Deaf/Hearing Cultural Identity Paradigms:
Modification of the Deaf Identity Development Scale

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The Deaf Identity Development Scale (Glickman, 1993) was modified to include hearing individuals and examine how hearing and deaf adults identify themselves. Statistical analysis based on 244 deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing respondents revealed a significant interaction between hearing status of self and parents on the hearing, marginal, and immersion scales of the modified version but not on the bicultural scale. Codas are more marginalized, less immersed, and similarly "hearing" in comparison to deaf persons with deaf parents. Hard-of-hearing respondents with deaf parents endorse more hearing values and fewer deaf values in comparison to deaf counterparts and also appear to be more marginalized. There were no significant differences between deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals with hearing parents. Compared to hearing respondents with deaf parents, deaf counterparts were more marginalized, more "hearing," and equally "deaf." Strong professional affiliation with the deaf community resulted in scores that differed significantly from those for individuals not as strongly affiliated. We discuss implications for identity development.

The relationship of the individual to society emerges in great part through our understanding of identity, a construct that has endured intense scrutiny for centuries (Baumeister, 1991; Erikson, 1980; Fitzgerald, 1993; Woodward, 1997). Baumeister (1997) views identity as basically the representation of the self. Although the core self is unified and consistent regardless of life changes, different facets emerge at different points in time (McAdams, 1997). Rosenberg (1997) takes this one step further by arguing for the multiplicity of selves within an individual's self-definition, which are identifiable in terms of various roles assumed through life depending on environmental context. These multiple selves, or in other words, identity constructs, are rooted within a societal framework, meaning that they evolve out of various social experiences. The experiences incorporate not only the self-evaluation of the individual but also the evaluation of others, as well as opportunities and constraints regarding self-definition imposed by those others doing the evaluation (Lai, 1995). Essentially, while the individual defines his or her own identity (or identities), groups or persons that interact with the individual impose identity (or identities) on the individual that can also affect self-definition. Thus, the questions related to who I am at what point in time and where, and whether this conceptualization came from within me or from outside me has profound implications for one's sense of self.

Patterns of Identification with Deaf Culture

Fitzgerald suggests that "it is culture that usually gives people their sense of identity, whether at an individual or group level" (1993, p. 58). Deaf people have had a sense of community for a long time, but the academic concept of a Deaf culture 1 was nonexistent until the 1970s (Humphries, 1996; Padden & Humphries, 1988; Paul & Jackson, 1993). Humphries conceptualizes the implications in terms of an emerging voice that encompasses cultural explicitness, self-consciousness, and a
centeredness around a signed language that was not previously reflected in the self-perceptions of deaf individuals. The values, mores, and ways of relating that have emerged out of this background are transmitted from Deaf parents to their deaf children and from Deaf peers to those deaf individuals who become exposed to Deaf culture at varying stages in the process of life, whether in the educational setting of childhood or within social organizations consisting of Deaf persons during adulthood (Padden & Humphries, 1988). Because of the transitional nature of this process, questions of authenticity pose fundamental dilemmas regarding the meaning of identity formation within the Deaf culture since it is a culture that is not always inherited. From this perspective, we need to ask who it is that represents the true Deaf culture identity and what is the relationship of hearing persons to Deaf culture and Deaf identity? Exploring these issues is critical not only for Deaf persons themselves but also for those hearing individuals whose lives are inextricably bound with the deaf community and Deaf culture, on a personal or professional basis. (For the purposes of this article, the deaf community represents a diverse entity encompassing a broad spectrum of deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing individuals who affiliate with the community for various reasons while Deaf culture is that component of the deaf community that represents a view of life manifested by the use of American Sign Language [ASL] and ways of life pertinent to those embedded within Deaf culture [Padden, 1980; Padden & Humphries, 1988; Paul & Jackson, 1993; Regan, 1990; Schein, 1989]). Furthermore, given their multifaceted nature, identities related to Deaf culture represent part or all of one's identity and are more or less salient depending on the individual and his or her level of interconnections with the deaf community. As a point of clarification, Preston (1994) introduces hearing adult children of deaf parents for whom identification with Deaf culture varies depending on environmental circumstances and internal feelings. In contrast, Lane, Hoffmeister, and Bahan (1996) portray individuals whose lives are fully centered in the "Deaf-World."

