf because it can include the language of impairment and the celebratory aspects of deaf culture. Within the
posthumanist frame, the deaf person can be researched as already belonging to the world instead of being shaped to fit into a world that is controlled by hearing people or valorized by deaf people. The collapsing of boundaries between human and animals, organic life-forms and the machine, between the physical and non-physical allows for the assimilation of the abject affects produced in assemblages and shaping the intra-actions with deaf people as an integral part of our world (Braidotti, 2011; Haraway, 1991). Finally, the researcher/teacher may need to adopt a nomadic ontology in all assemblages through which they move and perform.
In the fall of 2017, my workload lightened considerably due to the hiring of a hearing team teacher, who is also a parent of a deaf child. She eagerly took on many of my duties while we continued to coordinate The Deaf Forest art installation which opened at the Dunlop Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan, from September 29 to October 30, 2017. The sudden provision of another teacher of the deaf in the program allowed me to think more deeply, to apply research to my teaching, and to develop a transitional program to post-secondary education and employment, and an additional play, *Apple Time*, performed in June 2018. Previously, I had worked with two interpreters and ten students; now I work with a team teacher, one interpreter and eleven students, four of whom are acquiring English as an additional language (EAL).

During that fall, I also had a practicum student (hearing) whose professed goal was to become a teacher of the deaf. That fall, our newly reconfigured resource program focused on finishing *The Deaf Forest* for the September 29th, 2017 opening.

When the media came to interview the above-mentioned teachers and the students concerning *The Deaf Forest*, I found myself impatiently fielding questions from media reporters about whether I considered myself as deaf or hard of hearing or Deaf. I told a reporter that I didn’t want to focus on labels because by now, I understood that I was deaf when I used ASL to communicate, I was hard of hearing when I used my voice to communicate, and I was hearing when I wrote and read extensively within my doctoral studies. I didn’t want to be limited to any one label. I was beginning to understand that by adopting a nomadic ontology which required continual zigzagging between labels, always searching for a line of flight, I was instead, “becoming deaf” through adopting a
minoritarian position. Instead, I invited her to explore her feelings as she walked through
the different areas of the installation. Already posthumanism, nomadology and
preoccupations with what a deaf body can do, or the trajectory toward becoming deaf had
begun to take hold in my mind. While students, staff and artists spoke of the usual tropes
designed to empower deaf people, I found myself shying away from the media
interviews. I was now preoccupied with developing the ability to see as a posthumanist
researcher. I wondered if becoming deaf as explicated within a posthumanist frame
applied to hearing as well as deaf people. Could we all, hearing and deaf, as performative
subjects, develop relationships with other species or different people such as people with
disabilities, by experiencing the affects associated with being disabled? I wondered if it
would be possible for hearing people to experience the same affects as deaf people and
therefore embark on the trajectory of becoming deaf?

Within assemblages containing deaf people, becoming deaf opens lines of flight
and indicate possible contingent futures (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Dittmer, 2014). Such
futures are brought into the present moment which then changes the present or makes the
future more likely (Dittmer, 2014). During the fall of 2017 in which the installation of
The Deaf Forest took place, there were criticisms by a committee member of the SHRC
about the efficacy and the slowness of the Commission in resolving complaints
concerning the violation of the rights of deaf people (Vermette, Personal Communication,
2017 b). While the SHRC committee continues its work and others wait for long hoped-for
changes, I attempted to exercise a “healthy skepticism about the primacy of the
human in political matters, because of either the inherent vitalism of living things or the
vibrancy of materials” (Dittmer, 2014). I wanted to see what The Deaf Forest could do,
rather than what it could mean to viewers. How could canvas walls, photographs, a stuffed fabric multi-coloured tree, hanging hollow fabric trees, a large canvas bird, and small canvas squares of ASL handshapes bring about change in deaf education? Could this art installation extend itself beyond the tropes such as “deaf community”, “deaf identity”, and ASL? Moreover, could this art installation launch hearing people into the trajectory of becoming deaf without any deaf people being in the exhibit most of the time? I was not sure if a single art installation could bring about instant enlightenment as I recalled years of struggle with my own family, colleagues, husband, children, and friends, and essentially failing at attempts to help them understand what deafness was really like. Most of these attempts ended in anger, disappointment, sadness, despair, division and resignation. I, too, shared the common narrative expressed by those who had become late signers in the deaf community, that our hearing family and friends could not share in the DEAF-SAME experience in the same way other deaf people could (Friedner & Kusters, 2015). I wondered if I had fastened a deficit lens on hearing people as well.

After installing the exhibit, the students and I returned to the classroom and continued our studies. We were not available to provide tours except upon request. The response to The Deaf Forest was unprecedented according to Wendy Peart, curator at the Dunlop Gallery (Peart, Personal Communication, 2017b). Due to the reporting by the radio, television, including a CBC French station and newspaper (Deaf Crows Collective, 2017), the opening night was well attended with more than a hundred people. The Dunlop Gallery reported that a wide range of visitors from cities in British Columbia and Ontario, family members, university students, artists, and the deaf community. As viewers explored the installation, connections were made by visitors who “have a differently
abled body and others with acquired disabilities felt comfortable to self-identify their situation and felt empowered to speak about their challenges and triumphs” (Peart, 2017a, p. 1). Furthermore, “several different sets of visitors told us that they appreciated the work for enabling them to see themselves and others with a new perspective” (Peart, 2017a, p. 1). Other visitors included a group of high-level school board administrators, university professors, students from different schools, and administrators from a provincial arts organization. A key outcome of The Deaf Forest was the invitation to reinstall The Deaf Forest at the local school board office.

In the final days leading up to the opening night, I found myself sitting in a corner closing a casing on a canvas wall with needle and thread while casting an eye occasionally at the students who were using their linguistic repertoires and the multiple material and semiotic resources including tools, signs, photographs, cloth, canvases, glue, cable wires, scissors and thread, to accomplish their tasks. I had become a part of the assemblage characterized by constant motion, decision making, negotiating, using of multiple languages such as spoken English, American Sign Language, languages of origin (Arabic, Bengali, and Somali) and material resources to assemble The Deaf Forest. I was no longer an authoritative leader because material resources exercised agency by demanding attention. Needles broke, glue sticks needed replacement, a canvas wall accidently tore apart, some trees needed repainting and repair, the deaf tree needed more stuffing, and taped sections had come apart. Union rules stipulated who was to climb ladders and when. Indeed, humans were not in full control, but in partnership with materialities within The Deaf Forest.

Secondly, I wondered about the appearance of data. Would arts-based data in The
Deaf Forest glow, shine, glimmer, stutter, exert its agency? Would I even be able to recognize it? St. Pierre (2013) suggests that data comes into existence independently of ontological, epistemological and methodological categories and labels. Within qualitative research, data is converted into text to which theory is applied (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016; St. Pierre, 2013). In these instances, words replace the actual data and are organized in binaries, hierarchies, categories and labels (St. Pierre, 2013). Furthermore, I wondered if it was possible to view The Deaf Forest through a posthumanist lens when it had been constructed using constructs from American Deaf studies such as Deaf empowerment, Deaf community, and ASL. The following chapter is an exploration of arts-based data arising from intra-actions in the assemblage including creators and visitors. Here, I attempt to find data that glowed, disrupted, and therefore was agentic.
CHAPTER 8: THE SECRETS OF THE DEAF FOREST

Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore a cartography of intra-actions between deaf people, hearing people, animals, earth and machines presented in The Deaf Forest arts installation in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, September 29 - October 30, 2017. This cartography will explore the affects generated through intra-actions within the three contact zones within the installation: The Hearing Forest, The Hard of Hearing Forest, and The Deaf Forest. My discussion will include how affects in The Deaf Forest promote a translanguaging instinct (Li, 2011; 2017) among hearing, hard of hearing and deaf people in the Regina deaf diaspora thereby establishing a translanguaging space in which traditionally defined spaces according to one’s identity to hearing loss is replaced by performative intra-actions within each contact zone, therefore contributing to a single translanguaging space. On the surface The Deaf Forest seems to be an introduction to one’s identities formed in the response to hearing loss: 1) being a hearing person who cannot hear very well 2) using residual or cochlear implants and primarily identifying with the hearing world, thereby adopting a hard of hearing identity and 3) being a member of a deaf community, thereby presenting as deaf. I argue, however, that a posthumanist lens allows me to see The Deaf Forest as a single translanguaging space where the translanguaging instinct bypasses preoccupations with identity and locations strives, instead, to engage in encounters with difference in multiple spaces (Li, 2017; 2011; Masny & Cole, 2012; Pirbai-Illich, Pete, & Martin, 2017).
**Purpose**

As the only deaf teacher working with deaf children and youth in the province, I live and work in a deaf diaspora where very few deaf students meet adult deaf role models in school contexts. Furthermore, the students and their families are often not exposed to standard varieties of ASL or deaf culture. The deaf education arena in Saskatchewan is a confluence of conflicting ideologies about language acquisition (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016). The conflict is currently polarized between the use of hearing technologies such as hearing aids and cochlear implants to facilitate spoken English and the use of American Sign Language (ASL) (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016).

Due to the work of applied linguists and anthropologists in deaf studies and deaf education (Friedner & Kusters, 2015; Kusters, De Meulder, & O'Brien, 2017), a critical fork in the road is appearing as to how to view the language abilities of deaf children and youth who are not able to fully access spoken English or standard ASL as exhibited by recognized models of ASL such as deaf ASL instructors (Snoddon, 2016). Recent studies indicate that if a deaf child does not have access to language in early formative years of development, cognitive deficits can develop which interfere with learning (Humphries, et al., 2012) and the mastery of a second language such as English (Mayberry, Chen, Witcher, & Klein, 2011; Davenport, et al., 2016). Moreover, cochlear implantation continues to be widely variable in producing academically literate deaf children and youth, and its benefits decrease over time, which is most notable upon entry into secondary school (Blom & Marschark, 2015). Consequently, the mean reading level of the deaf high school leaver is at the fourth grade, which seriously impedes future
employment and postsecondary education (Mitchell, E, & Qi, 2012; Pirbhai-Illich & Weber, 2011). Such research is founded upon the principle of scarcity, on what deaf people don’t have or need to have to fully participate in society. Language deprivation is now advanced as a syndrome with social and cultural origins which can be prevented through the provision of full access to language (Hall, Levin, & Anderson, 2017).

Recent research and theorizing on languaging, however, presents an alternate view of limited language acquisition that may not be so stark. Rather, people with limited linguistic repertoires can engage in creative exchanges with other people through the modification of existing linguistic understandings, negotiation of meanings, swapping and borrowing from other languages to achieve the task at hand. In doing so, they exhibit a translanguaging instinct, a “natural drive to combine all available cognitive, semiotic, sensory, and modal resources in language learning and language use” (Li, 2017, p. 17). Such instinct is innate and despite the paucity of resources at time, increases over time as one becomes immersed in complex communicative tasks (Li, 2017). Deaf scholars have noted this behaviour during the use of International Sign (IS) which is an agreement to use borrowed signs from various sign languages along with gestures and the use of additional material, sensory and multi-modal resources at large international gatherings of deaf people (Friedner & Kusters, 2015). Here, the translanguaging instinct exhibited in language-deprived children and youth warrants further study with view to increasing their linguistic repertoires (Swanwick, 2017). Translanguaging theorizing concerning deaf children and youth may proceed from the principle of abundance, in looking at what is possible given the presence of material, social, cultural and bodily resources.
**Background**

As a deaf teacher in a resource room program contained in a regular high school for hearing adolescents, I witness daily many difficulties with learning, and oppression within the lives of deaf students. Furthermore, the 27 years of slow erosion of services to deaf people in the province of Saskatchewan have seriously impacted my ability as the sole deaf teacher within the elementary and high school systems in this province, to exercise critical interculturality (Pirbhai-Illich, Pete, & Martin, 2017). At the time of writing, cuts have been made in several areas, including preschools for deaf children operated by large school boards, government operated hearing aid services, and reductions in support services for deaf and hard of hearing school adolescents in the school where I teach (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2017a, 2017b; 2017c; 2017d). Furthermore, First Nations deaf youth experience less access to education and health services than their white peers (Cassidy, 2016; Pringle, 2016; Child and Family Services Act and [R.A.F.], 2005). The recent increase in cutbacks to longstanding services and the continued diminishment of the deaf community after the closure of the school for the deaf 27 years ago necessitated a radically different approach in advocating for the needs of deaf children and youth. To this end, I engaged my students in culturally relevant arts-based education projects (CRAE) (Hanley, Noblit, Sheppard, Barone, & hooks, 2013) which resulted in the production of a theatrical play, *Deaf Crows* which focused on the lives of language-deprived youth, *Nay’s Story*, a blended genre of ASL poetry and puppetry performance concerning the refugee experiences of a deaf Burmese young man, and the formation of the Deaf Crows Collective, Inc, which continues to develop and present performances and art work of deaf children, youth and adults. The most recent
project, *The Deaf Forest*, is an outcome of a collaboration between the high school resource program for deaf adolescents, an elementary program for deaf children, deaf adults, and school staff including teachers of the deaf and interpreters.

**Onto-Epistemology**

The art installation provides a cartography of intra-actions with humans, animals, plants and machines to evoke a public space with which to foster translanguaging instinct and translanguaging spaces within the art installation exhibit, *The Deaf Forest*. The cartography is presented within a posthumanist frame in which the post-anthropocene human is conspicuously removed from the apex of hierarchical relationships concerning othered populations (female, First nations, people of colour, and deaf), animals, plants, machine and earth. The human person, or the anthropocene is placed in equal juxtaposition with others in an assemblage of human and nonhuman actors who all provide diverse semiotic resources, materialities, and multiple linguistic repertoires which are encountered through zigzagging throughout the three contact zones in the arts installation. Attendees in *The Deaf Forest* exhibit are invited to become nomadic as they zigzag throughout the art installation. A nomadic subject is characterized by movement and mobility. Nomadic zigzagging is not from deaf spaces into hard of hearing spaces or into hearing spaces despite the signs in the installation describing these spaces as such. Rather, the nomadic attendee is invited to view the entire installation as a deaf translanguaging space and to encounter the translanguaging instinct mobilized by deaf people.

