

**THEY HAVE TO SEE US: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF DEAF PEOPLE IN  
TANZANIA**

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## ABSTRACT

They Have To See Us: an Ethnography of Deaf People in Tanzania

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This dissertation explores the relationship between Tanzanian deaf people and mainstream society, as well as dynamics within deaf communities. I argue that deaf people who do participate in NGOs and other organizations that provide support to deaf people, do so strategically. In order to access services and improve their own lives and the lives of their families, deaf people in Tanzania move comfortably and fluidly between identity groups that are labeled as disabled or only as deaf. Through intentional use of the interventions provided by various organizations, deaf people are able to carve out deaf spaces that act as places for transmission of information, safe areas to learn and use sign language, and sites of network and community development among other deaf people. Through these deaf spaces and networks—formed around the safe and open use of sign language—deaf participants in these communities are better able to resist the imbalanced systems and find ways to survive, and in some cases thrive, in the context of structural, cultural, and economic oppression. Finally, I lay out quantitative and qualitative data that show that deaf people who participate in a signing community have better access to support networks, economic opportunities, and increased participation in public life.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
ASL	American Sign Language
AUD	African Union of the Deaf
BBC	British Broadcasting Channel
BWI	Bretton Woods Institutes
CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Party of the Revolution)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DPO	Disabled Person's Organization
ELCT	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania
FBO	Faith Based Organization
FCS	Foundation for a Civil Society
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GTZ	German International AID Organization
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Country
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LAT	Lugha ya Alama (Tanzanian Sign Language)
LOT	Languages of Tanzania Project
MVSL	Martha's Vineyard Sign Language
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
PEPFAR	Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PWD	People with Disabilities
RA	Research Assistants
RQ	Research Question
SHIVYWATA	Tanzanian National Association of Disabled Persons
TACAIDS	Tanzanian Commission for HIV/AIDS
TANU	Tanganyika African National Union
TASAF	Tanzanian Social Action Fund
TB	Tuberculosis
TSD	Tanzanian Society for the Deaf
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
VETA	Vocational Education and Training Authority
WFD	World Federation of the Deaf
WHO	World Health Organization

## LIST OF KISWAHILI TERMINOLOGY

<b>Kiswahili Word</b>	<b>English Translation</b>
Binti Kiziwi	Deaf girl
Bubu	Derogatory term for deaf person; sometimes referencing people who cannot speak or communicate
Chai	Tea
Cheka chehas	Preschool
Cheza n'gombe	Traditional dance
Chuo Kikuu Cha	
Dar es Salaam	The University of Dar es Salaam
Daladala	Minivans for public transportation
Duka	Store
Fundi	Expert craftsman (in this case, a cobbler)
Haitumiki	We don't use it
Hamna	Nothing
Hiki ni nini?	What is that?
Hoteli	Small restaurant
Jambozi	Thugs, gangs of criminals
Jikos	Stoves
Jumamosi	Saturday
Kipofu/Vipofu	Blind person/people
Kiziwi/Viziwi	Deaf person/people
Kumi	Ten
Kweli	True
Lugha ya Alama ya	
Tanzania	Tanzanian Sign Language (LAT)
Lugha ya Kijiji	Village Sign Language
Maisha Magumu	Hard life
Mama Kiziwi	Deaf woman who is a mother-like figure
Marahaba	Response to <i>Shikamoo</i>
Mlemavu/Walemavu	Disabled person/people
Mti/Miti	Tree/trees
Mwenyekiti	Chairperson
Mzee/Wazee	Elder/elders or old people
Mzungu/Wazungu	White person/people (often derogatory term)
Pamoja	Name for Women's PWD NGO; Kiswahili for together, united, as one
Pombe	Illegal alcohol made from corn
Rafiki ya Kiziwi	Friend of the deaf
Samahani mama, viziwi ipo?	Excuse me ma'am, are there deaf here?
Sana	Many/very
Shamba	Farm/garden
Shikamoo	Respectful greeting

Tano	Five
Tsh	Tanzanian Schilling (1 USD = 1662 Tsh)
Twiga	Giraffe
Ugali	Cornmeal cooked to a thick porridge (major component of East African diet)
Ulanzi	Illegal alcohol made from bamboo
Zawadi ya Viziwi	Gift for the deaf

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As we park on the side of a dirt road in Katavi<sup>1</sup>, a village outside of Selous in Tanzania, my research assistant looks at me, rolls her eyes and signs, “Here come the crowds.” She is right. From the moment we arrived in any rural area curious onlookers gathered around the car and us to see what is happening. And, as if on cue, they all laugh when Renada and I begin to sign as we figure out our strategy for working in the village. Renada, having spent the previous day in Katavi, has already identified two homes with deaf family members and we are deciding which hut to visit first. Signing is rarely seen in Tanzania and almost never seen in rural areas. In fact, deaf people signing in public have been the victims of violence, mockery, and other abuses.

We decided to visit Ruth<sup>2</sup> first. Ruth is a forty-something-year old single woman with no children who lives with her younger hearing sister and her family. As soon as we walk up a child recognizes Renada and runs to get Ruth. Ruth and her sister come out to meet us and noticed the crowd slowly encircling the small smoke-filled hut. Ruth rushes up to Renada; they shake hands and, in Hehe fashion, kiss the tops of each other’s hands. Ruth, who has some gestures but no formal sign language and no knowledge of LAT<sup>3</sup>, begins dragging Renada around by the arm to show her neighbors. Ruth, with tears streaming down her cheeks, is so proud that another deaf person was in the village, that she is not alone, and that Renada is so successful—exhibited by her clipboard, pens, and papers. Once Renada’s tour is finished, we each sit down to begin our interviews. I, the hearing one, interviewed Ruth’s sister, Amina. Amina is the local *pombe*<sup>4</sup> maker and runs her business out of their home.

I begin my interview by asking about Ruth’s role in the family. Amina sits back, laughs and says, “Well, she cannot really do anything. She cannot read, count, or talk. She really isn’t all there in her head.”

Renada asks Ruth the same “How do you help your family? What do you do here?”

Ruth answers, “Well, mostly I wash clothes for people who live around here. I tried farming but I don’t like it. No matter what work I do I know they pay me less because I am deaf. Hearing people do the same work as me but get paid much more.”

Amina explains, “If it wasn’t for me and my family my poor sister would be dead.”

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<sup>1</sup> The name of this village, like all other place names except for Dar es Salaam, have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth is a pseudonym. All names in this research except for the names of my RAs have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

<sup>3</sup> *Lugha ya Alama* or Tanzanian Sign Language. For more information see Chapter Three.

<sup>4</sup> Kiswahili for local illegal alcohol brewed from corn.

Ruth tells Renada, “I know that I get paid less but my little sister needs me. I give her my money. When school fees are due I work more to help out.”

I ask Amina to explain why Ruth would be so unsuccessful on her own. Amina responds, “She has never gotten married. No men would want her. It is good, though, because she would be a horrible mother. Deaf people cannot be good parents.”

Ruth explains to Renada about her relationship in the family by saying, “I taught my sister how to change her children’s diapers. She would be nowhere without me. I protect her when her husband yells, I watch the little ones when she is working, I just try to help her as much as I can.”

*Excerpt from Field Notes: Katavi, January 2009*

This conversation could happen only through long-term ethnographic research. In order to build a mutually intelligible sign system with a deaf person who lives isolated, without access to education or other deaf people, one must spend several days building rapport and observing existing gestural communications. In some cases, the deaf people involved in this study have never been asked questions at all. They do not know their own names or their relationship to the people living in their homes with them. However, as one can see from the conversation above, they, just like everyone else, have stories to tell, experiences to share, and opinions to give.

This research set out to answer the following questions. RQ1: Among deaf Tanzanians, what affects participation in daily life? RQ2: How do national deaf NGOs, as sites of transmission of international discourses of deaf culture, affect identity formation in deaf people? RQ3: How do social contexts of living in Tanzania affect deaf people’s constructions of themselves in terms of a deaf cultural community, deafness, and disability?

The realities of my research population included limited language, strikingly different conceptualizations of terms like “deaf” and “disabled,” the varying awareness of deaf people outside of single villages, towns, or Tanzania, and how little sympathy or concern deaf people in Tanzania had for a “deaf cultural community,” let alone an international one. I had to remain flexible in my research agenda and work to understand the questions that my informants felt most

pressing. Additionally, certain segments of my study population worked six and seven day workweeks in workshops, offices, or farms; in order to interact with and interview my participants, I had to learn some new skills, such as carrying baskets of tomatoes long distances, mucking through muddy fields to pull weeds, and making greeting cards of elephant dung paper.

People with disabilities are among the most vulnerable populations in the developing world (Groce 2003). The deaf population, specifically, is one of the most marginalized and oppressed populations in Tanzania. Deaf people make up a small percentage of the total population of disabled people, and have a unique feature: their form of communication. By definition, they must communicate visually. In Tanzania LAT, is the dominant sign language, and deaf children gain access to formal language only through formal education. In reality, very few deaf children receive formal education in Tanzania (Eklindh, et al. 1995).<sup>5</sup> Eklindh and her team estimate that less than 5% of children go to school. However, since the publication of their study, more deaf schools have opened (there are currently 1,090 spaces open for deaf children in deaf schools). Based on interviews and fieldwork, it is clear that there are still many deaf children in Tanzania who do not have access to school.

For various reasons, Tanzania makes a unique case to study deaf people. In contrast to Western and American deaf communities, with relatively uniform discourses about the role of deaf culture nationally and internationally and the clear distinction between disability and deafness, Tanzanian deaf people have very different lived experiences. They operate with almost no direct support from the Tanzanian government, they draw a distinction between themselves and other disabled people only by the language they use, and they have limited awareness of and sympathy

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<sup>5</sup> The authors estimate less than 5%, but since publishing this report, several more deaf schools have opened (each educating about 100 students) and more deaf children are attending—but still, deaf children are more likely not to attend school.

for deaf people outside their own networks. Lack of access to formal education, coupled with lack of legislation mandating inclusive hiring practices, has led to the majority of deaf individuals living in Tanzania in extreme poverty (WHO 2005). External donors who operate through national and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and faith based organizations (FBOs) provide most services that are usually provided by other governments, like education and healthcare. Tanzania's deaf community's postcolonial history, which contributed to a general lack of American influence, further contributes to the context. Unlike many other African countries, Tanzania has almost no American deaf influence, most notably seen in the lack of American Sign Language (ASL) signs in LAT.

Deaf people in Tanzania are situated within multiple imbalanced power structures. First, they live in a country whose communities are ambivalent and even openly hostile to people with disabilities. They face extremely limited access to education, discrimination in seeking employment, and isolation from mainstream community. Deaf people meet this oppression with a variety of responses, and though not all are successful, many find ways to live and thrive. Additionally, deaf people struggle within networks of other deaf people to find equality. The politics of representation, competition for resources, and classic struggles between the core and periphery are all at play within groups of deaf people.

I explore the relationship between Tanzanian deaf people and mainstream society, as well as dynamics within deaf communities. I argue that deaf people who do participate in NGOs and other organizations that provide support to deaf people, do so strategically. In order to access services and improve their own lives and the lives of their families, deaf people in Tanzania move comfortably and fluidly between identity groups that are labeled as disabled or only as deaf. Through intentional use of the interventions provided by various organizations, deaf people are

able to carve out deaf spaces that act, often temporarily, as places for transmission of information, safe areas to learn and use sign language, and sites of network and community development among other deaf people. Through these deaf spaces and networks—formed around the safe and open use of sign language—deaf participants in these communities are better able to resist the imbalanced systems and find ways to survive, and in some cases thrive, in the context of structural, cultural, and economic oppression. Finally, I lay out quantitative and qualitative data that show that deaf people who participate in a signing community have better access to support networks, economic opportunities, and increased participation in public life.

This research contributes to anthropology, Deaf studies, disability studies, and the various bodies of literature on international development. This study fills important gaps in the literature about non-Western deaf communities, particularly those in Africa, emic understandings of being disabled in developing countries, and resistance to and manipulation of oppressive systems of power. The research presented here departs from current dominant theories about deafness, disability, deaf culture, and sign language. Additionally, the research presented here provides important data that could have a direct impact on the lives of deaf people in Tanzania. The government of Tanzania, NGOs and FBOs working with the deaf, and other external organizations have not had the access or resources to conduct in-depth research on deaf people. These data will provide useful, factual foundations beyond common sense that will help advocates lobby for better services and support for deaf people. Prior to this study, organizations would argue—without any proof—for support of deaf people because they have difficult lives and their situation is improved through education, sign language, and the ability to participate in deaf communities. This research will be provided in accessible formats to all organizations and individuals working to improve the lives of the deaf.

### **Introduction to The United Republic of Tanzania**

This section provides an overview of my field site: Tanzania. This review, though cursory, will provide some background to contextualize the research presented in this dissertation. As will become clear in Chapter Five, people with disabilities and deaf people are a marginalized population in Tanzania and are likely suffer disproportionately due to lack of access to services, education, and employment. Second, I cover a short review of Tanzania's history to show how the country generally and the deaf population specifically are situated within the colonial and postcolonial trajectories. Finally I introduce, with more depth in Chapter Three and Four, the deaf population in Tanzania. I next describe the role of NGOs in Tanzania to help provide information that will be useful in understanding NGOs that work specifically with deaf people. Tanzania is located in East Africa as shown in Figures 1 and 2 below:



*Figure 1: Tanzania's location on African continent (Central Intelligence Agency 2011)*



*Figure 2: Map of the United Republic of Tanzania (Central Intelligence Agency 2011)*

The United Republic of Tanzania, a former colony of Germany and Great Britain, is in many ways emblematic of underdevelopment in Sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, it is unique due to relative political stability and wealth in natural resources. I argue that the historical trajectories and postcolonial linguistic and economic policies set Tanzania on a course to develop a unique national deaf community complete with a homegrown sign language with extremely limited external influence and an active set of organizations run by deaf people. Tanzania's turn away from Britain and the United States after independence and the president's linguistic and economic policies invited a wholly different set of international deaf actors like Scandinavia to work in the country.

Tanzania which gained independence relatively early in the process of African decolonization has the rare distinction of having had national leaders step down voluntarily rather than through coup or assassination. Joseph Nyerere established the political party *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (The Party of the Revolution) or CCM, and it continues to dominate. President Kikwete, also member of CCM, recently won reelection with a large majority.

The population is 42 million, with a projected increase to 49 million by 2015 (UNDP 2005). The population is 99% black African made up of 130 ethnic groups but no single group has a clear majority. Tanzania is also home to over half a million refugees from Burundi and Rwanda. The dominant religious groups are indigenous (35%), Muslim (35%), and Christian (30%). Tanzania, unlike its northern neighbor, Kenya, has an extremely limited history of ethnic based violence. Additionally, despite the high number of evangelical Christian ministries, religious tolerance seems to be a common theme. Tanzania has a GDP of \$29.62 billion, with 42% from the agricultural sector, 18% from the industrial sector, and 38% from services, the fastest growing sector.

The current life expectancy of a Tanzanian is 51 years. Currently Tanzania rates at 159<sup>th</sup> out of 177 countries on the Human Development Index (UN developed) and 67<sup>th</sup> among 108 less developed countries on the Human Poverty Index and reports the percentage of population living under the global poverty threshold: less than \$1.00 a day (UNDP 2005). The Human Development Index (HDI) measures several indicators including access to clean water (Tanzania has over 38% living without access), gender empowerment (Tanzania ranks 44<sup>th</sup> out of 93), as well as education and access to health care.

Tanzania's fertility rate (5.7%) is higher than the average for Sub-Saharan Africa. It has about one doctor and 27 nurses for every 1000 people (UNAIDS 2006). Total health expenditures are 4.3% of GDP, and over 22% of national health costs in Tanzania are funded by external sources

(UNAIDS 2006). Malaria, pneumonia, rubella, and diarrheal diseases are major illnesses for children (UNAIDS 2006). Only 53% of the poor in Tanzania receive any immunizations (UNDP 2005). Infectious diseases like those listed above often include high fevers, which, in turn, cause deafness if untreated (Ibekwe 1998). Adult (15-49) HIV/AIDS rates are 6.5% of the population, with only 7% of those receiving anti-retroviral treatment (UNAIDS 2006). Recent studies show that people with disabilities, including deaf people, are between two and ten times more likely to contract AIDS than their peers (Groce 2003; Monaghan 2006). Recent reporting on cultural stigma, social isolation, and physical violence against people with disabilities (e.g., the murder of albinos, BBC 2007) makes it safe to assume that the health situation of deaf people in Tanzania is similar to but likely worse than others in the mainstream.

Public expenditure on education has dropped from 2.8% of GDP in 1991 to 2.2% in 2005 (UNDP 2005). Aside from this reduction in governmental funding, education in Tanzania has changed recently due to a 2000 decision to drop enrollment fees for primary school further stressing an already underfunded system (Gaeta 2002). Primary school is compulsory, with an enrollment rate of 91%, and the literacy rate in Tanzania is 69%, up from 59% in 1995 (UNDP 2005). This nation's current foreign debt is just over 75% of the national budget. This percent is greatly reduced from the previous 130% of national budget in 1990. Since then, Tanzania has earned the status of a Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) from the World Bank and IMF in 2000 (IEO and OED 2004). Recently, Tanzania has begun to rely more heavily on tourism and mining. Unfortunately these two industries are almost completely privately owned and few profits reach the general public (May 2002). Due to structural adjustment programs, public expenditure on health and education has dropped and external funding of these sectors has increased. Also, the amount of foreign direct investment went from negligible in 1991 to almost 4% of GDP in 2005

(UNDP 2005). The amount received in foreign aid for 2005 topped \$1.5 billion (World Bank 2007). As will become clear throughout this study, deaf people, living at the margins of social and state support, are heavily reliant on external, particularly religious, donors for most of their support.

## **A Short History of Tanzania**

Tanzania's history does not start with independence in 1961 from Great Britain. The varied influences on Tanzania include existing polities, early explorers, missionaries, colonial conquests, and post independence history. It is important to consider, briefly, the colonial history and independence. Tanzania's mixed relationship with Western countries and the marked increase in the NGO industry all come together to create a particular set of circumstances including postcolonial political decisions and early connections with Scandinavian countries have set Tanzania's deaf population on a unique course compared to other African neighbors who relied heavily on the United States and ASL.

### *Colonial Period*

Colonial Legacy: Measured on the time-scale of history, the colonial period was but an interlude of comparatively short duration. But it was an interlude that radically changed the direction and the momentum of African history...Foremost among the legacies bequeathed to independent Africa are the political boundaries created by the colonial powers...Thanks to the colonial partition of Africa, most of the modern African countries are much larger than the pre-colonial political units. ...Tanganyika has far greater potentialities—political, social and economic—than even the largest of the old African kingdoms. (Oliver and Atmore 1972: 275)

During the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 European nations carved up the continent of Africa through their own negotiations (Pakenham 1991). German East Africa (the mainland territory of current day Tanzania, Burundi, and Rwanda) was under direct rule by the Germans until their defeat in World War I. Germans, on the assumption similar to the French and Belgians that Africans were a naturally lazy race, used forced labor to work the large plantations and build

infrastructure such as roads and railways (Azevedo 2005).

The German policy concentrated on changing local industry's focus to the exportation of cotton, coffee, and sisal (Hyden 1980). German colonial rule introduced the first taxation, three rupees per household, as an "educational exercise" for Africans in an effort to incorporate indigenous populations into the monetary economy (Davidson 1984; Hodgson 2001; Hyden 1980).

The harsh conditions of German rule, lack of access to profits of the export economy, and heavy taxation led to the Maji Maji Rebellion of 1905-1906. Various indigenous groups led attacks against colonial forces in what became the most serious challenge to German rule. This significant rebellion forced colonial powers to reconsider the costs and profits of the colonial project (Hyden 1980). The Maji Maji Rebellion later became a symbol of nationalist movements in Tanzanian history.

After World War I Germany lost all of its colonies and Tanganyika came under the care of Great Britain. This decision would forever change the economic and political situation of the country (Mueller 1981). Tanganyika's status as a mandate and later as a trusteeship permitted some self-government that affected its status later in the century. Tanganyika became one of the pace setters of independence movements across the continent.

Britain's efforts in colonial Tanganyika were spent erasing German influence and restructuring the colonial government to coincide with other colonial endeavors. Investors, already over spending in other colonial markets, were hard-pressed to provide the huge influx of capital needed for industrialization support of yet another colony (Mueller 1981). Tanganyika's tie as a former colony of Germany further complicated European investments. Britain's leadership had two goals before implementing indirect rule. First, they must win over the Tanganyikan leaders

loyal to the Germans. Second, they must “retribalize” the colony by sending people back to their ethnic homelands and returning them to subsistence cultivation (Hyden 1980). Tanganyika was the least important of Britain’s East African colonies (Hyden 1980). Kenya was viewed as having much greater potential because of the high number and success of white settlers, its ports, and the booming trade town of Mombasa. Tanganyika, with multiple failed colonial economic development schemes yet with no major ethnic violence, is unique among other Anglophone East African colonies like Kenya and Uganda (Iliffe 1979).

### *Independence*

Tanganyika was considered by many the front-runner for the independence movement in colonial East Africa (Iliffe 1979; Nyang'oro 2005; Oliver and Atmore 1972). Oliver and Atmore write,

The pacesetter on the eastern side of Africa turned out, surprisingly enough, to be Tanganyika, which was economically and educationally far behind its two northern neighbors. Also political consciousness has been much slower to emerge in Tanganyika during the early years of African revolution. Yet, between 1956 and 1959, Tanganyika not only pushed through from the backward ranks of colonies to the front, but actually set the pattern for all the British territories from Kenya to the Zambezi. (1972: 218)

As support dwindled for maintaining colonies abroad, the British colonial office began to debate how the independent government of Tanganyika would take shape. Most agreed that a “multi-racial” state would be best, giving equal power to Europeans, Asians, and Africans. During these debates a Tanganyikan national consciousness was developing. The Tanganyika African Association was established in 1929 and was the first association established in Tanganyika with the aspirations for unity and self-rule (Iliffe 1979). In the 1950s the United Nations established the principle of self-determination and set up a Decolonization Committee to smooth the transition to self-rule. Julius Nyerere, leader of Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and the first president of the postcolonial nation, visited the United Nations in 1955 to increase visibility of his

cause for independence (Nyang'oro). At the UN, Nyerere made an impassioned speech that is often referred to as a critical moment in winning independence of Tanganyika. Tanganyika was also successful in the campaign to make white colonials feel safe in the country after independence. Another helpful factor in Tanganyika's road to freedom was the lack of a single dominant ethnic group. This provided relative equality among ethnicities and, to some extent, limited infighting (Nyerere quoted in Oliver and Atmore). Tanganyika's independence came in 1961 and was officially united with Zanzibar in 1964 marking its transition to the United Republic of Tanzania. Tanzania's particular colonial history, its status as a protectorate rather than a colony, the limited colonial hand in economic endeavors, the allowance of self-rule and other factors discussed above allowed for peaceful transition to independence and marks it as a unique nation in East Africa.

### *Postcolonial Period*

The relatively quick transitions from colonies to independent nations left many African states with hurried decisions to make. African organizations for independence needed to prove to their colonial administrations and to their citizens that they were in fact “modern,” and properly trained to take the reins of their countries. A component of this “modernity” included possessing specific governmental and economic philosophies. “There was clearly not going to be time in which to allow African systems of local government to evolve along their own lines... The only thing to do was follow Western models” (Oliver and Atmore 1972).

Julius Nyerere, educated in Britain and known as an idealist, set Tanganyika on a socialist path of self-reliance. The Arusha Declaration in 1967 put forth policies of individual and national self-reliance, a nationalized economy, and a national agrarian program based on unity - *Ujamaa*. The philosophy was based on respect, common property, and an obligation to work (Hyden 1980). In real terms this meant a clear bias toward agricultural and pastoral livelihoods and forced relocation of Tanzanians (Hyden 1980). With guidance from the first World Bank Mission, the

government focused heavily on supervised settlements in underutilized areas and investments in farming machinery (Hyden 1980). This prevented the upper class from gaining advantage over the lower class by, among other things, limiting property ownership (Mueller 1981). Tanzania was a country where only 26% of landowners owned more than five hectares of land and the rest owned less than three (Hyden 1980). The switch to socialist policy in Tanzania, as well as in Zambia, was supported with significant aid from the People's Republic of China. The latter provided infrastructure funds, specifically for an extensive railway system (Oliver and Atmore 1972).

Nyerere adopted Kiswahili as the national language, making it the official language of schools, hospitals, and politics (Illiffe 1999). The adoption of a national language diminished the potential for ethnic violence and encouraged cooperation among Tanzania's 100 plus ethnic groups. By speaking in Kiswahili, politicians, including Nyerere, facilitated direct communication and decreased the political power of English speaking elites (Illiffe 1979). Nyerere's legacy of a national language helped unify the citizenry through nationalistic pride and regional cooperation. Of note, this linguistic policy likely had implications for sign language development in Tanzania.

Once it became clear that there was neither domestic nor international support for *Ujamaa*, Nyerere overturned the policies, calling it a "well intentioned mistake" (quoted in Hyden 1980). Nyerere's retirement in 1985 marked a significant moment, making him one of the only post-colonial African presidents to relinquish duty without death or violence. Nyerere's retirement also marked the opening of Tanzania's economy to capitalist forces.

## **NGOs in Tanzania**

Tanzania provides a unique research setting for this study because of its developmental history including the late advent of capitalism in Tanzania, the rise of neoliberalism, and the accompanying non-governmental organizations (NGOs). After the first structural adjustment

program and the liberalization of the Tanzanian economy with Nyerere's retirement in the 1985, the activity of NGOs increased remarkably. Before 1990, there were 53 registered NGOs (Mercer 1999). By 1995, there were 604 (Tanzania 1995). Currently there are over 1500 NGOs and affiliates (TANGO 2008). Currently NGOs in Tanzania act as advocates for indigenous communities, provide education, do environmental conservation work, run health clinics, and numerous other activities.

### ***The Deaf Community in Tanzania***

Western Deaf Studies scholarship often refers to *the Deaf*<sup>6</sup> community as a single, bound group of people who cannot hear and who self-identify as culturally deaf people with an affiliation or relationship with all other Deaf people in the world. In this study, and in several other recent studies of non-Western deaf populations (e.g., Friedner 2010; Rashid 2010), scholars have begun to unpack and, in many cases, dismember the idea of *the Deaf* community in order to more realistically represent individuals. Western notions of transnational deaf identity and solidarity are useful for activism and representation in larger human rights debates; however, the idea of a single, globally-unified community often does not reflect local realities and deaf individuals' lived experiences. In Tanzania, it is easier to refer to a single community, but this is not an accurate reflection of how deaf people in this country relate to and think about each other. In fact, in the entire course of this research, no participants referred to a "deaf community" or "deaf culture" explicitly. However, through stories, metaphors, and explanations, deaf Tanzanians often got close to describing something related to Western discussions of *the Deaf* community. Tanzanians, however, do not draw the often repeated distinction in other communities between deaf people

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<sup>6</sup> Deaf spelled with a "D" is used by many Deaf Studies scholars to refer to a cultural community of deaf people, while "deaf" is used to denote a hearing impairment.

and people with disabilities. Deaf Tanzanians embrace the medical model of disability and deafness, while Westerners have explicitly rejected it. The social model of disability, developed and embraced by Western deaf and disability activists and scholars, locates impairments outside the individual, within the social, historical, and political context of a given milieu. Deaf Tanzanians in this study have limited or no sympathy for that point of view.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This research draws on several bodies of literature, including anthropological and historical studies of East Africa, development studies, and scholarship on Deaf studies and disabilities. The project relies on the scholarship of East Africa in order to situate the lives of deaf people in the appropriate historical, geographical, political, and social contexts. Anthropological studies of the international development industry provide the critical lens through which to understand the unintended consequences of aid interventions, and the disconnects between global discourses and local realities. Deaf and disability studies, with their foundations in the United States, provide starting points at which to begin studies of communities of deaf or disabled people outside of the Western world. Studying deaf people outside the West provides a contrast to dominant understandings of deaf culture and deaf identity. I rely on the previous writings and guidance of ethnographers who went to the field, lived to tell the tale, and told it. In Chapter Three, I include an explicit recounting of my own methods, challenges, and solutions for working with deaf people with limited language, especially in rural settings.

### **East African Ethnography**

Anthropology has had a long history in East Africa. Early anthropologists used the “primitive societies” in Africa and elsewhere to support their evolutionary modes of understanding human societies as a progression from simple, primal societies to civilizations like Western European polities (Morgan 1877; Tylor 1889). However, once anthropologists left their armchairs for the field, they produced better informed, receptive and varied scholarship. Of particular note in this first wave of empirical researchers, Evans-Pritchard worked with the Azande (1937) and Nuer (1940) in Sudan to produce one of the first modern ethnographies through research funded by and produced for colonial governments (Johnson 1982; Moore 1994). Concurrently, a new

generation of American anthropologists emerged, influenced by the work and tenets of Franz Boas, which was rooted in the scientific method. Boas's first Africanist student, Herskovitz founded the first African Studies program in the United States at Northwestern University in the 1920s (Diamond 1960) and began the tradition in East African anthropology of studying a specific group and identifying characteristics—livelihood, religion, and ethnicity. In broader political and social discourses, the people and their related characteristics were seen as stagnant, bounded, and immune to outside international intervention. However, Herskovitz and others (mainly his students) immediately began the important work of understanding how these major cultural attributes changed over time (e.g., Bascom and Herskovitz 1959). Their use of the anthropological lens to study groups and particularly to understand their dynamism in relation to various external and internal influences has been an important hallmark of East African ethnography.

This section discusses major topics in the anthropological and historical literature on East Africa, including colonial and postcolonial studies, livelihood, kinship, and continuity and change, and how anthropologists have engaged with and problematized these concepts in order to produce grounded and theoretically robust ethnography. Most of the research cited here is focused on East Africa; however, in order to flesh out specific theories or concepts useful to this study, I also include scholars who worked in other parts of Africa as well as Asia. The scholars discussed here used these rather traditional concepts in the study of East Africa as springboards into other topics that help to further research and understanding of local populations and their global interactions.

East African ethnography covers a whole spectrum of important and useful topics. There are experts in conservation, magic and witchcraft, religion, gender studies, and political anthropology. However, I shall utilize a selection of literature that has been most useful for my project. Scholarship reviewed in this section is useful to my research in several key ways. Lessons

from postcolonial studies highlight the importance of being aware of how external notions of Africa (namely Western) affect how researchers think about and interact with their participants. The relationship that participants have with each other, the state, and international players is also deeply influenced by history. Similarly, deaf people and networks in Tanzania are influenced by larger transnational discourses on deafness that originate from the United States and Western Europe. My research also draws on existing engagement with ethnicity and support networks ushered in through urbanization and globalization. Deaf people in Tanzania group together in alternative networks that are different from but analogous to ethnicity. Finally, this research seeks to carefully and critically think about binaries in Africanist anthropology in order to better understand how deaf Tanzanians think about themselves, their communities, and their local and global relationships.