Preston (1994) has argued that cultural affiliation and identity are important issues for hearing children born to deaf parents (or codas) in terms of their identification with the deaf community, Deaf culture, and individuals who hear. These children often grow up at the very least dealing with two paradigms, one relative to being hearing, and the other in terms of Deaf culture (in addition to ethnic cultures embedded within the family of origin) (Preston, 1994; Rutherford, 1987). Often inherent in this process is a continuous internal balancing of all such paradigms. Furthermore, within Deaf culture, arguments about the role of codas continue (Lane et al., 1996), particularly because from a generational perspective, those children are at some level the inheritors of Deaf culture. On the one hand, while the codas display internal knowledge of Deaf culture, this culture nonetheless finds subtle ways to give them a status that in essence reflects marginality and denies them full identification with Deaf culture because of their hearingness (Higgins, 1980; Padden and Humphries, 1988). On the other hand, Preston states that those hearing children of Deaf parents who grew up surrounded by Deaf culture see that culture as their "home." They feel very much a part of that culture when the term "Mother Father Deaf" forms a central part of their being. Hence, there is a need for this group to have a multifocused identity.

The concept of biculturalism encompasses the notion that an individual is able to gain competence within two cultures without having to choose one culture over the other (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). The old perspective of living in two cultures as psychologically undesirable due to the inherent complexities of managing the different cultures has given way to a more positive paradigm in which managing different cultures is a virtue. It is a means of acknowledging differences within oneself and juxtaposing these. If codas are engaged in a struggle to conceptualize their identity (or identities), this new paradigm has profound implications. In essence, it reflects a change from deafness as disability to deafness as a culture coexisting with society at large (Davis, 1995; Humphries, 1996) accompanied by the understanding of Deaf as a life experience that may include hearing children in terms of belonging.

Those hearing individuals who are not children of Deaf parents but perceive themselves as very connected with the Deaf community primarily tend to be professionals who work with deaf/Deaf persons. The
extent to which they identify with Deaf culture and are perceived as part of Deaf culture is very much contingent on how they respond to particular community goals that derive from Deaf cultural influences (Paul & Jackson, 1993). However, in general, hearing professionals are not seen as part of Deaf culture as their motives are often suspect and their “hearingness” gets in the way (Hoffmeister & Harvey, 1996). If they identify themselves as culturally Deaf at some level, the meanings imbued by this identification are very different from Deaf notions of belongingness in Deaf culture because of their hearing status and general lack of an apparent emotional bond with Deaf persons dating back to childhood. This leads to the question of who is truly entitled to claim membership in Deaf culture as well as in the larger society.

The literature reveals that minimal attention has been paid to how hard-of-hearing individuals perceive themselves relative to hearing and deaf identity constructs. Padden and Humphries (1988) note that those who are connected to Deaf culture because of birth or education may identify themselves as Deaf and function as Deaf persons do even though they recognize themselves as audiologically hard of hearing. Theoretically, they may be grappling with issues similar to those of hearing offspring of deaf parents because of their hearing status.

Deaf/Hearing Cultural Identity Paradigms

The current interest in cultural identity and implications for psychosocial adjustment (e.g., LaFromboise et al., 1993; Sue & Sue, 1990) has spawned the development of cultural identity models and scales designed to assess cultural self-perceptions in relation to life adjustment (e.g., Aponte & Barnes, 1995; Dana, 1993; Helms, 1990; Sanders Thompson, 1991). Aponte and Barnes caution that the classification of persons according to different acculturation categories has recently been criticized since it has been observed that people do not necessarily move through linear courses of cultural development. Moreover, the classification per se does not take individual dynamic variations relative to environmental contingencies into account. Therefore, these categorizations should not be rigidly used to classify any one person; rather, they can be useful in enhancing the understanding of identity paradigms.

Keeping these caveats in mind, we will now proceed to describe a Deaf/Hearing cultural identity paradigm consisting of four cultural orientations potentially applicable to deaf persons. This paradigm was developed by Glickman (Glickman, 1993; Glickman, 1996; Glickman & Carey, 1993) using racial and ethnic identity development models as a theoretical foundation. The first cultural orientation refers to those who are culturally Hearing, meaning that hearing norms are the reference point for normality, health, and spoken communication. The role of deafness in one’s identity is not emphasized. The second covers the culturally marginal, those who do not fit into either Hearing or Deaf societies. Their identities emerge without clear notions of hearingness or deafness. The third identity reflects immersion in Deaf culture to the extent that there is a positive and uncritical identification with Deaf persons. Hearing values are denigrated. Lastly, those with a bicultural identity possess the skill to comfortably negotiate Hearing and Deaf settings. They embrace Deaf culture and also value hearing contacts.