A nomadic ontology is rooted in a diasporic context. Due to mass relocations of people across the globe due to globalization, wars, advanced capitalism, present day
diasporas are characterized by mobilities, borders, transitions and flows (Braidotti, 2011). Contact zones within the diasporic experience often overlap and are non-linear (Braidotti, 2011).

A deaf ontology is characterized by the overarching desire to ensure that everyone understands what is happening in deaf spaces (Friedner, 2016). The motivation to work toward ensuring understanding in a deaf space stems from having to endure inaccessible classrooms during formative schooling years (O'Connell, 2017) and the contrastive experience of being immersed in spaces where accessibility through sign language is assured (Friedner, 2016). Here, for deaf people, valuing understanding is of equal importance to being visucentric “as the ways in which [deaf people] construct worlds and exist within them are based on what they do and do not understand” (Friedner, 2016, p. 185). For instance, deaf people often ask each other whether they understand what is being conveyed to them (Friedner, 2016). Hence, I suggest that ‘becoming deaf” is characterized by deaf people’s valuing of understanding as performative. The deaf posthuman subject is produced by what he or she does or does not understand and is producing within the assemblage of human and nonhuman actors including animals, earth, machine according to what he or she understands. Becoming deaf is about valuing understanding as characterized by the affects within the arts-based assemblage of *The Deaf Forest*. Furthermore, the shifting in levels of understanding produce and are produced in deaf translanguaging spaces. The deaf translanguaging space in *The Deaf Forest* is created through encounters with differences in levels of understanding. All people, regardless of their hearing, hard of hearing and deaf identities, then, are invited to become both minoritarian and embark on the journey of becoming deaf and to experience
the affects associated with the deaf epistemology of understanding.

**Theory**

Being able to appreciate the translanguaging instincts and translanguaging spaces concerning deaf children and youth, however, requires critical interculturality (Pirbhai-Illlich, Pete, & Martin, 2017) concerning how levels of understanding or not understanding are produced in deaf translanguaging spaces (Friedner, 2016). These authors refer to the abyssal line dividing the Global North and the Global South, emphasizing that those who are endowed with white privilege will view the lives of those who reside on the other side of the abyssal line as largely unintelligible and will impose solutions, policies, processes and interventions that are within their own frame of reference. Pirbhai-Illlich, Pete, & Martin (2017) attribute the lack of progress in enacting intercultural pedagogy to the presence of an abyssal line which is not easily crossed by educators endowed with white privilege (De Sousa Santos, 2007). I suggest that the audiocentric privilege interferes in a similar way in the case of educating deaf and hard of hearing students (Eckert & Rowley, 2013). In the case of white privilege and I argue, audiocentric privilege, the abyssal line does not allow for the valuing of subjugated knowledge, languages and cultures and renders them invisible (De Sousa Santos, 2007).

Exercising critical interculturality includes the acknowledgement of the abyssal line that divides people on either side, embracing differences rather than similarities, and fostering mutual reciprocity and interdependency (Pirbhai-Illlich, Pete, & Martin, 2017). This calls for a solidarity, not defined according to what one knows and perceives, but according to a “standing with” as opposed to “standing for” (Pirbhai-Illlich, Pete, & Martin, 2017). While white privilege is promoted as a reality to be grappled with by
educators, I also suggest that educators, administrators and personnel who work with deaf children and youth need to address their own audiocentric privilege which contributes to another line, the hearing line, which is an invisible boundary between hearing and deaf people (Krentz, 2007).

Krentz (2007), however, suggests that the effort to demarcate the hearing line between hearing and deaf, is thwarted by unstable meanings of deafness and hearingness, particularly in relation to language acquisition. Pirbhai-Illlich, Pete, & Martin (2017) affirm that critical interculturality does not rely upon the presence of multiple identities or cultures but the presence of multiple spaces which are created through encounters with difference. The deaf translinguaging space is not constructed according to multiple identities such as “d/Deaf”, “hearing” or “hard of hearing”, but according to levels of understanding afforded by the deaf translinguaging instinct that permeates all spaces (Friedner & Kusters, 2015).

The creation of deaf translinguaging spaces through encounters with differences is often thwarted by institutions, policies, and processes that reaffirm dominant ideologies, identities, languages, institutions, and cultures in the shaping of deaf children and youth. Rather than working to revive cultures, languages and knowledges previously dismissed as relevant, Pirbhai-Illlich, Pete, & Martin (2017) advocate for post-abyssal thinking which signals a complete break with Eurocentric epistemology and an alignment with the unthinkable. The unthinkable also includes the willingness to admit that much of what we know about other cultures is unintelligible to us.

I propose that deaf people have a unique translinguaging instinct, which is mostly unintelligible to hearing interlocutors. The deaf translinguaging instinct is characterized
by a continuous checking for understanding and not understanding among themselves in formal learning contexts (Friedner, 2016). This unique translanguaging instinct challenges Eurocentric Western assumptions around being responsive, caring for, advocating for and meeting the needs of deaf children and youth. Deaf people, upon being inducted into a translanguaging space, learn to ask interlocutors whether they understood, which is a form of care and authority where communicative sociality is enacted (Friedner, 2016; Li, 2017). Caring for others is evident in the asking if everyone understood what is being communicated, interpreting for others, providing different vocabulary, explaining a concept in a different way or providing additional details (Friedner & Kusters, 2015). While teaching or signing occurs, authority is asserted indirectly by providing a commentary on who did or did not convey meaning in an intelligible way through the attempt to ensure understanding (Friedner, 2016).

Furthermore, the effort and energy required to negotiate meanings and to ensure understanding requires a moral orientation, which propels the signer to use cognitive, bodily and linguistic resources to facilitate relationships with others (Green, 2015). The time, energy and resources employed toward the goal of ensuring understanding is notably in contrast with classes taught by hearing teachers who do not always ask their deaf students whether they understood, and who teach at a pace which does not allow for a deaf translanguaging environment (Friedner, 2016). Understanding is not just referential, however, but reaches multiple levels of meaning as to what it means to be deaf. Understanding involves an awareness of what is important to deaf people and the stakes of understanding in a context (i.e., a world that privileges listening and hearing) in
which deaf people often cannot take referential understanding for granted. Again, understanding is not just about comprehending lexicon and syntax but also about taking the broader value (that should be) attached to sign language and deaf sociality (Friedner, 2016, p. 192).

I suggest that the value placed by deaf people on understanding is somewhat unintelligible to people endowed with audiocentric privilege. Audiocentric privilege is characterized by access to language in multiple contexts. What is not understood in one context is easily picked up in multiple other contexts such as additional conversations, television, radio, advertising, or intercom announcements. Such multiple contexts are not readily accessible to deaf people because of the lack of sign language interpreters, signing models or limitations of technology. The use of audiocentric privilege, when attempting to teach language (sign or spoken) to deaf children, may contravene deaf translinguaging spaces where translinguaging instincts are guided by the desire for understanding. The work of integrating deaf children and youth into a Western hegemonic framework may bypass the unique translinguaging instinct afforded by deaf translinguaging spaces and render the deaf translinguaging instinct as unintelligible, unworkable or impractical. For this reason, certain affects of *The Deaf Forest* may be unintelligible to those endowed with audiocentric privilege. *The Deaf Forest*, then, requires the viewer to become nomadic, in the task of becoming deaf, that is, learning to inquire into affects associated with levels of understanding and not understanding.

In general, the translinguaging instinct flourishes in translinguaging spaces which are characterized as spaces of

“extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange where the geographical
imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity that have heretofore been considered by the epistemological referees to be incompatible and uncombinable” (Li, 2017, pp. 15-16).

A translinguaging space is not a hybrid space promoting the mixing of languages; rather, the space allows one to go beyond language, and create new possibilities, or evoke a becoming as in becoming animal, earth, machine and in this case, becoming deaf (Crowley, 2012; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The immersion of deaf children and youth in deaf translanguaging spaces allows them to see the real, actual and virtual associated with levels of understanding.

In this chapter, I explore an arts installation, The Deaf Forest, in which the affects associated with levels of understanding, guide the deaf translanguaging instinct and activity within deaf translanguaging spaces. The Deaf Forest is a post-abyssal project, a commentary on the existence of the deaf translanguaging instinct and spaces concerning deaf children and youth, designed to provoke critical interculturality amongst its viewers (Pirbhai-Illich, Pete, & Martin, 2017).

**Methodology**

Within the arts-based educational research paradigm, the artist within the posthuman frame, is charged with the task of creating a world or an assemblage to bring about deterritorialization (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Braidotti (2011) suggests that The imagination plays a crucial role in enabling the whole process of becoming-minoritarian and hence of conceptual creativity and ethical empowerment. It is connected to memory: the affective force of remembrance is the propelling of becoming-intensive. When you remember in the intensive or minority-mode, you
open up spaces of movement and of deterritorialization that actualize virtual possibilities that had been frozen in the image of the past (Braidotti, 2011, p. 153). Remembrance of chronic inaccessibility in classrooms, family settings, and social spaces inspire many deaf people to adopt a critical moral orientation, that is, a relationship “between signers that involves the bodily, linguistic, and cognitive turning of one’s self toward one’s interlocutor(s)” (Green, 2015, p. 72). Here, the flows of desire play a critical role in posthuman arts-based assemblage (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Mapping the flows of desire enables the artist to zigzag between the technological, artistic, cultural and institutional dimensions as well as the nature/nurture dimensions of biology (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Art is produced by the assemblage and is witnessed by the artists who attempt to map what is in the assemblage. Within this study, the arts-based data will focus on the affects produced by the various levels of understanding and the desire or moral orientation in ensuring understanding within translanguaging spaces.

**Research Question**

What does *The Deaf Forest* art installation reveal about the translanguaging instinct and translanguaging spaces concerning deaf people and their responses to varying levels of understanding? Zigzagging throughout an assemblage, looking for possible lines of flight away from binarized descriptions of locations, commitments and languages such as the border crossing into deaf and hearing worlds, constitutes a post-abyssal project in which deaf translanguaging instincts and spaces are encountered and mapped according to affects appearing in the arts constructed assemblage of *The Deaf Forest*. 
Methods

Care must be taken here to separate the work of the students and the artists in their construction of *The Deaf Forest* and the work I undertook as a researcher to view their work through a posthumanist lens. While I assisted in the organization, creation and assembling of the art installation, I refrained from discussing with the students, the artists, and the curator as to what I observed or thought about their work. In guiding tours of *The Deaf Forest*, I did not employ a posthumanist perspective, but strove, as much as possible, to mirror the language of the students and their own conceptions of the installations. Whenever possible, I positioned the students to provide the tours of *The Deaf Forest*. The artists, teaching staff, the students and the curator all employed terms such as identity, spaces belonging to hearing, deaf or hard of hearing, identification of language with certain spaces such as spoken English with the hearing space, American Sign Language with the deaf space, and a fractured English with the hard of hearing space. Meanwhile, using a posthumanist lens, I detected data as agentic, that is, glowing, stuttering and indicating its wants or desires (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016), thereby pointing to affects associated with the deaf translanguaging instinct and deaf translanguaging space in the installation on display at the Dunlop Gallery from September 29 to October 30, 2017.

While the creators of *The Deaf Forest* were engaged in constructing three separate spaces, I slowly became aware of the intra-actions between machine, animals, hearing and deaf people which indicated an assemblage where viewers were invited to navigate. In doing so, I came to construct a cartography, attending to affects arising from arts-based data that suggested a reinterpretation of *The Deaf Forest* as a single translanguaging
Data arising from *The Deaf Forest* appeared without the trappings of methodological, ontological and epistemological interpretations (St. Pierre, 2013) and presents the possibility of something which is not yet thought (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Furthermore, the data from *The Deaf Forest* serves to question the very spaces presenting what it is like to be hearing, hard of hearing and deaf through the eyes of deaf people.

The initial conceptualization of *The Deaf Forest* employed imagework, which is an imagination-based methodology applicable for use in visual anthropology, arts-based research methodologies, and transpersonal research methods (Edgar, 2004). Imagework involves the letting go of one’s daily occupations and entering a deep state of relaxation in which images surfaces from the unconscious (Edgar, 2004). Following instruction in visual storytelling in which attributes associated with shape, line, tone and colour were presented as a visual language with which to convey feelings, thoughts, preoccupations, and inner worlds (Bezemer & Kress, 2016; Serafini, 2014), the students and teaching staff were invited to respond to the prompt: “how do you feel in spaces traditionally described as hearing, hard of hearing and deaf spaces?” After asking the students to close their eyes and count to ten, they were asked to prepare abstract painting of their feelings, the students depicted trees, rocks, jagged edges, triangles, circles, squares and varying hues of colour associated with each state. Afterward, the students identified their pieces as feelings associated with deaf, hearing, and hard of hearing states. These selected abstract art pieces are organized into a montage below:
The multiple reference to trees, green spaces, and colours associated with different kinds of trees led the artists, teaching staff and students to conceptualize *The Deaf Forest* as containing three different types of trees. Moreover, the presence of dark, foreboding and murky spaces came from students who named those feelings as associated with being hard of hearing, while the state associating with being hearing was characterized as irritating, dangerous, and unsafe. Feelings of welcome, safety, caring, and warmth were associated with the state of being deaf. While the students, artists, deaf adult volunteers and teaching staff (including me) were co-constructing the three “spaces” according to conceptions of identity and cultures according to the availability of sound to hearing, deaf and hard of hearing people, I waited until *The Deaf Forest* was completely installed in the Dunlop Gallery to employ a posthumanist lens in constructing a cartography of affects.
associated with the desire to understand as a part of the deaf translanguaging instinct and how *The Deaf Forest* became a sole deaf translanguaging space.