### **Colonial Legacies and Postcolonial Lessons**

Africanist anthropology and the colonial project have a shared history. As mentioned previously, anthropologists, employed by colonial governments, conducted research on newly colonized subjects in search of ways to better understand and govern them (Moore 1994). While this is a dark past for current researchers, the appropriate response is not to ignore or avoid it, but to embrace the history and deal with its consequences (Apter 1999). Traces of the colonial project are permanent and can be seen in both the physical landscape (state boundaries, infrastructure projects, and architecture) and cultural landscape (ethnic groups, livelihood practices, and religion). It is important to recognize the colonial project as a dynamic and often contradictory process of domination and resistance (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). Anthropological studies have documented evidence of colonialism's mark on religion, beliefs, understandings of history, and

resistance by contemporary Africans and, collectively, elucidate the disparity of these effects (Asad 1970; Stoler 2002).

The colonial experience brought about new interpretations of “traditional” beliefs and practices. There is an established literature on the role of colonialism in inventing the “traditional” in terms of social standing and gender roles (e.g., Dirks 1992; Mitchell 1991). Also ethnographers have recorded various responses to the seemingly mystical attributes of the capitalist market through a resurgence or reinterpretation of magic in local communities (Comaroff and Comaroff 1998; Geschiere 1997; Smith 2005). Studying the colonial encounter and its legacy also reveals a significant blurring in categorizations like “colonizer” and “colonized” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997; Stoler 2002). They document that power relations are dialectical in nature and a unidirectional model ignores important insights into responses to colonization by both Europeans and Africans. Comaroff and Comaroff are not East Africanists, but their investigation of the impact of colonialism on the Southern Tswana in South Africa is useful in larger contexts as well. They show that colonial discourses of civilization are intertwined with Christian conversion processes. Beliefs about civility and citizenship were often blurred with discourses regarding missions and Christianity.

African politics, often described as irrecoverably corrupt and doomed to failure (Ayittey 1998), are better conceptualized as products of colonial trajectories with implications for its citizens. Colonialism established certain kinds of patterns in thinking such as the dichotomy of citizen and subject. African subjects of Anglophone colonies (most of East Africa) were forced to participate in economic and militaristic campaigns benefiting the metropole, but were denied any of the rights of citizenship (Hyden 1980). Mamdani (1996) presents a model for understanding contemporary African governance by referring to these and other patterns established during

colonialism. Most governance in the colonies was based on “customary law” via indigenous leaders who avoided centralized governments. This resulted in newly independent African countries that were ill equipped to govern.

From early European exploration to contemporary discussions in African Studies, theorists and experts often focus on what Africa is not. This interpretation of African political, economic, and cultural institutions, especially in the context of Western scholarship, is in some ways ethnocentric (Hyden 1980). Mbembe (2001) argues for understanding “African personhood” based on what it *is* rather than what is lacking. He looks to colonial histories to understand the trajectory of Africa as well as the varied, and often contradictory, subjectivities of Africans after independence. To understand how the “postcolony” was shaped, Mbembe centers the experience of Africans. Spear, who also examines questions of colonialism and the postcolony (2003), writes that power and resistance are present throughout the colonial system; in fact, the system of indirect rule on which colonials depended “limited colonial power as much as it facilitated it.” Colonial legacies continue to affect the physical and social landscape of Africa and further contextualize contemporary ethnography.

Postcolonial studies turned the focus to analysis of and reactions to colonialism. Moore (1994) writes, “By the postcolonial period, ‘change’ became the dominant preoccupation [of anthropologists], just as ‘custom’ had been.” Anthropologists focus on the aftermath of colonialism and shift their gaze from overt, state-level structures of control and power to other, softer forms of domination. They are not just interested in the unidirectional model of power (metropole to colony), but seek to understand the ways that power and resistance flow back and forth between new African countries, communities, and peoples, and the Western institutions that continue to exert control in various ways on the continent.

Scholars of a variety of disciplines recognize the residual consequences of colonialism in the ways that researchers, outsiders, and Africans themselves think about and engage with current phenomena. This is especially true in the ways that Africans interact with global markets, transnational discourses, and globalization in general, as well as the highly consequential shift from rural living to rapid urbanization. Additionally, social relationships, identities, and connections have been and continue to be influenced by colonial constructions of concepts like “tribe,” “gender,” and “community.”

This project builds on existing scholarship that situates the communities and groups they study within a historical context that considers the effects of colonialism. Additionally, and more important from an epistemological point of view, my research has been greatly informed by the importance of tracing the histories of ideas, values, and discourses from the West and understanding how they move into an East African context and are accepted, rejected, or modified by recipients of those messages. Here, in the accepting, rejecting, or modifying Western ideals and practices, anthropological investigation opens up a space to understand various kinds of resistance. This study approaches deaf people who live in various communities in East Africa and focuses on the importance of recognizing oppression and resistance in a variety of forms. Finally, I remain attuned to the power differentials that existed between the metropole and the colony, and observe where those disparities continue today. Researching deaf people in Tanzania must happen within the context of larger historical, political, social and economic relationships, and would be incomplete without carefully tracing influences from the West, particularly culturally deaf Western communities and organizations.

## **Beyond Ethnicity**

Ethnicity is a traditional point of investigation by Africanists. It also shares the characteristic of being a fruitful point of departure in order to contextualize how Africans relate to themselves and each other at various levels, including local, national, and transnational communities. As mentioned in the previous section, indigenous movements have been of particular use for groups seeking support from state or international organizations. Indigeneity, like other identities and groupings, can be mobilized in particular times for political, economic, and social reasons. Ethnographic studies of specific ethnicities continue to be important contributions to the anthropological understanding of East Africa. However, it seems that studies on urban spaces find other lenses more useful: political parties and citizenship (e.g., Askew 2002; Kelsall 2003; Phillips 2010), gender and sexuality (e.g., Ampofo, et al. 2003; Lockhart 2002; Nyamnjoh, et al. 2004), and socio-economic class. In fact, when allowing for more complicated views of relatedness, one can open up investigation that engages with a variety of social settings and provides a more reality based reading of the situation, as Howell (2009) argues.

The “tribe” has been a well-used term to categorize Africans and render them legible to outside groups like colonial administrators, researchers, foreign governments, and international organizations (Rodney 1982). However, anthropologists and others have learned that, despite the way it is understood in the mainstream, the concept of tribe when studying East Africans has largely been, in some cases, an obfuscating instead of a clarifying term that has real contemporary implications but is largely a colonial construction of African identity (Iliffe 1979; Lentz 1995; Moore 1994; Nyamnjoh and Englund 2004). Instead, as Moore (1994) explains, anthropologists have shifted their gaze from the “tribe” to the “town” as a more useful analytical grouping.

With the unit of analysis changed from a particular ethnic group to an urban space, it sets up the need to reexamine former understandings of power, hierarchy, and influence. Class,

gender, and political affiliation become important components for the calculus of power relations. For example, colonial administrations generated various opportunities for work in the cities, one such was prostitution. Kenyan women, experiencing the economic hardship of village life with their families, moved to city centers like Nairobi and engaged in prostitution. Common understanding would pity these women and their lowly occupation. White's analysis (1990) indicates that these women not only became major sources of income for their families; they also held powerful positions in their urban and rural communities.

An anthropological engagement with the relations of individuals in the context of different structures in place of and including ethnicity requires an investigation of gender roles and relationships. Gender roles were deeply influenced by the colonial project (Chatterjee 1993; Hodgson 2001; Stoler 2002) , and anthropological studies and historical reviews of the roles of women, gender, and feminism in the colonial project provide useful insights into how external ideologies influence the change in local discourses and practices over time (Saidi 2010; Visweswaran 2007). For example, women have had significant influence on the local and national development of the Tanzanian state by contributing to local discourses about nationalism (Geiger 1997).

Recent work in the social sciences and gender studies in Sub-Saharan Africa indicate that there are major gender-based disparities in health, work, violence, and legal protections (Ampofo, et al. 2003; Sa and Larsen 2008). Feminist critiques of anthropology have opened new spaces for researchers to consider women's roles in various cultures. In East Africa, major attention has focused on the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania and the Nuer of Sudan. The Maasai, generally considered patriarchal and resistant to efforts of modernization, are being reexamined as researchers de-center assumptions of male dominance and show that colonial conceptions of

gender roles deeply influenced Maasai practices (Hodgson 2001; Kratz 2000). Sharon Hutchinson(1996) shows that the Nuer's gender roles have changed since the 1930s due to changes in migration and economics. She, like other scholars, show that utilizing gender as a framework to examine a community more fully and with better attention to power dynamics, economics, and domestic relations.

Studies of contemporary, and particularly urban, East Africa have reached beyond traditional terms of ethnicity. Studies of class (Mueller 1981) and political participation (Askew 2002; Bratton 1989; Brockington 2006; Phillips 2010) also move beyond ethnicity as the major marker of East African identity and are useful in examining another grouping: disabled and deaf. These alternative networks are developed both outside and within the context of more commonly recognized networks. These groupings open up the possibility of engaging with participants on their own terms—the cornerstone of ethnography. It is important to ensure that researchers recognize the variety of ways that East Africans locate themselves within local, national, and transnational networks. Research presented in this dissertation will push this conversation even further to outline a potentially new alternative network. This deaf network transcends ethnicity, kinship, religion, class, and, in some cases, geography.

### **Continuity and Change**

In order to address any of the previous topics, researchers must be aware of the constant rearrangements and reinforcements of different aspects of societies. This sub-section uses the title of Bascom and Herskovitz's edited volume (1959) that addresses the dynamism of people in Africa across social and cultural practices and beliefs. Anthropologists are constantly working between the continuity and change of binaries such as local and global, traditional and modern, village and city. Anthropological work has been particularly useful in pushing scholarship toward a

nuanced and dialectical model for engaging with communities. A unidirectional model of “the global” acting on “the local” as though these two concepts are stationary and universal has been discredited in contemporary anthropology (Ferguson 1999; Ferguson 2006; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Mazzarella 2003; Piot 1999). Additionally, many scholars have pointed out that influence goes both ways, and one can trace the various ways that Africa and the Global South have influenced Western ideologies as well (Comaroff and Comaroff 2011; Said 1979). Globalization, as theorized by many anthropologists, is not a homogenizing monolithic process affecting the world in uniform ways (e.g. Aretzaga 2003; Cameron 2004; Igoe 2003; Mazzarella 2003; Trouillot 2001). Rather, globalization is a highly varied process consisting of a diversity of participants, grave power imbalances, and surprising sites of resistance and creativity. Therefore, responses to globalization come in many forms. In order to study a specific village or rural community, one must consider the larger national and international contexts in which it exists, which include global market forces (Ferguson 2005b; Geschiere 1997; Piot 1999), theories of neoliberalism (Ferguson 2006), and transnational ideologies (Appadurai 1991; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Piot 1999). It is no longer satisfactory to theorize a world in which social units are strictly either outside of or immune to larger structures, or to assume that larger structures are unaffected by smaller groups. Weiss’ (2009) study of urban Tanzanian engagement with global popular culture explains that in order to work for the good of others, one must be careful not to fall on either side of this divide. Instead, he attempts to study his subject while considering:

the potentials and constraints of this contemporary situation without succumbing either to a critique of political economy that sees only dependency and frustrated reaction to an order of domination or to a celebration of the creativity that Africans have generated independent of the harsh realities they daily confront.

Another binary of particular use in this study relates to defining what is “traditional” and what is “modern.” Traditional practices, groupings, beliefs, and cultural roles are at once a

problematic set of notions and useful for understanding historical and recent changes in communities. Without understanding previous ideas about ethnicity, one cannot investigate current connections and networks. The split between modern and traditional also has very real implications for applied or engaged anthropology as local participants move between or simultaneously interact with these two groupings. An example of the reality that exists between the binary of Western and African is Lewinson's (2006) work, showing the ways in which Tanzanian businessmen adopt both Western and specifically African sensibilities about family structure, monogamy, and wealth. There are several ways in which Tanzanians themselves—and the anthropologists who study them—are negotiating the discourses and ideologies around what is considered modern or Western and what is traditional or Tanzanian. In medical practices, nurses and other staff are constantly negotiating their own expectations of medicine and their patients' needs and beliefs (Langwick 2008). As Langwick describes them, the interruptions of traditional medicine into spheres of modern medicine and vice versa provide a fruitful space to study the collision and interaction of global-local and modern-traditional practices and ideas.

Another source of useful anthropological investigation is working between rural and urban spaces. East Africa, while rich in wildlife, varied climates, and remote small villages, is also home to many urban centers. These urban centers draw labor from peripheral areas with the promises of opportunity and prosperity. As of 2010, one-third of Africa's population lives in urban centers, with over 70% living in slums (The Economist 2010). White (1990) and others study changes in urban-rural relationships and expand the ethnographic space to urban Africa. Urban centers attract foreigners, international business interests, and other kinds of international presence. Barbers in urban Arusha, Tanzania have a fascination and identification with American hip hop culture and adopt some of those practices as shown in Brad Weiss' scholarship (Weiss 2002; 2009).

Urban centers draw migrants looking for work. With an increase of pressures on villages from the state, multinational corporations, conservation land management agencies, ecological factors, and population, rural workers seek employment outside of their traditional options. Migration to cities for work affects the cultural and physical well-being of the participants. As a result, these migrants often relinquish support and guidance from their family and community networks (May and McCabe 2004). The role of kinship networks in this new urban situation is diminished, and individuals discover novel ways to find and build community and relationships. The influx of money from participation in cash economies also affects the village. Marriage practices, expectations for adulthood, and many other seemingly permanent facets of cultures shift (Hutchinson 1996). Further, resettlement and fluctuations in local and global economy leave Africans to deal with the existing situation or the need to invent new economies and market practices (Little 2003).

Though not new, increased contact between global markets and cultural forces in East Africa has opened up new spaces for research. The global market is a significant component of globalization. African market and exchange systems have been the topics of anthropological research for a long time and have been complicated by globalization. Folk understandings and adaptations to the market show that the international economic structures are not quite as transparent and rational as Westerners have come to accept (Geschiere 1997). Entire national plans in recently independent African countries are particularly vulnerable to the market (Ferguson 1999). Globalization and the rise of multinational corporations have significant effects on specific places. Ethnographic work with the Barabaig of Tanzania shows how corporate interests and their lobbyists (in this case a Canadian wheat conglomerate) were able to displace entire communities from their land (Igoe 2005a; Lane 1994).

## **Conclusion**

The literature discussed here informs my research less for the specific lessons learned about these topics, and more for the fluidity and flexibility of scholars' approaches to their various topics. It maintains attention to the ethnographic balance of understanding various community dynamics as both local and global, traditional and modern, and as sites for oppression and resistance in the daily lives of participants. Being cognizant and critical of these false dichotomies allows ethnography to be sensitive to both individual understandings and larger structures that build the context around East African lived experience. This study seeks to maintain vigilance in the various dichotomies relevant to it: deaf/disabled, able bodied/disabled, Western/Tanzanian, and global/local. This study also challenges these binaries and shows how people who are living in these situations think about, engage with, and articulate their own middle ground.

## **Development Studies**

Within international development, Anthropologists participated as researchers and advisors on issues of poverty, conflict, and health. While the anthropological study of the development industry is relatively recent, anthropologists have had a presence in development since its inception in the Western world. Currently NGOs are among the most popular development interventions and have been a fruitful space for ethnography. Through the evolution of anthropological investigations of NGOs, scholars have modified their roles as impartial researchers to include work as activists and practitioners. They have also moved toward local and thick descriptions of the micro-politics of NGO workers, local community members, and the larger global networks that bring the two groups together.

This literature review covers a brief history of international development, then reviews anthropologists who work in development and, as a response to the previous section, who study development. The research presented in this dissertation engages with the development industry

and particularly NGOs who work with deaf people. In order to understand how deaf people relate to the state, mainstream Tanzania, and with each other one must understand how to study international development and NGOs and their effects in local dynamics. Fisher (1997) places studies of development into two basic camps. The first camp, anthropology in development, is comprised of literature authored by scholars who often perform applied work in development and understand the processes as positive and even inevitable, but flawed in serious ways. The second camp, others call critical development studies, is comprised of scholarship authored outside of these development organizations by academics who believe that the paradigm of development and its implementation is flawed and even detrimental. Scholars like Fisher who move between these two camps and complicate their easy binary produce the most useful ethnographic work; Mosse (Mosse 2005) calls this third group, new ethnography. Key here are the divergent approaches by scholars and practitioners in their roles as academics, or activists, or both, and the ways to view development entities, particularly NGOs, as whole or internally diverse units. Finally, this section covers some of the background and current state of methodologies useful for studying NGOs.

The research presented in this dissertation has relied extensively on the methodological and theoretical lessons learned in recent anthropological studies of international development, particularly NGOs. Deaf Tanzanians rely on extra-governmental resources for their social services, including religious organizations, NGOs, bilateral aid organizations, and others. In order to study this population, one must effectively situate them within the context of international development. Recent scholarship has done the important work of tracing the histories of foreign development and documenting the often negative unintended consequences of this concept. This research extends that scholarship by providing a counterexample to the overwhelmingly negative coverage of the surprising and often unforeseeable consequences of interventions. Like others who have

been studied, deaf people utilize development interventions for their own purposes and the result, unlike others who have been studied, is very positive—they make their own space in which they can develop and maintain specifically deaf support networks.

### **History of the Development Industry**

The international development industry is a historical product shaped by economic, political, and cultural influences. The Bretton Wood Institutions (BWI) were formed in 1944, with 44 countries participating. The stated goals were to establish international monitoring of currency exchanges and to set up an institute to help rebuild post-war areas. The first major international development and aid project is widely recognized as the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe after World War II, which was heralded as a success.

In President Truman's 1949 inaugural address, he referred to the issue of "underdevelopment" in the Global South. The concept changed American and European foreign policy, specifically for poor countries (Sachs 1991). In one short speech, Truman transformed a whole hemisphere of countries, peoples, and communities into a single category, the "underdeveloped." This uniform labeling of such variety has had repercussions to present day (Max-Neef 2003). If the problem in all of these areas was "underdevelopment," then development solutions could be similar. Soon the BWI administration, encouraged by popular opinion in the United States, began to seek out other countries that could benefit from large loans (Tendler 1975). The BWI distributed loans to states with little or no consideration of the capabilities of the national government or the more local cultures, communities, or politics. Ignoring these important issues was and continues to be a major stumbling block for development (Cernea 1991).

The agendas of larger development institutions have shifted from major economic and infrastructure projects to structural adjustment and poverty reduction, and, most recently, to

addressing environmental issues and sustainability (Cernea 2001; Gaile 2007; Goldman 2005). Each of these shifts in focus for multilateral agencies has meant major changes in all scales of the development industry. Funding for older, out of favor projects is radically cut or discontinued as resources flow into new areas. In order for countries and smaller organizations to maintain access to funding, they have to modify their work accordingly. In the 1970s and 1980s, neoliberalism gained momentum among economists and politicians. Rolling back state influence, market liberalization, and privatization became major components of foreign policy and requisite components of development programs.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, structural adjustment programs began to be recognized widely as deficient. Neoliberal policies left states with untenable debt, sapping and sometime eliminating the resources needed to educate or provide healthcare for their citizenry. As a consequence of structural adjustment policies, poor countries were losing what little footing they had in transnational economic dealings. As development projects were not achieving their goals, large development organizations and government agencies were seen as hollowed out, slow to respond, and inflexible (Drabek 1987; Edwards and Hulme 1996). A new development tool was needed; the answer came with the versatile, fast acting, small-scale NGOs (Bebbington 2004; Igoe and Kelsall 2005b).

In the next decade, the development industry focused funding and resources toward NGOs. Along with the influx of resources came high, arguably unattainable, expectations (Edwards and Hulme 1996; Vivian 1994). The category of NGO encompasses a diverse group. Variations on the theme include international, grassroots, indigenous, conservation, and community based groups, as well as many others. The NGO label is applied to such a diverse field of actors that

some scholars believe it has become highly problematic as a descriptive term (Igoe and Kelsall 2005b).

After a honeymoon period, development specialists were starting to reign in their enthusiasm for the efficacy of NGOs (Michael 2004). Simultaneously, there was a drastic increase in monitoring, evaluation, and tying the results to decisions about future funding (Rossi, et al. 2004). Today, the development industry has a wide variety of stakeholders including governments, multilateral institutions (such as the World Bank and IMF), bilateral institutions (such as GTZ and USAID), NGOs, and private donors (such as the Gates Foundation), as well as individuals living in countries who are donors or receivers of aid. Among these actors are complex networks that are political, symbolic, and economic. Anthropology is particularly well suited to study these networks and the people who are involved with them. Further, it is the field anthropologist who is well equipped to examine how individuals and institutions shape and are shaped by each other (Fisher 1997; Igoe and Kelsall 2005b).

### **Anthropology in Development**

Anthropologists, particularly the earliest contributors to international development, were operating under the assumption that development, though flawed in important ways, is still a “good” thing to do, on the balance benefiting more people than not. These scholars, for the most part, are practitioners of international development and believe that the flaws in development processes can be improved through increased participation from social scientists like anthropologists (Cernea 1991).

Given the discipline’s historical relationship with state governments, it is unsurprising that anthropologists have had a long relationship with international development (Cernea 1991). In 1942, Julian Steward founded the Institute of Social Anthropology with funding from the U.S.

federal government to provide information on foreign policy in Latin America. In 1950, the first anthropologist was hired by the World Health Organization (Foster 1982); soon after, the United States Agency for International Development began keeping anthropologists on as full-time staff (Hoben 1977). In the 1960s and 1970s, international aid organizations hired anthropologists because the dominant paradigm began to shift focus from national level economic projects to more social agendas that relied on participant driven programs (Hoben 1977). As Foster (1982) explains, early practitioners were focused on convincing local communities that Western notions of science, medicine, economics, and politics were the best strategy for development. Later, though, in the 1980s, anthropologists began a more balanced approach where they mediated between Western expectations and local needs to develop programs that were better able to affect positive change. These anthropologists generally believed that through good qualitative, ethnographic, and long-term studies, critical issues (e.g., poverty) could be addressed. They argued that putting people first and taking careful consideration of culture are crucial to the success of international development.

A first and important step in improving development processes is to widen mainstream conceptions of the scope of government. Sen (1999) writes that development increases human freedom through removing “unfreedoms.” He defines unfreedoms as poverty, tyranny, and lack of education, health opportunities, and social rights. He broadens the scope of development beyond basic understanding with an extension to economic projects. Sen was able to translate the importance of freedoms into promoting economic security. For example, he writes,

Political freedoms (in the form of free speech and elections) help to promote economic security. Social opportunities (in the form of education and health facilities) facilitate economic participation. Economic facilities (in the form of opportunities for participation in trade and production) can help to generate personal abundance as well as public resources for social facilities.

Critiques of the actual processes of development have also helped to increase representation and participation by the poor. Chambers (1984; 1995) is critical of development “professionals” who define poverty in reductionist, universalized, and standardized ways. These definitions of poverty are often in direct opposition to the definitions proposed by poor communities. Recently, Chambers and others have begun to argue for increased participation of the poor in designing, implementing, and evaluating interventions in their communities (Cameron 2006; Chambers and Mayoux 2003a; Mancini 2007). Similar critiques raise the issue of momentum, even in failed projects. Large infrastructures that involve thousands of workers, hundreds of administrators, and multiple government and private organizations can begin to build their own momentum and become unstoppable, even after they are understood to be failures. These unintended consequences of development have been the focus of recent studies (Chambers 2008; Zimmerer 2006).

One way of encouraging engagement of poor, local communities in development projects is to employ researchers and practitioners who specialize in working with those very populations. Anthropologists are trained to do just that. Cernea (2001), the first anthropologist employed by the World Bank, has been lobbying for increased involvement of anthropologists in every stage of the development processes. The World Bank employs the most PhD anthropologists in the world (Cernea 2007). Even with the high number of anthropologists, development policy constantly ignores important issues of culture and community. Development models and policies often focus on technological or economic solutions to poverty, seeing other concerns as insignificant (Cernea 1991; Chambers 2008).

Research and participation by anthropologists in the development industry have been key contributors to theory and knowledge production in the wider anthropological community. My

project is based in the same fundamental commitment to social justice for marginalized communities throughout the world. I also agree with these scholars that applied work can and does have important contributions to make to anthropological knowledge and theory and through careful anthropological engagement we can trace previous unintended consequences and even prevent negative ones in the future.

### **Critical Development Studies**

Beginning in the 1990s, anthropologists and others began to research and publish in the field they termed “critical development studies.” As Fisher (1997) outlines, these scholars see the whole project of international development as fatally flawed; even if there are good intentions by wealthy countries or other actors, the result in developing countries is to actually produce “underdevelopment,” poverty, and the Third World (Escobar 1995; Rodney 1982). Some of these scholars agree with Escobar (1991) when he writes that anthropologists who work in international development are “making an important departure from a long standing tradition of restricted applied intervention.” As shown in the previous two sections, this is simply not the case. However, while the founding premise of much of the scholarship outlined below assumes that anthropology has extremely limited space to work productively within the development industry, the theoretical insights and research are still very important in contextualizing future work in the area.

Critical development scholars seek to highlight the historical processes that lead to the development industry. Critical development studies are useful for this project because, like postcolonial studies in the previous section, they focus a critical lens toward the power that is present in transnational ideologies, interactions, and discourses. They look at subject making, interrogate problematic terminologies and methodologies employed in the name of international aid, and are attentive to the ethnographic particulars of the lived experiences of people who engage

in development. Critical development scholars are also interested in issues of state sovereignty and neoliberalism. They are highly critical of development and some even call for a complete halt of the process. Their work is grounded in post-structuralism, studies of globalization, and political economy. Critical development scholars have been aided by scathing insider critiques of large development institutions, such as the World Bank (Goldman 2005; Price 1990; Tandler 1975), the IMF (Abugre 2001; Buira 2005), and USAID (Maren 1997).

Critical development studies begin with an attention to the creation of subjects rooted in Foucault's conception of governmentality (1978; 1991). Basically defined as the "art of government," governmentality is a way of understanding how governments, families, and individuals self govern. Individuals living within a state become subjects to be controlled through research, medicine, education, and socialization. Understanding individuals as subjects of a state has helped critical development scholars to articulate important issues in the developing world. Escobar (1995) writes of the "subjectification" of the entire Third World. Several others have written about the major shift in conceptualizations of countries yet to be industrialized, and the major effects that these newly articulated understandings have on the lives of individuals (Max-Neef 2003; Price 1990). Ferguson (1990) writes about the subjectification of a country as underdeveloped and poor. By defining Lesotho as poor, it was eligible for certain kinds of interventions from the World Bank and other agencies. However, the country was denied agency in decision-making, drawn further into debt, and forced to keep commitments to outside organizations.

Anthropologists are famous for being attentive to issues in terminology, perhaps second only to philosophers. Critical development scholars have taken a cue from other development anthropologists and interrogated how reality is constructed through language and the effects of

those constructions. Development literature often uses terms that scholars have investigated. For example, *poverty* (Cernea 2001; Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1990), *participation*, (Borrini-Feyerabend and Tarnowski 2005; Chambers and Mayoux 2003b; Mancini 2007), *local* (Brosius 1999; Fisher 1997), *community* (Agrawal 2005; Brosius, et al. 2005; Li 2001), *stakeholder* (Davis 2008), *indigenous knowledge* (Cameron 2004; Escobar 1998; Goldman 2003), *civil society* (Igoe 2005b; Mercer 2002; Schuller 2007), and *nature* (Hayden 2003; Neumann 1998; Walley 2004) have all been proven to be highly problematic. The literature on these terms suggests that they are power-laden and used in development discourses. Negotiating multiple scales of culture, economy, politics, and power is a highly nuanced and complex task. Doing so without being clear about intentions and expectations is impossible. It is important in ethnographic study of development interventions and NGOs in order to understand the variety of ways people understand and use these terms.

Neoliberalism, the dominant international and domestic policy, emphasizes the “rolling back” of the state, privatization, and the liberalization of markets. It has forced a new way of theorizing the role of the state (Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Peck 2004). These policies are implemented through “conditionalities” imposed in aid packages and debt forgiveness (Gaeta 2002). Critical development scholars have recognized that these neoliberal processes have far-reaching and often detrimental effects on states in the developing world (Peck and Tickell 2002).

Rolling back the state, combined with liberalization of markets, has decreased states’ abilities to negotiate for fair trade deals (Ferguson 2005b). The result is often global capital “hops” and “skips” over certain areas, leaving particular areas and individuals highly wealthy while other, large swaths of land and people are left out (Ferguson 2005b; 2006). Hollowing out the state is particularly detrimental to welfare, social, and development institutions (Peck 2004). States

become less and less able to provide education, healthcare, and other services to their citizens. People begin to seek services outside the state—from NGOs. In some cases, NGOs are the sole source of government (Jackson 2005; West 2006). In other cases, NGOs and development interventions provide avenues for increased state presence—often in oppressive forms, as in the cases of Malaysia (Doolittle 2006) and Georgia (Dunn 2011).

When contextualizing the local effects of larger political and historical relationships between Western countries (in this case, the United States and Scandinavian countries) and Tanzania, it will be important to maintain the theoretical position of constantly interrogating notions of deafness, community, and disability. The critical lens modeled by these researchers is useful in understanding how imbalances in power privileges particular ideologies over others—even if they do not make sense for particular groups of people.

### **New Ethnography**

More recent scholarship has combined lessons from both the seemingly uncritical, Western-focused early years of anthropology in development, and the hypercritical writings of development studies scholars with their own fieldwork (Crewe and Harrison 1999). Working between these two groups—those who work under the assumption that external intervention in the name of social justice or mitigating unfreedoms is a problematic but essentially worthy endeavor, and those who see outside intervention as a perpetuation of existing power disparities between the Global North and South—is a new cadre of researchers and practitioners that work both inside and outside the development industry. These scholars take seriously the micropolitics of both NGO personnel and community members. They also look in more complex ways at how intention and on-the-ground practice are sometimes far more different than previously described. In his 2005 ethnography of the policy and practice of development in local populations in Western India,

Msiba Mosse defines this kind of work as “New Ethnography.” These scholars of new ethnography also contribute to what Ferguson (2005a) describes as a multidirectional flow of information between applied and academic anthropologists and theory and practice anthropology. Of the previous two schools, he says that both have unidirectional models: first, academia’s point of view, where theory is produced in the universities and then slowly disperses to anthropologists doing development work, and, second, practitioners’ view that academia begins to take them seriously only after they develop and test theories. Ferguson instead argues that, as much as either party is hesitant to admit, the production of knowledge and theory is multidirectional between the two disparate parties. Given that most international aid monies have been channeled through NGOs since the 1990s, especially for social programs, most of the scholarship has also looked at NGOs.