The Deaf Identity Development Scale (DIDS) was developed to measure those four cultural identity constructs (Glickman, 1993; Glickman & Carey, 1993). It consists of 15 items tapping into each of these constructs for a total of 60 items, which were administered via either a written English version to late deafened adults or a videotaped ASL version to deaf students in order to determine reliability and validity. After statistical analysis, the resulting DIDS consisted of 14 hearing, 14 immersion, 14 bicultural, and 12 marginal items for a total of 54 items. Alpha coefficients were as follows: hearing, .86; marginal, .767; immersion, .83; and bicultural, .81. Construct validity was demonstrated through hypothesis testing, which revealed that the factor structure of the DIDS was consistent across the groups evaluated (deaf students at Gallaudet University and late deafened adults). Glickman and Carey demonstrate that the four scales measure related but not identical constructs. They suggest that their results indicate the viability of an operational measure of Deaf people’s orientation to and affiliation with the deaf community and Deaf culture and state the need for continuing work on the DIDS.
As indicated earlier, Deaf cultural identity issues are also salient for hearing individuals connected in various ways with the deaf community/Deaf culture. For this reason we viewed the DIDS as an instrument that could potentially tap into the relevancy of the four cultural identity constructs for this particular population. As a number of the items were applicable to deaf persons only, it was necessary to revise the instrument to broaden its applicability to hearing persons as well.

The goal of the present study was to assess the appropriateness of such a revised instrument for hearing, hard-of-hearing, and deaf populations. We expected that those who were deaf with deaf/hard-of-hearing parents would score higher on the immersion scale and lower on the marginal and hearing scales while hearing individuals with deaf parents would score highly on the bicultural scale. Furthermore, hard-of-hearing persons in general as well as deaf persons with hearing parents would score higher on the marginal scale. Hearing persons with hearing parents would score higher on the hearing scale than deaf offspring of hearing parents. Finally, given the considerations regarding professional affiliation presented earlier, there was an expectation that this would mediate cultural identification for the different groups of respondents.

Methods

Subjects. The questionnaires were completed by 244 adult participants. Data regarding the hearing status of participants and their parents were collected by self-identification in a brief demographic survey that accompanied the Modified Deaf Identity Development Scale. The hearing status by parental hearing status of the sample is available in Table 1. Women completed 171 questionnaires while 72 were completed by men. The sample was predominantly Caucasian (91.4%). The median onset of hearing loss for deaf individuals was at birth. Hard-of-hearing individuals reported a median onset between 5 to 7 years of age.

As indicated in Table 2, of the 244 participants, the majority (58.6%) considered themselves to be fluent in ASL. Additionally, of the subjects who considered themselves to be fluent, 46.2% were deaf. Most hearing participants stated that they preferred either sign and speech (31%) or speaking alone (29.8%) as their preferred mode of communication while most hard-of-hearing individuals reported preferring speech alone (60.9%). Deaf individuals generally reported preferring ASL (55.6%). The distribution of professional affiliation within the sample based on relationships to deafness is shown in Table 3.

Instruments. A brief demographic survey covering such items as the participant's hearing status, parental hearing status, communication preference, and nature of
Table 3  Count of subjects' hearing status and parents' hearing status by professional affiliation with deafness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not related</th>
<th>Somewhat related</th>
<th>Very related</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deaf subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf/hard-of-hearing parents</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing parents</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard-of-hearing subjects</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf/hard-of-hearing parents</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing parents</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf/hard-of-hearing parents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing parents</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

professional affiliation was included with the Modified Deaf Identity Development Scale. This scale is a result of changes that were made to the original 60-item DIDS (Glickman, 1993) to ensure that it would be applicable to hearing as well as deaf persons. Specifically, three items were modified on the culturally hearing scale, four on the culturally marginal scale, one on the immersion scale, and five on the bicultural scale. For example, one item on the bicultural scale, “I feel good about being deaf, but I involve myself with hearing people also” was modified as follows: “I feel good about being with deaf people, but I involve myself with hearing people also.” Many modifications also involved changes from self as deaf/hearing-impaired to parents as deaf/hearing-impaired in order to be relevant for those with deaf parents: “I call myself hearing-impaired” was changed to “I call my parents hearing-impaired.” The resulting scale was titled “My Feelings about Deaf and Hearing People” when given to subjects. Answers were selected from a six-item scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.” “Not applicable” was included to make the questionnaire appropriate to all groups.