**Findings**

*Translanguaging Instinct as a Moral Orientation*

The door into the installation area is situated at the very left of the room. Consequently, an introduction to the hearing forest on the near left wall commands attention:

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)

*Figure 17: Deaf Crows Collective (2017) - Introduction to the Deaf Forest*

This statement composed by the deaf students is not about identity, language or culture as it is about the capacity to understand. The question is posed as a rebuttal to the expectation that hearing people require deaf people to shoulder most of the responsibility for communication as “in general, deaf people also deeply value understanding, perhaps because in non-deaf spaces they frequently must engage in hard and often asymmetrical work to understand” (Green, 2015, p. 71). The text implies that in the case of deafness, the words are missing and cannot be found. Yet the assemblage of trees, masks, birds, and photographs depicting various ways hearing people use their hands in this contact zone suggests that this question addresses deaf people as well. Do deaf people also want
to be entirely absolved of the task of trying hard to understand? The masks hung on the hearing trees below betray the desire to understand as they gaze into other parts of *The Deaf Forest*. While the creators of the installation described the masks as “dead” faces, typical of hearing people who express themselves primarily through inflection in their voices and not with their facial expressions, I began to wonder about the gaze afforded through the positioning of the masks as multi-directional.

![Image](image.png)

*Figure 18: Deaf Crows Collective (2017) - Hearing Forest Installation*

The gaze adds a dimension to the masks, one of longing or desire to know, to understand, to connect with others and may indicate a critical moral orientation, that is, a relationship “between signers that involves the bodily, linguistic, and cognitive turning of one’s self toward one’s interlocutor(s)” (Green, 2015, p. 72). Furthermore, despite being impaled on the sharp branches of the so called “hearing trees,” the mask suggests a translanguaging instinct, a “natural drive to combine all available cognitive, semiotic, sensory, and modal resources in language learning and language use” (Li, 2017, p. 17). This instinct becomes
sharpened through the continuing wall of photographs of hands in various positions hung on the wall between the two groups of “hearing trees”. While the creators described these hands as “dead” because they do not convey any meaning, a posthumanist lens would consider intra-actions with these hands as meaningful, as gestures conveying the feelings of hearing people. Moreover, a posthumanist lens would recognize the existence of cultures whose linguistic repertoires include meaningful visual gestures.

*Figure 19: Deaf Crows Collective (2017) - Hearing Forest Photographs of Hands*

Furthermore, near the end of this sequence of photographs, the student photographers inadvertently slipped in a handshape connotating certain signs such as “work” (used in International Sign Language and in American Sign Language) and the beginning of an ASL sign for “turtle”.

*Figure 20: Deaf Crows Collective (2017) - Hearing Forest*

This slippage suggests that the desire prompting deaf translanguaging instinct is in
operation even in hearing dominated spaces. Crasborn and Hiddinga (2015) suggest that the moral orientation is evident in the use of multiple modalities learned by deaf people through “their continuous existence in nonsigning, speaking environments” (Crasborn & Hiddinga, 2015, p. 63). The presence of these two photographs also indicate the mitigation of cultural, emotional, geographic and linguistic distances [through a]

shared experience of living a deaf life among hearing majority. This in turn, may contribute to the mutual intention to make interaction work. It is thus not just the shared variety of communicative repertoires as such, but also the experience of being deaf (DEAF-SAME) that constitutes the particular outside condition (cf Gumperz, 1982) in which strategies for understanding and being understood can persistently be worked out (Crasborn & Hiddinga, 2015, p. 63).

Moreover, Crasborn and Hiddinga (2015) suggest that the moral orientation to ensure understanding on the part of all who are in the translanguaging space comes from the unique experience of almost always being immersed in hearing spaces and therefore striving to exercise translanguaging instinct throughout every encounter in the hearing world.

**The Work of Translanguaging**

Crasborn and Hiddinga (2015) suggest that the communication strategies used in interacting with hearing people are foundational to the strategies used in first time interactions between deaf people who use different sign languages. These strategies include the use of multiple modalities, exploiting the iconic nature of sign languages to make themselves clear to hearing people, incorporating grammar from hearing languages, pointing to shared visible contexts such as objects, and relying on shared social contexts
as to the purpose of communication (Crasborn & Hiddinga, 2015). The study of such communication strategies employed by deaf people to interact with hearing people, enables deaf and hearing alike, to move toward “becoming deaf”.

The creators of the installation describe this space associated with being hard of hearing as fractured, fragmented, and tortuous as one must puzzle out meanings of words partly obscured by the hanging fabric trees and the canvas walls upon which painted trees obscure scrolls featuring ominous lines from nursery rhymes and fairy tales. The archetypal forest indicates a journey through the woods where anything could happen and is intended to provide a feeling of foreboding and entrapment. This space takes up most of the installation and invites the viewer to navigate his or her way through this dark space.

The funnel shape of the space originally dedicated to affects associated with being hard of hearing, however, was a last-minute decision in the design of the installation. The
The curator objected to the sharp delineation of space through the construction of walls and warned the creators that no one would want to go behind a wall in a gallery. The student creators, then erected a funnel shaped space, which propels the viewer toward the narrow opening above where a giant multi-coloured bird is in mid-flight, preparing for a landing. In doing so, the affects associated with being hard of hearing came under erasure. Instead of the feeling of entrapment originally envisioned, the hard of hearing space suddenly provides a wide inviting entry and an exit which is made more compelling by the bird positioned above. The wide end of the funnel allows for multiple entries into various parts of the installation include the spaces allocated to the states associated with being deaf or hearing. In this way, the hard of hearing space is characterized by movement rather than entrapment. The space no longer becomes about being trapped by the inability to hear fully but about translanguageing, using words partially obscured by the painted trees, pushing aside the fabric trees to obtain a better view of both exits and entries, and pondering the colourful yarn flowers sewn onto the fabric trees. The yarn flowers provoke conversation between hearing and deaf rather than allowing the viewers to be submerged in feelings of despair.

*Figure 22: Deaf Crows Collective (2017) - Hard of Hearing Forest (closeup)*
Moreover, the appearance of the large bird contrasts the foreboding hard of hearing sign which features the last two letters of the word “forest” as dropping away to signify sounds that are difficult to hear such as the “s” and the “t”. The movement suggested by the hard of hearing forest through trees, words, light, fabric, and flowers, propels the viewer into the moral orientation toward translanguaging, as a way through the hard of hearing forest. The work in deciphering the written text interspersed within the trees, puzzling out the meaning of the yarn flowers and contemplating the appearance of the giant bird at the narrow end of the funnel is an introduction to the work to be done in a translanguaging space. This contact zone indicates the work to be taken up by all viewers, hearing and deaf alike, in the trajectory toward becoming deaf.

**Characteristics of Deaf Translanguaging Spaces**

Li (2011) suggests that translanguaging spaces are characterized by the feeling of connectedness rather than “actual ties, the socio-cultural practices, especially multilingual practices, in creating the sense of connectedness, and the consequence of that sense in the individual’s identity positioning” (Li, 2011, p. 1221). I would further suggest that feeling connected is achieved through the moral orientation or the deaf translanguaging instinct exercised by deaf interlocutors to achieve understanding (Green, 2015). The affects associated with connectedness are presented as a movement, a sweeping up of disparate bits of understandings such as the random placement of the small ASL alphabet canvases toward the deaf tree is an eruption of connections between flower, tree, roots, branches.
Here, different dimensions of social history, experience, environment, attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, and materiality coalesce into the colourful tree constructed with quilted multiple fragments of fabric sporting a wide variety of texture, shape, styles, and patterns. The trees from other parts of The Deaf Forest remerge here as parts greater than the whole. The spiky branches found in the hearing forest are transformed into twisted stuffed fabric branches ending in sharp points.
The flowers from the hanging cloth trees in the hard of hearing forest now re-emerge as fully formed flowers in brilliant colours. The elongated panels from the hard of hearing forest are now shortened and widened. The elements of the hearing forest and hard of hearing forest are now combined to “generate new identities, values and practices” (Li, 2011, p. 1223). Moreover, the combination of parts enhances deaf people’s striving for understanding as a value associated with the use of vision. The flow of the eyes as disrupted, conjoined, and unexpected suggested behaviours of translanguaging in formal learning environments where teaching and learning are often disrupted in the quest for understanding. For instance, while I teach, deaf students frequently check among themselves to ensure understanding, often wave me aside to elaborate upon what I had just conveyed and interrogate the class to make sure everyone had understood. I support such interruptions to encourage a translanguaging space and to foster a translanguaging instinct that ensures that “everyone has equal knowledge, thus forming a community of identical learners” (Friedner, 2016, p. 189).

Creativity is an affect of the translanguaging space which serves to disrupt norms, language usage, and cultural practices (Li, 2011). The viewer, in being drawn through the other translanguaging spaces is invited by the giant bird preparing to land in the deaf tree, to consider the words printed below: “I feel so poetry when I paint my feel” (Tanner, 2017). This creative line written by a student in describing her feelings about art, invites us to consider the translanguage phrase, emanating from a mixture of ASL, English and her own thinking. If one were to correct her line to meet the requirements of standard English, the phrase might read: I feel poetic when I paint my feelings, or “painting my feelings leads me to create poetry.” Yet the standard English line does not do the
translanguaged version justice. “Feeling so poetry” suggests something more, something beyond poetry, a sense of being immersed in poetry, and “painting my feel” suggests the presence of texture, emotion, and movement. Here the connections between the phrase, the bird, and trees in the entire translanguaging space are greater than the sum of the whole.

Moreover, translanguaging is characterized by movement which is a critical rearrangement of roles, norms, expectations and linguistic repertoires, a “intense social experience and emotional investment” where a strong sense of attachment leads to a high psychological reward (Li, 2011). Such investment fosters the deaf translanguaging instinct, that is the desire to ensure understanding among all deaf, hard of hearing and hearing interlocutors in a translanguaging space that is always shifting in boundaries, norms, rules, and linguistic repertoires. Within this translanguaging space, becoming deaf allows deaf and hearing people to be active agents, united in the goal of achieving understanding. The deaf translanguaging instinct characterized as a moral orientation becomes conjoined with the translanguaging instinct identified in minoritized populations
who may speak more than one language as the “natural drive to combine all available
cognitive, semiotic, sensory, and modal resources in language learning and language use”
(Li, 2017, p. 17). Translanguaging spaces, particularly deaf translanguaging spaces, are
characterized by shifting, stopping, starting, pushing, pulling and the use of multiple
semiotic resources to achieve understanding. Translanguaging spaces are all about
movement, as depicted by the panels of birds in flight toward the deaf tree below:

![Figure 26: Deaf Crows Collective (2017) - Birds in flight](image)

The consideration of affects arising from experiences associated with varying levels of
access to understanding affords various entries, crossings, retracings and multiple
journeys by all visitors, hearing, hard of hearing and deaf, who physically and visually
engage with such affects.

![Figure 27: Deaf Crows Collective (2017) - The Deaf Forest](image)
Occupying the three contact zones of the art installation at once allow all people to engage in the nomadic journey of becoming deaf. *The Deaf Forest*, once conceptualized as three forests containing the clear demarcation of identities, ideologies, and cultures, now under the posthumanist lens, presents a cartography of affects, including the desire for understanding, belonging, connection, all characteristic of a deaf translanguaging space in which all are invited to engage in becoming deaf.

**Conclusions**

The cultivation of a posthumanist lens propels the researcher to consider performativity as a new way to think about language acquisition of deaf adolescents. Traditional school spaces often operate according to notions of the human subject as dominant and in control over lesser species including other humans who may differ in skin colour, languages, cultures, material resources and abilities. These notions also affect perceptions of deaf children and youth and often render them as fundamentally deficient. In considering performativity, the posthumanist research engages in a new way of seeing and thinking which is characterized by movement, shifting identities, multiple spaces, multiple linguistic and semiotic resources. The arts-based data is agentic in *The Deaf Forest*. The data glows, stutters, moves and has wants and desires (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). Such data points to the presence of liminal spaces that are often hidden from view by others who employ research methods that aim to classify, binarize, and represent. Koro-Ljungberg (2016) refers to a methodology without a methodology, an alternative to research language that creates realities through unexamined labels and concepts, separated from the contexts in which they are viewed. The researcher is to shift his or her control of the data, allowing the data to exercise agency through demanding attention,
creating change and illuminating injustices (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016). In this way, posthumanist research points to an alternative view of reality which may be truer of deaf people’s lives as they move through translanguaging spaces consisting of hearing, deaf and hard of hearing interlocutors along with animals, earth and machine. I suggest that research on deaf children and youth’s translanguaging be conducted through a posthumanist lens with view to looking at what deaf people do in translanguaging spaces rather than what they cannot do in spaces that are clearly defined and controlled by hearing educators. The work of deaf anthropologists (Friedner & Kusters, 2015; Kusters, De Meulder, & O'Brien, 2017) is especially invaluable in formulating an alternative anthropology of deaf people, translanguaging and deaf spaces. Indeed, attending to the performativity of deaf children and youth in translanguaging spaces dominated by deaf people invite all hearing and deaf researchers into participating in the trajectory of becoming deaf in the quest for understanding.
By the fall of 2017, several incidents had occurred within the arena of deaf education in Saskatchewan pointing to the necessity of an updated deaf education policy, which would draw upon the recent research in language acquisition, bilingual programming, and delivery models. In the school where I worked, the traditional resource room model where an interpreter or teaching assistant accompanied an individual deaf student, had been redeveloped into a primarily congregated setting for deaf and hard of hearing youth. Due to interpreter shortages (our last interpreter is planning retirement soon), we offered many high school credit classes in the resource room. In addition, we were sending out students into mainstreamed classes whenever possible. The interpreter crisis in the school board is mirrored by the provincial crisis in providing interpreting services. The Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services provides four staff interpreters to service the northern half of the province and one staff interpreter to work in the southern half of the province where the resource program is housed in a large city school division. The slow erosion of services to those who required sign language to learn and access the curriculum was promoted by a key policy document produced in 1990, which implemented the closure of the provincial school for the deaf (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990). The resource room where I work, is an adaptive response to this policy document which, in recommending a strong shift toward biomedical interventions and inclusive education environments, does not wholly consider the needs of deaf students who require sign language to access the curriculum.