Anthropology and anthropologists are acutely aware of linking local and global processes as well as studying the day-to-day lived experiences of people working within communities or organizations. Igoe and Kelsall (2005b) argue that in order to conceptually locate NGOs and understand the kinds of roles they play in resistance and domination one must engage with history, scale, and space. In support of this complexity, as well as providing a grounded approach, Lewis and Mosse (2006) focus on “how development projects—always unforeseeable—become real through the work of generating and translating interest.” In other words, ethnographers are well positioned to see how the larger bureaucratic structures, policies, and projects actually unfold, often in surprising ways, on the ground. The close, intimate study of development projects, players, and participants allows for a more nuanced understanding of how relationships of power and resistance are experienced, understood, and articulated by individuals and groups.

## Studying NGOs

How does one study an organization that is tied into multiple scales of influence, politically charged, and in constant flux regarding membership and funding? Work on the topic of NGOs is a burgeoning field, but there remain very few detailed studies of what specific NGOs actually do (Markowitz 2001). However, the foundations for ethnographic work in these organizations have been laid. Studying organizations draws on the methodologies of classic ethnographic work (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1940; Turnbull 1961) and more contemporary modifications like “studying up” in Nader’s work on high-level corporate culture (1969). Anthropologists are well able to study their subject in the context of its network. For example, to address macro and micro linkages, anthropologists conceptualize smaller units within progressively larger ones. For example, locating households within villages, villages within districts, districts within states, and, finally, states within global systems (DeWalt and Pelto 1985).

### *Anthropology of Organizations*

Organizational anthropology is a good resource for studying NGOs. Anthropologists have been studying human organizations since the beginning of the discipline (e.g., Tylor 1889), but it was not until the late 1960s that social scientists began to look seriously at studying occupational, religious and political organizations. Whyte (1969) wrote one of the first comprehensive texts in the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological aspects of studying organizations. His goals were to compile his work in labor organizations and the restaurant industry as helpful case studies, and to provide a textbook for college courses on organizational studies. Organizational studies as a specifically anthropological endeavor fell out of favor soon after. It experienced a resurgence in the 1980s and 1990s, largely because of the American response to the dominance of non-western economies like Japan (Altman and Baruch 1998), and has been popular again recently, with major

corporations bringing in anthropologists. For example, JCPenney and Microsoft each have staff anthropologists to work on both marketing and organizational issues.

Anthropology of organizations involves looking for patterns, specifically, “the various forms in which people manage to do things together in observable and repeatable ways” (Van Maanen 1979). Anthropologists generally look to study the ways people work in settings and come to understand and make sense of their situations (Van Maanen 1981). There are methodological aspects of the anthropological study of organizations that will be helpful for this project.

Organizational ethnography is particularly tuned into the historical, contextual, and processual components of organizations (Bate 1997). Ethnography of organizations has been particularly focused on mundane, day-to-day experiences as fruitful sites of information gathering (Latour and Woolgar 1979; Pollner 1987). This kind of work requires being on site and getting very close to routine projects. It requires spending considerable time and taking part in the daily lives of people who are involved in those projects (Van Maanen 1981).

Studying organizations such as police stations (e.g., Van Maanen 1984), advertising agencies (e.g., Mazzarella 2003), environmental organizations (e.g., Bryant 2005), and multilateral organizations (e.g., Goldman 2005) shows that ethnography is a particularly useful tool. Being there, on the ground, in the daily practices of people who participate in the organizations, and paying attention to the historical context in which organizations exist, are important methodological practices to apply to the study of development organizations. NGOs carry with them different kinds of expectations from citizens, participants, and governments.

### *Ethnography of NGOs*

NGOs present a challenging case for study; studying them requires focus on globalization, transnational networks, and micro-politics. Fisher (1997), in his *Annual Review* article, suggests three major directions for the study of NGOs. First, conceptually locating NGOs is important. It is

essential to understand where these organizations fit in webs of politics, economy, and culture, and then understand how they shape and are shaped by various scales of government, community, and market. Second, NGOs are useful for understanding local and global linkages. Third, one must investigate the micro-politics of NGOs. Anthropologists are particularly well versed in studies of globalization and relations between the macro and micro (e.g., Ong 1999; Tsing 2004).

Transnational work has recently become more important in expanding understandings of “the field” (Appadurai 1991), subject formation (Clarke 2004), and the historical roots of globalization (Piot 1999). Studies of businesses and other kinds of organizations (e.g., Mazzarella 2003) have shown the importance of understanding mutual constructions of various scales. Recent ethnography of multilateral development organizations draws attention to how “transnational structures of power, knowledge, and capital are produced; how they become hegemonic and how they are challenged” (Goldman 2005).

Markowitz writes about “finding the field” in NGOs (2001). She emphasizes following resource flows as a method to track alliances and tensions. She calls for a flexible methodology that is constantly attentive to the appearances of new linkages and units of analysis. Studies of development organizations often involve multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995). For example, Goldman (2005) studies the World Bank offices in Washington, D.C., and Laos. He also follows Bank workers out into the field as they implement water projects, and to high-level government meetings in the United States. He interviews development administrators, project workers, and local people to flesh out all aspects of aid interventions. Interviewing the various populations involved in the development process requires professional interviews (Nader 1969), investigation of census, government and archival data (Des Chene 1997), and time on the ground engaged with people affected by the interactions (Igoe and Kelsall 2005b). Gusterson (1997) argues for a

“polymorphous engagement” that involves journalistic interviews, informal socializing, and use of newspapers and other documents, as well as interviews conducted over email and telephone. He reminds us, “Participant observation is a research technique that does not travel well up the social structure.”

Early studies of development and NGOs failed to consider historical and political issues. They also used highly problematic terminology about the global South. More recent studies have failed to offer pragmatic solutions to the very real issues of large-scale development, poverty, and uneven effects of the global economy. Situating NGOs as dynamic, malleable components of local, national, and transnational networks provides for a framework readily approached by anthropological study processes of development. The two theoretical directions that have yet to be fully explored are the micro-politics of NGOs and their positions as links between local and global processes. In taking on these directions, research must be sensitive to historical and political contexts, offer pragmatic solutions, and provide an engaged critique. Several more recent studies utilize historical and contemporary ethnographic analysis in order to tease out the varied origins of village practices. Jones (2009) studied the small community of Oledai, Uganda, and shows how the Ugandan state has withdrawn from local governance over the course of the last few decades, and how communities continue to survive beyond the reaches or concern of the state.

The research presented in this dissertation relies heavily on NGOs, their personnel, and their networks as a focus of ethnographic study and also as an entry point into larger networks of deaf people. Participant observation, as lauded by many of the scholars here, provided key contextual information, which is as important as the larger and more historical work and investigation of archival and printed information.

## **Deaf Studies**

Deaf Studies is a relatively new field of study focusing specifically on historical, cultural, theoretical, and political issues around deafness. Until very recently, it was solely focused on Western countries and has only just begun to expand the boundaries and conceptualizations of how people experience deafness and disability in a variety of ways, depending on local realities instead of transnational ideologies. This review of pertinent literature within the field of Deaf studies covers some of the early work on anthropology and disability, and dives into Deaf studies as a multidisciplinary literature. For the sake of clarity, I place more recent and more relevant anthropological scholarship used for my research in the sections below, within the context of other studies on sign language, deafness, and deaf communities. The review of Deaf studies follows a general chronology of scholarship, moving from the basics of establishing validity of sign languages and communities to more nuanced discussion about what it means to be labeled a community and how these understandings clarify or confuse work in non-Western deaf populations, particularly in the developing world.

Most useful for this research are the studies that focus on the role of deaf spaces, like clubs and organizations, in community formation and continuity. Additionally, it has been useful to understand the varying influence—or lack of influence—of American Deaf culture and ASL in other settings. I have also relied on nascent scholarship, which brings together the historically separate fields of inquiry and theory about deaf and disability as a space to investigate how deaf people in Tanzania self-identify.

## **Anthropology of Disability**

Anthropologists have been incorporating disability and illness into their work since the 1940s. These considerations usually came from a medical model of disability, but provide the foundations for anthropological study of people with disabilities. Even with the recent increased

interest from anthropologists (e.g., Keating and Hadder 2010; Shuttleworth 2004), disability continues to receive far less attention than other issues such as gender, race, and sexuality (Battles 2011). The field of disability studies is growing, but anthropology is contributing very little to the conversation. Like Deaf studies, disability studies and the anthropological scholarship that accompanies it is, at its core, both academic and activist. The research on people with disabilities in the United States and elsewhere has real implications for issues of access, human rights, and social justice. The contribution of these studies goes beyond policy and activism, though. Gleeson (1999) writes, “Disability is a vitally important human experience. A failure to embrace disability as a core concern can only impoverish the discipline, both theoretically and empirically.”

Early work on disability and illness came from sociological studies, but had a significant effect on looking at the variability of roles that different individuals play in relation to sickness. Parsons (1975) wrote about the role of sick people and their societal rules. First, once a person is sick, they are relieved of all other social roles (such as mother, husband, leader). Second, the sick person must be passive, they must accept help and care from others, and seek qualified professional help. Finally, and most problematic, the sick must get better.

Goffman (1963) writes about stigma. There are three kinds of stigma: abominations of the body (disabilities and physical deformities), blemishes of character (mental illness, homosexuality, and alcoholism), and tribal stigma (race, religion, or ethnicity). All of these stigmas affect people’s perception of the whole person, even if the stigma itself is minor or has no influence on the individual’s life. Goffman also writes about the important concept of ‘passing,’ where individuals with stigmas are constantly trying to and are expected to ‘pass’ as “normal.” Through rehabilitative treatment, clothing, and other strategies, people who are stigmatized try to relieve normal people from also having to experience the stigma. He writes that people with stigma only find comfort in

associating with other stigmatized people, when there is a relief from having to pass as normal. He does not spend time critiquing the definitions of these stigmatized characteristics or questioning the reaction of normal people to stigma, but he does bring out important points of disability and illness being just one kind of many undesirable traits in humans.

Several ethnographies have incorporated issues around disability, but not the topic directly. One of the earliest is Gwaltney's (1970) ethnography of a Mexican village with the highest incidence of blindness in the district. Gwaltney himself is blind, but seems to take little interest in blindness as a topic of research. He writes a traditional ethnography of living arrangements, family patterns, life cycles, and landscape usage. Myerhoff's *Number Our Days* (1978) is an ethnography of a Jewish senior center in California. While she does not discuss disability, she does discuss the community center's members' adjustments to their decaying health and issues of aging. In this early period, the most disability-focused ethnography is Robert Murphy's *The Body Silent* (1987). Murphy has a tumor in his spinal cord that is slowly growing and further paralyzing him. His ethnography is mostly a biography, in which he incorporates research and interactions with other chronically and terminally ill patients. He writes that disabled people are depressed, filled with rage, and unhappy with the totally new and all-encompassing identity forced upon them by physical disability. Murphy writes that people with disabilities are on the margins, and studying disability is a way to understand humanity. His very personal and very moving ethnography is important to compare to studies of people who were born with disabilities.

Many other anthropological engagements with disability are reflexive, and situate the anthropologist and their own disabilities as an entry point to the research. These works include Colligan (2001), a paralyzed anthropologist who recounts her fieldwork in Israel and the implications of her disability on her own research and interactions with participants. Gold (1994),

an anthropologist with disabilities, documents his own experience in San Francisco using Paratransit as a useful point of entry to ethnography. Finally, others like Rapp and Ginsberg (2001) use their own experiences as parents of children with disabilities to begin their research.

The anthropological literature is extensive; though it has historically focused on the dysfunction of disability, it is beginning to incorporate more contemporary understandings of the condition. Still, much of the literature on disability in anthropology remains focused on the United States. These studies, in line with the general field of disability studies, situate disability as a phenomena necessarily connected to context. The degree to which an individual is disabled is based less on the individual and more on the cultural, social, political, and economic context in which they exist. This fundamental assumption underpins my study of deaf people in Tanzania. The veracity of the importance of context is very clear in the comparison of deaf people who live in communities like Mnazi (described in Chapter Seven: Deaf Spaces) and those who live in isolated rural areas.

### **Linguistic Validity**

Since the 1960s, there has been a slow but growing body of literature on signed languages. Prior to the publication of the first dictionary for American Sign Language (Stokoe, et al. 1965), most experts regarded the language as a crude system of gestures lacking complex grammatical structures. Stokoe and his team's work provided the first academic validation of American Sign Language and is considered the first major step toward linguistic and cultural validity for deaf people. Senghas and Monaghan (2002) outline several sign systems: natural sign languages (ASL), artificial sign systems (Signed Exact English), home sign (gestures developed in individual homes), contact signs (pidgin languages), and gesture.

Studies followed, differentiating American Sign Language from other sign systems like Signed Exact English, Cued English, and Simultaneous Communication. The latter three are artificial sign systems (Senghas and Monaghan 2002), developed as visual representations of spoken English. While both ASL and artificial sign systems are still popular teaching tools for deaf children, they have both been shown to be deficient and misused (Johnson, et al. 1989). Home sign systems have been documented in the United States and elsewhere (Goldin-Meadow 2003; Goldin-Meadow 2007; Senghas 1997). These are systems of signs invented by deaf children and their parents and are unique to each family. These home sign systems have been credited with providing initial lexicons for growing natural sign systems (Groce 1996; Senghas, et al. 1994). One component of the linguistics of sign languages is recognizing, documenting, and theorizing variation. Sign languages vary by region and ethnicity (Burch and Joyner 2007; Hairston and Smith 2001 (1980); LeMaster and Monaghan 2002; Lucas, et al. 2001; Woodward 1976), and by contact with spoken languages like English (Lucas and Valli 1989).

Once ASL itself was validated, one could take seriously the artistic expressions, and productions could be analyzed (Padden and Humphries 1988). There has recently been research into ASL poetry and literature. These works include analysis of poetry, literature, and theater (Bauman, et al. 2006; Eddy 2002; Peters 2000; Wissler 2003). ASL literature occupies an important cultural place in Deaf communities. Gatherings of Deaf people almost always include time spent sharing jokes, stories, poems, and other literary pieces (Lane, et al. 1996; Monaghan 1996; Padden and Humphries 2005; 1988).

Another important topic in the linguistic study of ASL is its history. The sociolinguistic aspects of ASL are fascinating. ASL folklore and scholarship trace their roots to two major sources:

French sign language and Martha's Vineyard Sign Language (Groce 1996; Padden and Humphries 1988).

### **Recognition and Legitimization of Community**

To use a cultural definition is not only to assert a new frame of reference, but also to consciously reject an older one...But the cultural definition continues to perplex many. If Deaf people are indeed a cultural group, why then don't they seem more like the Penan of the island of Borneo, or the Huichol of Mexico? (Padden 1996)

After Deaf President Now<sup>7</sup>, the form and focus of studies of Deaf people changed (Schuller 2003). Mainstream acceptance of Deaf communities as legitimate cultural groups became the focus of major research, publications, and community efforts. Through in-depth discussion and study of history, theories on community, and the shared oppression of Deaf people, scholars and activists have slowly etched out space in the mainstream discourse for consideration of Deaf and deaf ways of being. Looking to the history of Deaf communities in the United States helped to establish a more situated argument for cultural legitimacy.

### **History**

The particular historical context in which the American Deaf community came about is important. Stories of growing up Deaf highlighted the specifically Deaf experiences of individuals in the United States, showing recent histories of the Deaf community (Evans and Falk 1986; Hall 1991; Lane, et al. 1996). Early Deaf American history included establishing schools and a college for the Deaf, efforts to establish a Deaf state or nation (Van Cleve and Crouch 1989), the fight against the Oralist movement and sign language oppression (Baynton 1996), labor and education (Buchanan 1999), and nationalism, normalcy, and resistance (Burch 1999; Burch 2002). Others have analyzed the development of the idea of Deaf people as disabled (Branson and Miller 2002).

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<sup>7</sup> Deaf President Now was a protest in 1988 calling for a deaf president of Gallaudet University that gained worldwide attention.

## Is it a Culture?

The definition of Deaf culture has been problematic and used in various ways by Padden (1996), Gannon (1981), Van Cleve and Crouch (1989), Padden and Humphries (1988), and Lane (1992). Laying out the basic argument for the cultural dispute included highlighting that Deaf people can be differentiated by their language, customs, and values (Brein 1981; Carmel 1987; Fjord 1996; Hall 1994; Lane 2005; Napier 2002; Vasishta and Sethna 1994). Increasingly nuanced and sophisticated arguments have been made for labeling communities of deaf people as distinct cultural groups. Discussions range from claiming that Deaf communities are micro- or sub-cultures (Bahan 1997), to others who argue that Deaf groups are fully autonomous and deserve legal recognition similar to those given to indigenous groups (Batterbury, et al. 2007; Ladd 2003). Questions arise around topics like membership: can hearing people be members of a Deaf community? Essentially all scholars agree that there is some type of unit of culturally Deaf people that has boundaries and specific requirements for membership. The particulars are hotly debated.

Anthropology has had an extensive discussion of the culture concept, and anthropologists have argued both in support of (Brumman 1999; Geertz 1973) and in opposition to this concept (Abu-Lughod 1991; Trouillot 1991). Whether or not individual anthropologists currently employ the term “culture,” all of them recognize the importance of using the term and the heterogeneity and dynamic nature of groups categorized as cultures. It is also important to consider the group, not as existing independently, but with attention to the web in which it exists (Geertz 1973). In consideration of current debates, this project discusses Deaf groups as communities with specific attributes and focuses on the connections between groups as well as the groups themselves. Questions arise about the kinds of characteristics a group needs to have in order to be labeled a cultural group—or a group at all. Shared language, collective values, and geographic similarities are a few common suggestions. As problematic as the term “culture” is, recent ethnographic work

highlighting the dynamic nature of cultural membership, citizenship, and community (e.g., Ong 1999) makes labeling a group all the more interesting.

## **Audism**

Audism is “the notion that one is superior based on one’s ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears” (Humphries 1977). Recognizing the shared history, language, and values led to discussion of shared experiences of oppression. Humphries, the Deaf scholar who coined the term, wrote that he immediately felt as though his life and experience had been legitimized once he wrote down the definition of audism (1977). Other theorists have taken the discussion of oppression of deaf people further, even so far as to call the Oralist movement an act of genocide (Ladd 2003). The usage of the term audism has, in recent years, become a rallying point for activists and academics, and has helped the mainstream get a wider understanding of discrimination.

## **Many Ways To Be Deaf**

### *Shared Signing Communities*

Early explorations into Deaf communities outside of the United States and Western Europe came in the form of studies about shared signing communities. Shared signing communities, also known as assimilation communities, are communities in which there is a high enough incidence of deafness (often over 4%) over multiple generations, and both hearing and deaf people communicate in sign language (Bahan 2002). The earliest documented case of a shared signing community is Martha’s Vineyard, on the east coast of the United States (Groce 1996). A family of immigrants from England settled in a secluded part of the island and, through extended isolation and limited genetic diversity, developed a community with up to 25% deaf people. The community lasted for several generations and began to disperse with the introduction of deaf education to the United States. Martha’s Vineyard Sign Language, though very different

from modern ASL, played an important role in its formation. The last descendent of Martha's Vineyard's assimilation community died in the 1980s.

Other communities have been documented in the Yucatan (Johnson 1991), Bali (Branson, et al. 1996), and in a Bedouin community (Kisch in press). These communications are important examples of ways of being Deaf outside of the United States and Europe. Marriage practices, political and social participation, and understandings of deafness and the ability to hear among these assimilation communities are drastically different from American and European ones. For example, in the United States, deaf-deaf marriages far outnumber deaf-hearing ones. In assimilation communities, there are rarely deaf-deaf marriages. Studying these cases has opened up new space for theorizing the diversity in deaf experiences.

### *Deaf Way*

In 1989, Gallaudet University hosted an international convention called Deaf Way, celebrating Deaf people from all over the world. While international Deaf conventions have been taking place since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe (Lane 1989; Lane 2006; Senghas and Monaghan 2002), Deaf Way's gathering was larger and more diverse than any before. Deaf Way, riding on the wave of publicity and enthusiasm of the successful Deaf President Now movement at the University, marked an important change in representation of Deaf people outside the United States and Europe. Leaders from Deaf communities came to represent their people and shared stories among each other. International attendees corrected Americans on the signs for their own countries, and the new signs were adopted into ASL as the proper signs.<sup>8</sup>

The convention, as well as publications based on the associated talks, was a first major step toward recognizing and learning about Deaf communities, developing sign languages and deaf

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<sup>8</sup> For example, signs for Germany, Mexico, China, and Japan from the native countries were adopted into ASL as proper.

education (Ojile 1994; Suwanarat 1994), developing community and shared culture (de Garcia 1994; Okyere and Addo 1994; Sururu 1994), and speaking out against the oppression of deaf people in developing countries (Devlieger 1994; Sawuka 1994). The face-to-face gathering of Deaf people at Deaf Way facilitated the production and strengthening of transnational networks among Deaf communities. After the event, arguably more clearly than before, Deaf people were participating in a global, imagined community.

### *Imagined Communities*

Deaf people in the general population account for less than 1% of the total population (Jokinen 2006); even with such a small percentage, there are too many for every deaf person to have a personal relationship with every other deaf person. Despite this, there remains an imagined sense of belonging to a larger national, even global, community. Anderson (1991) describes imagined communities as “nations,” as they are inherently limited and sovereign. They are “imagined” because even members of the smallest nation will never know all of the people they imagine in their communion (Anderson 1991). He describes “community” as a group of people who find horizontal comradeship despite inequalities. While there are great differences between the socioeconomic, educational, vocational, and ethnic characteristics between deaf individuals and between deaf communities around the world, the characteristic of being “Deaf” is a unifying one. These imagined communities are held together through various strategies, Deaf organizations and clubs, and international meetings such as Deaf Way.

“The social networks working within and between these imagined (but also very real) communities are key to understanding these communities...” (Senghas and Monaghan 2002). These social networks are produced and reproduced through face-to-face gatherings in Deaf clubs and organizations. In the early formation of the Deaf community in the United States, the National Association of the Deaf, state organizations, and local clubs became important places to build

relationships, share information, and function as a rallying point for rights campaigns (Burch 2002; Robinson 2006; Van Cleve and Crouch 1989). Deaf communities in developing countries have relied on similar organizations, particularly deaf clubs, to provide safe space for signing and support (Hall 1994; Sururu 1994; Vasishta and Sethna 1994). Deaf clubs are often permanent or semi-permanent spaces that are used for face-to-face gathering and play an important role in community cohesiveness.

Sports tournaments (such as the Deaf Olympics), regional basketball championships, beauty pageants (such as Miss Deaf America or Miss Deaf Colorado), academic and community conferences, and other temporary gatherings are important tools for the reproduction of Deaf communities. Deaf beauty pageants, particularly popular in the United States, allow communities to gather and participate in mainstream popular culture and reflect the varying notions of beauty and what it means to be culturally deaf (Burch 2006). Sports tournaments also function similarly. Rallying for your alma mater's team is a way to stay connected to networks established during time spent at schools for the deaf (Lee 2006). These temporary meetings in previously unmarked spaces are interesting. In hosting a conference in a hotel or a tournament in the gym of a university, the space is temporarily transformed into a Deaf space (Breivik, et al. 2002). Spaces that are usually hearing without accessible communication, such as businesses and restaurants, change into Deaf spaces full of sign language users, waiters who understand how to write messages to their patrons, and businesses catering specifically to Deaf people. These spaces and gatherings are points in networks that exist locally and transnationally.

### *Transnational Communities*

Recently, Monaghan and others (2003) published a book of scholarly articles on deaf communities around the world, which has ushered in a new phase in the discussions of deaf people, identity, and language. This book is an important step in Deaf Studies, particularly for

those who are interested in thick descriptions (Geertz 1973) obtained only from long-term cultural research. Research in this school deals with issues of sociolinguistics and teases out the role of sign language in every day practice and participation in both Deaf and hearing communities (Aarons and Reynolds 2003; LeMaster 2003; Lucas and Schatz 2003). Others look at community formation in conjunction with the formation of schools for the deaf and clubs to understand the contexts in which communities take shape (Berenz 2003; Pursglove and Komarova 2003). Useful for this project are the recent studies of identity and identity formation of participants in deaf communities outside the United States (Nakamura 2003; Senghas 2003; Woodward 2003).

It is clear from research, publications, media, and personal experience that there are transnational networks of Deaf people. There are two examples of anthropologists beginning to address this topic. The first is German linguistic anthropologist Constanze Schmaling (2000; 2001; 2003). Schmaling has worked intensely with the Hausa of Nigeria, specifically their Deaf community and its language. She outlines the basics of the language and, in later works, traces the global influence of ASL. The imperial nature of ASL is threatening Hausa Sign Language survival. The second example is Richard Senghas (1997; 2003; 1994). His work, based in Nicaragua, focused on the formation of a sign language and community centered on the founding of a school for the deaf. The situation in Nicaragua is a rare case study of subject formation studied “in real time” as the community and language form. Senghas outlines how the Nicaraguan government was influenced by American academics in sign language linguistics and policies from the Swedish Association of the Deaf.

Both of these works provide an important first step in taking seriously the role of Deaf transnational networks in shaping practice and subjectivity. Both studies have been transformative for Deaf studies. However, neither research project attended to the ways that Western ideologies

(about what it means to be deaf or a member of a deaf community) are spread along with the language or how those messages are received, accepted, or rejected by local groups.

### **Critiques of Global Deaf Culture**

Current scholarship in deaf studies is focused on two particularly pertinent new fields of engagement: breaking down the divide between deafness and disability and conducting situated, local ethnography of deaf communities outside the West; and highlighting the varied ways that deaf people connect and disconnect from what Friedner (2010) calls “global deaf culture.” Recent scholarship in anthropology, history, and other disciplines has begun a conversation that breaks down the generally accepted and well policed boundaries between deafness and disability in the West (Burch and Kafer 2010a). In order to further these conversations, various anthropologists have used ethnographically thick descriptions of international deaf communities to further complicate a unified global deaf culture (Rashid 2010).

### **Conclusion**

Current work on deaf communities largely fails to move beyond descriptive ethnography of current conditions in isolation. Future work must consider issues of imagined communities (Anderson 1991) and the world system in terms of transnational networks of influence (Clarke 2004). The dissertation research presented here builds on and departs from the literature presented above in several key ways. First, my research is founded in the epistemological standpoint that disability, in this case deafness, must be considered in a larger context that includes economic, political, and cultural factors. Additionally, my work takes seriously that there are a variety of ways to “be deaf”; extensive ethnographic research outside the West will help to flesh out better understanding. My work departs from much of the existing work on deaf people because it is one of the first anthropological investigations of a very poor, very rural situation in Africa. I also

locate sign language as one of a variety of topics significant to deaf people, not as the central.

Previous studies look solely at either language or the central theme. In this study, it is clear that sign language is a crucial component of living as a deaf person, but it is not the only one.

### CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The village *mwenyekiti*<sup>9</sup> leads us to what he calls a *bubu*, which in his definition means deaf person who can't speak, who works as one of the village's shoe *fundi*.<sup>10</sup> The man is about 40 or so. He has a small wooden stall big enough for him to sit in to fix shoes. He takes out a well-worn notebook and writes his name. It is mostly scribbles with an "s" and he finishes it with a period at the end. He takes out a small plastic jar with coins. He shows us, mostly by pointing, that he is paid about 50-100 Tsh for fixing shoes and the other shoe *fundi* gets paid 200-500 Tsh for the same shoes. He literally walks over to the other *fundi*'s stand, pulls out a pile of coins, and pretends to hand them to him while moving his mouth like a hearing person talking. He then comes back to his stall and hands Renada, after moving her into his seat at the stall, 50 Tsh. It takes a long time but his message is clear. As we move onto the topic of his children (he tells me he has two and then tells Renada he has six), a crowd starts to gather and he gets intimidated. Instead of saying goodbye or ending our conversation in any formal way, he just walks across the street and sits down among the onlookers to watch us. That's how he opts out of the rest of the interview—by simply walking away.

*Excerpt from Field Notes: Katavi, March 2009*

This project relied heavily on many of the well-worn and well-proven methods of anthropological fieldwork. Participant observation served as the foundational method used and remained a constant presence throughout the research. The project also utilized other methods, including interviews (semi-structured, life history, group, and individual) and surveys. The less-used supporting methods were institutional history interviews, archival research, and review of popular media and culture. Too often, graduate students are left to discover for themselves what their advisors and faculty had to learn during their own research. Fortunately, my advisor was explicit in his methodology usage and the costs and benefits of various tools, and he encouraged me to also be explicit in my methodological choices. This reflection proved valuable to my project; I spend some time in this chapter on describing how I conducted this research and implications of various

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<sup>9</sup> Kiswahili for chairperson

<sup>10</sup> Kiswahili for cobbler

methods. I also lay out the methods used during the research project and outline some of the successes and challenges in doing this kind of fieldwork. I address informed consent and confidentiality as problematic, especially when working with people who have extremely limited language.

A field researcher's most important tool is flexibility. Seasoned field researchers and PhD candidates who have returned from the field constantly remind those about to embark on their research projects that, while the research methodology looks well planned and coordinated in grant applications, one must be prepared to reassess the situation upon arriving and completely redesign the project if need be.

This research, specifically, required some significant innovation for two reasons: first, because of the high number of deaf people who had no formal language and little to no informal gestural language; second, because the categories of "deaf" and "disabled" as constructed by the West—which were firmly engrained in my understanding of the research questions—were entirely different from local understandings of the same concepts.

Major research sites included homes, places of work and worship, conferences, community events, schools, clubs, and hospitals. After gaining initial access, I used group interviews and surveys to get preliminary data that was then used to develop interview protocols, recruit participants, acquire general knowledge about community members and their concerns, and build rapport. I then followed up with participant observation, participatory mapping,<sup>11</sup> and continued semi-formal interviews with hearing participants. Finally, I conducted extensive, recurring interviews with a few participants who were willing, able, and interested in sharing their stories.

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<sup>11</sup> Participatory mapping utilizes participants' knowledge of legal boundaries, important spaces, and their own representations of their geographic and social maps.