Procedure. Participants were recruited through organizations for deaf/hard-of-hearing and hearing individuals who were willing to distribute information about the study to potentially interested individuals. Announcements soliciting participants were also made through electronic mail networks or poster distribution. Respondents who indicated interest in participating in the study were provided with the demographic survey and the “My Feelings about Deaf and Hearing People” scale together with a stamped, addressed envelope for returning the material upon completion. No identifying information was requested.

Results

The internal consistency of each scale was assessed. Reliability was strong for the hearing (α = .8479), marginal (α = .7883), and immersion (α = .8025) scales while the bicultural scale was low (α = .333). The alpha levels for the hearing, marginal, and immersion scales were comparable with what was reported by Glickman (1993), but the bicultural scale consistency was considerably lower than that in the Glickman study.

The data were analyzed by employing a two-way (3 by 2) factorial multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to determine the impact of both hearing status and parental hearing status on the different cultural scales. For the independent variable hearing status, respondents were categorized as being deaf, hard of hearing, or hearing. For the independent variable parental hearing status, respondents were categorized as having deaf parents if one or both of their parents were deaf or hard of hearing and were categorized as having hearing parents if both their parents were hearing. The follow-up tests were univariate ANOVAs and planned simple comparisons. Significant main effects were found for both independent variables: subjects’ hearing status, Wilks’ lambda = .79, F(8, 462) = 7.45, p < .0001, and parents’ hearing status, Wilks’ lambda = .84, F(4, 231) = 10.94, p < .0001.
A significant interaction was also found, Wilks' lambda = .84, $F(8, 462) = 5.16$, $p < .0001$, meaning that the impact of one's hearing status on the cultural scales of the modified DIDS depended on the hearing status of one's parents (see Figure 1, which presents the means for each classification).

Univariate $F$ tests revealed significant hearing status by parents' hearing status interactions on the hearing ($p < .0001$), marginal ($p < .0001$), and immersion ($p = .004$) scales; however, the interaction was not significant for the bicultural scale ($p = .37$). Due to its low reliability and its failure to achieve a significant interaction, the bicultural scale was not included in further statistical analysis.

To interpret the significant univariate interactions for the three scales, we designed and carried out additional analyses in the form of simple comparisons. Separate analyses were run for respondents with deaf parents and for respondents with hearing parents. Also, since there were three groups (deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing) to be analyzed within each of the two parental hearing status groups, additional planned simple comparisons were defined. Simple comparisons of deaf versus hard of hearing and deaf versus hearing were specified with the expectation that the differences in means would reflect the dimension measured by the scale (e.g., hearing individuals would have higher scores on the hearing scale, etc.). The $t$ values associated with the significant comparisons are presented in Table 4. Negative $t$ values indicate that deaf respondents scored lower on the respective scales than their comparison group. Positive values indicate that deaf respondents scored higher. When compared to hard-of-hearing respondents, deaf individuals showed different cultural ratings on all three scales examined, but only if they had deaf parents. Deaf and hard-of-hearing respondents did not differ on these scales if they had hearing parents.

When we compared deaf and hearing respondents, we observed significant differences for those with deaf parents and for those with hearing parents. However, the pattern and direction were different. Most interestingly, for those with deaf parents, deaf respondents scored significantly lower on the marginal scale. For those with hearing parents, deaf respondents scored significantly higher on the marginal scale than hearing respondents. Clearly, hearing participants differed from their deaf counterparts depending on whether they themselves had deaf parents or not.

The data were also analyzed by a MANOVA to determine the presence of an interaction between hearing status and professional affiliation (degree of professional connection to the Deaf community) on performance on the scales of the Modified Deaf Identity De-


Table 4  $T$ values for the comparisons on three scales of the Modified Deaf Identity Development Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Deaf vs. hard of hearing</th>
<th>Deaf vs. hearing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deaf parents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing scale</td>
<td>-4.54</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal scale</td>
<td>-3.22</td>
<td>-4.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersion</td>
<td>+5.45</td>
<td>+2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hearing parents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing scale</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal scale</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersion scale</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$df = 1,234.$

Negative and positive significant at .05.