Rather, since the DEAF report, services for deaf children and youth have focused on the provision of inclusive education, aural habilitation, cochlear implants and auditory
verbal therapy (Saskatchewan Pediatric Auditory Rehabilitation Center, n.d.). Many of the deaf students I taught, had received all these services and yet arrived in my classroom significantly struggling to access language, signed or spoken. The DEAF report, and its predecessor, Saskatchewan Task Force on Education of the Deaf report, strongly recommended the use of Signed English with deaf students who could not develop oral language (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990; Saskatchewan Task Force Committee on Deaf Education, 1989). In the reports, ASL was mentioned as a possible use within a bilingual context but no further support was given throughout these past 28 years (1989-2017) to implement bilingual education in ASL and English. A Saskatchewan landmark court case surfaced in 2005 concerning a young deaf boy in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan who received a cochlear implant and was instructed in Signed English yet remained languageless (Child and Family Services Act and [R.A.F.], 2005). In the fall of 2014, the University of Regina hosted a Western Canada Conference on ASL-English bilingual education, which was well attended by teachers of the deaf, parents, educational administrators, deaf community individuals, university students and personnel from several provinces (University of Regina, 2014). University presenters from Carleton University, Boston University, University of Manitoba and OISE presented research on bilingual education to date. Saskatchewan Ministry officials attended the conference.

Two years later, after concerted lobbying effort by the deaf community and personnel from Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, two key reports concerning deaf children and youth surfaced. First, a report called The Silent World of Jordan concerned the death of a near languageless First Nations deaf teen who was
unable to express his health concerns and thus died while in custody (Pringle, 2016). Secondly, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) issued a report summarizing the complaints of key stakeholders in education and services to deaf people of all ages (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016). The SHRC then began to solicit applications for serving on a committee to address human rights concerns of deaf people. I refused to apply despite encouragement from the deaf community and my own school board. Since the areas of concerns listed by SHRC did not include early childhood language development and or prevention of challenges to language access, I suspected that the committee would structure itself according to a binarized view of language acquisition in which oralists would go toe to toe with advocates for the deaf community and bilingual programs.

Because of my longstanding history of having engaged in such meetings and confrontations, and my readings in posthumanism, I veered away from the core deaf community leadership who had established a Deaf Coalition comprising of members from all deaf organizations in this province who were engaged in meetings of this nature (Vermette, Personal Communication, 2017a). I chose, instead, to work alongside community members, both hearing and deaf, to foster a grassroots response to the language learning challenges of deaf children and youth through artistic projects designed to resist, disrupt, and change discourses concerning deaf education in Saskatchewan (Ells, Hi, & Weber, 2016; Deaf Crows Collective, 2017). Our work mirrored another artistic project which surfaced in Saskatoon, SK in the fall of 2017, that is, the Prism Project which featured the stories of hard of hearing and deaf youth with cochlear implants who did not join the deaf community or learn American Sign Language (Vermette, 2017c).
Despite the growing artistic grassroots movement and amidst the rumblings against the SHRC committee from a committee member as to the inefficacy of the committee in addressing human rights of deaf people (Vermette, Personal Communication, 2017b), the government cutbacks to preschools for deaf children and hearing aid plan services (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2017b; 2017d) took place. Around the same time, the deaf community hired a lawyer to lobby on the behalf of stakeholders who wanted ASL English bilingual education (Saskatchewan Deaf Coalition, 2017). I decided, then, to examine how a posthumanist language planning policy could be developed for deaf education and outline some possibilities for a policy document. The following chapter explores discourses that informed the last policy document (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990) and provides some future directions informed by posthumanism toward a new language planning policy document for education of deaf children and youth. In doing so, I suggest that the new policy document needs to consider eschewing binaries altogether.
CHAPTER 9: SILOS OR RHIZOMATIC SPACES IN DEAF EDUCATION

Purpose

Using the posthumanist frame (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013) I explore deaf spaces (Gulliver & Kitzel, 2016) within pluricultural spaces as advanced by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2017) to further understand how to facilitate plurilingualism for deaf children and youth. Moreover, I propose that the facilitation of deaf spaces within pluricultural spaces allows for a unique contribution to plurilingual practices among deaf children and youth. Posthumanism allows me to explore the rhizomatic performativity of deaf people within deaf spaces as they engage in intra-action with humans, animals, machines and earth in pluricultural spaces (Barad, 2007). Such performativity may illuminate how plurilingualism within pluricultural spaces including deaf spaces may look different for deaf children than hearing children (Swanwick, 2017; Valente & Boldt, 2015).

Using critical discourse analysis, I first analyze how a key deaf education planning and policy document in Saskatchewan, Canada embraces discourses supporting cognitive imperialism concerning language acquisition in deaf children, particularly in its elucidation of four (out of six) principles that guide their recommendations (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990). Secondly, I will position an alternative critical text that addresses the principles outlined in the Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum (1990) report within a posthumanist frame (inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) to articulate the ways in which the use of material, social and cultural elements in deaf spaces within pluricultural spaces can be heightened to facilitate plurilingualism in deaf children and youth. In doing so, I will use arts-based data from the
theatrical play, *Deaf Crows*, to examine the deaf spaces as a pluricultural space and how the spatial temporal dimensions can be further exploited to facilitate plurilingualism. Finally, I will make recommendations toward the preparation of a new language planning document set within a posthumanist frame that allow optimal (and unique) use of deaf spaces embedded within pluricultural spaces to facilitate plurilingualism in Saskatchewan deaf children and youth.

**Background**

Twenty-seven years after the issue of the DEAF report, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) (2016) comments on the continued existence of the polarization in their report:

The information gathered during this process suggests there are two broad, general, and differing, approaches to understanding and addressing the needs of those with hearing disabilities that may or may not be considered compatible with each other. One is a cultural approach (e.g., “Deaf” culture) and the other is a medical approach. This division became clear in the context of views about the early identification, treatment, and education of children with hearing disabilities. The medicalization of deafness and the focus on medical treatments, such as the use of cochlear implants and hearing aids, is seen by some as an attempt to oppress and invalidate Deaf culture. (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016, p. 4).

The open acknowledgement of this binary between opposing views concerning the treatment of deaf children suggests a hegemonic struggle between the dominant medicalization discourses and anti-medicalization discourses to maintain and preserve the
institutions’ power to grant social capital through cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2011; Bourdieu, 1991). Biomedical discourses have shaped education and health services in Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Task Force Committee on Deaf Education, 1989; Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016) while anti-medicalization discourses argue for a bilingual bimodal approach to language development in deaf children (Mauldin, 2016). Pettito and Jasinka (2014) present neurological evidence that the same area of the brain is used for processing sign language as for spoken languages. The binarizing discourses emanating from the cognitive imperialism associated with sign and spoken languages are vigorously defended through the development of educational materials and programs attempting to promote standard varieties of English and ASL (Canagarajah, 2013; Snoddon, 2016). Yet, the overall effect of binarizing discourses and deliverance of language training in lockstep, discrete organized marketed packages (curriculums, lesson plans, dictionaries, additional resources) serve to reinforce the hegemonic control asserted through cognitive imperialism which asserts Eurocentric knowledge, languages and cultures as superior (Battiste, 2011). Snoddon (2016) however, challenges linguistic prescriptivism inherent in defenders of ASL and points to plurilingualism as a positive and inclusive approach to language learning in deaf children and their families.

**Onto-Epistemology**

Binarized categories arranged in hierarchies, support cognitive imperialism as an outcome of anthropocentrism which places the human being at the apex of all creation, managing, ordering and dominating whole groups of people, languages and cultures and non-human resources. Cognitive imperialism supports the individual as the site of
learning and cognition (Battiste, 2013) and draws upon the Enlightenment notion of universality which, in turn, endeavours to promulgate Eurocentric knowledge, experience, culture and language to the exclusion of other languages and cultures (Battiste, 2011). Without reference to a rhizomatic assemblage containing families, communities, material, social, cultural, political, animals, machine and earth, the individual is lifted out from the ecological web in which he or she is immersed, to receive a curriculum shaped by western European thought and is instructed accordingly.

Educational policies are often anthropocentric, indicating further rationale for continued Eurocentric domination of certain human beings over other classes of human beings, animals, plants and non-living matter for the sake of the common good (Braidotti, 2013; Pedersen, 2015). Such aims are future oriented and preclude the complex web of intra-actions between humans, animals, machines and living and non-living matter (Pedersen, 2015). Rather than incorporating future oriented language goals such as the deaf child will learn to speak fluent English into rationales, action plans, missions, and packaged structuralist approaches, a posthumanist language policy might address what people do with language and how they use their linguistic repertoires toward the acquisition of standard English.

Language within the posthuman frame is then articulated as properly belonging to the here and now and necessitates attention to current practices of people negotiating and creating meaning using complete and incomplete linguistic repertoires (Canagarajah, 2013; Council of Europe, 2001). Intra-actions between humans, animals, plants and earth places language activity outside communication frameworks emphasizing the role of cognition within individual actors (De Frietas, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Forms
of thinking such as thinking aloud, explanation, justification, predictions, proposing solutions to problems can take on an overly rationalistic cast, thereby reducing verbalizations of thought to simple and binarized categories (De Frietas, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Thinking undertaken by an assemblage of human and non-human actors, however, can appear as a distributed collaborative activity as opposed to a collection of private cognitive acts expressed by human actors (De Frietas, 2013; Pennycook, 2018). Rather than studying the messages transmitted between sender and receiver as located within cognition, attention is given to the intra-actions between human and nonhuman actors within the assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Within the assemblage, language becomes one entity among material, social, and cultural entities and does not dominate the flow of the assemblage. Furthermore, not every entity is rhizomatically linked to language; such entities whether living or non-living are part of heterogeneous multiple semiotic resources (De Frietas, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Language placed outside a communication model that studies the cognitive ordering of words, sentences, grammar and syntax, is no longer endowed with the function of informing or communicating (De Frietas, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) but is distributed throughout an assemblage (Pennycook, 2018). Within pluricultural and deaf spaces, constructed meaning can transcend established patterns of linguistic interactions.

Theory

Batterbury, Gulliver, & Ladd (2007) note the parallels between indigenous peoples and deaf people described as sign language peoples and cite linguistic oppression concerning the use of sign language. In keeping with Batterbury, Gulliver, & Ladd
(2007)’s suggestion that sign language people be treated as indigenous in that sign language is rooted in the body in the same way as indigenous languages are rooted in their relationship with the land, I propose that cognitive imperialism also dominates deaf education through discourses within policy documents and texts concerning deaf education. Battiste (2013) proposes that cognitive imperialism is a form of manipulation used in Eurocentric educational systems. Built on damaging assumptions and imperialist knowledge, educational curricula and pedagogy are built on a monocultural foundation of knowledge, and privileges it through public education (Battiste, 1986). Cognitive imperialism relies on colonial dominance as a foundation of thought, language, values, and frames of reference as reflected in the language of instruction, curricula, discourses, texts, and methods (Apple, 1982, 1997; Bear Nicholas, 2008; Farmer, 2004). (Battiste, 2013, p. 161).

Cognitive imperialism is apparent in the hegemonic struggle for the imposition of an oral approach to educating deaf children who can also benefit from learning through ASL. Mauldin (2016) suggests that the site of contention between those who promote biomedical interventions such as cochlear implants and those who promote the value of the value of ASL as a means of linguistic protection for the deaf child (Humphries, et al., 2012) is embedded in neurological processes associated with language acquisition. The emphasis on the cognitive foundations of language acquisition is used by both parties. For instance, biomedicalization discourses promoting the use of cochlear implants and hearing aids emphasize the detrimental effects of contaminating efforts to develop speech by adding sign language (Mauldin, 2016). At the same time, Gallaudet University is
building a National Science Foundation funded Science of Learning Centre called Visual Language and Visual Learning (VL2) premised upon implications of the seminal finding that sign language uses the same area of the brain previously allocated for the development of speech (Gallaudet University, 2017; Pettito & Jasinska, 2014).

Plurilingualism, on the other hand, suggests a moral and social orientation in that people of diverse linguistic repertoires work together to achieve effective communication using a variety of linguistic, semiotic and material resources (Canagarajah, 2013). Judgements concerning the standard use of established languages are suspended in the task of negotiating with other, the meanings needed to complete tasks at hand (Canagarajah, 2013). This requires stepping away from cognitive imperialism, in which standard European languages, cultures, and spaces are held up as the norm for all people to emulate (Battiste, 2011).

Plurilingualism occurs when people possessing a mother tongue and/or an incomplete mastery of languages, negotiate meaning with other diverse peoples, thereby strengthening their own linguistic repertoires and knowledge of multiple cultures (Canagarajah, 2013). Plurilingualism uses terms such as code meshing, crossing, and polyglot dialog and often is used as a tool which with to approach a standard language (Canagarajah, 2013). Plurilingualism is considered from the viewpoint of the individual, that is, his or her linguistic repertoires used to construct meaning. Such repertoires may include varieties of language and varying degrees of linguistic competency in multiple languages used to construct meaning (Council of Europe, 2001).

Plurilingualism is action oriented and signals a shift away from structured language learning tasks embedded within a cognitive model of language acquisition.
toward dynamic language learning arising from performing real life tasks (Council of Europe, 2017). In rejection of the ideological stance that languages are bounded, discrete and held separately from each other through cultural and geographical boundaries, CEFR promotes the building of communicative competence that incorporates all linguistic repertoires, experiences and cultures (Council of Europe, 2017). Co-construction of meaning and action-oriented learning is at the heart of language learning and teaching (Council of Europe, 2017). The primary strength of the CEFR documents lies in its view of the learners as social agents acquiring language within a socio-cultural milieu allowing for their use of linguistic resources.

More recent theoretical models of concerning language acquisition are advocating for the exploration of spatiotemporal dimensions of language learning (Canagarajah, 2018b; Pennycook, 2012), a theme that is picked up in the revised CEFR documents (Council of Europe, 2017). Canagarajah (2018b) explains that structuralist approaches to teaching language ignore the spatiotemporal entities associated with communication. In doing so, language is defined as innate. Facility in language acquisition is premised upon the location of language within cognition (Canagarajah, 2018b). The inclusion of context within language acquisition is often presented primarily as an afterthought with view to establishing distinctions between bounded languages as if there were no other considerations concerning mobility of diverse linguistic populations, spatial and material resources that are used to communicate (Canagarajah, 2018b). Reality dictates that grammatical forms of language are co-constructed within a variety of contexts, social networks, ecologies and material objects (Canagarajah, 2018b).