Over the course of the fieldwork, I conducted approximately 255 individual surveys and ten group interviews. Additionally, I used participant observation in various deaf spaces and activities, including clubs, sporting events, churches, conferences, and workshops. I also worked in three different organizations where all or most of the employees were deaf. Each method, interview, and interaction informed the whole process. I continued to modify my approach, questions, and format according to feedback from my research assistants and informants. I also spent a significant amount of time learning and failing to cooking the staple starch of the Tanzanian diet, *ugali*.<sup>12</sup>

### Gaining Access

When studying American deaf communities, gaining access is always a significant factor. As a hearing graduate student at Gallaudet University and a scholar of Deaf studies, I have spent an extensive amount of personal and professional time in the American Deaf community. My American Deaf network connected me with a few deaf Tanzanians in the United States who helped me contact organizations and leaders in Tanzania. I arrived in Tanzania with the name and a number to text an officer in the National Society of the Deaf (Kitaifa<sup>13</sup>). In Tanzania, very few hearing people use sign language. My command of LAT and gestural communication set me apart from other Westerners and hearing people. My training in American Deaf cultural values, particularly that of always using sign language in the presence of deaf people, worked in my favor. When there was a communication breakdown, I resorted to gestures instead of lip-reading Kiswahili, and this further endeared me to my participants and separated me from other hearing people. I, unlike the Western missionaries and volunteers, was willing to partake in local vices such

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<sup>12</sup> Ugali is a major source of calories for Tanzanians. Very young children learn to cook it and families eat it daily. I, no matter how hard I tried, never successfully cooked even a small batch. This was unendingly amusing to my participants.

<sup>13</sup> Kitaifa is Kiswahili for nation. This is a pseudonym for one of the deaf associations in this study.

as watching Nollywood<sup>14</sup> soap operas and drinking homemade moonshine like *ulanzi* (made from bamboo) and *pombe* (made from corn). Interestingly, though, my training in American Deaf values, specifically my distinction between Deaf people and people with disabilities, set me apart and, at times, hindered my understanding of other issues.

My nationality and appearance allowed me increased access to situations quite often. People who were hesitant to let their deaf family members out of their homes allowed me to enter their homes because of my assumed status. Organizations often invited me along to events because a Westerner sitting in on a workshop opening or closing ceremony lent an increased level of legitimacy and formality to the event. When my Research Assistants (RAs) were having trouble with a family, they would often call me over and we would be granted instant access. However, at times, my status as an outsider who appeared to have more power made me seem more threatening, and homes with dominant male family members often found my presence far more intimidating than the presence of my deaf RAs.

Facilitating cooperative and open relationships with organizations required that I provide both immediate and long-term benefits directly to various NGOs. NGO workers' time was not free or easily given. I often worked free of charge as a laborer, a grant writer, or an interpreter for important meetings in order to gain access to these settings. I also committed to providing the results of my research in accessible formats to the organizations I worked with in order to provide them with usable data for grant applications and lobbying purposes.

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<sup>14</sup> Nollywood is the Nigerian cinema industry, analogous to Hollywood in the United States and Bollywood in India.

### **Research Assistants**

My RAs were vital to the success of my project and my gaining access to these communities. They helped to develop networks of informants and participants, at times leveraged their own personal and professional relationships to gain access for me, participated in the development and refinement of my surveys and interview protocols, and helped me to learn and expand the countless home sign systems we encountered in various villages in order to conduct interviews with rural isolated deaf people. They also guided me through interviews and interactions, helping me in their own ways to see what I was missing, catch a point I could not grasp, or avoid a trap waiting for me. Through the course of my research, I had six RAs, three of whom were with me for the duration of the project: Renada, Valeriana, and Godfrey. My other short term RAs included Lisa, Neema, and Theresia. Four of the six were deaf. None of my RAs had ever worked on research of any kind before, nor had they used a computer or conducted a survey.

The deaf RAs, based on their own experiences and creativity, helped me develop sign systems with rural deaf participants who had no formal communication at all. They helped me collect life histories of people who had never before been asked a personal question. They acted not only as interpreters, but also as field linguists—observing, learning, and further developing varied sign and gestural systems in highly varied settings, and helping me and my participants through the entire process.

My RAs traveled with me for hours on buses and waited for days outside government offices. In some cases, they endured rural community members' verbal and physical jabs as we met with deaf people and their families. They set up creative communication strategies for our most difficult cases and figured out new and novel ways to ask questions and learn about our informants. Often, at the completion of an interview, they would circle back around to topics or questions in

order to ensure that I caught the major issues an informant was expressing. Their gentle guidance and extreme patience was unending.

Two of my RAs were employed full-time by an organization that hires deaf and disabled people. I had to enter into extensive negotiations with these organizations to secure their time. All four of my deaf RAs attended deaf schools and were active members of their local deaf communities. These networks and experiences were invaluable. We were able to access groups, meetings, individuals, and topics that I otherwise would not have known existed. Their ages, life experience, and gender helped me build rapport and gather data all over the country.

Working with me, they earned a wage higher than what their peers were making, and there was a certain increased status from working with a Western researcher (with a car). This disruption in their positions in their communities had some negative consequences. At times, their peers expressed jealousy, suspicion, and frustration during the course of the research. Each of the RAs put stress on their own families, friends, and communities in order to help me through my research. I appreciate their guidance and sacrifices very much.

### **Sample**

In order to discuss the study population's specific points of view and beliefs, it is important to talk first about which group of deaf people is speaking, within the general group of Tanzanians who are deaf. My sampling strategy was neither random nor structured, but was instead dependent on the resource constraints and local realities of working with rural and slum dwellers, as well as a marginalized and stigmatized community. Throughout this dissertation, I switch between conversations, beliefs, and experiences held by all, some, or just a few of the people who participated in this study. In order to be clear about those speaking, I created general subdivisions of the study population, as shown in the Table 1 below:

Group Name	Percentage of Sample	Language	Work	Education	Integration in Mainstream
Elite	6%	LAT, Kiswahili *, English *, other sign languages	Government, NGO leadership	Post secondary	Fully
Integrated Signers	41%	LAT, Kiswahili *	Full time, reliable	Secondary	Significantly
Marginalized Signers	29%	LAT, ~ Kiswahili	Day laborer, sporadic	Primary, vocational training	Marginalized
Non-signers	24%	Gesture, home sign, none	Day laborer, none	Vocational training, none	Isolated

*Table 1: Subsections of Research Sample of Deaf Participants and Significant Characteristics<sup>15</sup>*

This study is, at a general level, a study of people who are deaf in Tanzania. However, among this group, the sample population varies significantly. My participants were mostly (66%) deaf people who knew sign language. While there is limited data on the numbers of deaf people in Tanzania and where they live, their education level, and language usage, one can make inferences given the available information. According to the Tanzanian National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), disability has a higher prevalence in rural areas (8.4%) than in urban areas (6.4%). Deaf people in rural areas are particularly isolated from schools and other services. Given that 74% of Tanzania's population live in rural communities, it is likely that there are far more rural, isolated deaf people than the proportions of participants in this study include. However, given the time, resources, and structural constraints of reaching this isolated population, my sample population is biased toward deaf signers in urban areas and people I describe as integrated signers.

This project examines multiple topics; each topic has a particular configuration of direct and indirect participants. While many people with limited language were unable to participate directly in conversation on certain topics—either because of my own inability to effectively

<sup>15</sup> Table 1 Key: \* means both oral and written proficiency, ~ means some or a little.

communicate with them or because of the extreme limitations of their situation—their stories, demographics, and other forms of indirect participation provided important context and counter examples to the opinions and experiences of others with whom I was able to communicate more easily. Even with the overall marginalization of deaf people in Tanzania, the bulk of direct quotations and major vignettes in this project were drawn from those who said the most, but not necessarily those who had the most to say. The reality of this type of research is that it was significantly easier and faster to communicate with people who were accessible, had formal language, and were interested in participating. The most vulnerable and marginalized, while a larger proportion of the general deaf population and with as much to contribute, were harder to find, access, communicate with, and interview.

Vulnerable people in countries that have limited formal registration or census programs must be sampled in creative ways. It is difficult to sample deaf Tanzanians. There is limited general census data and no registry of deaf or disabled persons. Deaf people are often hidden, and, at times, actively kept away from public life.

In urban places and communities with organized and connected deaf people, sampling was easy; finding deaf people in rural communities or finding those who do not regularly attend meetings was much harder. Sampling through membership of a deaf church or sports team, participation in local deaf clubs, and working within or accessing services from deaf organizations allowed access to a wide variety of well-connected, signing, urban deaf people. We all had a common language (with only some regional differences), a basic level of familiarity with Westerners, and Kiswahili literacy; the urban deaf people all had a support network of deaf friends and co-workers. This however, is only a single component of the entire spectrum of deaf people in Tanzania.

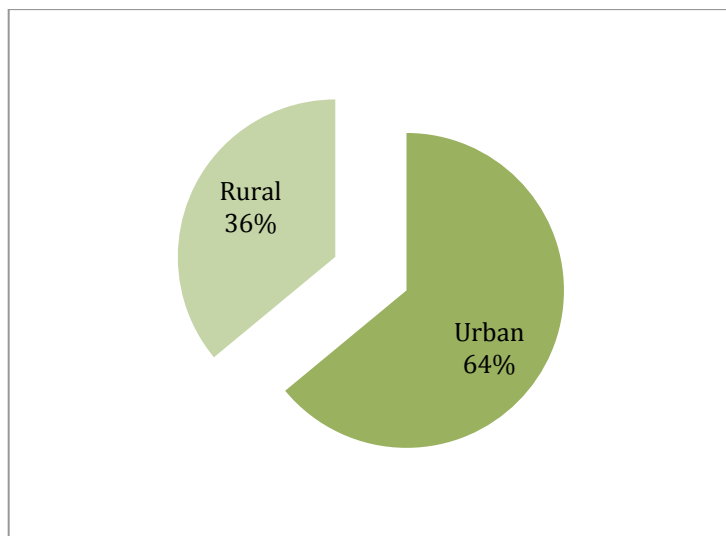
Given the widely documented stigma around disability and deafness in Tanzania (Baskind and Birbeck 2005; Eckhardt 2005; Weiss, et al. 2006; World Health Organization 2005), particularly in rural areas, it was much harder to gain access to potential research participants. One woman described her experience of finding and recruiting students for the newly opened Selous School for the Deaf. She said that she would get information, through rumors, that a deaf child was living in a particular home, but upon visiting, parents would often flatly deny having a deaf child there. Occasionally, after much discussion, the parents would finally bring their deaf child out. Other times she would find children hidden behind sofas, under beds, or locked in cabinets.

For our work, informal communication networks was the best method for finding deaf people. Following rumors and gossip was often the best method for finding deaf people in remote places. A village visit often consisted of finding the first deaf person (with networking done by the RAs a week earlier) and asking at the completion of each interview for the participant to refer us to another deaf person. If they knew of someone, they would physically lead us to the next interview because navigating villages is not easy for strangers. We then followed that deaf person to the next deaf person, continuing on until the group grew to the point where we were walking around the village with an entourage of deaf participants and curious hearing residents. This was snowball sampling in a very literal sense.

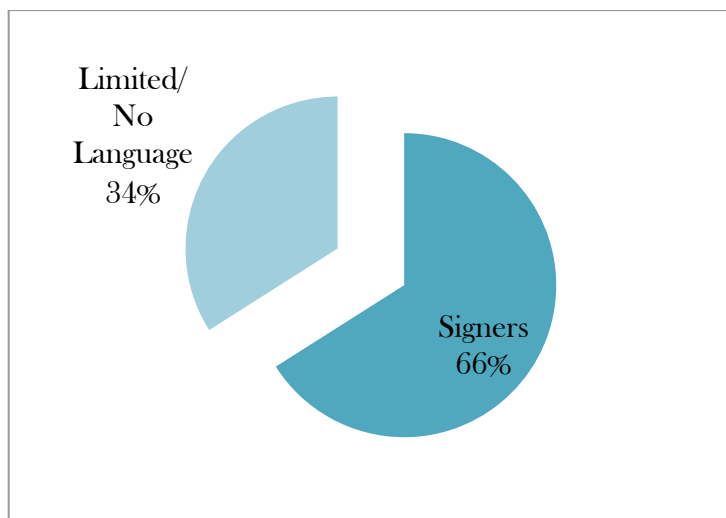
I was attempting to reach the two major groups—the connected, urban, signing deaf and the isolated, rural, non-signing deaf—I was only able to interact with and interview those individuals whose families allowed them participation in public life. This was not always the case and the most marginalized and vulnerable deaf were a group I was unable to consistently access.

Over 255 individuals participated in my study in some formal way. At the completion of the study, only 65 participants (or approximately 25% of the sample) came from the latter group,

the isolated, rural, non-signing deaf. My sample included near gender parity, with 52% women. I collected data and was sensitive to issues of ethnicity and religion, but throughout my research neither of these issues emerged as sources of solidarity or friction for participants. This is in line with other research on Tanzania, which, compared to other African countries, has little ethnic or religious tension. Figures 3 and 4 below describes the breakdown of my participants' signing abilities (signers/non-signers) and living situation (rural/urban):



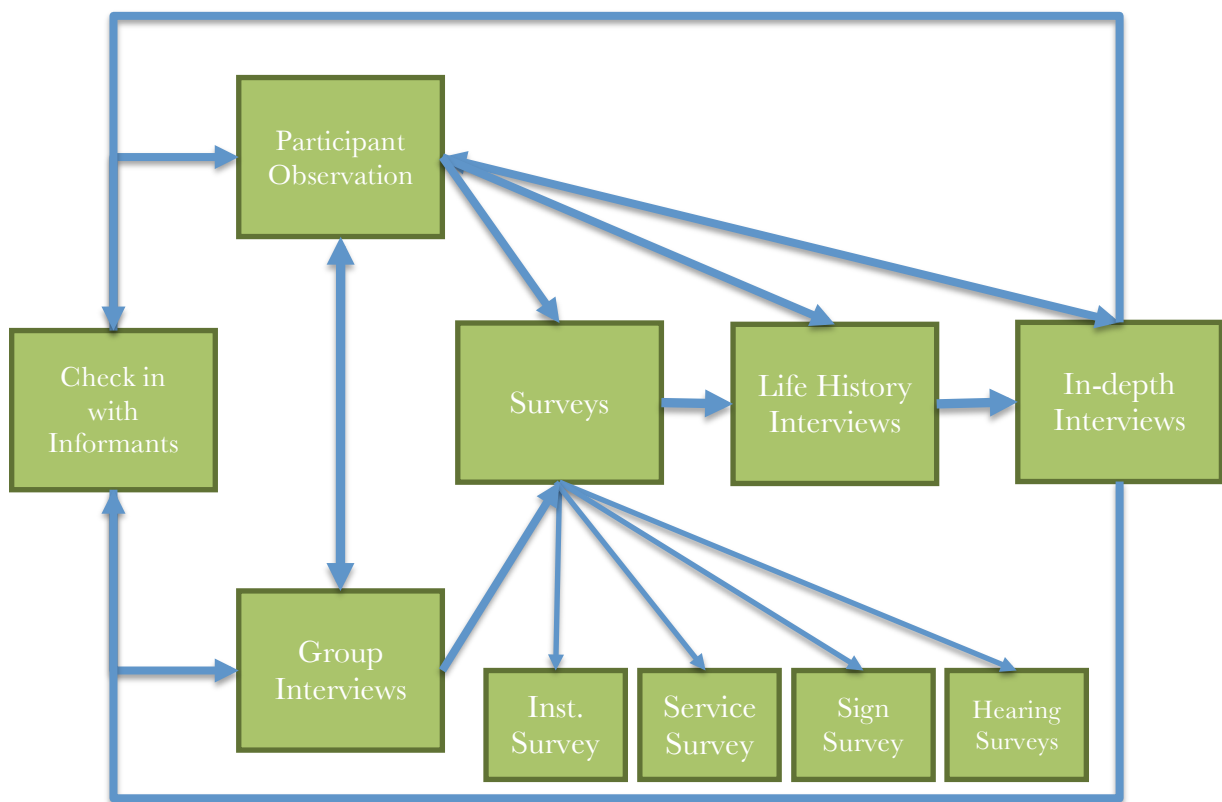
*Figure 3: Sample's Urban/Rural Split*



*Figure 4: Sample's Language Usage*

### Gathering Data

Interviews were a significant and constantly changing component of this project, often refined based on data from other interviews, surveys, and participant observation. Before arriving in Tanzania, I developed a list of questions for interviews and surveys that would be used to address my research topics. However, upon arrival and becoming familiar with local realities, I had to modify my approach. In order to ensure that I was getting the most accurate information possible, I continued to refine my questions, surveys, interviews, and interactions based on feedback from all the methodological tools and, most importantly, by checking in with informants. My research followed a circular model as shown in the Figure 5 below:



*Figure 5: Using and Refining Methods throughout Fieldwork*

## **Participant Observation**

Participant observation was the most time consuming, unstructured, but beneficial method used in this study. In many cases, particularly with women, participants opened up more readily during daily activities like work, cooking, and childcare. I worked with several different NGOs in order to gain entry to deaf people and to get the help I needed, while also providing some kind of support to their own operations. I worked in various capacities in different NGOs—editing grants, working at conferences, and waiting in offices of government officials to help lobby for deaf students' access to education. Participant observation in these settings was particularly important while studying a part of the population that works six-day workweeks. I volunteered my time and in turn learned to make paper from elephant dung and beads from beer bottles, as well as the fine art of gluing paper. More importantly, I gained entry into a community that would welcome me into their homes and lives after the workday ended. I lived and worked with deaf people in Tanzania for a year.

## **Group Interviews**

Group interviews were a useful method for testing topics and questions, and gathering a diverse set of opinions in a short amount of time. The group method was successful for interviews with only men, but less successful when the participants were only women. Generally, my male participants were more comfortable in formal settings and shared more information during those kinds of meetings than informal ones. Women, however, tended to be more open and welcoming during cooking, doing laundry, and walking to work, and were not willing to participate when the setting became more formal. Over the course of the project, I conducted four group interviews: one with female signers, two with male signers, and the last with mixed non-signers. The group interviews with only men were by far the most fruitful. Often, women would gather on Sundays to do laundry or share cooking responsibilities; these were successful informal group interviews

because each woman would chime in with her own opinion on my questions. Due to the lack of participation, only one formal, sit down interview took place with the women.

### **Individual Interviews**

An individual interview's success or failure largely depended on the kind of relationship I had with each participant. Most interviews were semi-structured; that is, I started with a list of open-ended questions to use as a guide and then allowed the conversation to go where the informants wanted. Topics for the semi-structured interviews included demographic information, work and family history, access to education and healthcare, and interaction with and feelings about deaf people in their area.

Interview locations varied widely. The most easily controlled and private location was within a participant's home. We used, for a time, the office of the local dominant political party, CCM in Selous. However, sitting outside a small one-room home with a large crowd of curious onlookers seemed to be the norm.

With a small number of participants, I went further in depth, asking more about their families, their experiences growing up, and particular events or situations in their lives. Those were the most intimate interviews. Generally, these interviews centered on a specific experience. One gentleman wanted to talk about his experience running for office, leading, and then being banned from a deaf organization and the implications of that experience in his life. Another woman told me about her history of abortions and her fears about the fast-approaching birth of her first child. These interviews were often deeply private and heart wrenching, and relied on the mutual trust between participants and myself.

I used video for as many of the interviews as time, batteries, and permissions would allow. Generally, people allowed themselves to be taped but some had reservations. One woman was

afraid that I would keep a record of what she said and show it to the deaf elites in Dar es Salaam. Others allowed themselves to be taped so they could see their own faces on the video screens. Some said my taping them was important so that I could get their stories right and quote them properly. As the interviews were conducted in a visual language—either LAT or a home sign system—note taking was nearly impossible without great disruption to the flow of conversation. Depending on who was leading the interview, my RAs and I took turns taking notes; videotaping ensured that the conversations were fully documented.

### **Surveys**

The largest number of contributors to this project participated in surveys. In order to get a breadth of data to contextualize the in-depth participant observation and interviewing, we collected general data from a wide geographic sample. Topics included political participation, religious affiliation, and organizational membership. The questions were fixed and generally structured for short, open answers. Due to the success of the surveys and the availability of my RAs, I was able to develop surveys based on specific topics that continued to come up in other areas. The final batch of surveys focused on a new population: hearing people. This survey took into account the relational and geographic distance that hearing people had from deaf people, and asked a series of questions about what kinds of things they thought deaf people could do. We collected data about education, reasons for deafness, feelings about and access to work, religion, and social services. Table 2 shows the method, geographic location, and approximate number of participants in this study:

Method	Geographic Locations	Number of Participants
General Survey	Selous, Dar es Salaam, Njombe, Arusha, Mbeya, surrounding rural communities	228
Sign Language Survey	Selous, Dar es Salaam	116
Services Survey	Selous, Dar es Salaam	137
Hearing Survey	Selous	65
Group Interview	Selous	88
Life History Interviews	Selous, Dar es Salaam	22
Individual In-Depth Interview	Selous	10
Institutional Histories	Selous, Dar es Salaam, rural areas	86
Conferences	Morogoro, Dar es Salaam, Selous, Kibaha	150
Workshops	Selous, Dar es Salaam, Kibaha, Rural communities	75
<b>Total</b>		<b>317</b>

*Table 2: Methodology, Place, and Number of Participants*

## Challenges

### Rural Areas and Non-Signing Deaf

The most challenging work, by far, was with deaf people in rural areas and deaf people with limited or practically no language. These two groups often intersected. The neat and clean methods and protocols developed for this project were quickly muddled and mixed upon use in the field, especially within this population. The deaf non-signers, once we established a mutually intelligible system of communication, had quite a lot to say. A survey, with introductions and rapport building, took three hours with signing deaf people and 8-12 with non-signing deaf.

### Crowds

It is a similar story for all anthropologists who work in rural areas. Control is lost when crowds gather around the newcomer in the interview space. The crowd answers the questions meant for a single person. Truly, it takes a village to conduct an interview. Often, in relatively

remote areas, deaf people receive little attention. They are kept in homes, away from public life, and are never the subject of an interview by a Western researcher. Many community members were astonished that someone would want to “waste time” on a person who was perceived to have so little to tell. Our conversations in sign and gesture drew the laughter and taunting of many hearing onlookers. Children would stand behind my informants and mimic their movements, to the great enjoyment of the crowd. At times, these crowds were frustrating and destructive.

In one case outside Makumbako, we met a young woman named Zaituna. We met as she was cleaning up dishes from the morning *chai* at her mother’s tiny café. The cafe was built from old wood and wheat bags. The interview began with fingerspelling our names and showing our sign names. No sooner had the interview begun than the curious crowd began to gather. Zaituna’s mother joined us and helped answer some questions about deafness in the family, the cause of deafness, and Zaituna’s education history. Zaituna watched very patiently but participated very little. It became apparent that Zaituna did not know sign language and her gesture system with her mother was superficial. As we were leaving to conduct more interviews, Zaituna caught up with us. She knew LAT, which she had learned from Kitaifa seminars, and was bursting to tell us all her answers to our questions. She said she refuses to sign in front of her neighbors because they laugh at her. Zaituna was also very interested in my single, young RA named Godfrey.

While crowds were often a frustrating reality of rural work, they also proved helpful in facilitating communication between our participants and us. Parents and younger siblings would help teach their home sign systems, family members would help fill in dates and histories, and friends would help participants feel more comfortable with sharing their stories. In one village, to avoid having to hike through miles of muddy *shamba* (farm), we attempted to gather all the deaf people at a single house to interview them. The location was convenient but demonstrated how

heavily we relied on people around the participant for context and basic information. For example, many people do not know how to write, even their own names. With very basic sign systems, it can be very difficult to differentiate between mothers, sisters, grandmothers, and aunts. Causes for deafness, reasons for not attending school, and many other questions become quite challenging, if not impossible, in these situations.

### **Discriminatory Practices of Hearing People**

Despite laughing at the sight of people signing, hearing people sometimes found signing threatening. This was particularly noticeable with male family members. For example, while I was conducting an interview with Batina, a 25-year-old unemployed deaf woman, her mother and father came and stopped our conversation. They asked us questions, which I was interpreting for Batina and for my RA, Godfrey. The father said, “Stop! You speak only to me. None of this nonsense. Not in my house.” He said that if the information was important enough, his daughter and my RA would figure it out by lip-reading. In other situations, a husband would supervise his wife’s interview and force everyone to speak while we were signing so he could understand what was being said. Speaking and signing simultaneously is very difficult because each language has its own, very different grammar. Often, the deaf participants had a hard time communicating clearly when they tried to do this.

### **Language**

Despite challenges, it was amazing to discover how much you can talk about with people who have no language. Without formal language, we talked about community responses to deaf people, the unfair low wages compared to hearing peers, politics, and soccer. Language makes this work unique among other anthropological endeavors. Language, or lack thereof, and the stigma associated with signing are the most complex factors in this project. Working with people with

limited language required a different type of rapport building. For their entire lives, deaf people, particularly those with no spoken or sign language, have feigned understanding. In the first attempts at interviews, I would check every few minutes to make sure the participant “understood everything.” I would wait for them to nod or smile—a signal that they were following the conversation. Then, a later question would make it clear that the participant had no idea what I had been talking about the entire time. In these cases, it was necessary to take a step back to build rapport with the potential participants as well as their families. Trust allowed us to utilize the family’s space and time. It was also important to build a common gesture set, which enabled the participants to admit that they did not understand something.

There were very different levels of literacy between participants. Many deaf people could sign beautifully but could not read a word of Kiswahili. Others could read and write in the local language, Kihehe, but had no formal sign language. One family had an incredibly complex sign system with almost no connection to LAT, and none of the deaf knew Kiswahili or Kihehe. Some participants interviewed had almost no language. One young man’s communication was comprised of lifting his eyebrows and pointing. Unfortunately, the pointing and eyebrow movements were not directional and were used only to mimic what he saw his family doing. In order for his family to communicate, they would take him by the wrist to the rabbit cages and hand him a bucket of water or give him a mop in the kitchen. All communication was focused on household chores. He did not know who his father was or his relationship to the other children living in the house. He did know, however—and days later was able to clearly communicate—that when he left the house by himself, the neighborhood children threw rocks and beat him with sticks.

### **Communicating with Non-signers**

Working with non-signers required time and creativity—for myself and my RAs and, especially, my participants. The burden of communication and any failure to do so rests squarely on my own shoulders. The non-signing participants had far more stamina and patience than I could have hoped for.

Finding deaf people in rural places is a challenge. Generally, NGO workers and other deaf participants would inform me about villages surrounding Selous that had deaf residents. My RAs would go out to the village one or two days in advance of my arrival to find deaf people and make initial introductions with the deaf people and their families. My RAs would then spend some time (ranging from a few hours to a whole day) with potential participants. They would observe how the non-signer communicated with family members and other village residents, and begin to build some rapport. I would come the next day and, after meeting with my RA, we would formally talk to hearing family members. Either sitting near their homes, out in the fields, or at a café, we would spend time building a mutually intelligible system for communication with deaf people and their families.

During initial interview efforts, we spent time establishing signs related to work, family, and the immediate surrounding community. With some non-signers, we were able to develop shared gestures relating to time (distinguishing mother from grandmother) and their current job or situation and what their preferences were (farm now but would really like to open a small shop selling flour). In other cases, we were unable to establish a complex enough system to distinguish between certain familial relations.

In one case, we spent a whole day interviewing a participant with the understanding that he had three little daughters at home. The next day, while interviewing his family, his sister-in-law

explained that those were his nieces and he had never been married or had children. It was clear that these children were important to him and he spent a lot of time with them.

In the story at the beginning of this chapter, the deaf gentleman used very clear communication. He physically showed us the amount of money others made and then how much he made, using actual coins. He took my RA's hand and walked her over to the hearing *fundi's* stall to distinguish himself from the others. He then used his physical presence and absence to show his willingness to participate in continuing the interview.

Along with consent and rapport development with the participant, permission from hearing family members was an important initial step. Some families were very concerned about outsiders wanting to spend time with their deaf family member. We felt the risk to the deaf participant was too great to continue interviews without the expressed consent of their families. Initially, we made a concerted effort to work with non-signers away from their families. In many cases, though, family members knew some gestures that were often used and could also explain basic demographic data or clear up questions. In the end, we found that interviewing non-signers with and then away from their family members was the most useful.

## Interpreting

Working in multiple languages—Kiswahili, LAT, home sign systems, and Kihehe—required creativity. In one of our most complex interviews, I asked questions in LAT, my deaf RA translated into Kihehe, a sibling of the deaf participant translated from Kihehe to their own sign language, then my RA translated the answers from lip-read Kihehe to LAT for me to understand. Complex interpreting situations certainly affect rapport and the tempo at which an interview proceeds. Often, my RAs would go to a village or community a day or two before my arrival, find deaf people, and spend several hours with them. This allowed my RAs to watch the deaf people

interact with their families and neighbors, and begin to learn the completely individual communication systems. Then, once I arrived for the interview, the RAs would teach me the individual communication system. They would tease that I could sign two languages: LAT and Village Sign. By Village Sign, they meant the various languages deaf people use when they do not have a formal language. Working between this many languages opens up some vulnerabilities in gathering accurate data. In order to mitigate these risks I triangulated the data by asking questions in various ways at different times, collecting other kinds of information from other sources, and then comparing and analyzing the information when stories were different.

### **Alternative methods**

In some interviews, we used newspaper cutouts of the president and other famous people as tools to assess political awareness and voting habits. Some deaf people, despite limited language, were able to line up the four presidents of Tanzania in chronological order. During a group interview in a very rural area where less than half the participants knew sign language, we used hand-drawn pictures of food, water, work, homes, children, and other concepts to ascertain the interviewees' major concerns. Sometimes, during particularly difficult communication, the participant would just take me by the hand to his or her mother, children, or work to show me instead of tell me what they were trying to say.

### **Confidentiality and Informed Consent**

The challenges of obtaining truly informed consent and maintaining confidentiality are not unique to this project. However, the complexity increases when working in a small, vulnerable population with participants who are without formal language and are among the most marginalized in their community. For introductions, formal interviews, and surveys, we spent an extensive amount of time explaining what research is, where I was from, who would read the

research, and how we would protect their identities. When acting as a participant observer during informal conversations or activities, I reinforced that I was a student doing research and their conversation was of interest to me, and I asked if I would be allowed to write about it. More participants were comfortable with this as long as the dissemination of the research was global versus local.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is among the most important characteristics of anthropological research. Confidentiality, as a formal concept, was relatively novel for most of this project's participants. Most signers understood "keeping secrets" in the context of gossip and storytelling, but because so many deaf people get material, political, and social support from organizations such as Kitaifa Selous and Huruma, they were highly sensitive to maintaining anonymity when discussing concerns or complaints.

Godfrey, my RA, introduced confidentiality in this way: "Also, anything you say here, in this interview, I will keep to myself. If I see other deaf people around town, I will not tell them. I won't even tell them we met." In another interview, Godfrey explained that while we would keep what they say secret from the community, the participants themselves did not have to. "If you want to talk about it, that is fine, but the two of us won't. We will take notes during the interview, but at the end we will take out your name so that we can make sure we use your life story but not your name. No one will know who you are."