0 = no significance.

Development Scale. No interaction was found, Wilks' lambda = .92, $F(16, 654.4) = 1.08, p = .374.$ Follow-up univariate statistics revealed no significant differences. However, professional affiliation had a significant main effect in itself, Wilks' lambda = .66, $F(8, 428) = 12.29, p < .001.$ Follow-up univariate tests indicate significance for the hearing, marginal, and bicultural scales at the .05 level.

An examination of the subgroup means of the three professional affiliation groups for each of the three scales for which significant univariate $F$s were obtained is presented in Figure 2. These data show that as degree of professional affiliation with the deaf community increases, scores on the marginal and hearing scales decrease, while scores on the bicultural scale increase. Post hoc analysis using Tukey's honestly significant difference test revealed the same pattern for all three scales; those reporting jobs that were "very affiliated" with the deaf community differed significantly from those reporting jobs that were either "not affiliated" or "somewhat affiliated." However, these latter two groups did not differ significantly from each other on any of the three scales.

Discussion

Even though the sample is a national one, it is also self-selected and therefore not truly representative. With this caveat, the results of this study have potential implications for those interested in cultural identity development, particularly in terms of the deaf community.

As based on internal consistency results for the immersion, marginal, and hearing scales, the Modified Deaf Identity Development Scale might be useful for assessing one's cultural affiliation in terms of the Deaf-Hearing continuum. However, the bicultural scale is problematic not only in that it has low internal consistency but also that it did not differentiate well among the groups surveyed in this study. While the internal consistency may have prevented the bicultural scale from differentiating among the respondents, the researchers wonder if the bicultural scores were elevated across the groups of participants due to the propensity for subjects to endorse items that appear socially correct. It is important to remember that many participants had some connection to or understanding of deafness and, likely, parts of the bicultural scale reflect that. An example of this is found in item 49, which states "I feel comfortable with both deaf and hearing people." In other words, it may be that this bicultural scale is assessing social desirability rather than the concept of dual competence within two cultures as defined according to LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993). As based on the concept of dual competence, comparing scores on the immersion and hearing scales to assess the degree of comfort with both cultural norms appears to be a more effective approach.

Results indicate the value of taking into account one's hearing status and parental hearing status in determining how respondents score on the hearing, immersion, and marginal scales. Specifically, hard-of-hearing individuals with deaf parents scored higher on the hearing scale than deaf individuals of deaf parents, but codas performed similarly to deaf persons with deaf parents. In other words, hearing individuals with deaf parents are no more "hearing" than deaf individuals of deaf parents, but hard-of-hearing individuals with deaf parents identify with more hearing values than deaf individuals of deaf parents. On the marginal scale, deaf individuals of deaf parents scored lower than both the hard-of-hearing individuals of deaf parents and the hearing individuals of deaf parents. This indicates that hard-of-hearing individuals with deaf parents and codas are more marginalized than their deaf counterparts.
On the immersion scale, deaf individuals with deaf parents scored higher than their hearing counterparts and considerably higher than hard-of-hearing counterparts. This is not surprising if one considers the hearing and immersion scales to be opposite extremes on a hearing-deaf value continuum. When all of these are considered together, it appears that codas do not endorse more hearing values than deaf individuals with deaf parents and support comparatively fewer deaf values. Additionally, they experience themselves as more marginalized. In comparison to deaf counterparts, hard-of-hearing respondents are more marginalized, identify more with hearing values, and score lowest for immersion.

For respondents with hearing parents, the findings indicate that deaf and hard-of-hearing adults perform similarly on the hearing, marginal, and immersion scales. However, deaf respondents score higher than hearing individuals on both the hearing and marginal scales, while results for the immersion scale are similar for both groups. In other words, deaf and hard-of-hearing participants with hearing parents are more marginalized and subscribe to more hearing values than hearing individuals. Additionally, they do not endorse more deaf values than their hearing or hard-of-hearing counterparts.

When these results are taken in tandem, some interesting conclusions emerge. Hard-of-hearing individuals with deaf parents endorse more hearing values and fewer deaf values in comparison to deaf counterparts. They also appear to be more marginalized. Hard-of-hearing individuals with hearing parents demonstrate no real difference compared to their deaf counterparts.