The discussion of material, cultural, social spaces which may facilitate
plurilingualism in deaf children and youth is emerging in deaf geography studies (Gulliver & Kitzel, 2016), deaf spaces (Friedner & Kusters, 2015), deaf diasporas (Emery, 2015), and hybrid spaces such as the convert culture in which oral deaf and hard of hearing youth and adults migrate to the deaf community (Bechter, 2008) and the inbetween spaces often experienced by those who sign and speak (Brueggeman, 2009).

For instance, the notions of deaf similitude (DEAF-SAME) (Friedner & Kusters, 2015), secreting deaf culture (Gulliver & Kitzel, 2016), skills in navigating the hearing world (Crasborn & Hiddinga, 2015), and exercising a moral responsibility in ensuring that everyone understands what is happening in the room (Green, 2015) all contribute to the deaf spaces embedded within pluricultural spaces in which deaf children and youth exercise bimodal biculturalism. Deaf geography looks at the development of knowledge that emerges between those who share productions of social space. This knowledge might include things as simple as ways of communicating: folklore, poetry, art forms, shared social icons and so on. They might, even, include shared representations and value judgements about the space itself; or about how to view that space from inside or outside (Gulliver & Kitzel, 2016, p. 3).

Cognitive imperialism often restricts plurilingualism for deaf children and youth when little consideration is given to spaces in which deaf people co-construct meaning. For instance, authorial control in meaning making with deaf children concerning written texts is a feature of deaf authored spaces within pluricultural settings. Heineman-Gosschalk & Webster (2000), found that while hearing teachers asserted more control over the reading of texts with deaf children by focusing on grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary
building, deaf adults supported reading of the same texts by engaging in dialogue, constructing shared meaning, and being more responsive to the deaf child’s attention, focus, gestures and communicative intention (Heineman-Gosschalk & Webster, 2000). In other words, many deaf adults create a deaf space while reading to deaf children, allowing for deaf authored knowledges in explicating texts.

**Research Questions**

The research questions are three-fold: 1) how does cognitive imperialism influence Saskatchewan language planning documents concerning deaf education and 2) how may deaf spaces contribute to pluricultural spaces and therefore contribute to plurilingualism for deaf children and youth, and 3) what would be the salient features of a posthumanist plurilingual planning policy for deaf children and youth with attention to deaf spaces?

**Methodology**

In the first part of this study, I will use the dialectical-relational methodology of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010) to uncover the cognitive imperialist inspired discourses leading to the cognitive based and structuralist orientations in language development in the Saskatchewan reports concerning language acquisition in deaf children and youth. Secondly, using arts-based data, I will also provide a rhizoanalysis (Masny, 2013) of the intra-actions in the *Deaf Crows* script (Ells, Hi, & Weber, 2016) as a critical plurilingual text with a focus on deaf spaces. Rhizoanalysis
eschews interpretation. To seek interpretation would be asking what something means. In rhizoanalysis, sense expresses not what a text means or is, but rather its virtual potential to become. The reading that goes on is the result of relationality within an assemblage in the actual (Masny, 2013, p. 229).

Since *Deaf Crows* was developed in conjunction with the deaf adolescent students, using their stories of growing up in mainstream educational settings, the script could be viewed arts-based data within an arts-based ethnography. The study of *Deaf Crows* script within a posthumanist frame, however, serves to push the limits of the ethnographic account (Vicars, 2012) and emphasize the performative nature of activity within the *Deaf Crows* assemblage. The rhizoanalysis will provide a cartography of the intra-actions between human and non-human entities within the play.

The combination of discourse analysis and the rhizoanalysis within the posthumanist frame constitute a critical inquiry, a bricolage which attempts to “confront the injustice of a particular society or public sphere within society” (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2012, p. 16). The bricolage is dedicated to a form of rigor that is conversant with numerous modes of meaning making and knowledge production modes that originate in diverse social locations. These alternative modes of reasoning and researching always consider the relationships, the resonances, and the disjunctions between formal and rationalistic modes of Western epistemology and ontology and different cultural, philosophical, paradigmatic, and subjugated expressions (Kinchenloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2012, p. 23).

Thus, the combination of critical discourse analysis of policy texts and the rhizoanalysis
of the *Deaf Crows* script results in a critical bricolage serving to uncover lines of flight for a future plurilingual educational policy concerning deaf education.

**Findings**

**Critical Discourse Analysis**

The critical discourse analysis will focus on a selection concerning guiding principles from the Deaf Education Advisory Forum (DEAF) report to the Saskatchewan Minister of Education, 1990 with a view to uncovering discourses that point to the structuralist or cognitive theoretical position on language acquisition. Within this text, elements in discourses are viewed as related or different and not entirely separate from each other (Fairclough, 2010). Rather, the elements are internalized by semiotic resources within “social relations, power, institutions, beliefs and cultural values” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 230). The critical discourse analysis focuses on the ways in which cognitive imperialism concerning language acquisition dominates deaf education.

**Strategy: Appeal to Moral Imperatives**

The use of moral imperatives to secure hegemonic dominance in asserting cognitive imperialism in the acquisition of language appears in the Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum (1990) report to guide the implementation of selected recommendations from the Task Force report (Saskatchewan Task Force Committee on Deaf Education, 1989). These principles were composed immediately after the task force negotiated its way through a difficult and protracted battle between two opposing camps for resources, recognition and competition between different approaches to developing language in deaf children and youth. The Saskatchewan Task Force on Deaf Education
(1989) framed the polarization between camps (oralism versus bilingualism) as an educational placement issue: integration versus segregation without reference to linguistic choices or needs. Furthermore, the Task Force committee described the “unhealthy competition among programs which in turn has diminished efforts of parents and professionals to work together to provide quality education for the deaf” (Saskatchewan Task Force on Deaf Education, 1989, p. 3). The admonishment to professionals to work together is presented as a moral imperative: “It is timely that the parents and professionals involved unite and solidify their efforts to better serve the deaf children of Saskatchewan” (Saskatchewan Task Force on Deaf Education, 1989, p. 3). Therefore, the appeal to ethics in the DEAF report (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990) which follow immediately upon the heels of the Task Force on Education of the Deaf report is an attempt

To raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces of development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes (Forgacs, 1988, p. 234 cited in Fairclough, 2010, p. 128).

The Saskatchewan DEAF (1990) committee report makes no mention of the polarization but articulates six principles guiding how quality education for the deaf is to be achieved regardless of the “child’s level of hearing loss or geographical location” (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990, p. 3). The appeal to morality suggests that the deaf child is entirely free to respond in an autonomous and rational manner, capable of developing his or her own true essence independently of the severity of the hearing loss or where he or she is located (Mansfield, 2000). Scientific activity, social organization,
morality, teleological goals are built on this notion of the individual and aim to obtain greater freedom on the behalf of the individual (Mansfield, 2000). Such hegemonic values emanate from the Age of Enlightenment in which individual freedom, reason, and autonomy were posited as the rebuttal to theocentric rule emphasizing divine rights of kings (Descartes, 1970; Foucault, 1988; Gramsci, 1971; Mansfield, 2000).

**Principle: Excellence of Standards**

Concerning excellence of standards, the DEAF report says: “The quality of education should be such that deaf and hard of hearing students reach the standard achieved by their hearing counterparts to the best of their ability” (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990, p. 4). The phrase, “to the best of their ability” suggests that successful language development relies on innate cognitive abilities within the deaf child and the child’s ability to approximate the monolingual culture within Saskatchewan. Cognitive imperialism ascribes the failure to approximate the monolingual and monocultural norms to “cultural and racial origins rather than the power relations that create inequality in a capitalistic economy” (Battiste, 2013, p. 161). I suggest that this insight be equally applied to deaf children and youth. Medicalized discourses on deafness indicate that the failure of cochlear implant is the result of the lack of compliance in parents in following the prescriptions provided by the cochlear implant clinics (Mauldin, 2016). Mauldin (2016) notes that most failures of cochlear implants reside in minoritized and racialized populations.

Furthermore, the ability of the child and the parents to be compliant with the prescriptions concerning language acquisition issued by cochlear implant clinics (Mauldin, 2016) is often presented as a moral imperative (Lee, 2016). Yet, a large
percentage of implanted children continue to be several years behind their hearing peers (Humphries, et al., 2012; 2016) and even cognitive deficits have been found in very successful implanted children (Humphries, et al., 2012). Hall, Levin and Anderson (2017) suggest that language deprivation is a neurodevelopmental syndrome caused by social and cultural discourses.

Mauldin (2016) suggests that the real battleground concerning language acquisition is in the brain. The advocates for cochlear implantation argue that the provision of sign language interferes with the cognitive processes required to develop spoken language (Mauldin, 2016). For this reason, exploitation of brain circuitry for the purposes of acquiring speech through hearing and listening requires a dedication to a monolingual policy (Mauldin, 2016). The implication of this position is that the failure to develop language is contingent upon the failure to stimulate the brain so that it can develop spoken language. Similarly, Pettito and Jasinska (2014) have found evidence through neuroimaging that the area of the brain used for speech is the same area used for sign language, thereby advocating for a bimodal bilingual approach to language development (Pettito & Jasinska, 2014). It should be noted however that both sides use the brain and therefore individual cognition to advance theories on language acquisition.

**Principle: Recognition of deafness as a unique condition.**

The observation that “deafness is unlike any other disability and must be recognized as such. As a result, the hearing-impaired child should be equipped to take part in both a hearing society and the deaf world to the extent the child chooses to do so” (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990, p. 4) is an attempt to integrate the medicalization and cultural critique of deafness (anti-medicalization discourses). The
implication that a deaf child is free to align himself with his habitus which may or may not be fully accessible is problematic because there continues to be a wide variability in the success rates of cochlear implants (Humphries, et al., 2012; 2016) and the availability of trained and qualified interpreters within the school environments (Malcolm & Russell, 2009; Mauldin, 2016; Russell, in press).

The expectation that the deaf child will pick up attitudes, practices, and perceptions through inculcation into the hearing world during early childhood (Emery & O’Brien, 2014) leads to the desire that the deaf child’s habitus supported by educational placements will align itself with corresponding fields, that is, through relationships with specific social contexts (Bourdieu, 1991; Emery & O’Brien, 2014). Such alignments with social and cultural fields will culminate in social, economic, cultural and linguistic capital of the dominant culture (Bourdieu, 1991). Such expectations are ascribed to conscious, rational, autonomous and free individuals (Mansfield, 2000) independent of cultural, social, economic, and material circumstances. Here, cognitive imperialism favours white, middle to upper class families (Battiste, 2013; Mauldin, 2016).

**Strategy: Integration of selected opposing viewpoints**

Establishing dominance of a discourse over other discourses often requires strategic maneuvers to obtain stakeholder consent (Fairclough, 2010). Hegemonic struggle persists in the forming of combining and recombining contradictory ideological positions to obtain stakeholder consent and to establish an equilibrium in which dominant discourses can remain dominant and consent is won from dissenting voices (Fairclough, 2010). Hegemonic struggle requires a degree of integration of local and semi-autonomous institutions and
power relations, so that the latter are partially shaped by hegemonic relations.

This directs attention to links across institutions, and links and movement between institutional orders of discourse (Fairclough, 2010, p. 64).

The dominant institution employs many strategies to maintain the equilibrium which may at any moment be undermined by other groups (Fairclough, 2010). At stake, is the maintenance of the individual cognitive foundation of language acquisition, a theoretical position reinforced by the government through practices such as market research (opinion polls, surveys, and focus groups) which dominate the content of stakeholder reports (Fairclough, 2010).

**Principles: Parental Choice and Individual Self-Fulfilment.**

The DEAF principle concerning parental choice: “Based on the provision of information, the ultimate responsibility and right to choose an educational program for a child remains with his or her parents. As a child matures, he or she shares in that responsibility” (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990, p. 3) suggests that the parents can make freely formed and independent decisions concerning the language choices and educational placements for their deaf children. SHRC (2016), true to the discursive strategy of recontextualization by reporting speech and thoughts of stakeholders, lists the concerns of many parents about their ability to make freely informed choices. Many concerns address the Saskatchewan Preschool Auditory Rehabilitation Centre (SPARC) located at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon and which serves as a resource to the University of Saskatchewan medical school, to the Ministry of Education, and to school divisions (Saskatchewan Pediatric Auditory Rehabilitation Center, n.d.). SPARC personnel are part of the multidisciplinary team
working under the auspices of the Cochlear Implant Program which provides counselling to parents, mapping services, and monitoring progress of cochlear implant recipients. SPARC also includes follow up services to deaf school aged children in school divisions. To this day, SPARC describes itself as an “early detection, assessment and (re)habilitation program with hearing loss in the Province of Saskatchewan” (Saskatchewan Pediatric Auditory Rehabilitation Center, n.d.). Their message is unequivocally clear; the clinic provides supports for the development of oral English in deaf children.

Twenty-seven years later, the SHRC report (2016) directly links complaints about early childhood intervention programs to SPARC in one paragraph:

Parents reported that they had requested American Sign Language (ASL) instruction for their families upon their children’s diagnosis. Many of these parents, along with other participants, reported being told by health professionals that ASL instruction is not preferable or available for deaf children or their parents. Some parents of deaf children reported feeling that the dearth of ASL services in early childhood is related to an ideology in the healthcare system that favours the use of aural and oral (i.e., hearing and speaking) means of communication with the assistance of cochlear implants or hearing aids and lip-reading. Some parents believe that the current healthcare system also favours the use of hearing assistive devices and that this impedes early language acquisition...However, multiple parents said audiologists and speech pathologists at SPARC discouraged the use of ASL with young deaf children on the premise that this would impede their aural
and oral communication (and even if they were awaiting cochlear implants) (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016, pp. 5-6).

It is significant, however, that SHRC did not consider the rights of deaf children aged 0 to five as an area of concern to be addressed in its otherwise long list of human rights concerns (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2016). The glaring omission of language rights and issues concerning language acquisition within a monocultural frame points to the entrenchment of cognitive imperialism advocated by those responsible for cochlear implants and follow-up services (Mauldin, 2016). The attractiveness of the corollary principle: “Each child is an individual and should be encouraged to reach his or her full potential” (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990, p. 3) and by extension, as the child matures, he or she is free to decide about his/her own language and communication choices, reinforces the Enlightenment cognitive imperialism concerning the individual as rational, free, autonomous and fully conscious (Mansfield, 2000). In short, the principles concerning the freedom of parents and children to make choices independent of available cultural, social, economic and material resources promotes a false consensus toward cognitive imperialism.