Many said that as long as their neighbors did not find out, we could tell Americans their stories. One woman wanted to share her story as long as the deaf in the capital would not know what she said. Or, as a young man participating in the study allowed, "I would rather keep this private. The two of us can talk without anyone else. It is ok to use my name when you write your

book.” He was uncomfortable having my RAs and fellow community members in the room but he was excited at the notion of sharing his story with the world.

Large portions of the study population had no idea that there were deaf people in countries other than Tanzania. Their own families and communities took little interest in their lives—why would people across the world care at all about their stories? Aside from gathering data to help them plead their case for more support from the government, my research participants largely thought my project was a fool’s errand.

### **Informed Consent**

Truly informed consent for well-educated, research-oriented Westerners is often a challenge. Add to this situation a highly marginalized population who have never been studied, with extremely limited language skills, and the issue becomes much more unclear. I continually came up with strategies to help deaf people and their families truly understand my research project, role as a researcher, and the concept of voluntary participation.

Generally, the populations of this study have never been researched. Some have been interviewed by donors and religious leaders, but not in a systematic, confidential, scientific study. Many of the non-linguistic participants had never been asked questions at all. This is a population who has never been studied and are totally unfamiliar with surveys, interviews, and the point of research.

Consent among non-linguistic people was often shown by the position of their feet, like the gentleman in Katavi in the opening vignette. When a person no longer wanted to interact or be interviewed, he or she would just walk away. They often did so without pretense or explanation. One gentleman who tired of trying to communicate simply got up, walked across the street, and watched us from about 50 feet away. Another young man sat down with us for a few minutes and

then got up and literally ran out of the café. Still others would hide behind their family members and not interact with us except to watch.

The use of GPS was another challenge for informed consent. Much time was spent explaining that the map with the participants' houses would be on a different landscape so that no location could be traced back. Most participants thought the GPS unit was a camera or cell phone and paid it no attention. The president of a local deaf club discovered we were using GPS and, while he declined to have his home mapped, wanted control of mapping all deaf people's homes. He explained that the *jambozi* (gangs of criminals) would use the GPS information to rob deaf people's homes. There were two issues here: first was the use of a technology that the participants did not fully understand, and second was the issue of community versus individual consent.

### **Analysis of the Data**

This project utilized several methods to analyze the data. These methods ranged in complexity from sticky notes and highlighters to cutting edge analytical software. The first, and longest, portion of the analysis was transcribing all the data. Using hyperTRANSCRIBE,<sup>16</sup> I translated all of my videotaped interviews, conversations, and other events recorded on film from LAT to English. I then translated all of my surveys into English and organized them in an Excel spreadsheet. All my field notes, interview summaries, and other written descriptions were also typed up and saved in various Word files. I then used Atlas.ti<sup>17</sup> to analyze my narrative data for themes. The software also allowed me to connect these various themes, participants, places, and dates in various relationships for further analysis. Finally, I coded all of my survey data and used simple statistical capabilities on Excel to contextualize my qualitative data. My surveys had both

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<sup>16</sup> [www.researchware.com/products/hypertranscribe.html](http://www.researchware.com/products/hypertranscribe.html)

<sup>17</sup> [www.atlasti.com](http://www.atlasti.com)

closed- and open-ended questions, and I developed scales and sets of the varied answers in order to analyze the data for trends. I was able to ensure that my analysis was honest and more complete. In some cases, upon review, themes that I thought were most important or most interesting were discussed by participants less often than other issues. By running a periodic meta-analysis of my themes and qualitative analysis, I ensured that my work remained grounded in the voices of my participants.

### **Field Sites**

This project drew from rural and urban populations. The two main urban areas were Dar es Salaam and Selous, with smaller samplings from Morogoro, Arusha, and Stonetown. Villages around Selous served as the source for rural sites. Within each of the field sites, I worked with several organizations and clubs. For full descriptions of these organizations, see Chapter Five. Below are short descriptions of a few major field sites.

#### **Dar es Salaam**

As the largest city in Tanzania, Dar es Salaam is an important economic center in the region. The 2002 national census estimated Dar es Salaam's population at about 2.5 million. It is a bustling city with horrendous traffic and sprawling settlements around the outskirts. It has a crumbling infrastructure and skyscrapers, and is home to the richest and poorest of Tanzania. The crowded suburbs are rapidly growing and poorly planned. It is a hot, humid Kiswahili city with large populations of Western expats, Asians, and others.

Dar es Salaam, as a hub of economic, social, and political power in the country and the region, is also home to almost all of the major national and international entities working in Tanzania. This includes the development, aid, and charity organizations that work throughout the country. CSOs, NGOs, FBOs, and all the rest of the alphabet soup of lobbying, development, and

community groups also work in Dar es Salaam. The two major organizations for the deaf, Kitaifa HQ and The Union of Deaf Youth of Tanzania or Vijana (youth), are headquartered there and it is home to the largest population of deaf people in a single area in the country. Other research, in other regions of the world, shows that deaf people often gather in urban areas where they can more easily access deaf schools and government services, in addition to living in a community. Dar es Salaam has several branch offices of Kitaifa, deaf clubs, a deaf soccer league, a deaf church, at least one major primary school, and several smaller schools for children and adults. The population density, services, infrastructure, and organizations focused on and run by deaf people makes Dar es Salaam a useful field site for studying how deaf people live in Tanzania. As an urban space with a high, relatively well-connected deaf community, it stands in stark contrast to most of the rest of the country.

### **Selous<sup>18</sup>**

Selous is a relatively sleepy town at the crossroads of major highways cutting through the country. In the highlands, the weather is much more moderate and agriculture—specifically flowers, tea, and coffee—fuels the local economy. Due to the high number of migrant workers and truck drivers from the highway, Selous also has the highest HIV/AIDS infection rates in the country. Selous district is home to the Hehe, an ethnic group. The Hehe are significant in Tanzanian national history for several reasons, including their fierce battles against the Germans, their resistance to joining the newly independent Tanzania, and the story of their Chief Mkwawa who fought back several German attacks in the late 1800s.

Selous town hosts several major religious groups running varying kinds of interventions in the district. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (with strong ties to Minnesota) runs

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<sup>18</sup> Selous is a pseudonym for the site. All location names other than Dar es Salaam are pseudonyms as well.

several large-scale development activities, as well as a nationally acclaimed university. The Roman Catholics have a convent and a monastery, both of which educate children, train adults, and provide significant support to the communities. The Anglican Church also has a large presence in Selous.

Selous has a deaf school, a branch office of Kitaifa, and an FBO called Huruma, which specifically employs deaf and disabled workers to make crafts to sell to tourists.

### **Mnazi**

The suburb of Mnazi sits east of Selous's city center by approximately a 45-minute walk. It is a relatively poor neighborhood, where most people live in single rooms of shared homes and share kitchen and bathroom space with fellow tenants and landlords. Red dirt colors the roads and mud homes, and matches the bricks that build the more substantial homes. Mnazi is located along the Cape to Cairo Road, and residents walk from the closest bus stop up a steep hill to the plateau that Mnazi sits on. Few homes in the community are wealthy enough for fences around their property; even fewer cars venture into the area. The paths between houses are wide enough for two people to walk, except where it narrows further. Children, goats, chickens, and the occasional cow roam around the community. Hair salons, shoe sellers, and food shops dot the area among the homes.

Mnazi is unique, as it is home to a dense population of deaf people. On Sundays, the only day off for most workers, deaf community members gather at each other's homes to catch up on the week's news. Deaf women take their laundry over to each other's homes to gossip while cleaning. Deaf men gather, either at the bar or at a single home, to do the same. Mnazi is also home to the Selous School for the Deaf, founded in 1993. Many graduates of the program choose to stay in the area in the well-established deaf community.

As will be discussed later, many of these deaf residents, unlike most other places, are almost all gainfully employed. Landlords seek out deaf tenants, shop clerks know sign language, children know how to respectfully greet deaf adults in LAT, and being deaf is a regular part of the community. Deaf people moving to Selous specifically choose to live in Mnazi. They almost always start their time in the area living with a deaf friend or mutual friend who lives in the neighborhood and then decide to stay.

### **Conclusion**

This project required time-tested methods utilized by anthropologists as well as some new or modified techniques to reach the unique population studied here. Above all other tools in the ethnographer's toolbox, the most useful was the ability to be flexible. Through reflexivity and constantly getting feedback from data collected by other methods and participants, I was able to modify my methods to maintain a fruitful, honest, well-rounded study of this challenging topic.

## CHAPTER FOUR: SIGN LANGUAGE IN TANZANIA

During dinner tonight in Dar es Salaam, I continue my usual practice of asking, “*Hiki ni nini?*”<sup>19</sup> I want to know the various signs that people use to describe things. Although I have a copy of the first Tanzanian Sign Language dictionary, different people give me different signs. Some—mostly officers of Kitaifa—keep with the description of the dictionary when signing, while the vocabulary of others varies. When I ask a husband and wife, Hamidi and Mremba, for the sign for *twiga*,<sup>20</sup> they each give me a different sign. Mremba says, “He is the sign language expert at Kitaifa and knows from the book; most of us deaf people don’t care about what the dictionary says.”

*Excerpt from Field Notes: Dar es Salaam, January 2007*

Deaf Tanzanians agree that sign language is crucial for communication among deaf people and is the key to accessing information, formal education, and community. However, upon further investigation, the neat narrative breaks down when deaf people talk about sign language and the politics around language standardization and control. In this chapter, I review the origin of sign languages generally, and LAT specifically. I also discuss the ways in which the language continues to evolve through intentional study and attention, as a group of scholars and deaf elite seek to “purify” the language of external influences. The process has its detractors, though, and I discuss the resistance to LAT among the deaf in Tanzania. Many deaf people in Tanzania have extremely limited access to sign language or contact with other deaf people. In these cases, deaf people develop home sign systems for single family units and, what my research assistants called *lughu ya alama ya kijiji* (village sign). Finally, the chapter concludes with a review of the meaning of sign language as a communicative system and a symbol of deaf community in Tanzania. This chapter is intended as an engagement with sign language on a social level, which will only be discussed in

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<sup>19</sup> Kiswahili for “What is this?”

<sup>20</sup> Kiswahili for giraffe

terms of what its existence or absence means in the lives of deaf people. This chapter does not include morphological or syntax studies of LAT, villages sign systems, or other sign languages.<sup>21</sup>

This chapter examines LAT in light of major international discourses on deaf rights and emancipation (vis-à-vis the role of a nationally recognized sign language), discusses how Tanzanians learn, understand, and think about sign language in the context of their lives, and exposes the internal tensions around LAT use and authority. On the one hand, signers are struggling to use sign language safely in public places, advocate for sign language in schools, and teach isolated rural deaf to use the only language truly accessible to them. On the other, internally, deaf people are negotiating an unequal system of authority and representation in which certain people and groups have more control over how LAT is shaped as a relatively new language. Understanding LAT in the context of deaf people's lives is also illustrative of micro systems of core and periphery, connection and isolation, and elite and underclass, as each of these binaries plays a role in who controls the language and how others accept or resist it.

### **Engagement with Relevant Literature**

The research presented in this chapter builds several developments mentioned in the literature review in the field of Deaf studies. First, my work with people without sign language or with village or home sign systems is informed by the existing work on home sign in the United States and Nicaragua. These studies show that when deaf people are in situations where they are allowed to communicate visually, they find a way (Goldin-Meadow 2007; Senghas 1997). Second, I unpack largely Western ideologies about the standardization of language in order to trace the processes, ideologies, and power imbalances evident in Tanzania. Third, I build on the other

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<sup>21</sup> For more on the linguistic study of LAT and village sign systems in Tanzania, see work by Dr. H.R.T. Muzale. Dr. Muzale is the leading linguist doing research on LAT. He is also a tireless supporter of improvements in deaf education and access to sign language.

studies of deaf people outside the West that center on sign language and its implications as the major object of study (e.g., LeMaster 2003; Schmaling 2003; Woodward 2003). These studies show the development of sign languages and the ways that deaf people express information about their identities through the signs they use. Sign language, as a topic of study, is contextualized within the ways that deaf Tanzanians think about, interact with, use, and articulate their thoughts about it. This research also continues in the anthropological practice of tracing a process, the players involved and the myriad ways people respond. Specifically I will use postcolonial studies and critical development studies to understand the standardization of LAT and the tensions involved.

### **Quick Primer on Sign Languages**

Throughout the world, sign language is most commonly developed when deaf people get together and are not actively prevented from communicating visually. There are at least as many sign languages as there are deaf communities worldwide. Several countries have multiple sign languages—and every country has at least one. Linguists have identified regional and ethnic sign languages within countries that also have a national sign language (e.g., Schmaling 2000). Each sign language, similar to spoken languages, is developed within the context of the cultural, political, geographic, and historical particularities of the users.

People who are unfamiliar with sign languages often assume that all deaf people use a single, universal sign language. Since most sign languages have some degree of iconicity, people assume that all of them are based on the same set of manual representations of the signified, and that all sign languages are mutually intelligible. None of these assumptions are true. All sign languages utilize some degree of iconographic representation in order to communicate, but each may choose a specific visual characteristic. For example, the sign for “tree” in ASL represents the

entire tree with the forearm as the trunk and spread hand to indicate branches, showing the whole tree. In LAT, *miti* (trees) are represented in a way to express the way trees look when one walks past them by using the hand shape for the number one and alternating moving them up and down. An international sign language, similar to a visual version of Esperanto,<sup>22</sup> has been intentionally created—as opposed to the ‘natural’ sign languages developed in particular cultural circumstances—and is called International Sign (IS). Initially called Gestuno, IS began as a concept developed at the first Deaf World Congress in 1951 and, over time, has morphed into a more usable system that consists of loan signs, common iconographic representations, gestures, and completely new signs (Rosenstock 2004). However, IS is used only in international deaf conferences and is known only by the deaf who regularly attend.

Since the 1960s, sign languages and the linguistics of sign have enjoyed a steadily increasing amount of mainstream and academic attention. In 1965, the first linguists to study sign language published a dictionary on ASL (Stokoe, et al.). The dictionary is recognized as a turning point for sign language as well as deaf rights and recognition. Deaf Studies scholars, historians, linguists, and deaf leaders generally agree that sign language is a unifying characteristic of a deaf community, both locally and globally, and a necessary step toward the emancipation of deaf people (Ladd 2003; Lane, et al. 1996; World Federation of the Deaf 1951). In the West, sign languages are predominantly seen with ambivalence or curiosity by mainstream societies. In the United States, ASL is the fastest-growing foreign language option for hearing high school and college students. However, in many places, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, sign languages are stigmatized and not viewed as an acceptable form of communication; users must either use them in private or suffer consequences.

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<sup>22</sup> For an example of Esperanto, see the 1966 film “Incubus” starring William Shatner.

## **Lugha ya Alama ya Tanzania (LAT)**

### **Origins of LAT**

“It is this manual type of communication that deaf people need and whenever there are two or more deaf people a sign language will necessarily emerge” (Muzale 2004b).

LAT is a relatively new sign language. It is likely that by the time Kitaifa was organized and established in the 1980s, LAT was already growing with a population of users that the organization could build from. In fact, according to Muzale (2004c), early Kitaifa meetings outside the capital hosted a surprising number of signers who were already familiar with LAT. In more remote places, this was not the case. The first LAT dictionary was published in 1993 (Chama Cha Viziwi wa Tanzania), and a second edition in 2004 (Muzale). It has yet to earn official national recognition but is moving toward public acceptance.

LAT has a unique history among sign languages of other African countries. After Tanzania gained independence in 1961 and joined with Zanzibar in 1964, the newly born United Republic of Tanzania moved away from heavy dependence on its colonial power, England, and the West. It remained relatively closed to Western countries and, because of this, did not experience the same ASL influence as many of its neighbors (Foster 1975; Schmaling 2003). LAT, unlike Kenyan, Nigerian, Zambian, or Ghanaian sign languages, has very few commonalities with ASL. As opposed to the American model of encouraging complete adoption of ASL (Andersson 2005), Tanzania, due to larger national historical trajectories, instead has a close relationship with Scandinavian deaf associations who encouraged Tanzania to develop its own sign language instead of adopting an existing one from the West.

The specific origin of LAT is unclear; however, there are some factors that likely influenced its development. These factors include the founding of deaf schools, international deaf and disability campaigns, the founding of the Kitaifa, and the increased capacity of deaf

communities to partner with research linguists. Sign languages develop when groups of deaf people come together regularly, often when a deaf school is opened, as in the United States and Nicaragua (Lane 1989; Senghas, et al. 1994), or in a community with high instances of hereditary deafness, such as Martha's Vineyard and the Yucatan (Groce 1996; Johnson 1991). In Tanzania's case the Catholic Church established the first deaf school, Tabora School for the Deaf, in 1963. The school teaches by way of a strict oral method and does not allow sign language in the classroom. However, as shown in research by Muzale (2004c), the sole linguist in Tanzania focused on LAT and, as repeatedly reported by my study participants, deaf students at Tabora found a way to sign, even with the school's strict oral policy.

Many participants believed that LAT originated at Kitaifa and expanded from there. This is partially because early Kitaifa events (often seminars or workshops) were the only places people had access to the language. It is an origin myth perpetuated by Kitaifa officers, with many explaining to language learners that the organization itself created LAT. To some extent, the myth is based in fact, because Kitaifa was a significant contributor to the early documentation and development efforts. Some deaf people differentiate their own sign languages (from families or regions) from LAT by calling the latter "Kitaifa sign."

Many deaf people, especially those who intentionally distance themselves from Kitaifa, take serious offense at an organization in the capital run by a handful of elites taking credit for LAT. During a group interview of young men, I asked, "Where does sign language come from?"

William responded, "First schools, then Kitaifa wrote it all down."

Mathayo agreed, "Yeah, not Kitaifa though."

Christopher further clarified, "No. First it was deaf people themselves. Before Kitaifa we could communicate. We knew 'mom,' 'cook,' 'dad'... it was us, the deaf not a school and not Kitaifa."

Mathayo said, "Kitaifa got the money to promote sign language from the government, now everyone thinks it came from them."

Deaf people, especially young deaf, were interested in differentiating the deaf community and sign language from a single organization. They found it disempowering to take away ownership from what they called “the deaf.” The issue here is focused on the organization, not a problem with LAT itself.

### **Development and Spread of LAT**

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) believes that strong national-level deaf associations, formally recognized national sign language, and a strong interpreting professional cadre are key factors in advancing the rights of deaf people (World Federation of the Deaf 2011). To that end, Scandinavian deaf organizations funded several early initiatives, like the Sign Language Series from 1988-1994 and the first LAT dictionary in 1993. Currently, Kitaifa and other deaf organizations get external funding to teach sign language and there is extensive linguistic research by Dr. Muzale of the University of Dar es Salaam. It is important to note, though, that many deaf people in Tanzania—particularly the large population who do not attend any formal education—still have extremely limited access to any form of communication, let alone LAT. The spread of LAT is very uneven, with the most access in urban areas and the least in isolated rural areas. As Muzale (2004c) describes, “The number of deaf people in any given community is less than that of hearing persons, and sometimes there is one deaf person in a village or town. That is where problems begin.”

#### *Sign Language Seminars*

A major effort in research and standardization of sign languages was the East and Southern African Sign Language Seminars that began in 1988 and continued until 1994. These seminars brought together sign language experts from regional African countries and their peers in Europe to work on issues surrounding sign language. The negotiations for this conference series began in

1986, lead by the Finnish Association of the Deaf and supported by the World Congress of the Deaf and the Danish Association of the Deaf. The bulk of the responsibility for planning and conducting the seminars remained on the European countries (again, mostly Nordic) and the logistical responsibilities fell to the African country hosting the conference. European countries planned the program, prepared the project reports, and made arrangements for experts to attend. Host countries chose the venue, reserved rooms, and handled public relations. The power dynamics, through necessities born of capacity or convention of history, were clearly uneven.

The language conferences addressed issues of sign language development and research in African countries, but also highlighted other topics related to deaf communities and their rights. These seminars, as showing in Table 3 below, were an important starting point for developing capacity among African deaf leaders, linguists, and interpreters.

Date	Sign Language Seminar Topic	Host Country
1988	Sign Language	Tanzania
1990	The Deaf As Active Members of Society	Ethiopia
1992	Sign Language in Education of the Deaf	Kenya
1994	Sign Language Interpreting for the Deaf	Uganda

*Table 3: East and Southern African Sign Language Seminars*

#### *Teaching LAT to the Masses*

Sign language seminars were an important, well-funded, initial step to documenting, developing, and studying African sign languages. Kitaifa began the first effort to travel around Tanzania to collect and document signs that deaf Tanzanians used in various areas. Generally, school graduates were the best survey population. In the early 1990s, Kitaifa began teaching sign language to deaf adults. As Neno, a deaf man, described:

People from the office in Dar es Salaam would come down. They would teach sign language. I saw that, well, the first time I saw that sign language was in Morogoro. Two people from every branch got to go to Morogoro and we gathered there and there they started to teach sign language. That was all they did, was teach us how to sign. So we signed and signed. I guess that was two weeks or maybe, yeah, two

weeks. And then when it was finished we came back home and started to teach our local communities. But we kept going back each month, then 4 of us went. There were a total of 60 people there in Morogoro learning to teach sign language so that's where I learned and then I got a certificate to be a teacher of sign language. I am very proud. I have a certificate there at my house. But I don't actually work for Kitaifa. It is just as a teacher. I haven't gotten work with them yet. I have only been a teacher a little. If a couple people want to learn then I teach, but just here and there. But now, every deaf person in Selous knows sign language. I was the first teacher of sign language in Selous. Our eyes are opened as a community. We can all sign. It is good.

Neno was among the first class of deaf adults officially trained in LAT. He is unique among his peers because Neno went to a hearing school for his education and had no previous exposure to LAT or other sign languages. He did, however, have a gestural system he used with his deaf siblings at home. He explained that it was not a language and nothing like LAT, though. He and others, with their new certificates as teachers, began to use this language at deaf meetings around Tanzania.

Slowly, Kitaifa branch offices began to sprout up in places outside the capital and representatives visited schools to begin to lobby for adopting LAT. However, it was not until the dictionary was first published in the 1990s that schools began to change their curriculum. It is not entirely clear how long the transition from existing European sign languages (mostly Scandinavian) to LAT took or will continue to take, or the uniformity of their usage.

Deaf adults over 30 years of age remember a time before Kitaifa sign language (as LAT is sometimes called). Deaf people developed their own systems, which Muzale, the leading expert on LAT, called local sign language varieties. They chose signs from what they saw hearing people doing, physical characteristics of people they knew, and iconographic representations of objects. In Tanzania, for example, hearing people use a gesture to represent *sana* (very or extremely), where one snaps two fingers together in an arm and wrist movement. Many deaf people recounted that the origin of the sign is based on the way hearing people do it. However, a fair number also said

exactly the reverse. While the specific origins of the language are still unclear, many deaf people remember a time before it was formalized, recorded, and taught uniformly. Two deaf sisters laughed as they explained:

Upendo said, “We didn’t know Kitaifa sign yet.”

Rahema, her sister, laughed and responded, “I don’t think there was Kitaifa sign yet!”

Hamidi, a deaf man from Southern Tanzania who now lives in Dar es Salaam with his deaf wife and two hearing children, works for Kitaifa. He has worked on sign language research in Tanzania since the WFD started funding the effort. He is a key contributor and researcher in the collection, documentation, and teaching of LAT. He is also one of the few deaf Tanzanians with formal linguistics training. During an interview, he recounted what he saw deaf people doing early in his research and how it has changed today:

Before, there wasn't sign language. Well, there was a little. But mostly it was lip-reading and deaf people on their own would come up with sign languages. They were different everywhere. Before, there was very little signing and now it has increased quite a bit. There wasn't much sign language before, partially because people were embarrassed or ashamed. Because people in leadership positions, like teachers, would tell the students that sign language was bad. And that people who used it were not as smart. But at the same time there was a little bit of sign language when deaf people met each other. But as more and more deaf people met each other, sign language grew on its own.

Here, Hamidi highlights the variety of gestures used by deaf people and the pervasive negative views among hearing educators of signing. Speaking was, and still today is, equated to intelligence; deaf people still experience discrimination based on their inability to communicate orally. He also explains that sign language develops from deaf people spending time together and, for him, the next logical step was to develop a standardized LAT and make a dictionary that could be used to prove to educators and others that LAT was legitimate and an appropriate medium for the education of deaf children.

*Standardization*

Tanzanian Sign Language (LAT) is the standard variety of sign language used by deaf people in Tanzania. It is the variety that has the role of unifying the Deaf as a community in the country. Thus, efforts to have the language fully standardized and developed have been going on for about two decades. Apart from LAT however, deaf people, especially those in schools, tend to use their local signs found in their vicinity. (Muzale 2004c)

Language standardization is not unique to signed languages. Linguistic groups, especially those with limited access to power or political representation, will use language standardization as a method to increase awareness and gain support for their cause. Standardization also increases the level of legitimacy for that group's authority and uniqueness. Through the establishment of a uniform, codified, formally recognized language, groups could often utilize those rights to gain others, particularly for political and social equality. However, standardizing a language, while ensuring uniformity and being a first step in recognition by outside parties, has consequences for the language itself and its users (Duranti 1997). Deaf organizations and global experts in sign language see a strong relationship between awareness and respect for sign language, and rights and access for deaf people (Muzale 2001). In order to gain recognition by international organizations, state governments, schools, and other decision makers, the WFD and others work to standardize this as a first step to language recognition.

The ultimate goal of standardization is adoption of a national signed language by the Tanzanian government, thus guaranteeing children and adults access to the language and, hopefully, access to resources, ensuring inclusion of deaf people in mainstream society. So far, several countries have recognized sign language in their constitutions, including Uganda. Tanzania has made almost no progress in this area, but it continues to be an expressed goal of deaf organizations. Standardization will likely be difficult to achieve, though, since early Tanzanian

postcolonial linguistic politics discouraged recognizing another language because doing so would likely ignite a much larger debate over other traditional languages actively used in the country.

### *LAT Dictionary*

The publication of sign language dictionaries, as well as international seminars on the topic, certainly improve awareness and protection at high levels of government and society, but at a more local level these issues are less visible. The first sign language dictionary project sent researchers like Hamidi all over the country to collect signs from the deaf. Due to limited resources, they focused their search in areas that had deaf schools that allowed sign language, or large deaf clubs. Funded by Nordic countries, the first dictionary, published in 1993, had approximately 900 signs with translations to English and Kiswahili. The dictionary included multiple signs for the same concept and marked the region of the country in which each sign was used, labeling them “DSM,” “Songea,” or “Traditional.”

Once the first dictionary was published, LAT gained a new authority among educators and other leaders. Deaf people were able to lobby schools that were using sign language in the classroom to adopt LAT instead of the foreign one or mixture they were using at the time. The question still remains of how well teachers understand and use LAT.

After the publication of the first LAT dictionary, a second edition was published in 2004 with an increased number of signs and only one sign for each concept, thus removing the previously accepted regional variations. Below are two figures from the dictionaries showing the signs for *chipsi* (French fries). In Figure 6, one sees the three different signs—two “standard” and one from Mbeya; Figure 7, one sees a single sign (replicating the first sign in the first dictionary).

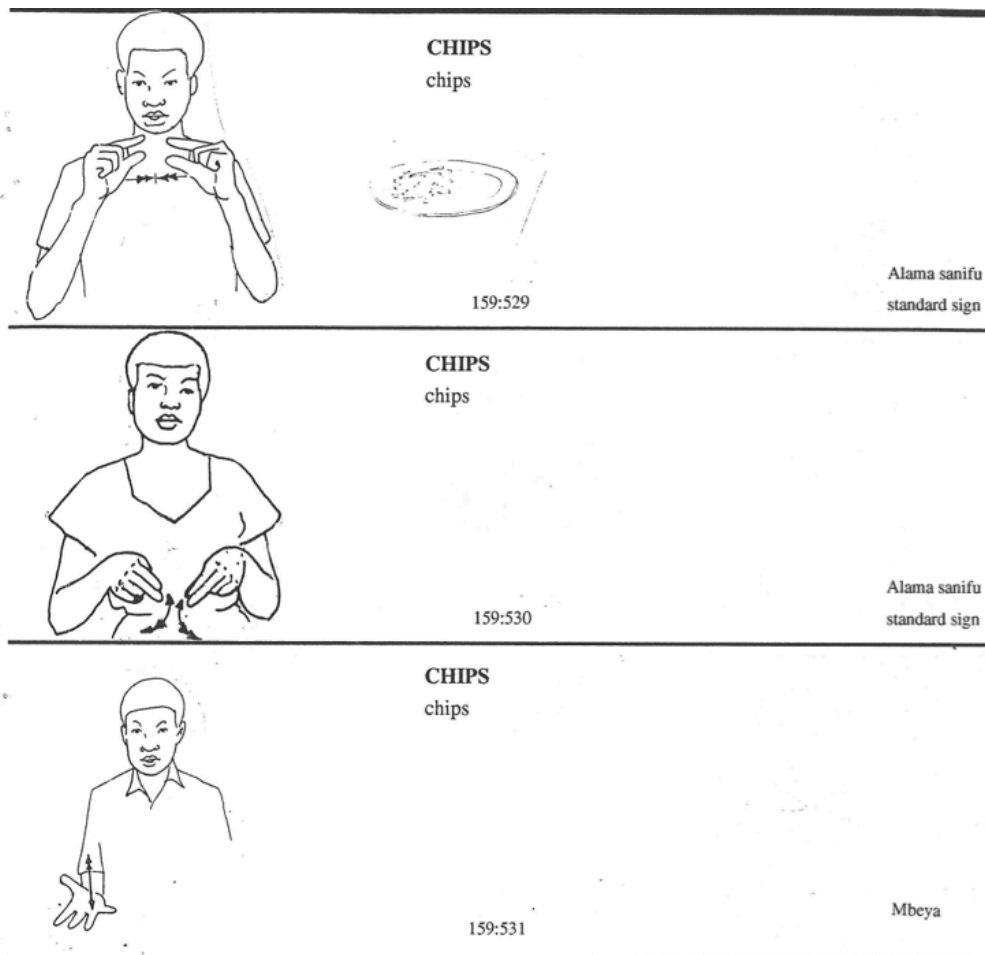


Figure 6: Signs for *CHIPS* in First LAT Dictionary

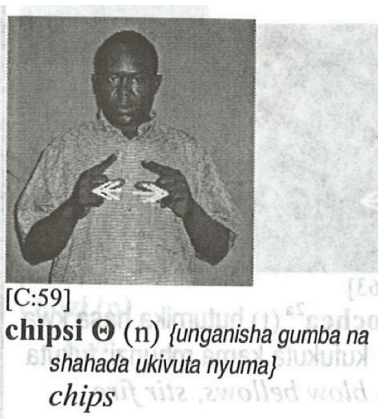


Figure 7: Sign for *CHIPS* in Second LAT Dictionary

Currently, Dr. Muzale and several deaf linguists are working on a book of LAT syntax to further help in public recognition and acceptance of the language.