Deaf individuals with deaf parents endorse more deaf values than hard-of-hearing or hearing individuals of deaf parents. They endorse hearing values at the same rate as codas. Additionally, they are less marginalized than codas and hard-of-hearing individuals of deaf parents. When deaf individuals have hearing parents, however, they are more hearing and marginal but are no more immersed in deaf values than hearing subjects.

Overall, the findings suggest that the experience of being deaf/hard of hearing with hearing parents influences one’s identity development in a way that is significantly different from the identity development for a hearing or deaf/hard-of-hearing person of deaf parents. This may reflect the different types of pressures that a deaf child faces in joining a hearing environment, while hearing and deaf children can freely participate in the Deaf culture of their parents. A potential con-
founding factor may be developmental stage, which was not included in this study. According to Glickman (1993), deaf individuals would be expected to progress from the hearing to marginal to immersion to bicultural stages. It may be that this sample was taken at a point in cultural development where the deaf respondents with hearing parents were changing from more hearing values to more Deaf values and were accordingly in a more marginal state. Additional research is required in order to clarify this possibility.

Codas are no more “hearing” than deaf individuals of deaf parents and are not nearly as immersed in Deaf culture as their deaf peers. However, codas are more marginalized than their deaf peers. This has implications for our understanding of cultural identity development within codas. As Preston suggests, “Just as these informants [hearing adults of deaf parents] were more likely to perceive themselves as culturally Deaf, these men and women were also more likely to be estranged from a sense of themselves as Hearing” (1994, p. 71). The pattern of performance from this study suggests codas are experiencing more conflict between hearing and deaf values than deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals of deaf parents.

Those reporting strong professional affiliations with the deaf community differed significantly on the Modified Deaf Identity Development Scale from those reporting lower levels of affiliation. Since they scored comparatively lower on the marginal and hearing scales, and comparatively higher on the bicultural scale, this can be interpreted to mean that the greater degree of professional affiliation is associated with lower endorsement of hearing values, less marginality, and a higher level of biculturalism. Although professional affiliation and hearing status are important to cultural identification independently, the lack of an interaction effect might be explained by the possibility that professional affiliation and hearing status may negate each other (e.g., a deaf individual of deaf parents may work in a hearing environment and still identify strongly with Deaf Culture).

This study addresses some important aspects of Deaf identity development for deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing individuals in relation to their parents’ hearing status. Perhaps the most interesting finding was that codas are more marginalized than deaf individuals of deaf parents. It may be that codas need to suppress their hearingness and subsequently find themselves in conflict. In comparison, deaf individuals with deaf parents who score on the hearing scale similarly to codas may feel compelled to compensate to some degree in terms of their identity construction and being able to negotiate within a hearing environment as needed. Furthermore, deaf individuals with hearing parents may face particular struggles with identity development, particularly if they have been trained to identify with hearing values and become aware of a Deaf culture at later stages in their lives. This would introduce an element of competition with the culture of their hearing parents due to inherent deaf/hearing conflicts that can emerge until one learns to comfortably navigate both Deaf and Hearing cultural paradigms. Hard-of-hearing individuals with deaf parents appear to endorse different types of identities than their deaf counterparts while those with hearing parents score similarly to their deaf counterparts. It may be that the pressure to conform to hearing paradigms negates any difference when parents are hearing, while having deaf parents may differentially affect cultural choices and present more conflict situations. Reasons can only be speculative at this point.

While we have been able to derive some interesting conclusions from this study, the problems emerging from the bicultural scale indicate the need for additional psychometric work on the Modified Deaf Identity Development Scale. It would be helpful to collect data on the same demographic group over a period of several years to determine if changes occur in one’s cultural identity status. Moreover, further studies may want to collect information regarding length of exposure to deaf culture to substantiate the model of cultural identity development presented by Glickman (1993).

Notes

1. The lowercase deaf indicates the audiological condition of not being able to hear, while the uppercase Deaf represents a group of deaf people who share a language (ASL) and a culture.
2. “Coda” stands for hearing adults who have at least one parent who is deaf. This should not be confused with the acronym CODA, which stands for the organization Children of Deaf Adults Incorporated. Nor should it be assumed that the individual is a member of CODA.
3. Contact Irene W. Leigh for a copy of the Modified Deaf Identity Development Scale.

References