**Rhizoanalysis of Deaf Crows**

*Deaf Crows* (Ells, Hi, & Weber, 2016) is a critical text developed to address the cognitive imperialism concerning language acquisition in deaf children and youth (Blume, 2010). Discourses promoting the cognitive or structuralist origins of language reifies assumptions made about people who have incomplete access to the dominant language. Counter discourses on the other hand, point to the social, material, and cultural entities within pluricultural spaces that contribute to plurilingualism. Moreover, artist
activists often challenge dominant discourses through material, social and cultural means embedded within art, theatre and performance to point to alternative discourses that might level the playing field for those who do not have full access to linguistic resources (Blume, 2010).

The theatrical performance of *Deaf Crows* (Ells, Hi, & Weber, 2016) is a markedly radical departure from government reports in its disruption of the hegemonic bid for cognitive or structuralist approaches to language development in deaf education by introducing discourses about deaf spaces within pluricultural spaces required to support plurilingualism among deaf children and youth. Deaf spaces within pluricultural spaces allow deaf adults, parents and their deaf children to create ambivalent discourses that highlight how they are simultaneously empowered and disempowered by cognitive imperialist inspired discourses (Mauldin, 2016) and how deaf spaces within pluricultural spaces provide material, social, cultural, linguistic and semiotic resources required for plurilingualism in deaf children and youth. More recently, in Saskatchewan, discourses promoting plurilingualism introduced through *Deaf Crows*, an outcome of culturally relevant arts education project for deaf youth (Hanley et al, 2013) may hold promise for the development of a plurilingual planning document within a posthumanist frame.

The writing and production of *Deaf Crows* emerged from an artist in residency with a small resource room program serving deaf adolescent students in a high school in Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Arts Board, 2018). The students were not fluent in spoken English nor in ASL but were able to convey their experiences growing up in environments that were bewildering and oppressive (Weber, 2018c in press). The play also incorporated the viewpoint of a deaf elder who is bilingual, having acquired ASL at
the school for the deaf, which was closed upon one of the recommendations put forth by
the DEAF committee (Saskatchewan Deaf Education Advisory Forum, 1990). The play
examines the impact of language learning challenges as manifested in critical incidents
that occurred to the students. Furthermore, *Deaf Crows* explores the effect of cognitive
imperialism on a parent of a deaf child.

The information in *Deaf Crows* is presented as contextualized, jargon free, and
with little reference to abstract concepts although the information is similar in content to
the SHRC reports containing complaints from actual stakeholders (Saskatchewan Human
Rights Commission, 2016). In this text, the audience’s emotions and engagement are
solicited as possible responses to the theme of social and cultural challenges to language
acquisition of the deaf child. The adolescent and adult deaf actors of *Deaf Crows* are
either dedicated cochlear implant and hearing aid users and are diverse in terms of race
and class. They tell their own version of being biomedicalized without recourse to the
cultural script afforded by the deaf community. Through *Deaf Crows*, the ambivalent
discourses begin to make their way into the public space outside of policy and planning
documents pertaining to deaf education. The creation of the play was our deliberate
response to the reports over the twenty-seven years, an attempt to provoke critical
awareness about discourses reinforcing cognitive imperialism.

**Description of the Play**

*Deaf Crows* (Ells, Hi, & Weber, 2016) features three worlds: 1) to the left of the
stage is the world of medicalized discourses occupied by an audiologist, a parent and her
seven year-old deaf child locked in bitter dialogue about whether to use sign language as
the window for language is nearly closed, 2) the right of the stage is the world occupied by
a Deaf elder and storyteller who reminisces about his days at the school for the deaf and 3) the center stage is where a bleak landscape consisting of scattered deaf students trying to navigate their way through elementary school, the playground, and the hearing world with varying language abilities.

*Cognitive Imperialism*

According to cognitive imperialist discourses that have guided deaf education policy, each student is presented as an atomistic entity, that is, autonomous, free, and agentic, unshackled by the demands of family, community, and society. As the play progresses, we see how the students are abandoned by teachers, adults and playmates, left to wander a barren landscape devoid of meaningful intra-actions with humans, animals, earth, and machines. In the lives and stories of the individual Deaf Crows, the cost of inaction precipitated by cognitive imperialism becomes apparent. In the first story, we are introduced to Jade, a young deaf child who attends school for the first time. Uncomprehending, surrounded by her hearing classmates who snicker when she doesn’t do what is expected of her, she is confronted by a teacher who uses material and semiotic resources to teach a large classroom.

**SCENE II: JADE**

**TEACHER (mouthing)**

Come sit down. Sit down.

Teacher crosses to Jade and taps her on the shoulder. Jade looks up at the teacher.

**TEACHER (mouthing)**

Sit down.

Jade does not respond. The teacher points at the chair.
TEACHER (mouthing)

Sit down.

Jade slowly goes to the chair and sits down. The students giggle at Jade. The teacher crosses back to the front of the class.

TEACHER (mouthing)

Get out your books.

The hearing students all lean down to the floor and pick up books. Jade swings her feet and looks around. The teacher turns her back on the class and draws a map on the board. She does not look at the students.

TEACHER (mouthing)

This is North America. This is South America. Here is Canada up here. Now where is Saskatchewan?

The teacher turns to look at the class. All the students are taking notes.

THOMAS (mouthing and pointing)

In the middle.

TEACHER (mouthing)

Very good.

The teacher turns back to draw Alberta on the board, and Jade gets up and crosses to her old spot downstage right.

TEACHER (mouthing)

Now here is the next province over. What is it called?
The teacher turns around. Emma holds up her hand and points at Jade. The students giggle. The teacher crosses to Jade, taps her on the shoulder again, and points at the chair.

TEACHER (mouthing)

Sit in your chair!

All the hearing children get up and run out, taking their chairs.

TEACHER (mouthing to Jade)

You stay in your chair through recess.

The teacher fully asserts her authority in this scene, reinforcing cognitive imperialism through her emphasis on structuralist approaches to teaching and language acquisition. Jade is never introduced to students and the material objects such as the blackboard, pointer, chalk and chairs are not to be moved or touched. The teacher continues to misread Jade’s inability to participate in the classroom as acts of defiance and therefore unable to learn. Such continued misinterpretations often lead to the culture of low expectations (Gay, 2010; O’Brien & Placier, 2015) in which the teachers and other auxiliary professionals develop a deficit perspective (Gay, 2010) toward the deaf student as cognitively flawed and therefore unable to access the cultural and social capital within the dominant society (Bourdieu, 1991). The withholding of and control over material and semiotic resources such as books, the pointer, and the blackboard prompts Jade to return repeatedly to what she knows: her chair and her own gaze. Her longing for something meaningful is focused elsewhere. She is looking to something else, perhaps to her own potential as to what she could become.

Social, Cultural and Material Interventions
An elderly deaf man who finds Jade after the class has dissolved. He tries to connect with her and finding that she is not able to respond to his signing, he presents her with a crow feather. She takes this feather in a matter of fact manner without acknowledging this gift or its meaning and walks off the stage. Here, the deaf space has been created for the first time by the deaf elder, and the feather now encapsulates her encounter with the deaf elder. The feather is potent to her future intra-actions and serves to provide an embodied memory beyond language itself. Here, the significance of language appears outside the carefully mapped systems by linguists as it comes into intra-actions with material resources in a deaf space. The deaf elder secretes deaf space by extending a crow feather to Jade. The question posed through this action, is not what does the feather represent but what does it do to Jade and what will Jade do with the feather?

**Linguistic Prejudice**

Hall, Levin, & Anderson (2017) present language deprivation syndrome as a possible neurodevelopmental disorder with sociocultural origins. In doing so, they challenge the cognitive imperialism or structuralist approaches to language acquisition by suggesting that socio-cultural biases against sign language incur cognitive deficits. “Language deprivation that deaf people frequently experience is a social occurrence centered around the developmental choices made for them as children” (Hall, Levin, & Anderson, 2017, p. 7). Furthermore, Hall, Levin & Anderson (2017) suggest that educational and medical policy developers do not consult deaf people and exclude sign language as a viable language intervention. Such medical and educational policies are powerful tools that can generate positive futures for deaf children (Hall, Levin, & Anderson, 2017). The following scene addresses the social-cultural bias against sign
language. Immediately in the next scene, a mother of a deaf child is in a heated conversation about the language deprivation occurring to her child:

SCENE AS VOICED
AUDIOLOGIST

Come on in, Maureen. Hi, Oliver.

MOTHER

Hello.

AUDIOLOGIST

(She points to her clipboard to which Oliver’s audiogram is fastened).

So, the results are back from Oliver’s hearing test. His hearing is stable. That means he’ll be able to speak more and hear more.

MOTHER

But he can say only fifty words and he is seven years old! You don’t think that he needs to learn sign language?

AUDIOLOGIST

I’ve been telling you for 7 years. He must learn to speak to function in the hearing world. Just keep it up. He will eventually learn to speak. And whatever you do, DON’T use sign language.

MOTHER

But how will he learn if he can’t hear? He is so frustrated. I can’t understand him, and he can’t understand me. Maybe if he learned sign --

AUDIOLOGIST (interrupting)
If he doesn’t learn to use his ears, he will be stuck with Deaf people. If you sign to him, he will not learn to speak. He belongs to the hearing world and he will eventually learn to speak. Just keep up the hard work. See you again in six months.

MOTHER

If I come back...

AUDIOLOGIST (She faces Oliver and shouts)

Bye Oliver!

(She opens the door and ushers them out; the three of them leave).

The clipboard containing the audiogram in the hand of the audiologist is an agentic material resource to which both adults refer. The audiogram is the point of entry into services for deaf children and ironically the deaf community as well (Brueggeman, 2009). The power of the audiogram lays in its ability to predict the future of the deaf child, to establish teleological goals which will eventually come to pass if one works hard enough for it. Two women arguing, the authority of the audiogram, and the deaf child looking about in bewilderment while holding his mother’s hand also places language outside of carefully coded systems. Bodily movements, facial expressions, a piece of paper that emits an agentic, virtual, unseen, almost ghostly presence, become collapsed in a sparring match between the mother and the audiologist who, in the end, shouts out a farewell in a condescending manner to the deaf child.

Mauldin (2016) suggests that the choices available to parents concerning language pedagogy are too stark and narrow; parents, deaf children and deaf adults may be reforming the medicalization and anti-medicalization discourses into their own
ambivalent discourses by dropping or picking up various aspects of medicalization and anti-medicalization discourses. Ambivalent discourses suggest that parents are provided with a script to follow in securing their child’s future and at the same time, provides relief when some aspects of that script are dropped or replaced with a script from the anti-medicalization discourses. The mother’s last response to the audiologist (“if I show up”) indicates an ambivalence about the value of continuing the audiology appointments. She doesn’t want to close the door on medicalization discourses but is not willing to accept the prescriptions offered by the audiologist. The family is the “key social site where meanings of deafness and disability are assigned but also perhaps rewritten” (Mauldin, 2016, p. 24). The mother in *Deaf Crows* (Ells, Hi, & Weber, 2016) leaves to puzzle out what is happening to her child in terms of his language development and to seek resources that will protect her child from social and cultural challenges associated with acquisition of language. In the play, it is not clear if she ever is successful in her quest.

The deaf elder encounters another deaf child (Blossom) who, on the school playground, is abandoned by her playmates despite her desperate attempts to join a game of hide and seek. He teaches the child the signs for “I”, “me”, “you”, “sad”. After Blossom struggles to learn the signs, the deaf elder gives Blossom the second crow feather (Jade received the first one). Blossom seizes the feather and examines it carefully. The deaf elder waits with his hand outstretched until Blossom realizes that the feather is not hers. Reluctantly, she returns the feather to the elder and he models, “thank you”. Then he gives the feather back to Blossom and she makes the sign for “thank you”. The feather is agentic in that it evokes a sequence of exchanges where dignity is restored to Blossom and accorded to the deaf elder who is well versed in deaf community life.
Furthermore, Blossom is fascinated by the feather, pondering what it means, sensing that the feather is communicating something beyond language.

While the feather continues to morph, stretch and project different agentic actions upon the deaf students, additional material resources begin to crop up in the rest of the play, exerting their own agency upon the students. A ball, in the hands of a child abandoned by his frustrated teacher who tells him to play by himself on the playground during class time because she can’t teach him, becomes a teaching tool in the hands of the deaf elder who discovers him on his way back from grocery shopping. Bully masks and placards bearing denigrating terms such as “retard”, “dumb”, “deaf” obscure the true identities of bullies and their own fears and anger with which they attack two vulnerable deaf students and prompt one of them to begin bullying the other. The deaf elder, by then, having a group of deaf children coming along with him, confronts the bully and instructs the deaf children to break the placards and put them in a garbage bag. He makes an impassioned plea to the audience:

It doesn’t matter if deaf can speak or sign or both. There are so few of us. We need to work together, to support each other. We are not hearing people or copies of hearing people. We are Deaf! (Ells et al, 2016, p. 25).

The masks, placards, and the garbage bag provide additional semiotic and material resources in the scene which culminates in the presentation of a feather to each of the vulnerable deaf students. One student gratefully accepts the feather and the other vulnerable student turned bully, dashes the feather to the floor in his refusal to accept the invitation. The students and the deaf elder leave the stage sadly, while the bully stoops to the ground, pondering the feather before determinedly walking off the stage without the
feather. The feather on the ground has claimed the stage and therefore produces a deaf space.