In theory, the spread of LAT should be characterized by the wave theory, that is, moving from the centre(s) toward the peripheries and ‘from the dictionary’ to real language use. However, [the LAT dictionary] is a very small reference book that lists signs and their lexical equivalents in English and Kiswahili. In fact, one wonders whether it really deserves the term ‘dictionary’ from a lexicographical point of view. Therefore, expecting a language to develop and spread effectively from such a simple reference book, while some schools discourage or limit the use of SL among deaf pupils, would be overestimating the linguistic role of a dictionary. (Muzale 2004c)

After the publication of the first dictionary, linguists like Muzale began to participate, and LAT was recently included under the Languages of Tanzania (LOT) Project from the University of Dar es Salaam. The Project’s goals are to record, study, and produce teaching materials on the languages of Tanzania and to train future linguists in the work. In May 2009, LOT had a working weekend at the Beach Comber Hotel outside of Dar es Salaam. Two deaf linguists, Hamidi and Mariam, and a hearing interpreter and linguist, David, got together to review the progress made on the LAT syntax study. To ensure that only the proper signs were included, Hamidi and Mariam discussed the various signs and weeded through those that were foreign, did not make sense, or were not iconographic. I attended as an “expert” but ended up playing the role of secretary. David asked about ASL linguistics and the kinds of resources and expertise American deaf have to study their own language. He was shocked at all the equipment and attention ASL receives and said, “When you had typewriters, we were writing on the floor. And we still haven’t caught up” (85:1).

During the discussion, the participants debated the authenticity of various signs used by deaf Tanzanians. In the following example, the sign being discussed is *mzungu* (white person), signed with the use of the non-dominant palm or top of non-dominant hand and then the dominant hand rubbing a circle on the surface (the movement is very similar to the *Kitaifa* accepted sign which takes place on the cheek instead of the hand).

Mariam: *Haitumiki*.<sup>23</sup>

Me: I saw that used in Njombe.

Mariam: That's only one place it is used. There's a sign normal people use.

David: Njombe is big, that's many people using it.

Mariam: When those kids leave school and go out, they will use the other sign and stop using that one.

David: But they use it.

Mariam: But it comes from Finland's sign for white.

David: This is a question for the terms of reference.

Mariam: Muzale wants us to get out all the non-Tanzanian signs.

Me: But that doesn't mean *haitumiki*, it means it is from Finland or not from Tanzania.

David: This is a big question about including it in the book. This is because academics, researchers, higher ups, will see this book and trust it.

Mariam: Let's take them out but leave a note for Muzale

*Excerpt from Field Notes: Dar es Salaam, March 2009*

The group took cleaning and authenticating the signs in the text very seriously. They discussed at length which words were no longer used, which were awkward, and, of greatest concern, which signs came from another country. Sometimes, if a sign appeared foreign, they would ask for the ASL sign to ensure that it was totally different from the LAT sign before deciding whether to accept it or not. An express goal of the work was to clean the dictionary of foreign signs, particularly those originating from ASL. As users connected to the dictionary project describe it, LAT is unique in Africa. LAT has its own history and, according to the researchers, has developed naturally over the course of a few decades into a language that has not been infiltrated by foreign signs. Parallels were drawn between the authentication of LAT and the legitimacy of deaf Tanzanians.

### **Role of Sign Language in Everyday Life**

In this section, I outline the ways deaf people learn sign language, its role in everyday life, and what life is like without it. Generally, sign language plays a significant role in the development

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<sup>23</sup> Kiswahili for "It isn't used."

and maintenance of a community of deaf people. While learning sign language, deaf people are also learning about other deaf people, the networks among them, and the larger community of signers they now participate in.

Sign language plays a significant role in deaf people's lives. There are particular ways that deaf people gain access to the language, and places and times they are allowed to use it. There is still a significant amount of stigma around the use of sign language, and deaf people experience physical violence from families, community members, and others who do not approve of manual communication.

In most cases, deaf people in Tanzania live without any sign language. Without access to sign language and a community of deaf people, they rely on more rudimentary forms of communication, or, in some cases, none at all.

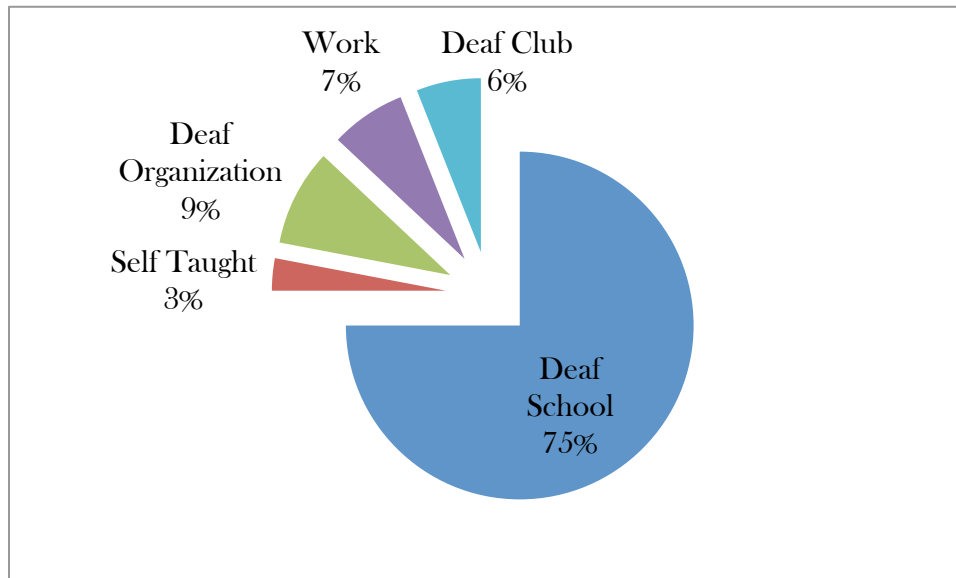
### **Learning Sign Language**

The age at which people learned sign language, and the way they learned, is highly dependent on the individual's demographics. Learning sign language is a life-changing event for deaf Tanzanians; it provides them access to language and to a new life with people, events, and community. Participants in this study conveyed the sense of relief and belonging they felt when they could finally participate fully in what was happening around them. Nyawe described,

I really liked school. We could use sign language at school. At home I was bored and alone. They would all talk and I would never understand what was going on. I would ask people to repeat but they never would. At school I could catch everything that was happening.

Overwhelmingly, signers in this study learned at deaf school—especially those entering school after 1993. In rural areas, the deaf were more isolated and if they learned LAT at all, they learned from KITAIFA workshops hosted in their area. Late-deafened individuals often learned

from deaf clubs in urban areas. Figure 8, below, shows the breakdown of responses by survey participants on where they learned sign language:



*Figure 8: Survey Question: Where did you learn sign language?*

Many participants in the study pointed out that they learned at school, but not in the classroom. Teachers of the deaf are almost always hearing and generally not the primary language models for deaf learners. This is, in part, because teachers of the deaf receive highly varied amounts of training in LAT and therefore often have limited skills in sign language. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. In rare cases, hearing teachers become advanced signers and the deaf teachers are expert signers.

Language policies in schools for the deaf are highly varied as well. Deaf schools in Tanzania, of which there are eight, are run by religious organizations. So, while the Government of Tanzania pays the teachers' salaries, the level of oversight the state has in internal school affairs is

not comprehensive. “Total Communication?”<sup>24</sup> Ha! Try Total Confusion!” laughed Anders as he described the situation at a deaf school in Northern Tanzania. The school had teachers from three different Western countries (USA, Sweden, and Finland) all teaching in different signed languages while using spoken English. Before Kitaifa had a written its collection of signs, schools were using whatever the nearest expert or majority of the school population suggested. Hamidi, a Sign Language Officer, recounts language use in schools, saying, “It was all mixed. Sometimes Finnish and sometimes Tanzanian. We have been trying really hard to get schools to all use Tanzanian Sign Language and get rid of the other stuff” (128:18). The Selous School for the deaf used Finnish sign language until 1993, when Kitaifa officials visited with a copy of the new dictionary. The teachers began to transition over to the new sign system. Given the nascence of a formal dictionary for LAT, schools for the deaf have been using the language for less than 20 years with no requirements as to the skill level of teachers. Additionally, several schools have continued to resist any usage of sign language as an appropriate form of communication for their pupils. Unfortunately, these schools continue to use oral methods because they do not accept sign language as an acceptable form of communication for deaf children.

Schools with signing students and staff became extremely important places for deaf children. They could understand everyone; they were in no danger of being teased or beaten for their deafness, and, in short, they were exactly where they thought they should be. Sia described her feelings about school,

Once I got to deaf school you, couldn't pay me to leave. I loved it. From November to January—then the school was closing for holiday. I stayed the whole time until the school was actually closed. Then I finally had to go home. I was home for two weeks and then right back.

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<sup>24</sup> Anders is referring to the communication philosophy that encouraged signing and speaking simultaneously in order to provide both languages to students. This has been largely discredited by the work of Johnson et al. See literature review in Chapter Two for more on this.

While most people who learned sign language at a young age learned it in school, many pointed out that it was the other deaf students who taught them, not the teachers or staff. Mode explained,

Yes from the deaf there. It took me a long time, though, at first. I would just copy signs, just copy, copy, copy. Then, after a while, I started to put things together. I started to understand more. You know, I wouldn't be able to make complex thoughts come out. But as I understood more, I could communicate more.

Deaf teachers and staff described their frustration at growing up in schools where hearing educators would stand for hours on end, writing on the blackboard and talking into the wall, leaving all the children to guess the lesson. They described spending nights piecing together the information between all the deaf children in order to learn. They specifically referenced these experiences when they talked about deciding to go into education.

In the early years of LAT (and still today in rural areas), teams of sign language teachers traveled out to remote places to teach local deaf. After several sessions, they chose a few people who learned the language quickly and had the potential to be good teachers for more in depth training, and developed those few into instructors who continued to teach in the area. Funds were extremely limited for these efforts, and deaf people often learned sign language not through a sign language class, but through a workshop or seminar on a completely different topic where they began to copy signs.

Late-deafened people who learned from deaf clubs described that they learned about sign language but also met a community of people who had common experiences. Ester, who became deaf when she was 15 years old, described how she started to learn sign language when she began to work at Huruma, a religious organization that hires deaf and disabled people to make various crafts:

Later, I started to figure it out. I started to work at Huruma and the deaf would read lips and use sign language. So I started to figure out how to do it. I realized I wasn't

the only deaf person. I wasn't the only one who couldn't read lips at night. It was just a new part of my life.

Hamidi explained that he went to sign language class and learned the language, but also learned about local deaf clubs and Kitaifa, where he met his future wife.

Many of the early sign language learning stories that participants told included embarrassing or humorous events such as slapstick humor and miscommunication. Sinda, a deaf woman and leader in the Dar es Salaam community, described her first weeks at a school for the deaf. Even though it was an oral school, some of the staff would sign with the children. A staff person asked Sinda in gesture if she was Muslim or Christian, using the sign of the cross. Sinda, being a Protestant, didn't understand the sign of the cross so she just said, "No." She said "no" was the only sign she knew. On Sunday, when all the other children were getting dressed in their Sunday finest, Sinda watched sadly as everyone else went to church and she had to stay back at the dorm. She did not understand. Unbeknownst to her, the staff thought she was the school's first deaf Muslim child and they were looking for a mosque for her to attend. The next week, she figured out how to tell them she was Christian and got to go to church. She got to get dressed and go with all the other children. From then on, she learned to sign "YES" to everything for fear of missing out on something. After Sinda finished telling her story, the entire group of deaf people around her were wiping their eyes and banging tables because her account was so funny and so familiar.

Sinda told a story similar to many told by deaf people all over the world. Joining a deaf community means being new and unaware of linguistic and cultural behaviors. These stories are told and retold all around deaf clubs. They are especially funny to deaf people because they are in such strong contrast to their current situations of operating in a fully accessible community where

everyone uses sign language. A few awkward bumps are a welcome change from a previous life of feeling isolated and ostracized.

Sign language means education, community, rights, and relationships for deaf people. Without sign language, all other aspects of life are often missing or severely impaired. One of the starkest examples of extreme consequences of access to sign language comes from two brothers, Michael and Kato. They were both born deaf, only a few years apart, to a mother who farmed and a father who was an elementary school teacher. The village they lived in was a multi-day journey from the nearest deaf school. The two boys, aged 6 and 8, made this trip with their father. The headmaster welcomed them into the office and gave the father a choice. The school was full and they could accept only one of the brothers. On the bus ride home, Michael sat next to his father and never understood why his brother had to stay. Over the years, Kato stayed with families closer to the deaf school to save on travel costs and rarely came home. Michael stayed home, helped on the family farm, and hid from local youth who would taunt and tease him. As adults, Kato and Michael have drastically different lives. Kato works in construction and is saving to build a home for himself, his long time girlfriend, and infant son. Michael works at Huruma. For the first time in his life since his brother left for school, he is around other people who cannot hear. Over the course of this study, Michael began to learn sign language, made friends for the first time in his life, and started to meet young women. Until Kato got Michael a job, Kato was sure his brother would die alone in a small hut on his parents' farm without friends or family to miss him.

It is clear from the scholarly literature that learning a language is a time-sensitive activity. Learning a language before puberty ensures that the user will be a native speaker. Learning any language at all in the first few years of life will impact all other development. Deaf people in Tanzania learn their first language when they are 7 or 8 years old, at the earliest. There are efforts

to open *cheka chehas*, or preschools, for deaf children in Dar es Salaam, but these children do not currently learn a language until far later. For those who are born deaf and are isolated for most of their lives, they learn their first language well into their 20s or 30s. Research shows that learning your first language late in life results in limited and simplified syntax and vocabulary, among a host of other things. Several deaf people in this study, as in the case of Michael, did not learn language until well into adulthood. In addition to lost years of relationships and social access, these adult learners remain severely hampered in their communication abilities throughout the rest of their lives.

### Using Sign Language

Sign language provides more than just an interesting form of communication. It also provides access to public life. Deaf participants, during interviews, articulated it this way:

So it really comes down to an issue of communication. Communication between deaf and hearing is so difficult. It is so hard. I see deaf people who have the desire to be successful but it is difficult. I think the key here is sign language. We should be teaching them sign language. Sign language is the best way for deaf people to communicate. It is the easiest. Once they get sign language then they can get education, they can lobby government. But the government hasn't accepted sign language. They still don't see deaf people as equal to hearing people. So life for deaf people is hard. They have far more problems.

I hate speaking. I like signing. That other world is too hard.

### Access

Throughout interviews and conversations, participants talked about sign language in terms of the access it provided. They were able to access information, rights, and relationships. Sign language in Tanzania is more than a language; it is also a vehicle for participation in community, education, and public life. “Therefore, the Deaf look at the efforts geared towards developing their language as the necessary seed for securing their human rights and fostering their development in general” (Muzale 2004c).

Accessing services is a huge challenge for deaf people. Very few service providers (healthcare workers, police, clergy, and government officials) know sign language. Additionally, there is extremely limited infrastructure for communication support, such as interpreters. The lack of interpreters and resources to pay for them, coupled with a relatively high rate of illiteracy among the deaf population, produces a serious barrier to services and participation in public life. Many deaf people reported relying on family members, especially parents, to help facilitate communication, particularly for healthcare. Since so few hearing people use sign language, deaf people often find themselves using informal interpreters. Deaf people reported feeling uncomfortable using family members to interpret communicate with doctors when talking about sensitive topics like sex and HIV/AIDS.

In an interview with Ester, a deaf single mother and officer in a local *Kitaifa* branch office, she described how sign language is vital to accessing social services, particularly healthcare. She said:

Think about Joyce's situation. She can talk a little bit. But she can't read at all. She can't sign at all. Some deaf people, like me, I can talk but I can also read so the doctor can write and I can understand what he is saying to me. But Joyce can't do that. She has no idea what's happening. That is a really serious problem for deaf people. I mean, these people can't even explain what is wrong with them. Maybe they have a little bit of sign language, then it becomes easier. Then someone can interpret for you, you have some basic language ability. But if neither one can do it, then it is completely different.

Often, deaf people who were not allowed to sign at all had no foundation of language and far more limitations in developing ad hoc communication strategies with hearing people to address specific needs. Adila described the crucial role that sign language plays in transferring information between deaf people. "We could explain things to each other. This is really important because deaf people are really lacking in knowledge." Tanzania's information comes through radio, TV, and newspaper. Deaf people have no access to radio, extremely limited access to TV, and

newspaper reading requires a level of education many deaf people do not have. Additionally, the typical oral communication of community members informing each other and trading news and gossip is extremely challenging.

### Stigma

While sign language is incredibly important in education, work, and personal life, there is a stigma about looking deaf or being a *bubu* (a deaf-mute, one who cannot communicate). Deafness is unique among disabilities because those who are deaf can often move through a crowd and not “look disabled.” They can pass for hearing in public life. Signing calls attention to a relatively hidden disability and makes people uncomfortable. The shame, embarrassment, and discomfort around disability in general—and deafness specifically—impacts deaf people’s lives in public society and at home. Ruby explained the reaction her father had to her using sign language,

Well, we would talk mostly. My father hated sign language. He hated it so much. If he caught me signing he would hit me. Wow. He was so mad. He only wanted me to use my mouth and to read lips. He thought signing made me look like a *bubu*.

During their time in schools, even deaf schools, informants described their strategies for hiding signing from hearing teachers and using sign language outside the classroom as a tool to teach each other the information they were missing because teachers only spoke. Sia recalled from her school years:

It used to be that all the teachers at Songea were hearing. They would write on the boards. But they wouldn't let us sign. They hated it. If the teachers caught you signing they would hit you. They were really strict about it. We would have to be cunning and wait until we were away from the teachers and then we could sign. In the classroom we would only speak and then outside we would sign. When the teachers weren't around that's when we would use sign language.

Out in public life, older deaf participants explained that times are changing. As Rahema explained, “These days you can sign in public and people don’t hit you. It is a big change.” There are lots of explanations for the positive changes; generally, the existence of associations of the deaf

and formal study and acceptance of sign language seem to be key. While many deaf were critical of Kitaifa for various reasons, they also recognize that Kitaifa has been a positive force in deaf equality and rights. A Kitaifa officer explained:

It has changed a lot I guess. Before there were lots of deaf who were embarrassed to sign. They would only do it in secret. Now people sign out in front of people all the time. Also, sign language has a book now [dictionary] and we have posters we put up in places. Also, deaf people now have a different consciousness than before. Deaf are getting work better now, the government knows about LAT and accepts it. So those are major changes I have noticed since I started in Kitaifa.

Public awareness of people with disabilities has been increasing recently. National level organizations for disabled persons, specific lines of funding from large external donors, and other high-level campaigns have increased the visibility of people with disabilities in public life. These positive changes are unevenly distributed, though, and those who live in rural areas or far from deaf schools are still ostracized by their hearing community members. During my research, if deaf people in a rural area wanted to communicate in gesture or sign language, they would often move the conversation into their homes, away from the laughs and jeers of their neighbors. If conversations happened outside, in public view, a crowd quickly gathered and some mocked the signers by copying their movements and making snide remarks. Sometimes, however, the consequences of signing in public were more severe. Deaf participants and their families explained that deaf people were not only teased, but were also the victims of physical abuse at the hands of community members.

### **Places To Sign**

Because of a lack of education, each deaf person has their own unique way of using Kiswahili. And people don't know that; people don't understand that. Often hearing people, rather than work to figure it out, just kick deaf people out of the office or the room. They wash their hands of it. And deaf people get treated terribly. These hearing people get so frustrated and just get rid of them. Then deaf people are left without medicine or help. So they don't know what medicine to take, how often, and have no one to ask for help. (Interview with Ester, February 2009)

Across the interviews, deaf people related where they were able to safely use sign language and unanimously wished they could use it more often. Despite the stigma of using sign language, deaf Tanzanians are constantly figuring out ways to use their preferred mode of communication and ensure access for themselves and their peers.

For instance, pupils in those schools which insist on oralism, like Tabora and Luhuwiko, tended to resort to speech when they were in class with a teacher, but would immediately switch to [sign language], or at least start signing, once the teacher left. Similarly, if you meet them outside and sign to them, they respond in [sign language], provided there is a sense of security and risk-free environment. (Muzale 2004c)

Deaf Tanzanians find creative ways of ensuring they have that sense of security. Often, the best way is to ensure that they are living and working in a community with fellow sign language users. In places where deaf people do not feel secure, they often refrain from communicating at all. For example, deaf women explained that on *daladala* (bus) rides where they were only two and did not feel safe, they would just look out the window and try to blend in.

In order to acclimate new hearing associates to sign language, deaf Tanzanians use slapstick humor and other strategies to introduce signing. Around hearing friends and partners, deaf people often take a slow, informal approach to teaching sign. Rahema explained that hearing people are afraid of sign language the first few times they see it, but once they move past that, they get much more comfortable. Jimu, a deaf man working in a café owned by his deaf brother, explained of hearing patrons and staff:

People there do sign. Yes. Once people have been working there for a while they understand how to communicate with deaf. They can sign. But the guests or the new people, they don't know that there are deaf there. But after a while they figure it out. And they start to sign. They usually stop talking and start signing.

Here, repeated exposure seems to be key. Also of important note, because it is rare in this situation, the deaf person is in a position of authority.

For those who were raised around deaf people, attended a deaf school, and continue to work and live around their fellow deaf Tanzanians, sign language has been a full-time presence. However, the vast majority of deaf people in Tanzania do not live solely within the deaf community. Hearing spouses, children, bosses, and neighbors almost always require oral communication. Elsia, a home worker at Huruma, lives with her husband and four children outside of Selous. During our interview, she explained that she really only uses sign language while she is at work or at a meeting of deaf people. She only goes into work once a week and she attends deaf meetings less than once a month. Sign language, for Elsia, while a convenient way to communicate, does not play a significant role in her life. Another gentleman, Godfrey, was raised by his hearing elderly grandparents, attends hearing secondary school, and only dates hearing girls. Among his deaf friends he signs and he appreciates the access the visual modality provides, but does not have the opportunity to use it often.

Deaf people have varying abilities to use sign language in their public and private lives. Using sign language is more than a preferred mode of communication, and often the key factor in enabling deaf people to access educational, economic, and social opportunities. Many older deaf people have recognized the slow, steady improvement of mainstream acceptance of sign language, and all deaf people continue to find ways to communicate with each other and their hearing community members. Sign language awareness and usage is the key to accessing public life. For those who do not know sign language, the situation is very different.

### **People Without Sign Language**

As mentioned previously, most deaf people in Tanzania do not know LAT. There are a wide variety of communication strategies employed by deaf people, especially in rural areas. Some deaf people have small home sign systems that they developed with their own family and close

neighbors, and used only for a short period of time. Others have longer-lasting sign systems that develop from home signs and grow into multi-generational systems used in a whole or part of a village. The more extreme cases were deaf people who were actively deterred from signing (often with physical abuse), who had no language at all.

### **Village Sign**

Given the lack of exposure to LAT and the isolation of deaf people, home sign systems, gestures, and “village sign” continue to flourish throughout Tanzania. As Muzale (2004c), Goldin-Meadow (2003), and others have shown, when deaf people are allowed, they will develop a manual form of communication without being taught. In isolated communities, these languages develop independently of other sign languages and continue for generations (Groce 1996).

Deaf people who first used home sign systems and later learned LAT, indicated that their systems often started with various degrees of pointing and then developed into iconographic gestures to communicate more complexly. Jimu explained, “My sister and I made up our own. Before we learned sign language, we mouthed and pointed at things. We didn’t actually sign anything that looked like Kitaifa sign. It was our own.” Others described that they would borrow gestures from hearing people, like “*sana*,” “*hamna*,” and “*tano*” (very/a lot, none, and five), and build their language around it. Upendo and Rahema said they took their signs for “full,” “steal,” and other words from hearing people around them. Even their own sign names changed when they began to use LAT.

Sign systems, depending on the population of deaf people, their hearing family, and community members’ willingness to participate and allow the system to develop, can grow into multi-generational sign languages. The communication system in a village outside of Selous called Kitulo, where the Nyenya family resides, was the most complex and well-established home sign

system in the study.

The immediate family has four children, two girls and two boys. Three of these children became deaf at very young ages. The three children lived with their aunt, uncle, and cousins after their mother died. All the children in the house signed, as well as many of their young friends and some of the neighbors. Two of the deaf children moved away for school and still live outside the community, but one deaf sibling, all the cousins, and neighbors remain. Many of them still sign. When the deaf sisters return home, they switch to the village sign, as they call it, which looks very different from LAT. Rahema and Upendo explained:

Really, our brother has not even been taught sign language yet. Really. He knows the sign language he uses in our family and in our village but if he meets people who use Kitaifa sign [LAT] he doesn't know what they are saying because he hasn't learned it yet. When we were all together it was fine. We all communicated just fine. But he has been alone for so long and everyone who could sign has slowly moved away, gotten married, and gone for work, really. Before, my aunt's house was full and every single one of them could sign.

Deaf participants who were allowed to sign at home would show me various home signs and how different or similar they were to LAT signs. One example a woman showed was her home sign for Dar es Salaam (the LAT sign is produced with a “d” hand shape to the palm, transitioning to an open hand with fluttering fingers for water). She pointed far away and then wiped her brow for hot, meaning, “the place far away with hot weather.” Given her location and the weather of Dar es Salaam, this was very appropriate. Another young man used the gesture of putting a shot in his bottom as the sign for doctor. A woman in a remote village made a gesture of a person who is skinny, ill, and weak as a sign for HIV/AIDS. These examples highlight the highly iconographic nature of some signs, which are very different from the accepted LAT signs.

Based on his extensive research, Muzale writes that local sign language systems are mutually intelligible with LAT. During my field research, it became apparent that some local

systems were quite similar and, with a few years of constant exposure, most deaf people in these situations could become proficient users of LAT. Other systems were extremely different. All local systems appeared to be based on iconographic signs of the signified concepts. This research, however, is not a linguistic study of sign language variation in Tanzania but after months of interviews, one picks up a few insights.

### **Extremely Limited Language**

Through my research I found that even without any intelligible signs, information is shared between parties. Even in the most extreme cases, acts of communication still exist. Some of the most rudimentary sign systems consisted of a set of movements without any intelligible meaning. One young man, Fred, would point to the right and raise his eyebrows. There was no directional relation to his pointing and he used it as a response when he thought someone was trying to communicate with him. When I took notes on my survey paperwork, Fred took a pen from the bag and “took notes” on a slip of paper that the RA gave him. He scribbled in tiny shapes that, from a distance, could look like writing. He mimicked facial expressions from people in the room. Other rural deaf communicated with their families by physically taking the person to the place they were needed. For example, one woman showed that when she needed the deaf orphan who she took in to clean the floor, she physically took him by the wrist to the mop and bucket and then to the floor she wanted cleaned. When he was finished, he would get her and bring her to the cleaned floor for her inspection. Most of their communication consisted of trial and error through pointing and waiting until he chose correctly. Another man used the sign “HAMNA” (meaning?) as a response to any question. Mwanitu, an older woman living in a village outside Selous, signed the number ten or “KUMI” (two closed fists clapped together) for every number in her

estimation.<sup>25</sup>

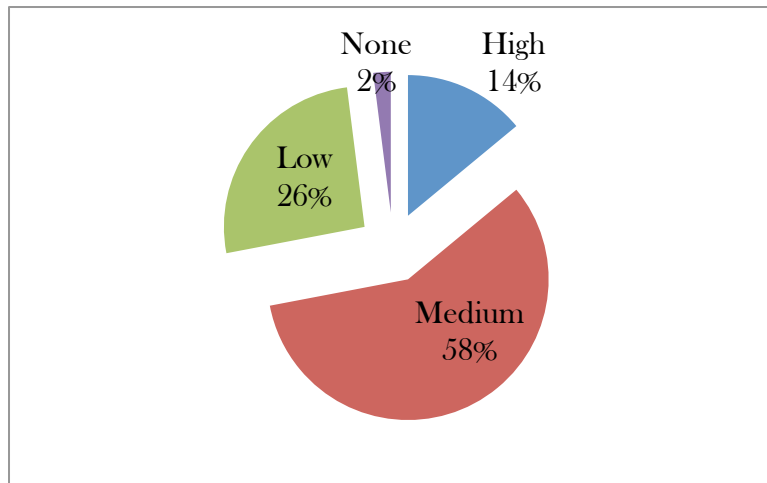
### **Life in Tanzania for Signers and Non-Signers**

There are stark differences between the lives of deaf people who sign (sample groups: elites, integrated signers, and marginalized signers) and deaf people who do not (sample group: non-signers). Deaf signers have often attended some form of formal education, participate in a community of deaf people, and have an increased awareness about political, cultural, and economic systems that exist in Tanzania. They are more likely to know about legislation passed in Tanzania regarding the protection of people with disabilities, but also understand that they are not enforced. They are also more likely to report abuse to police, and can rely on community members to help in times of need. Non-signers are often completely isolated from their own families, villages, and certainly from mainstream Tanzania.

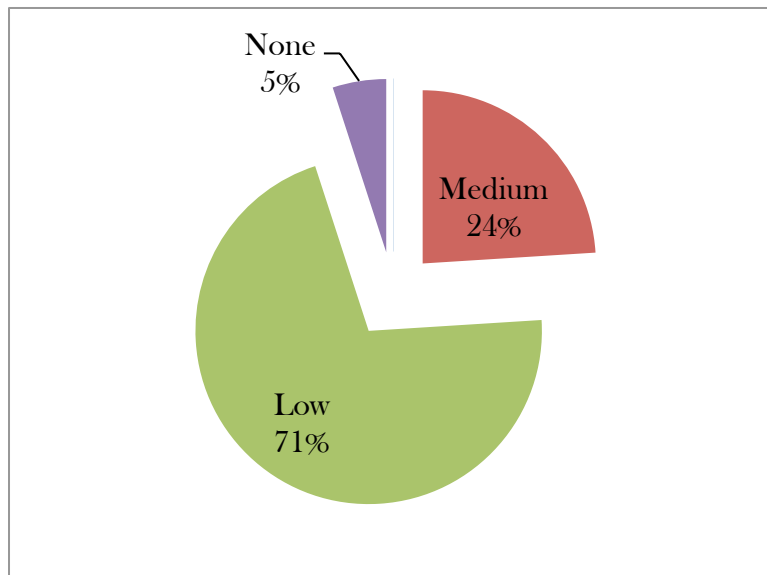
Signers and non-signers have access to very different kinds of work and different income levels. As shown in Figures 9 and 10, below, signers had better access to higher paying work.