At the end of the play, cognitive imperialism becomes replaced by social, cultural material entities moving throughout the assemblages consisting of young deaf students who ponder their future. The feather abandoned by the deaf bully exerts a mysterious force upon the oldest deaf student, who is about to graduate and to go out into the wide world. She picks up the feather which physically propels her forward and prompts her to ask, “how?” Her fellow deaf classmates ask each other “how” while exploring their dreams and hopes. The question moves from fixed goals in the future (what will I do, what will I accomplish, what will I become?) to which all deaf children must aspire toward a performative question: how will I continue to move through an assemblage of material, social, cultural resources and entities which continue to produce me and which I exert influence upon? Questions concerning “how” are questions concerning agency within an assemblage of human and nonhuman actors and are performative in nature. The scene is concluded by the entrance of the deaf elder who is carrying a book containing the history of the deaf community. The book is presented to the older student in response to her question as to how she will navigate the future. This secretion of deaf space does not provide an answer to her question but points to a mysterious becoming that will be wholly hers.

The last interaction is between the audiologist and Oliver, the seven-year-old deaf child who hands her a feather representing a contact with the assemblage. A deaf teen presents a feather to Oliver which now represents the initial contact with the cultural, social and linguistic knowledge possessed by the Deaf community:
Oliver takes the feather, scrambles down off the stage, runs to the Audiologist’s door, and knocks. She opens the door.

AUDIOLOGIST

Well hello, Oliver.

Oliver hands her the feather and looks at her.

AUDIOLOGIST (puzzled but ponders the feather and signs)

Thank you.

OLIVER (signing)

You’re welcome. Bye!

Audiologist closes the door.

Oliver is now confident that the feather will lead the audiologist to search out others in pursuit of the questions brought forth by her own clientele who insist that the deaf community and sign language are viable resources and have significant roles within the assemblage. He invites the audiologist to consider her role within an assemblage of human and non-human actors. Here, Oliver is comfortably situated between both worlds and can mediate the opposing camps by offering the mysterious crow feather, a material resource, provoking reflection on the part of the audiologist. Brueggeman (2009) suggests the state of “inbetweenity” where discursive scripts concerning the foundations of language acquisition are being remashed to more accurately reflect the deaf experience today. Deaf spaces as well as pluricultural spaces secrete deaf cultural values and plurilingual values to hearing actors as well.

Hall, Levin & Anderson (2017)’s efforts to register language deprivation syndrome as a neurodevelopmental disorder deriving from socio-cultural origins warrants
further discussion here in light of Oliver’s feather. While it is indisputable that cognitive deficits arise out of linguistic neglect of deaf children (Davenport, et al., 2016; Furth, 1966; Gulati, 2014; Hall, Levin, & Anderson, 2017; Humphries, et al., 2016; 2012; Mayberry, Chen, Witcher, & Klein, 2011; Peterson, Pisoni, & Miyamoto, 2010), I suggest that cognitive deficits can be ameliorated best within a posthumanist paradigm which allows for plurilingualism, founded upon co-constructed meanings of partial linguistic repertoires. Posthumanism allows for negotiation and use of material, linguistic, social, cultural resources with assemblages, thereby releasing new lines of flight concerning linguistic acquisition of deaf children and youth. For instance, Oliver’s feather provides a material resource which becomes a potent challenge to the audiologist who pauses and expresses gratitude in a non-condescending manner. Within this assemblage, lines of flight suggest other ways of approaching Oliver’s language needs.

**Implications and Conclusions**

Facilitating pluricultural spaces includes the acknowledgement of humans (deaf and hearing), animals (the crow), machines (the audiogram), and non-living actors such as the ball, the book, the shopping bags, placards, masks and the feather as entities which produce and are produced by each other. In facilitating the deaf space as a pluricultural space, the deaf elder never contests or rejects the presence of hearing actors throughout the play; rather, he encourages the audience to learn signs from him during several intervals in the play. The entire stage initially separated into three worlds, becomes an assemblage of hearing, deaf, non-living actors each morphing, exerting influence and being influenced by each other, suggesting that language acquisition is performative and distributed rather than based on individual cognition (Pennycook, 2018). Spatiality
becomes a critical aspect of language acquisition and the provision of deaf spaces
becomes a valuable contribution to language acquisition as performative. In his abstract
for the AAAL 2017 Conference, Canagarajah explains:

We are becoming more sensitive to space as a defining and generative resource in
communicative success. A competence for such success involves one's
emplacement in relevant spatiotemporal scales to strategically align with diverse
semiotic features beyond language, participate in an assemblage of ecological and
material resources, and collaborate in complex social networks. Such a
consideration compels us to revise traditional notions about the autonomy of
language, separation of labelled languages, primacy of cognition, and agency of
individuals. Constructs such as spatialization in geography, rhizomes in
philosophy, assemblage in social sciences, and object-oriented ontologies in
physical sciences help us theorize competence beyond the structuralist legacy
(Canagarajah, 2017).

_Deaf Crows_ (Ells, Hi, & Weber, 2016), by placing itself outside of language planning
policy debates, is an attempt to address cognitive imperialism by disrupting binary
opposites. The presence of performative discourses capitalizing on pluricultural spaces
and deaf spaces offer a way out of the highly polarized state of deaf education.
Furthermore, the pluricultural spaces including the facilitation of deaf spaces more
directly address the habitus of a deaf child by refocusing on removal of challenges to
accessing language and by steering discourses away from debates over educational
placements.

Performative discourses addressing the actions of humans, animals, earth and
machine may provide a more nuanced description of the performativity of deaf children, their parents and deaf adults, therefore leading to a posthumanist framed language planning policy for deaf children and youth in Saskatchewan. Posthumanist language planning policy addresses the here and now and eschews teleological goals in favour of facilitating deaf spaces within pluricultural spaces including material, social, cultural entities through which plurilingualism occurs, addressing all resources brought to bear upon the task at hand (Canagarajah, 2013).
SECTION 10: LINES OF FLIGHT

Research Questions

The multi-layered strands throughout this dissertation all converge to answer the overarching research questions posed in the first chapter: 1) the investigation of posthumanism as a potential paradigm to eschew the binaries that dominate policy, practices and research in the field of deaf education, 2) the usefulness of posthumanist research methodologies, 3) the potential afforded by affective pedagogy toward increasing language acquisition in deaf children and youth, and 4) the impact of arts-based language and literacy intervention upon deaf adolescents, the deaf community and the communities of deaf and hearing professionals. The dissertation is a largely rhizomatic journey through an assemblage of concepts associated with posthumanism, deaf education, deaf studies, educational policies, personal and community development, researcher positionalities, theatre performances and an art installation leading us to stick and stitch canvas pieces together with needle, thread and a glue gun. Each introduction and chapter are designed to allow reader entry without having to read previous chapters or follow the chapters in the order arranged in the dissertation. In this way, if the sections in the dissertation are disparate, this is deliberately so. Overall, this dissertation is an academic experiment in posthumanist research applied to the highly polarized field of deaf education. There are lines of flight in this dissertation. These lines of flights are reported below in response to the three overarching research questions enumerated above.

Line of Flight: Posthumanism as a Paradigm for Deaf Education

My evaluation of the potential of posthumanism toward a paradigm shift in deaf education research appears during an era of declining numbers of deaf people who sign
and who are part of deaf communities. The decision not to implant a deaf child is increasingly viewed as willful neglect on the part of the parents (Lee, 2016). At the same time, increasing numbers of deaf scholars around the world continue to define research agendas for Deaf Studies, with a focus on deaf ontologies, that is “deaf ways of being,” using a network of relationships between deaf scholars, deaf research participants and deaf community members and activities (Kusters, De Meulder, & O'Brien, 2017, p. 1). The gathering momentum to define deaf ontologies (Kusters, De Meulder, & O'Brien, 2017) challenges the ever-increasing rates of cochlear implantation in deaf children despite warnings concerning linguistic neglect and harm reduction (Humphries, et al., 2012; 2016). I suggest that the increased focus on deaf ontologies is a strategy to define what is it that the deaf community experiences, knows and desires for its future (O'Brien, 2017).

Braidotti (2013) speaks of the crisis of the subject, as an outgrowth of the crisis of representation. In this way, posthumanism builds upon the work of anti-humanism, a move to challenge the humanist beliefs concerning autonomy, progress, freedom, and unlimited growth concerning science and technology. Deaf scholars have taken up the mantle of anti-humanism in their work on deaf ontologies. I suggest, however, the field of deaf studies and deaf education, needs to go further and adopt a posthumanist ontoepistemology. The first step is to recognize that deaf subjectivity needs to be redefined.

Snoddon writes: “in the post-anthropocentric age that is now upon us, I recognize that who and what it means to be a deaf person has changed (and has been changing before our eyes all along)” (Snoddon, 2017b). Differences in class, race, gender and ability, initially conceived within the antihumanist mode of scholarship, have performed
the function of gatekeepers, advising who and what may cross certain boundaries and how these boundaries may be crossed (Braidotti, 2013). It’s time to dismantle those boundaries and consider posthuman performativity as the guide to research on deaf education.

Posthumanism suggests a further task for those who work with differences. For deaf people, this involves a reconfiguration of their relationship with technology such as cochlear implants. Within the humanist and antihumanist traditions, cochlear implantation is largely described as having positive and negative benefits. Yet, as the numbers of language-deprived youth coming into my classroom suggest, this dependency on technology is derived from a shared sense of vulnerability between parents, deaf children and professionals. Such vulnerability poses questions like, how can my child be a part of the hearing world? How can deaf people find work without being able to speak, read and write in the majority language? How can I communicate with deaf people if they don’t learn to hear and talk? How much is this going to cost our family, the government, or the school? What sacrifices will be required of me, the school and the government? Such questions coming from a position of vulnerability quickly dissolves into binarized positions. Braidotti (2013) suggests that questions concerning biocitizenship and biosociality can replace questions framed upon shared vulnerability, a position taken up by Friedner (2010) a deaf academic concerning deaf biosociality. This position allows for the understanding of intricate relationships between deaf people and technology, particularly cochlear implantation.

Ontologies, epistemologies and research methodologies within the humanist and antihumanist frames concerning deaf people continue to be problematic (Mertens, 2007).
Ladd (2003) notes that the medical model of deafness (including the development of speech and hearing through residual hearing, the use of cochlear implants and augmented listening technology) receives most available funding dedicated to the cure of deafness. The posthumanist turn, as applied to deaf education, includes studies on diasporic mobility, transculturality, translanguaging, plurilingualism, and diversity which are now appearing in transversal movements such as feminism, intercultural pedagogy, and intersectionality which is more descriptive of deaf people today (Braidotti, 2013; Canagarajah, 2013; Dussel, 2013; Friedner, 2017). Concepts such as ecology and environmentalism support the posthumanist turn, pointing to the interconnectivity between species including machine, earth and animal (Braidotti, 2013; Haraway, 2008). Using an ecological and therefore a posthumanist approach to deaf education calls for a radical transformation of the research agenda.

In rhizomatic spaces, data glows, stutters, and has agency to produce the researcher as well. The intelligences of the deaf adolescents in the classroom where I teach are nearly flashing neon lights now that I have learned to look through the eyes of a posthumanist researcher. I am no longer fixated on cognitive imperialism, a feature of Western hegemony (Battiste, 2013), and the organization of deaf adolescents into independent silos, always struggling to enact the individualist narrative of achievement, triumph over adversity, and to reach the hoped-for acceptance in the hearing world despite limited access to signed and spoken languages. I suggest, however, that the notion of cognitive deficits of a deaf adolescent, once described as language-deprived, fades away when the classroom assemblage through which we move, deterritorialize the affects associated with Western hegemony concerning language and cognition. The study of
their plurilingual practices, efforts at translanguaging belies intelligence in deaf children and youth despite their restricted access to the curriculum, the classroom and society at large.

Additional lines of flight within this posthumanist paradigm include 1) the commitment to becoming an intercultural educator (Banks, 1998; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Pirbhai-Illrich, Pete, & Martin, 2017) and one that exercises intergenerational responsibility to deaf students (Kusters M., 2017), 2) attending to the performativity of deaf people as they construct their languages, identities, cultures and worlds 3) establishing transversal links between humans, animals, earth and machines which firmly establishes the deaf person as a performative entity within an assemblage instead of trying to gain entry into a world primarily constructed by hearing people 4) defining the role of desire, conscious and unconscious in assemblages and how desires bring about affects which can be used toward an affective pedagogy, 5) viewing the deaf posthuman subject as a cyborg, a collection of liminal selves where the uncombinable is combined 6) the deaf subject as nomadic even within the context of a deaf diasporic community and adopting descriptors that account for abject affects, and 7) supporting a deaf translinguaging space that allows for hearing and deaf to exercise a moral orientation toward a translinguaging instinct and to perform the work of translinguaging. All lines of flights suggest a trajectory toward becoming deaf, a movement toward the complexities, multiplicities and the liminality of the deaf experience, particularly in the lives of deaf youth living in diasporic deaf communities. Becoming deaf is a positive act, one that embraces the minoritarian position, and nomadic activity.

*Lines of Flight: Posthumanist Pedagogy or Affective Pedagogy*
Becoming deaf requires an affective pedagogy in which affects associated with being deaf, are separated from their anthropocentric moorings. The transversal links between deafness, animals, humans, machines and earth, allow all to become deaf regardless of hearing status. Affective pedagogy using arts-based interventions create little publics (Hickey-Moody, 2013) to disrupt binarized thinking in the areas of education, civic life and politics. jagodzinski & Wallin (2013) ask the question, styled after Deleuze and Guattari’s question, what can a body do, that is, what can art do? First posthumanist art must address advanced capitalism as the great nomad, looking to seize upon rhizomes, nomadology and assemblages to further its agendas (jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Advanced capitalism promotes systems that appear egalitarian because the technologically mediated point of reference is neither organic/ inorganic, male/ female, nor especially white. Advanced capitalism is a post-gender system capable of accommodating a high degree of androgyny and a significant blurring of the categorical divide between the sexes. It is also a post-racial system that no longer classifies people and their cultures on grounds of pigmentation (Gilroy, 2000), but remains nonetheless profoundly racist. A strong theory of posthuman subjectivity can help us to re-appropriate these processes, both theoretically and politically, not only as analytical tools, but also as alternative grounds for formations of the self (Braidotti, 2013, p. 98).

I argue that the deaf adolescent, equipped with hearing aids, cochlear implants and augmented listening devices is similarly impacted. This is particularly evident in the basement and boutique phenomenon concerning bilingual programs (Flores & Garcia, 2017) arising from the provision of ASL to hearing people and the denial of ASL to deaf
children and youth (Snoddon, 2016). Here, advanced capitalism in the form of commodified language instruction can reach those who can afford it and learn it more easily because they possess a first language acquired through hearing (Penicaud, et al., 2013).

To counter the claims of advanced capitalism and the auditory industrial complex, what can art do: the installation provoked a conversation about what deaf people do, think and feel while in the translinguaging space, apart from the technology and biomedical interventions provided to them. The Deaf Forest allowed for the experience of affects associated with translinguaging among hearing and deaf people. Becoming deaf here has little to do with degrees of hearing or imitating deaf people. Rather, becoming deaf marks the profoundly creative movement of thinking in place of [the deaf person] by palpating a world, a practice, or a style of thought that no longer falls back upon on an all too human image of the family, the State, or the readymade ‘individual’ desires of the neoliberal market” (Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013, p.181).

The creation of art within the posthumanist frame allows deaf adolescents to share the affects of their deaf experience without resorting to anthropocentric claims. To this end, I have demonstrated several art projects created through the intra-actions between animal, machine and earth that are grounded in posthumanism ontology, epistemology and methodological theory.

**Lines of Flight: Implications for Research**

My own quest to imagine the unintelligible, confront my own epistemic
blindness, stalk the virtual real within the group of deaf adolescents with limited access to ASL and English yet capable of translanguaging to achieve tasks, began with the attempt to get the two halves of myself to talk to each other, that is the deaf self that is fluent in ASL and the hearing self that is acculturated into the hearing world, particularly within academic environments. In pursuing posthumanism, however, I have encountered an alternative ontological state. I am no longer a deaf human subject, rather, I am a posthuman always in the state of becoming minitorian, including the states of becoming deaf, woman, animal, machine and earth. The very act of becoming suggests movement within an assemblage, negotiating and being produced by others in their own becomings. Characterized by movement, performativity rather than reflexivity provides always and already shifting descriptions of the human person. Binarized descriptions of what it means to be deaf or hearing no longer serve me.

In the introductions to the chapters of this dissertation, I provided a narrative inquiry into my thoughts, my reading, my personal decisions and social activism toward becoming a posthumanist researcher concerning education of deaf children and youth. I began to discover questions arising from my increasing awareness of transversalities between animal, human, earth and machine (Braidotti, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Tracing these transversal lines requires bypassing established categories, fields and domains and the practice of defamiliarization (Braidotti, 2013). Transversal links between the social, political, ethical and aesthetic dimensions call for “a reappropriation of the production of subjectivity, through ‘chaosmic’ de-segregation of the different categories” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 93). Currently, issues concerning education of deaf children are scattered across several domains.
Audiology concerns itself with the identification, degree of hearing loss and prescriptive measures to ameliorate the effects of hearing loss. Biotechnology concerns itself with the successful medical insertion of a prosthesis into the cochlea. The development of speech and hearing is confined to the domain of speech and language pathology. Teachers of the deaf and parents address issues involving language development, language and communication choices, emotional and social behaviours, and educational placements. At the end of the day, the parents continue to evaluate their choices based on the advice they’ve been given, the development of their deaf child and the availability of educational supports and options. Mental health therapists concern themselves with environmental and individual supports that fosters the wellbeing of deaf children and youth. This scattering among domains assumes a notion of a subject that is defined as static, unchanging, and unified within the humanist tradition and the notion of the subject as possessing multiple identities, spaces, and traversing many borders within the anti-humanist tradition. The scattering either provokes a humanist or anti-humanist response and serves to reinforce the silos in which people work with, teach and research deaf subjects.

Critical posthumanism is about addressing the scattering across domains and presenting an alternative posthuman subjectivity, one that integrates scientific and technological complexity with human norms, practices, beliefs and governance (Braidotti, 2013). In this dissertation, I have attempted to trace the transversal links between the auditory industrial complex, scientific knowledge concerning sound and cochlear implants, advanced hearing technologies, biomedicalization of deafness, disability studies, applied linguistic studies, art, theatre, deaf studies, autoethnography,
deaf education, narrative inquiry, quantitative research studies concerning deaf people and the neoliberal forces that promote inclusive education. Through arts-based research, I also have endeavoured to show the ongoing multiple reappropriations, for instance, concerning frozen epistemologies of deaf people (Friedner M., 2017).

As a posthumanist researcher, I zigzag over a body without organs attempting to discover linkages that re-appropriate knowledges scattered throughout many domains, between multiple subjectivities, to develop a subjectivity that is autopoietic while in intra-actions with humans, animals, machine and earth in assemblages (Braidotti, 2013). Autopoiesis is a process in which subjectivity is formed, negotiated, and renegotiated (Braidotti, 2013). The self-styling associated with autopoiesis is characterized by performativity, continuous movement, agency, self-organization and intelligence in all humans, animals, machine and earth (Braidotti, 2013). Autopoiesis enables me to gather my four passions: for the English language, culture and the world of sound in which I grew up, my love of ASL and ASL literature including poetry, drama and stories; my own artistic practice and my passion for social justice.

Arts-based research introduced me to the process of researching without categories, labels or preconceived notions concerning deaf education. Making art and with the students allowed me to conceptualize how to use affective pedagogy in the classroom and to train my mind to look for data that leaked, glowed, stuttered and had agency. Indeed, I began to see in ways I had never seen before, to learn to move in intra-action within an arts-based assemblage. I doubt that I would have understood posthumanism without the parallel art making that accompanied my journey as a posthumanist researcher.
My own commitment to the language and literacy education of language-deprived youth is not preventative in nature because I don’t have access to deaf children before the age of 14. Furthermore, I do not attempt to extend previous efforts to develop language in deaf adolescents. Limited access to spoken and signed languages does result in permanent cognitive deficits that are extremely difficult if not impossible to reverse (Mayberry, Chen, Witcher, & Klein, 2011; Davenport, et al., 2016). My approach is pragmatic in that I am now charged with preparing the deaf adolescent for entry into work and further education. I only have a few short years to ameliorate the effects of unmet challenges to providing language access. Upon reaching secondary school, the lives of deaf adolescents have become very complex. Not only must they continue to learn academic content without having a full language with which to understand and access the curriculum, they must develop hope for a future that enables them to work, participate in community and civic life, form lifelong partners and friends, raise children and pay taxes. This means I am accountable in multiple ways to the deaf adolescent. Instead of forming a singular, therefore linear, accountability by ensuring that deaf people learn to hear and speak according to provided strategies, approaches and communication methods, multiple forms of accountability allow me to zigzag over the body without organs, searching for lines of flight enabling me to think about alternative ways to teach deaf youth who struggle with the effects of limited access to language. I am accountable to the deaf youth who arrive in my classroom on a yearly basis and to their families. I am held accountable to structuralist models of language acquisition by those who trained me to teach deaf children and youth. I am also required to search out social constructivist models of language acquisition which may be more applicable to how deaf youth can
continue to develop language using an ASL-English bilingual bimodal approach (Canagarajah, 2018b; Furth, 1966; Swanwick, 2017; Vygotsky, 1925). As a deaf community member, I am accountable to the deaf community in that I must contribute to its struggle for recognition of sign language and validation of its own existence. At the same time, I must support the development of spoken language in deaf children and youth and the efforts of the auditory industrial complex. These multiple forms of accountability shift and are performative as I intra-act with humans, animals, earth and machine throughout assemblages. In eschewing binaries, I work with recent innovations in research undertaken by deaf scholars who have placed their attention on the complexities, nuances, interstitial spaces, deaf sociality, deaf spaces, translanguaging, methodologies, particularly ethnography, to bring to the fore, deaf ways of being (Kusters, De Meulder, & O’Brien, 2017).

These multiple forms of accountability also make it necessary to search lines of flight, that is, imagining the unintelligible in the education of deaf youth long after early efforts have failed in developing spoken and or sign language. Finally, multiple forms of accountability allow me to conduct a fine-grained analysis of data which sits at the edge of language rather than defending one half of a binary. What sits at the edges of boundaries, interstices, and between spaces will likely propel us further into the future concerning deaf education. There, questions become reframed and approaches are redesigned. In the future, we will need to cast aside blunt shaped tools designed to assess intelligence, learning, and achievement. As the world becomes increasingly trammeled by anthropocentrism, posthumanist data will point to the small, the unnoticed and the data at the edges of language that glow, exert agency, and point to new ways of thinking
about teaching deaf children and youth.
SECTION 11: FINAL THOUGHTS

Despite receiving deaf adolescents who struggle with challenges to their language acquisition into the classroom where I teach, I continue to worry alongside Snoddon (2017c) who writes:

I just returned from the World Federation of the Deaf Conference, which had a special focus on deaf education, and where I participated in a workshop preceding the conference. Specifically, the focus of the conference was about the meaning of inclusive education for deaf children. In the elite space that is a WFD gathering, where I rubbed shoulders with various deaf European Union and national parliamentarians, lawyers, and academics (both faculty and administrators), we confronted the dominant trends in deaf education today, where schools for the deaf are contracting and more and more deaf children lack any access to sign language in or out of school. After the brief 5 or 10 years when bilingual bicultural models of education were piloted at several schools for the deaf in the 1990s, today’s deaf elite seems to have largely accepted that cochlear implants are here to stay, and many deaf schools have disappeared (Snoddon, 2017c).

Hence, the field of deaf education, despite efforts of deaf academics, remains bifurcated as ever. The universal push by the auditory industrial complex to implant deaf children and the restriction of sign language and deaf community authored knowledges continues to drive many deaf youth who struggle with limited access to language into inclusive education environments that are bewildering and oppressive.

Much of the world remains gripped by its own anthropocentric importance. Having to survive as a deaf woman, placed in the margins, away from vibrant deaf
communities, in the shadow of well-funded deaf studies and deaf education posts, often on the edge of hearing and deaf communities, holding unpopular views that appear contradictory to many parents and professionals within the auditory industrial complex, and possessing skills that very few professionals in this province have to address the language learning needs of deaf youth, I am learning that “survival is not an academic skill” (Lorde, 2007). The master’s tools provided by the academy (Lorde, 2007) are not equal to the task of becoming a posthumanist researcher. Dismantling the master’s house (Lorde, 2007) rife with binaries, categories, labels, and assignation of power to the stronger halves of the binaries requires a radically different ontology and therefore a different set of tools. Such tools must be capable of nuance, fine grained analysis as opposed to blunt instruments afforded by binarized thinking.

While always mindful of the realities of challenges associated with acquiring language, I consider the alternative views of cognition and language acquisition that are influenced by social, cultural, political and material circumstances, that is an assemblage of humans, animals, machines and earth. From Russia, Vygotsky in 1927 wrote:

…perhaps I shall not be wrong in saying that the world’s first experiment of self-governing among deaf and dumb children has been made in our schools. The children organize their own life; they have their own school governing body, with sanitary, cultural and other committees, and all these interests go to make up their whole life. As a result, social habits, conscious instincts, initiative, organizing abilities, collective responsibility are developing and strengthening through this system (Vygotsky, 1925, p. 25).

Canagarajah (2013) comments that meaning making among people who have diverse
linguistic repertoires have always been present in Western cultures. Everyday
communication and literacies among diverse peoples have, however, been placed in the
shadow of monolingualism promoted by academic and institutional life (Canagarajah,
2013). The presence of deaf communities around the world, the growing body of
linguistic, anthropological, sociological, and neurological research attests to distributed
cognitive and language in assemblages (Pennycook, 2018). Moreover, the consideration
of translanguaging and plurilingual practices also extend to spaces in which they are
enacted. Deaf spaces and hearing spaces now become translanguaging spaces when
researchers begin to grapple with the desires of deaf people to form their own destinies in
partnership with hearing allies and the movement from representation to performativity
allows for the inclusion of materiality which often impact deaf people in such dramatic
and direct ways. Snoddon writes:

As we come to realize that our language practices were translanguaging all along,
that our social identities have always been multiple and intersectional, and that the
diversities in deaf communities today (however these are understood) are
“productive events,” it may be that the struggles in deaf education can lead to
‘alternate visions and projects.’ (Braidotti, 2013, p. 54). If we are forced to
reconfigure our understandings of ourselves as limited by previously held
conceptions of the deaf (or Deaf) subject, then maybe we can glimpse ‘untapped
possibilities for bonding, community building, and empowerment’ by undertaking
‘a leap forward into the complexities and paradoxes of our times.’ (Braidotti,
2013, p. 54).

Until posthuman performativity begins to take hold in the minds and hearts of
researchers, the field of deaf education continues to be riven by binaries that polarize researchers, educators, parents and deaf activists (Kusters, De Meulder, & O'Brien, 2017). As a deaf teacher within a resource room serving deaf adolescents, I no longer see them as language-deprived and I witness how their cognitive deficits are ameliorated through performativity as posthumanist subjects within an assemblage. They are whole human beings and fully in the world when they are allowed, encouraged, and supported in their efforts to translanguage with hearing people and with each other. Posthumanism has allowed me to see past coarse-grained binarizing labels such as language deprivation and possessing cognitive deficits. I now see them capable of learning the same curriculum as hearing adolescents must learn, when provided with full access to language (ASL or English or both), arts-based literacy interventions, opportunities for translanguaging, deaf sociality, and a translanguaging space.

As a posthumanist researcher, I am no longer divided. I am now able to draw upon my own experiences growing up with sound, learning to speak, my own reliance upon hearing technology as well as use ASL and the strengths inherent in being a member of the deaf community to deliver an affective pedagogy that will enable deaf adolescents to integrate sound and sign, hearing and seeing. I am now able to forge new relationships within their assemblages through which we move, unfettered from the binarized descriptions that restrict us all. Moreover, in the context of community action, I now work alongside deaf activists, teachers of the deaf, educational administrators, and parents to bring about change in deaf education within the province of Saskatchewan. I continue to traverse the assemblage of humans, animals, machines, earth, an experience which rarely falls into categories, binaries and labels. As a posthumanist researcher, I
look forward to new discourses, to forge new ways of expressing what was never divided in the first place. Now I have a beginner’s grasp of what it means to imagine the unintelligible, to stalk the virtual real in deaf adolescents.
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