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<sup>25</sup> During the course of this study, I only found one deaf non-signer that clearly had other disabilities, specifically mental. While I am not an expert in assessment and diagnosis of any disability, it became clear over time and working with these participants that, given the chance to develop a safe way to communicate, they were clearly intelligent, thoughtful, and very frustrated people.



*Figure 9: Levels of Income for Signers*



*Figure 10: Levels of Income for Non-signers*

Signers were more likely to have consistent incomes and were less reliant on family members than non-signers. In many cases, signers were also responsible for supporting their own immediate families with their wages, as well as extended families. This was very rare among non-signers. Signers were more likely to be partnered, and were more likely to have other deaf people as partners. Signers had far more understanding about the history and status of LAT. Some deaf

people in this study, especially the elites and integrated signers, had knowledge of other sign languages in other countries as well.

### **Power, Representation And Resistance**

While LAT is generally accepted in conversations with people outside the deaf community—and all deaf people agree that life with sign language is better than life without—the ways that people think about and interact with LAT vary widely. In some cases, deaf people who lived outside the capital and were not active members of Kitaifa would teach a sign and, with a smirk, say what the Kitaifa sign was for that concept while continuing to use their original signs. For example, during and after church socials, deaf parishioners had great fun teaching the various regional signs for *Jumamosi* (Saturday). They wanted a guess of where each sign was from—Kitaifa, Selous, Songea, or Dar es Salaam. They debated the merits of each sign, if it made sense, if it was easy to produce, and who used it. The fact that the dictionary formally sanctioned it carried very little weight in these discussions.

The uniformity and authority of the dictionary does not reach throughout the country. In fact, a study in 2004 revealed that over 50% of deaf students preferred their local sign languages to LAT while the rest preferred to mix the two (Muzale 2004c). Adila, a graduate from a deaf school in Southern Tanzania, explained during an interview that she has two brains when it comes to sign language. She said the language she used at school had Finnish signs and she kept those for when she communicated with her fellow alumni. During the rest of her life she used LAT.

Authority and ownership of sign languages are important and contentious issues with significant consequences. Sign language is a defining factor in the identities of deaf communities, as it distinguishes them from their hearing peers. It is the single most important method by which deaf people access community, education, relationships, and rights. As the language becomes

more codified through research, the dictionary project, and use in schools—and as it gains recognition in the national consciousness—deaf people become increasingly able to sort through the way decisions are made and provide direction for the language. Currently, the major decision makers for the language are the elites: hearing university researchers, linguists, and leaders in national level deaf organizations. On a national and international level, the lines are clear. However, there remains an important question about how this authority is understood and accepted (or rejected) by diverse segments of the Tanzanian deaf community. During the dictionary project discussions, all final decisions were held for Dr. Muzale, the expert. Only certain deaf people have the authority to accept or reject signs as correct, foreign, or appropriate.

Given the lack of community organization, democratic decision-making at a community level is difficult. However, even in the most equitable of circumstances, there are necessary decisions about inclusion that make a statement about who has the authority to participate. Some deaf people complained that the elite deaf leadership at Kitaifa kept tight control of the development of the first dictionary and the current research on LAT utilizes a relatively small number of participants. Those who live outside the capital and are less connected feel alienated from the process and the language.

### **Conclusion**

This research builds on the important work of Deaf Studies (2000; LeMaster 1997; Schmaling 2001; Senghas 1997), and takes LAT seriously as a legitimate language and the best way for deaf people to communicate. Working with people with limited or no sign language capabilities in Tanzania is based in the foundational studies on home sign and village sign systems (Branson, et al. 1996; Goldin-Meadow 2007; Johnson 1994). It moves away from the rhetoric around sign language being the “natural language of the deaf” by tracing the external influences, largely from

the World Federation of the Deaf and Scandinavian countries, in the internal efforts to standardize LAT. Standardization of LAT is, to some extent, a necessary step in improving deaf education, training interpreters, and ultimately facilitating better access for deaf people to public life in Tanzania. It is not a neutral process. By following the theoretical contributions of postcolonial studies in East African ethnography and critical development studies, I show where the campaign to standardize LAT began, who has the power to participate in the process, and how people resist the representation of LAT as owned by a particular group or organization. Additionally, this project departs from most studies of deaf people in the developing world because it locates sign language, not as the central theme of the ethnographic engagement, but as one of a variety of issues as experienced, interacted with and articulated by deaf people. Finally, I want to remain grounded and somewhat pragmatic in my description and highlight that, no matter how flawed the process of language standardization and education might be, LAT remains one of the most important ways through which deaf Tanzanians access education, support networks, and public life. Knowledge of sign language continues to be one of the most important indicators for improved opportunity, work, and support from both deaf and hearing communities.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SHIFTING BETWEEN DEAFNESS AND DISABILITY

The room is hot, dark, and crammed with women. Some of them are dressed in *kangas*—traditional East African fabric worn as skirts, shawls, and head coverings—and some in Western style dresses and blouses. Among the 40 women who sit knee-to-knee in the unfinished cement room, some are blind, a few are on crutches, one is albino, and several are deaf. They come from all over Dar es Salaam and surrounding villages, meeting here formally twice a week according to the calendar on the wall, but are found here nearly every day. They are Pamoja.

I came to the meeting with a deaf friend in Pamoja who works in another organization called Vijana. She quickly finds me a chair and sits me next to Pamoja's president. The president is an older, shorthaired, blind woman who works as a teacher of blind students in Dar es Salaam. We all receive our soda and cookies, and then the meeting begins. The women, sometimes in turn, sometimes together, speak of their problems, stemming in part from the lack of respect they receive in their homes and communities. Pamoja is important to them because it provides work and a place to express their concerns.

Then comes the part of the meeting I have come to expect: the part where they want to know what I—a white, American, hearing, able-bodied woman—am doing here in Tanzania, hanging out with their deaf sister. In my best Kiswahili and Tanzanian Sign Language, I try to explain that I am a student doing research on the lives of people who are deaf in Tanzania. The president puts her hand on my arm and helps me, “You mean disabled people in Tanzania—not deaf people in Tanzania, right?”

“No,” I say, “I am focusing only on deaf people for this project.” To this, there is an outcry of shock and disappointment by the group. The crowded room suddenly feels even smaller, as I feel the eyes of the women zero in on me. Several women, who had once looked at me with friendly, welcoming smiles, are now eyeing me with disgust, and a chorus of rising voices fills the crowded room.

“Why study only the deaf? They are no different than us.”

“We are all poor and oppressed by our husbands equally.”

“When you separate out the deaf, you only weaken our voice.”

“We, as disabled women, must stand together or we will accomplish nothing.”

My friend Tina, realizing the situation was getting tense, quickly taps my knee and signs, “Say what I say, don't tell them I am saying it.” She slyly and patiently tells me to say respectfully and kindly that I am only a graduate student and that I can only study one small piece of a much larger picture. That my work is only in its initial phases, and I recognize the shortcomings in my work and will seek to build a larger study where I learn about all disabled women—instead of one tiny fraction. This statement, voiced by me but crafted by my friend, seems to save me. The women of Pamoja relax and allow me to stay for their meeting. I am even allowed to keep my cookie and soda.

*Excerpt from Field Notes: Dar es Salaam, April 2009*

In contrast to Western deaf communities, the distinction between deafness and disability is less concrete in Tanzania. Deaf people move between deaf and disabled groups, making those movements strategically. In this chapter, I show that the distinction between deaf people and other people with disabilities, so clearly demarcated in Western scholarship, breaks down in Tanzania. Deaf Tanzanians, who have drastically different living situations than deaf people in the West, move fluidly between groups that label themselves “disabled” and groups who solely identify as “deaf.” Tanzanians with disabilities have no effective legal protections, extremely limited access to education, and must struggle against the various forms of oppression that mainstream society, the government, and their families use against them. This research reveals that deaf Tanzanians are conscious about their self-identification and often distinguish themselves from disabled people in situations that involve competition for scarce resources.

### **Engagement with Relevant Literature**

This chapter uses the important theoretical and methodological approach provided by East African ethnographers (Langwick 2008; Lewinson 2006; Weiss 2002) in being cognizant and critical of the various, often Western-imposed, binaries in East African social life. In terms of this study, I interrogate and challenge the deaf/disabled binary originating from Deaf studies scholarship. The research presented here is among the first ethnographic examples of the multiple ways that deaf people think about themselves in terms of labels like “disabled” and “deaf” in a non-Western setting.

### **Deaf, Not Disabled: The Western Model**

Up until this point, all of my training had been focused on Western Deaf<sup>26</sup> cultural communities and American Deaf Studies scholarship. The assumptions that I had internalized about how deaf people see themselves and how they place themselves within or outside of disability groups, brought me directly into this awkward situation. In order to understand how these people and this research help to highlight the similarities and differences between Tanzania and other deaf communities, it is useful to compare the literature on Western, and specifically American, deaf cultures. Since Western researchers focused on the West produce most scholarship and knowledge production about deaf people, those notions are assumed to be international. A quick review of the distinctions between “deaf” and “disabled” in the United States can help to highlight the differences between the West and countries with very different local realities, like Tanzania.

In the United States, there has been a well-demarcated distinction between elite deaf people and people with disabilities. Deaf communities have kept that distinction well-policed since the 1800s (Buchanan 1999; Robinson 2010). Deaf people in the United States generally self-identify as a linguistic minority, not a disabled group. Generally, these culturally Deaf American and Western European communities distinguish themselves around the uniqueness and importance of sign language. Deaf communities in the West have a long history of struggle for linguistic recognition and rights, and have fought tirelessly to keep sign language in schools (Ladd 2003; Lane, et al. 1996). Disability Studies and more recent scholarship in Deaf History and Deaf

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<sup>26</sup> Again, following current nomenclature, I use the capital “D” term “Deaf” in this section to reference culturally deaf communities in the U.S. and the West.

Studies have examined this divide and complicated the binaries of disability versus deafness and communities of bounded stagnant identity.<sup>27</sup>

The central and consolidating characteristic of the Western Deaf communities is sign language. Sign language separates deaf people from the mainstream and, as all languages do, plays a central role in shaping how its users see and understand the world (Ladd 2003).

Western Deaf leaders and community members often articulate themselves as “people of the eye” (Lane, et al. 2011). Deaf ASL users self identify as an ethnic group unique among other groups, who are equally and legitimately deserving of respect and recognition. A significant portion of scholarship in recent decades has focused on proving that culturally Deaf communities satisfy the various requirements for being an ethnic group, or at least a linguistic minority or sub-culture. Deaf individuals in the West have actively advocated for a widely accepted public understanding that they are unique among people with disabilities.

The material reality that matters most in distinguishing deaf experiences and rhetoric in the West and Tanzania, rests on the provision (or lack thereof) of basic protections in each community. In the West, deaf people are protected by functioning legal and justice systems that have the capacity to enforce against discrimination in education, employment, and public life. People with disabilities in the West are protected, and experience a certain basic level of protection that, though imperfect, serves as a major influence in shaping identity and community. Tanzanian deaf identity is informed by a stark lack of these protections and a reliance on bodies external to the State to protect and care for them.

I began this research project with the perfect interview question, “Are you deaf or disabled?” I asked the question (or a modification thereof) to rural and urban signing and non-

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<sup>27</sup> For more on the new wave of scholarship challenging these binaries, see Burch and Kafer 2010.

signing deaf, as well as hearing family members, NGO workers, and government leadership. I continued to receive, almost unanimously, a blank stare or the answer, “Both.” After several weeks of testing the question on a variety of populations, I decided to talk to deaf people in Tanzania about their own ways of self-identification and how they made decisions to join certain groups. Interestingly, the only people who had any sympathy for my question were a few deaf elites who were educated in Western countries and worked with international deaf organizations who made a clear distinction between the needs of deaf people and disabled people. However, even these few still self-identified as both deaf and disabled.

### **Disability in Tanzania**

The Tanzanian government defines people with disabilities as “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (Mwakyusa 2009). This definition is adopted directly from United Nations 61/106 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. WHO estimates rates of people with disabilities between 10% and 12% in many countries. According to a 2008 study by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Tanzania has a 7.8% prevalence of disability among the population (Mwakyusa 2009). Additionally, the study reveals that 52% of people with disabilities reported being oppressed or ostracized due to their, as the government describes, “difficulties.” Among the most telling data points gathered by NBS, is that fewer than 40% of children with disabilities attend formal education of any kind. Given the stigma around disability, global statistics, and the resource limitations and political implications of

the study, it is likely that disability prevalence was underreported.<sup>28</sup> Below, Figure 11 shows a breakdown of disability types as reported by the Tanzanian Government:

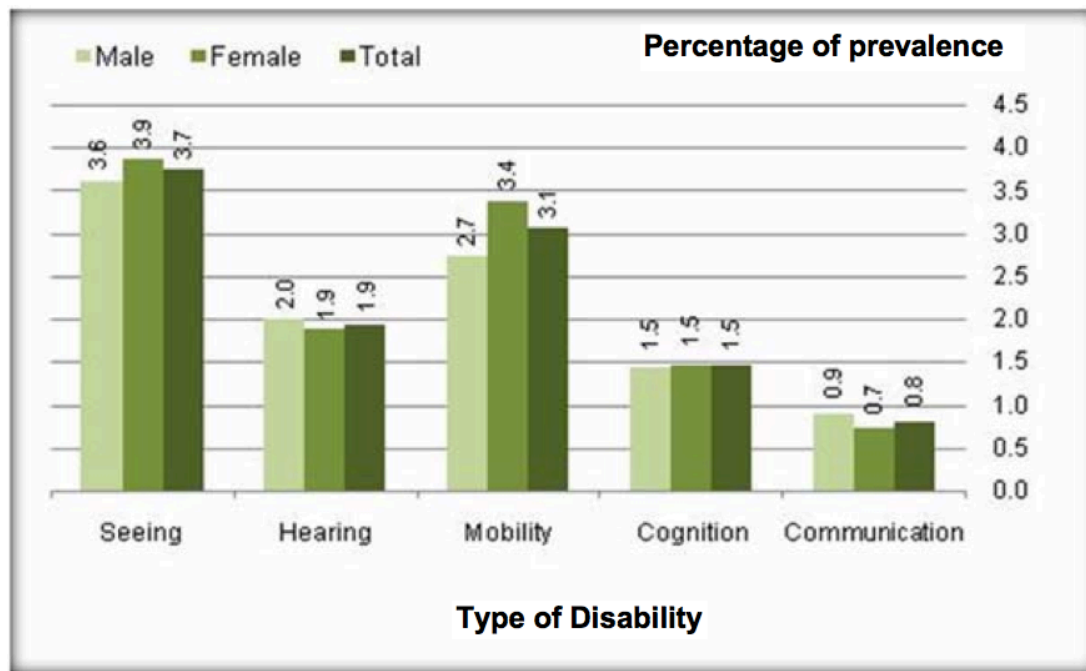


Figure 11: Breakdown of Disability in Tanzania 2008 (Mwakyusa 2009).

People with disabilities and deaf participants pointed out that despite some level of awareness on the part of the government, the resources and commitment to enforce those laws are clearly lacking. At a conference on disability issues, one disability rights activist said, “All of us disabled people try, but the government does not understand.” Currently, Tanzania, like its neighbors Kenya and Uganda, has seats in parliament reserved specifically for disabled people. Kenya and Uganda each have several while Tanzania only has one.

While the government of Tanzania is rarely openly derisive about people with disabilities and their rights or place in society, it is commonly understood that, due to lack of resources, the

<sup>28</sup> Gathering data on a vulnerable and marginalized population is difficult, especially in developing countries. After reviewing the data from the National Bureau of Statistics and comparing that to other data from organizations, as well as my own research, it seems clear that the data released by Mwakyusa may have flaws in reporting or sampling.

government is unable to further support people with disabilities. As the spouse of a deaf woman described, “The issue in Tanzania isn’t the government. Government loves and supports disabled people. They just need more foreign money.” In support of deaf people, Professor Muzale (2004c) writes:

Government authorities tend to be compliant with the plans and wishes of deaf people. However, the question of priorities, from both the donors and the governments, affects the amount of assistance given to deaf people, bearing in mind that deaf people are only a part of minority groups or people with special needs. On the other hand, people’s ignorance about sign language and the deaf results in decision-makers either ignoring or forgetting the needs of deaf people. As a result, the governments make decisions, which are not specifically in favor of deaf people.

For disabled children, secondary school attendance is 5% and post-secondary is below 1% (National Bureau of Statistics 2008). Deaf children face very serious barriers to education.

Families, especially in rural areas, are skeptical about their deaf children’s ability to be successful in school. Even families who are ambivalent are often unwilling or unable to pay the requisite school fees for boarding programs. Finally, even if families are aware of schools, able to pay, and willing, many are turned away due to limited space in deaf programs. There are a few units within mainstream schools that cater specifically to children with disabilities, but only 2% of disabled children attend. There are also two training programs for teachers of students with disabilities, located in Tanga and Arusha.

The major form of income for disabled people in Tanzania is begging. Many street corners and bus stations in urban areas have several people with disabilities begging. A few have small trays or stands to sell phone vouchers, newspapers, and candy. The Tanzanian government’s estimates show that only 30% of people with disabilities are unemployed; based on interviews and observations, this number seems quite low. For example, 79% of non-signing deaf in my research

were unemployed. However, my research findings agree with the NBS study that most people with disabilities who are employed work as farm hands (2008).

A Tanzanian national organization on HIV/AIDS (TACAIDS) conducted a study in 2009 and found that over 40% of people with disabilities were victims of sexual assault. Only 54% of the total population of people with disabilities had basic knowledge about HIV/AIDS and its prevention. HIV/AIDS prevalence in the general population was 6.2% in 2007. Among people with disabilities, the number jumps to 9%—and is likely higher still due to underreporting. HIV/AIDS infections among people with disabilities often go completely untreated due to their limited access to services, information, and resources. Several participants in this study recounted stories of sexual violence. The concern, at least in this sample, was particularly gendered with only women reporting concerns about sexual violence and concerns about contracting diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS. As I presented recently at the annual American Anthropology meetings knowledge of the disease and prevention as well as awareness of and access to services was far lower among non-signers than signers. Deaf people in Tanzania, like other people with disabilities, are likely at higher risk of infection and also less likely to receive any form of treatment.

In Tanzania, relative to its neighbors, the disability movement is rather well established. There are several organizations, awareness campaigns, and events to raise public consciousness and acceptance of people with disabilities. SHIVYWATA, or The Federation of Disabled People's Organizations, is an umbrella group under which nine DPOs function. Deaf, albino, blind, and other national-level organizations participate in SHIVYWATA. These organizations are most active in urban areas, specifically Dar es Salaam, and have far less penetration in rural areas.

**Tanzanian Legal Protections and Government Support**

The United Republic of Tanzania has several laws protecting the rights of people with disabilities. However, like many other pieces of legislation, the country lacks the resources and capacity to enforce them. The table on the following page lists Mainland Tanzania's legislation protecting people with disabilities, and provides brief description of each.<sup>29</sup> Table 4 displays the laws, year adopted, and description of Tanzanian legislation related to people with disabilities:

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<sup>29</sup> Zanzibar has similar legislation as well.

Name	Year	Description
<b>The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania</b>	1977	Recognizes the rights of PWDs and prohibits all discrimination.
<b>Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (No. 2)</b>	1982	Establishes a quota system that stipulates that 2% of the workforce in companies with over 50 employees must be PWDs. Also establishes the National Advisory Council on PWDs.
<b>Disabled Persons (Care and Maintenance) Act (No. 3)</b>	1982	Provides and designates responsibilities of caring for PWDs to families, relatives, local and central government, and NGOs. Also establishes a National Fund for PWDs
<b>Disabled Persons (Employment) Regulations</b>	1985	Defines the eligibility and registration requirements for PWDs.
<b>Vocational Education and Training Act (No. 1)</b>	1994	Provides a legal framework for the implementation of a flexible vocational education and training system that responds to the labor market.
<b>National Employment Promotion Service Act (No. 9)</b>	1999	Provides for the registration, employment, counseling, vocational rehabilitation, and placement of PWDs.
<b>Employment and Labour Relations Act (No. 6)</b>	2004	Forbids direct and indirect discrimination in any employment policy, including discrimination based on disability.
<b>National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (MKUKUTA)</b>	2005-2010	Recognizes disability as a cause for poverty.
<b>Persons with Disabilities Law</b>	2010	Requires the respect of all human dignity, non-discrimination, full and inclusive participation of PWDs, equal opportunities, and provides basic standard of living and social protections.

*Table 4: Tanzanian Legislation Protecting People with Disabilities*

The government ministries with responsibilities include Education, Justice, Labor, and Health and Social Welfare, which coordinates all disability matters. The Vocation Education Training Authority focuses on Tanzanian vocational education and provides scholarships to

people with disabilities to pursue their studies. Additionally, Tanzania is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons, signed in 2010.

As stated earlier, despite the long list of legal protections, boards, councils, and ministries with responsibilities of enforcing and providing equal access and participation to people with disabilities in employment, education, and public life, the Tanzanian government lacks the capacity and capability to enforce any of these measures. Many disability rights advocates, teachers of the deaf, NGO workers, and deaf participants articulated that Tanzania struggles to care for its able-bodied citizens; disabled individuals will have to come second. DPO leaders repeated this kind of narrative about able-bodied citizens coming first, but paid special attention to how unfair and uninformed the priorities were.

While many deaf Tanzanians recognized that the structures of government rarely act to protect or support people with disabilities, they did have an interesting narrative about disability in Tanzania. On several occasions, deaf people would explain to me a history of the four Tanzanian presidents and their adoption, support, and knowledge of deaf or disabled people. A much-repeated refrain included stories of presidents adopting orphans as part of their service to the country; the orphans they took in would often have disabilities. It seemed, from these kinds of stories, that the top leadership in Tanzania understood the needs of disabled people, but the leadership between the president and citizen was responsible for the inaction.

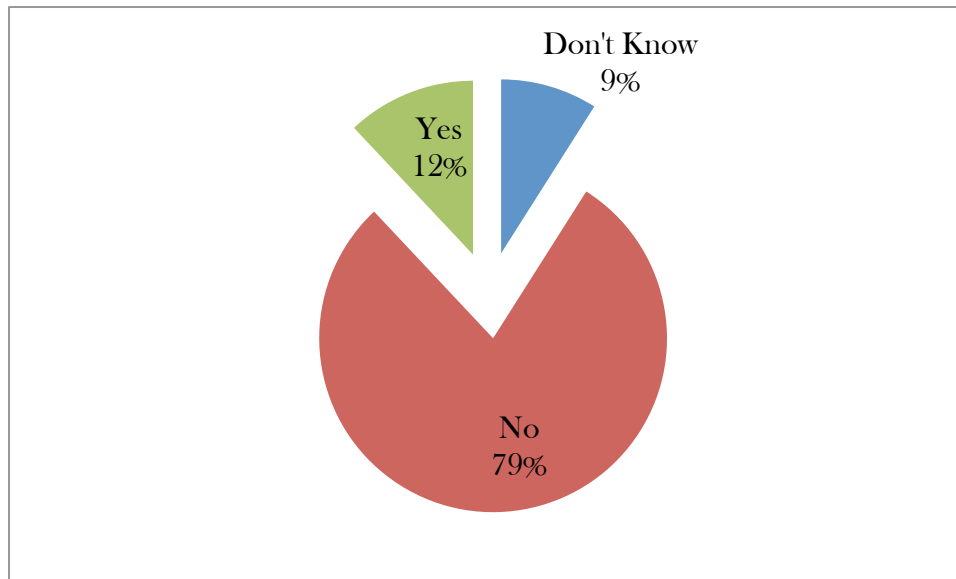
Generally, the state plays a very limited role in the lives of people with disabilities and deaf people. Deaf people often complained that people with mobility impairments get canes, crutches, and hand bikes, blind individuals get canes, but deaf people have never received any kind of assistive devices like hearing aids or interpreters. All schools for the deaf are run by organizations outside the Tanzanian government; most often Christian churches. Schools for the deaf receive

only limited support from the government (teachers' salaries are sometimes provide by the state) and therefore there is limited national level oversight (Muzale 2004c). As is discussed in the next chapter, even if deaf people receive money or support from the Tanzanian government, it is provided to individuals through NGOs or other outside groups who partner with the government. Deaf people have extremely limited interface with the Tanzanian government, and therefore receive almost all support from NGOs.

Generally, most deaf people do not differentiate between the support provided by the State, NGOs, and religious organizations. However, deaf community leaders who interact with local and national level government as well as other support-providing organizations, articulate that the neglect of deaf people is related more to ignorance than any ill will. Deaf people recognize that what little support they receive from the Tanzanian government is hard fought by organizations like Kitaifa. As a deaf man living in Selous described:

The government knows there are deaf people. That is different from before. Before people had no idea. They didn't know anything about deaf people. They had no idea. But then, once Kitaifa was formed, that started to change. Do you understand? When there were people there to work on it, then it started to change. They help out a little at a time. To help people understand. Kitaifa has been working with the government.

Generally, participants recognized that life is improving for deaf people. However, few related the improvements to support from the government. As represented in Figure 12, below, surveys showed a majority of deaf people reporting the lack of support from the state:



*Figure 12: Survey Participants' Responses to "Does the government help deaf people?"*

Deaf people cited ignorance, inability, and disinterest as reasons the government fails to provide support to deaf people. Many explained that while the government may be absent, churches, deaf organizations, and other groups help the deaf. Additionally, over 70% of survey participants reported not attending village and district level political meetings because they were unable to understand what was going on. One man said, "I go because other people are going, but I just clap when everyone else is clapping."

### **Mainstream Responses to Disability**

There is significant diversity in response to disability in Tanzania. Researchers generally seem to agree that urban communities have more tolerant and potentially positive views of people with disabilities than rural populations do (e.g., Makundi, et al. 2004). During interviews, several Tanzanians with disabilities explained that urban populations have more exposure to people with disabilities. They not only see more people with disabilities, but they also see those individuals enrolled in schools, employed, and participating in public life. In rural areas, the public awareness campaigns, exposure, and education levels are different, and informants in this study explained

that the lack of information for rural populations contributed to negative perceptions about people with disabilities. On a linguistic note: in Kiswahili, the prefix for humans is *m* (singular) and *wa* (plural). However, many terms for people with disabilities, including *kipofu/vipofu* (blind singular/plural) and *kiziwi/viziwi* (deaf singular/plural) do not utilize the human prefixes.

Stigma related to disability in Africa, generally, and Tanzania, specifically, has been studied mostly in reference to the HIV/AIDS epidemic (e.g., Kohi, et al. 2006; Maclons 2006). Additionally, most studies look at the impacts rather than the causes. Researchers place stigma within a nexus of limited government support (Whyte 1995) and lack of medical knowledge among community members (Weiss, et al. 2006). Stigmatization has come to be a part of deaf people's lives in Tanzania. I would often ask interview participants how they would decrease the oppression of deaf people and the negative discourses around disability. One deaf woman told me, "They have to see with their own eyes that we can do things. They have to see many different disabled people working and being successful, then they will understand. But only when they see it."

Responses vary from staring, to taunting, to physical abuse. Generally, the most common and seemingly least harmful response to disability is humor. People with physical deformities or who behave differently are often the focus of jokes and mocking. Deaf people are made fun of or laughed at while signing in public places. While these behaviors do not physically affect deaf people, the negative effects are evident in descriptions of sad, frustrated, and isolated times deaf people spend among hearing communities and families. In many cases in rural areas, deaf informants would cut interviews short because of the crowd's or community's negative response to public conversations in sign language.

Physical abuse was most often reported in rural communities. Older deaf participants recounted that when they were young, they were vulnerable to a beating if they were caught using sign language in public. When I asked deaf participants why they were treated so poorly for signing, they responded that hearing people are uncomfortable with things that are different. They said hearing people were afraid of them. Urban areas have recently become more hospitable. However, deaf individuals living in isolated, rural areas, are still constantly ostracized and dismissed. Families become responsible for the care of people with disabilities, who are often seen as noncontributing, burdensome household members.

Within a few village communities, there is a certain pragmatism about disability. Those who can contribute, must, and all do find ways to support the group. This approach is most often seen in areas of high incidence of deafness. It happens through a unique set of circumstances in which multiple family members of different generations are deaf and remain in the community for most of their lives. For example, in Kitulo, a village east of Selous, several families have deaf children, and many of the hearing family and community members know how to effectively communicate with deaf people through strategies like gesturing and facilitating lip reading. The deaf people living in Kitulo are more accepted than those in other villages in this study, and participate in a variety of occupations including childcare, farming, and mending shoes.

Children with disabilities are sometimes kept at home and hidden from visitors in remote areas of the country. When teachers and staff come to villages to find deaf children for the local schools, they often find them hidden in closets and under beds. Parents describe these measures as protection from the verbal and physical abuse of community members.

Able-bodied Tanzanians generally do not distinguish between different groups within the term *walemavu* (disabled people). In interviews with hearing participants, I would ask them to list

the different people with disabilities they knew and it took a significant amount of explaining to tease out the different categories of disability. Often, parents of disabled children would try to enroll their children in deaf-specific services or events, even if the children were hearing. For example, Kitaifa's rural workshops drew out the local deaf who were allowed by their families to attend, but also often drew out people with other disabilities. These individuals had mental retardation or physical disabilities, and their parents brought them to the workshops. This was funny to workshop facilitators and regular attendants. In a small village off the Cape to Cairo Road, one mother brought her adult son and argued that he was, in fact, a *bubu*, that he was unable to communicate just like the people in the room. Rural community members often call deaf people *bubu* because the assumption is that deaf people are completely unable to use language. The irony here was that the mother was speaking with Mgunda, a deaf man who read lips, spoke, and signed with incredible fluency. She said, "He's just like you, he can't communicate." Mgunda looked over at me to ensure that I was paying attention. He was obviously effectively communicating with this woman by lip reading spoken Kihehe, while simultaneously passing out written materials in Kiswahili and signing in LAT to the workshop attendants. He was actively using three different languages—*bubu* indeed.

This story highlights some important points. First, there are very limited services for people with disabilities and families must be creative to get support for their children. Second, the negative perceptions about people with disabilities, including deaf people, prevail even when mainstream Tanzanians come into contact with counterexamples.

In Selous town, two British audiologists spent several days fitting Huruma workers with hearing aids. Word traveled fast that doctors were seeing the deaf. Many deaf people who had friends or family who worked at Huruma came in the hopes of accessing the service; several

mothers with adult children with other disabilities came as well. Of course, these women were not only bringing their children out of a desire to connect them to a community of people with similar circumstances, they also knew that this was an official seminar and likely included some kind of service delivery or per diem payment. They explained that their sons could barely help out in the fields and were not able to help out elsewhere for wages—collecting money for attending a workshop meant that their sons could materially contribute to the household.

Deaf people have not captured the imagination of Tanzanian public society in the same way that deafness is interesting to Americans. In the context of this research hearing people generally did not seek out sign language classes unless they had a deaf family member or needed LAT for work. In a unique counterexample, the Tanzanian hip-hop artist Zanto has a hit song called “*Binti Kiziwi*,” (Deaf Girl). He falls in love with a deaf girl and must communicate his love to her in gesture and drawings. In the case of Zanto’s music video we see no sign language but a lovestruck would-be beau desperately trying to tell the young woman about his feelings. He does not, however, use any recognizable LAT. This fact was disappointing to many of the deaf people who saw the video. So this is a single example of the presence of deafness in popular culture but sign language does not accompany it.

### **Deaf and Disabled: Connections**

Anthropologists and others have recently begun to study identity as a dynamic, contested, and, at times, conscientiously utilized characteristic. People with multiple (and sometimes seemingly contradictory) identities negotiate them in different situations and times with different purposes by foregrounding a specific identity while hiding the others. Ethnographers, like Valentine (2005), have studied the situations and motivations that people use in the decision to

utilize or hide various identities at certain times. A nuanced view of identity is useful in studying deaf people in Tanzania.

Generally, participants were intentional and strategic about their associations. Sometimes, group membership was described as natural and obvious, while at other times the relationship was artificial or strained. Membership in groups and the identities that accompanied them were, at times, ideological; at other times, they were based on more tangible material or political considerations related to livelihood, access, rights, protections, friendship, and familiarity.

In several situations, the lines between disability and deafness blurred. In an early trip to some of the more remote villages surrounding Selous, Godfrey, one of my RAs, was present. Our first half of the day was spent walking among the homes, asking adults if they had seen any deaf people and playing Frisbee with children. After a few hours and a little luck, Godfrey found a deaf villager in a small home near the main road. The entire family gathered out front of their home to formally welcome us. We met Fadili, a young man with a limp who was wearing two different colored flip-flops and a soccer shirt. His parents welcomed us into their wattle and daub home to sit on tiny wooden folding stools and have *chai* (tea). Godfrey spent the initial interaction signing and gesturing to Fadili to gauge his linguistic capabilities. Fadili responded to any questions asked of his parents in spoken Kiswahili. We wrapped up the interview and said our goodbyes. As we walked away, I asked Godfrey why he chose that family. He said, “You want deaf people, right?” I said, “Yes, deaf, like you, can’t hear, have to read lips or use sign language.” He stopped, looked at me and said, “Deaf like me? That’s all? No one who can’t see or has to crawl? Oh, well, that’s different.” The Western definition of “deaf” did not match how the RAs, disability group leaders, and hearing community members understood the term.

## Identity and Politics

“People with disabilities have to travel further.”

Sinde, the Gender Officer at Kitaifa and leader of an umbrella NGO for all people with disabilities, said this during a Kitaifa workshop in Selous. There are strong similarities between the experiences of all disabled people in Tanzania. Stigma, abuse, isolation, and struggles to support themselves and their families were common themes in interviews. Deaf and disabled workers at Huruma rallied together to lobby for pay increases and improved working conditions.

Grouping all people with disabilities together, or splitting them up, are both strategic choices. The same topics that unify them also divide them. Shared experience is a significant factor in building and maintaining community. In the case of people with disabilities, the language around their group centers on, sadly, shared challenges and suffering. One woman in a wheelchair said, “We all have hungry children, no work, and husbands who are awful.” The material struggle and uncertainty in the lives of people with disabilities is certainly a consideration for defining the community as a larger, more general category. The chairperson of an organization for disabled women told me, “There are many disabled women in Tanzania and they could not all fit in one room, but they do try to be a unified voice.” Speaking with a unified voice of people with disabilities instead of smaller fractions of groups, allows people with disabilities to gain more traction with mainstream society, the Tanzanian State, and external donors. In a context where mainstream society rarely differentiates between individual disability groups, people with disabilities calculate that highlighting those differences, especially in the case of rights or resources, will only undermine their efforts.

## Defining Disability

The term “disability” has a wide variety of meanings. Disability Studies scholars point to the distinctions between medical, structural, and cultural definitions, highlighting that what is

considered a disability in certain situations may not be in others. Unlike many Western countries, Tanzanians often include albinism prominently in their list of disabilities.<sup>30</sup> These definitions were the same between disabled and able-bodied informants. During a meeting of deaf people, deaf leaders discussed what disability means; after listing the usual four groups that make up disabled people (interestingly, they often exclude those who have mental disabilities), a woman made a joke about how *wazungu* (people of European descent)<sup>31</sup> talk about disability. She said, “Disability, is there a national definition? You know, in Sweden they include diabetes and asthma on there.” The crowd responded by laughing and asking Makale, another deaf leader who recently discovered he had diabetes, if he wanted to move to Sweden in order to be recognized as having two disabilities.

Deaf informants were comfortable associating themselves with the term disabled and with others in that group. In communities, disabled and deaf people socialized. Several hand bike users relied on their deaf neighbors to push them up hills on their morning commutes. In village confrontations, disabled people often relied on each other as advocates in discussions. However, situations exist where deaf people intentionally distinguished themselves from other people with disabilities.

### **Deaf, Not Disabled: Disconnections**

“Deaf is a different kind of disability.”

The situations in which deaf people intentionally disconnected themselves from membership among the disabled, often related to three common themes: sign language, deafness as an unseen disability, and economic concerns. Distinctions between deafness and other forms of

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<sup>30</sup> This may be due to the recent history of people with albinism having experienced increased violence in recent years, particularly around areas with extractive economies, like mining. Albino body parts are seen by some as good luck for success in the volatile international economy of precious metals and gems.

<sup>31</sup> Singular form is ‘mzungu.’ Both terms often carry a negative connotation.

disability seemed to become sharper in the context of competing for support from external partners or the Tanzanian government. Deaf elites who studied in the West (most commonly the United States and Scandinavia) were more likely to articulate a constant differentiation between people who were deaf and those who had other disabilities.<sup>32</sup>

### Sign Language and Communication

While the number of deaf signers is increasing, hearing community members, especially in rural areas, are highly uncomfortable with signing. Using sign language is a marker of difference and disability and, as mentioned previously, deaf people have reported being physically and verbally abused for using sign language in public. Many deaf people said that they make hearing people more uncomfortable than other people with disabilities. Government officials, shopkeepers, bankers, and educators shy away from the deaf. As Ester said, “You can see it, politicians don’t like to meet with deaf people.” She explained that they do not understand how to communicate with deaf people and simply close the door in their faces.

A deaf-run savings and loan scheme began in Tanzania in 2009. At the opening meetings, members of various deaf organizations from all over Dar es Salaam came together to write a constitution to guide development. In the rules, they decided that no more than one person on the directors’ board could be hearing. When asked about their discriminatory practices, they explained that having more than one hearing person meant that they would begin to communicate with each other in Kiswahili instead of LAT and all other board members would be left out. They welcomed participation by other *walemavu* (people with disability) but were firm in the limited role they could have as leaders.

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<sup>32</sup> A rare few deaf Tanzanians have been able to study outside the country. Fewer than 10 have been able to do so, but their articulations of the role of sign language, deaf identity, and other issues are clearly influenced by time spent among other deaf communities.

Francis, the second deaf student to attend *Chuo Kikuu ya Dar es Salaam*, the most prestigious university in the country, explained the double-edged sword of “mixed schools” for disabled children. He said that for kids in wheelchairs, albinos, and even blind students, the disabled student is afforded better access and better education through a mixed (or mainstreamed) approach. This is not the case however, for deaf children. The Tanzanian government and the Ministry of Education do not have formal recognition of LAT. This has disastrous effects on children’s education and their future lives.

It should be further noted that, unlike Uganda, Tanzania is yet to include sign language in the national constitution. Consequently, the Ministry of Education in Tanzania does not have a clear policy concerning the role of LAT in the education system, in which case the power to decide on the functions of LAT rests in the hands of 14 individual schools. (Muzale 2004b)

The use of wheelchairs for children with mobility issues or canes for children who are blind, is universally accepted as appropriate support for those children. The use of sign language for deaf children, however, is not. In real terms, deaf students spend their days in classrooms with little to no idea about what is being taught, and their nights catching up on other students’ notes and using guesswork to figure out the lessons. Due to their language requirements, deaf people have a vastly different educational experience.

This differentiation continues into adult and public life. One deaf woman pointed out that even a blind man in a wheelchair can participate in a political rally, hear the news on the radio, and participate in discussions on the corner or under a tree. Deaf people, even though they might look like everyone, walk, and play soccer like everyone else, cannot participate in some of the most important aspects of public life. Additionally, government support and participation are a particular concern for deaf people. During surveys, many deaf people explained that they did not

attend political or village meetings—or even vote—because they were unable to understand what was going on. Public participation, they described, is a problem specifically related to deafness.

### **Deafness Is Hidden**

“When you walk in the street there’s no hiding you are a cripple. We can hide. People don’t see us.”

The second major distinguishing characteristic between disabled people and deaf people revolves around deaf people being able to “pass” for able-bodied. The term “passing” describes that, while in the short term, disabled people can work through the world without unwanted attention or discrimination, the long-term negative effects of an able-bodied biased world remain. Slurs, negative media coverage, and other prevalent discourses continue to affect those who can disguise their disabilities in public.

The ability to pass, though, is a double-edged sword because while deaf people can hide their deafness when they feel threatened, they are unable to effectively stay in the public consciousness as a group who are vulnerable and deserve support like other groups. A deaf leader who also works in the larger Tanzanians with Disabilities movement explained, “The community sympathizes with visible disabilities—people are willing to help. ‘White Cane Day’ is a national day to sensitize people about the blind. There’s no day like that for the deaf.” Others described concern regarding the nascent national attention on the albino community following the spate of highly publicized murders of albino Tanzanians. The rights and concerns of albinos, to the exclusion of all other disabled groups and much to the concern of other disabled leaders, dominated World Day of the Disabled Person in 2009 and 2010. One woman joked that when they start killing deaf people the public will start to care, but just starving them and locking them away in huts seems not to be worthy of mainstream attention.

A group of young deaf men describing the concerns of deafness as a hidden disability explained, “They don’t see us! They don’t think we are important.” So, while they valued the ability to hide when they needed to—on a bus, at the market, and in the bars—they were highly frustrated with the lack of support and recognition that same anonymity afforded them.

### **Competition For Resources**

At the root of the previous two themes and the source for the most tension of differentiating deafness from other disabilities is, ironically, the same reason deaf people often cite for seeking affiliation with those groups in the first place: material. The most contentious debates concerning differences between deaf people and disabled people centered on hiring practices and access to resources. For example, deaf Huruma workers were disgruntled at the rising number of new employees who had disabilities other than deafness. They said that the more disabled people who worked at Huruma, the less deaf-friendly the work environment would become. Besides, they all knew perfectly good, hard-working deaf people who still desperately needed jobs and *walemavu* could get jobs anywhere.

Deaf people also talked about the limited amount of support they get from the government compared to other disabled groups. As one NGO leader explained, “Really, it is the goal of government to make the lives of all Tanzanians better, they just need to recognize that we deaf people are a part of that.” When asked why the government does not help deaf people, they gave a variety of answers. These answers often included explanations about being forgotten or lumped in with the larger disabled group and thus missing out on the specific kinds of interventions that would help deaf people. One woman described, “In order to get help from the government, you have to be able to read and write to fill out forms. They are scared of our sign language and they laugh in our faces.” Another answered, “No, it is easy for them to ignore deaf people.”

While I was volunteering at Huruma, two visitors from Tanzania's Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance came to the workshop to visit the employees. They held an open forum and the crowd was highly participatory. Patrick stood up and explained that the Tanzanian government is not fair to the deaf among disabled people because they provide hand bikes and canes to people with mobility issues and blindness, but no hearing aids to deaf people. As he sat down, the entire room erupted in applause, with people shouting or signing "*kweli*" (true), and pounding canes. As I recounted the story later to a deaf friend, he hypothesized, "Maybe the government has forgotten about deaf people." It is interesting to note that the two British audiologists were visiting Huruma at the time and giving out free hearing aids. It is likely that if Patrick and the other deaf employees had had time to prepare, they would have asked for other services like interpreters and sign language classes.

Justified or not, the competition for resources from donors and the Tanzanian government leads to suspicion of other organizations' transparency in sharing their resources with deaf groups. As one NGO leader described,

A problem I see for having all the disabled people under one group, is that leadership is weird and government is really difficult. So if the government makes an announcement about funding, then they can get the money, but those who heard about it first can more easily split the spoils. They don't have to share equally with deaf people. Communication is difficult. The government just lumps us all together, all disabled people. What ends up happening is deaf people are marginalized within that group.

Here we see that deaf people report not only having trouble communicating within their families, but also in the larger networks of other DPOs, the Tanzanian government, and international donors.

The reverse is also true; organizations that support deaf people were more likely to direct funders to other deaf people instead of other groups of people with disabilities. Coca, a Tanzanian

working for the MacDonald Foundation, was working on a project that focused on dispersing micro-grants to women with disabilities. Her first stop was at Kitaifa's women's club, where she quickly filled her quota of deaf women and needed to find equal numbers of blind and other disabled groups. She was extremely frustrated that the deaf women continued to bring her other deaf women instead of the other disabled groups she specifically asked for. When the deaf women were asked about this, they said that blind women and albinos get all the attention from everywhere else; the deaf women they knew needed the money more and would be more successful on the program than other women with disabilities.

### **Deaf Identity**

Certainly, there is no unified discourse concerning a Tanzanian deaf identity or a global deaf identity, either. The binary between deaf and disabled that exists elsewhere in the world does not have traction in the context of Tanzania. Deaf people in Tanzania, with the exception of a few elites who have traveled internationally, have very little awareness of deaf people outside their own communities or countries. Late in my fieldwork, some of my study participants asked to see what they teasingly called "proof" of American deaf people. After some work, we secured a room, projector, and electricity to show some clips of various documentaries I brought with me. We would play a small clip and then I would translate the ASL into LAT before playing the next. After showing some footage, we had a discussion about people's reactions to the videos. Many expressed that they had never considered that there were deaf people outside of Selous, let alone Tanzania, and they were completely shocked about how proud the deaf Americans were to be deaf. Deaf Tanzanians, upon learning about deaf people in other countries, express very little concern or connection to an international community. Those who do express that interest are often deaf leaders and are responsible for applying for funding and support from Western deaf organizations.

### Conclusion

Research presented in this section shows that the lived reality of deaf and disabled people in Tanzania is extremely different from the lives of the same populations in Western countries. Relying on the theoretical approach of the anthropology of disability and disability studies, I look at the various contexts in which disability exists. I also highlight the ways in which deaf people in Tanzania, unlike the larger body of literature in Deaf studies, shift between being “disabled” and “deaf.” I draw from East African scholarship (e.g., Weiss 2009) in recognizing where and how the various discourses—particularly around the binary of deafness and disability—are engaged in different ways, depending on a variety of factors. Deaf people in Tanzania do, at times, distinguish themselves from other people with disabilities, but only in particular situations—usually involving the competition for resources, specifically funding. Conversations about funding almost always happen, not at the individual level, but at the organizational level. Various organizations that work with deaf people significantly shape the way people think about and talk about themselves. Each organization, while unified in “trying to improve deaf people’s lives” often approaches the problem differently and sometimes even contrary to their peers.

## CHAPTER SIX: ORGANIZATIONS

Kitaifa Selous is hosting a workshop on democracy and governance in a small village about an hour away, called Saadani. Mgunda, the Kitaifa Selous president and lead trainer, arrives at the community center to conduct the workshop himself. The community center has a cinder block meeting room that is painted blue and yellow, with four large wooden tables and a visitor's book. The small room slowly begins to fill with workshop attendants. All told, 17 deaf people who live in the surrounding villages come to the workshop. Their ages range from 19 to 50 years old. Out of the attendees, only seven know LAT, four know some signs, and six have no sign language at all. Only two or three can read or write. Regardless of the capabilities of the participants, Mgunda is here to host a grant-funded workshop on how to vote, fight corruption, and be a responsible Tanzanian citizen. He conducts the all-day workshop entirely in LAT and written Kiswahili. One woman spends the class looking up at Mgunda and then scribbling, pretending as though she is writing, in her Kitaifa provided notebook. Simon, a farmer, reads the workshop program upside down. Another two men spend their breaks yelling incomprehensible Kihehe in each other's ears. It is highly unlikely that people are learning much about democracy or governance, but the workshop was an excuse to leave their homes and farms and meet some fellow deaf people.

*Excerpt from Field Notes: Saadani, December 2008*

I left the Saadani workshop dispirited, wondering what the non-signing participants were getting from these workshops besides the hefty per diem. Further into my research, though, I found out that non-signing deaf people greatly valued these workshops for several reasons. They appreciated the per diems, but what they truly valued was the opportunity to leave their families for some time and spend the day with other deaf people. Non-signing participants could describe the physical features of the workshop facilitators and fellow participants. Some even explained that they found out where other deaf people lived and made trips to visit each other between workshops. These connections are the beginnings of rural communities of deaf people.

As has been clear throughout this dissertation, deaf people in Tanzania receive extremely limited state support, and therefore must find support elsewhere. Deaf people find their support through non-profit organizations like Kitaifa, Huruma, Vijana, and various churches. Each

organization has its own ideologies, goals, and methods, and even though they all have a similar goal—to create better lives for deaf people—their avenues to reach this goal can be drastically different and sometimes contradictory. There is fierce competition for resources (monetary, personnel, space) among these organizations. Deaf people compete for access to resources from providers. In order to access the various levels of support, each party must conform to outside expectations in specific ways (social, ideological, material). Throughout the research period, however, it became clear that even while conforming to these expectations to receive support, deaf people use these organizations, interventions, and services strategically and for their own needs—which sometimes conflict or at least diverge from the organizations' own needs.

### **Engagement with Relevant Literature**

This chapter lays out the system of development that provides services specifically to deaf people, how it is used by the deaf, and how it affects deaf Tanzanians. The research presented here builds on current anthropological studies of NGOs that situate the organizations and their members in larger political, economic, and historical context (e.g., Igoe and Kelsall 2005a). I also build on the methodological insights of scholars who conduct ethnographic research on development (e.g., Goldman 2005; Murphree 2005; Tsing 2004; West 2006), and who work inside development organizations with specific interventions and local populations affected by external attention. I build on the research regarding the negative, unexpected consequences of Western development and international aid in local situations (e.g., Bebbington 2004; West and Brockington 2006). I depart from some of this scholarship to show that there can also be positive, unforeseen results from development interventions. I address the gap in the literature on the effects of organizations on deaf community development and maintenance. Deaf development is often lead by deaf organizations from Western countries, but also includes hearing secular and

religious organizations. Deaf development, like all progress in the developing world, is highly political, ideological, and uneven. There are not enough resources for all deaf people to receive support, which leads to the production of systems of selection, which, through various methods, define who can access which services. In some significant ways, this process defines membership to the various economic, social, and occupational communities.

### Development Culture in Tanzania

Over the last 4 years, Tanzania has decreased its dependence on foreign aid from 42% to 28.2%, while domestic revenue has been steadily rising. In Figure 13, below, one can see the change over time in reliance on donor monies and Tanzania's continued dependence:

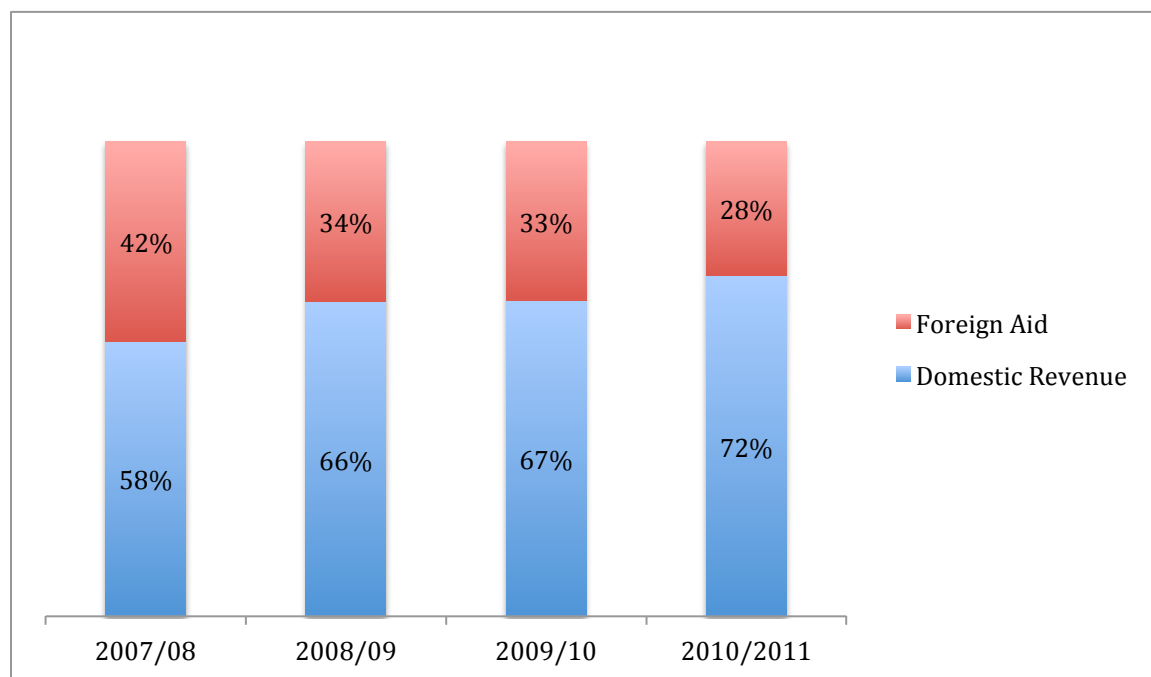


Figure 13: Tanzania's National Budget 2010/2011 (adapted from Policy Forum 2011)

However, even with improved domestic revenue, the Tanzanian State is still dependent on foreign aid for a significant portion of its budget. Certain types of programs are more reliant on foreign monies to provide services than are others. The sectors most dependent on external

funding are social welfare systems, like health and education. Tanzania's health sector receives over 50% of its funding from foreign monies, the majority of which comes from the United States government (Lee 2010).

Tanzanians often must go outside of their own government in order to access general services, like healthcare and education. Even when the government funds the support (with the help of outside donors), the funding is distributed to NGOs and FBOs that deliver the services. This means that in almost every transaction around education, health, or other areas of social support, Tanzanians interact with personnel outside the government. Tanzanians rely on socially developed networks and familial safety nets to supplement existing interventions, which are often insufficient to meet their needs. It is no surprise, then, that deaf people, as a marginalized population, are even more reliant on external sources for support. In Tanzania, there are eight deaf schools; all of them are heavily reliant on foreign groups for funding.<sup>33</sup> Six rely solely on churches for funding. Compounding the issue of deaf people's access to support, they, unlike hearing people, have remarkably less ability to rely on traditional familial networks of support.

### **Deaf Development in Tanzania**

As in other sectors of Tanzanian life, deaf people receive extremely limited support and attention from Tanzania's government. NGOs, FBOs, and other aid organizations from foreign governments provide nearly all the social services to deaf people. Additionally, there are some smaller Tanzanian government organizations that provide support and are funded by bilateral and multilateral organizations (for example, USAID, NORAD, GTZ, UN, WHO). Successful Tanzanian organizations have strong, well-worded sets of missions, objectives, progress reports,

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<sup>33</sup> The specific levels of funding for schools from the Government of Tanzania are unclear. Some reported that the state pays teachers' salaries, but the rest of the financial responsibility falls on outside donors. However, all deaf schools include the name of their biggest funder on the signs for their schools.

and sometimes even websites. In order to court donors and receive funding, these organizations must find ways to effectively communicate, in a manner that is pleasing to donors, about community needs and potential projects that align with donor agendas. Through extensive participant observation and interviews, I gained unique access to the inner workings of many of these groups. However, for as much time as I spent with these groups, information about funding and budgets remained a sensitive and private issue. Based on fieldwork, review of written documentation, press coverage, and other research, I was able to parcel out some of the donor streams, amounts, and tensions within and among these organizations. Information on funding is incomplete, but helps to highlight the significant role that resources—and the competition for them—play on the structure and strategy of organizations, and the highly localized results of those influences.

The major organizations that participated in this study are separated into two groups: those run by deaf people, and those that work with deaf people but are run by hearing Tanzanians or foreigners. Those founded and run by deaf people focus solely on deaf people and understand sign language, deaf education, and deaf community as necessary elements for improving the lives of the deaf. In the case of deaf people in Tanzania, mainstream organizations are often religiously motivated, work with all disabled people, are all hearing-run, and typically focus on issues of salvation and income generation. The organizations in which I conducted research included Kitaifa, Vijana, and Huruma.

### **Major Funders**

The three organizations listed above receive funding from a relatively small group of donors who are interested in deaf or disability issues. Interest in these issues spiked noticeably after the United Nations (UN) named 1981 the Year of the Disabled Person. Each of the organizations

outlined below find one or several of the organizations that participated in this study. Each has its own ideologies, goals, and requirements.

**The World Federation of the Deaf** (WFD) was founded in 1951 and has a current membership of over 127 countries. It has consultative status with the UN system, including the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the WHO. The WFD lays out five foci they see as crucial for equality for deaf people: (1) improvement of status of national sign languages, (2) better education of Deaf people, (3) improved access to information and services, (4) improved human rights for Deaf people in developing countries, (5) establishment of Deaf organizations where none currently exist (World Federation of the Deaf 2006). The WFD is the only international Deaf organization that is not region specific. Through its member countries, the WFD provides a wide variety of assistance to national level deaf organizations. In Tanzania, Kitaifa receives a significant amount of support for sign language research and education, day to day running of the organization, interpreter training programs, and several other projects. Of note, there is also the African Union of the Deaf (AUD), which is now in the process of becoming formally established. It has extremely limited funding and has not yet been a significant participant in supporting national level organizations. Kitaifa is preparing a bid to make Dar es Salaam the seat of the AUD.

**The Tanzanian Society for the Deaf** (TSD) is an organization of predominantly hearing members from Tanzania and England whose major accomplishment is the founding and continued support of the Buguruni School for the Deaf in Dar es Salaam; it also supports Vijana. Much of its current work includes running the school, fitting and maintaining hearing aids for deaf children, sign language training for hearing parents, beginning a nursery program, and offering a vocational program for deaf students. TSD is a secular charity that does a significant amount of fundraising outside Tanzania and sends the money to its various projects.

**Christian religious organizations** fund most of the deaf schools in Tanzania, as mentioned in previous chapters. Churches also provide a significant amount of support in other areas of deaf Tanzanians' lives. The Catholic Church supports several schools, including those at Tabora and Luhuwiko, as well as several small-scale vocational programs aimed at deaf adults without formal education. It also runs several orphanages for deaf and disabled children. Throughout my interviews, deaf people cited the Catholic Church as an important source of support for tuition, work and wages, and training programs. This was particularly the case in the lives of deaf women. The Consolata Sisters have a program in several Tanzanian towns in which they train young women (including deaf) who are unmarried with children or whose families are no longer able or willing to support them. In order to help them find future work and support their families, the Sisters train these women in tailoring, cooking, and childcare. Several deaf women reported being abandoned or disowned by their families, and the nuns, or *sistas*, took them in.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT) gets its support from Scandinavia and the United States, specifically churches in Minnesota. The ELCT supports Mwanga, Mugeza, and Njombe schools for the deaf. Of note, Njombe also boasts the first secondary school for the deaf, which opened in 2009.

The last Christian church that acts as a major funder among deaf organizations in this study is the Anglican Church. It supports the Selous School for the deaf and is the largest supporter of Huruma in Selous. British missionaries from the Anglican Church run Huruma and its related programs. Similar to the Catholic Church and the ELCT, the Anglican Church has certain lifestyle requirements that participants in their programs must follow. These include abstaining from premarital sex, criminal behavior, and, in some cases, consumption of alcohol.

## **Organizations that Work with Deaf People**

**Kitaifa**, which is the National Society of the Deaf, is the oldest and largest organization for the deaf. Situated in a suburb outside the city center in Dar es Salaam, Kitaifa's headquarters is a compound with two buildings and a guard post. Kitaifa has several vehicles with its emblem painted on each driver's side door. Hearing staff serve multiple roles, including interpreter, driver, guard, and gardener. There are several women who spend most of their days in the smaller of the two buildings. They sew, cook, gossip, and sell their crafts, sodas, and cell phone vouchers to residents nearby and deaf people who visit.

The officers are truly the elite, by both hearing and deaf standards in Tanzania. Most of them have experienced training internationally, obtained post-baccalaureate education, and spent time at international conferences and with leaders within the Tanzanian government and other organizations. The meeting room has walls lined with bookshelves that hold binders, photo albums, books, and meeting notes from all over the world. Deaf people drop by the headquarters to catch up with staff members, get updated on news and events, and spend time among deaf people.

Kitaifa is the best-established and most well-known organization that works with the deaf in Tanzania. It is a donor darling and has a high success rate for grant awards. Kitaifa and its branch offices receive funding from a variety of sources. The oldest sources are the WFD and its participating donor countries, predominated by Scandinavian national deaf organizations (Haualand 2005); the Foundation for Civil Society (a pool of money from Embassies in Tanzania and other donors), which awards over one billion Tsh annually across Kitaifa offices; the Tanzanian Social Action Fund (TASAF), a presidential special program; and PEPFAR, the U.S. Presidential Emergency Plan for HIV/AIDS Response.

Kitaifa branch offices are semi-autonomous organizations located across the country. Each branch office pays dues to the headquarters and elects its own leadership and sets its own agendas, as long as the projects fall within the scope of Kitaifa headquarters' guidance. Branch offices receive support from the headquarters in the form of help with grant writing, recruitment, and training. However, they receive no monetary resources or equipment. There are 17 branch offices, each with their own culture, goals, and challenges. The major form of interaction between branch offices and the Dar es Salaam headquarters is through semi-annual conferences. Branch offices have had widely varied success with getting external funding. Branch offices' budgets range from 50 thousand to 50 million Tsh annually (\$30.00-30,000.00).

As Kitaifa headquarters and branch offices continue to provide assistance to deaf people, their most well-funded and well-attended work appears through seminars, workshops, and conferences. Topics include health programs (HIV/AIDS awareness), citizenship and social training (democracy and governance), and economic and occupational education (entrepreneurship, chalk making, batik techniques, and sign language classes). Additionally, at the national level, Kitaifa lobbies national government, courts donors, and networks with other DPOs. Branches hold smaller scale versions of seminars and also provide a significant amount of counseling to deaf people and their families. Often, if a parent decides to keep a child from attending secondary school, a Kitaifa officer will be called in to educate parents. Finally, the national-level organization and its regional offices provide space, time, and awareness for local deaf clubs and other deaf activities.

**Vijana**, or Union of Deaf Youth of Tanzania, is one of the newer deaf-run organizations in Tanzania. Seen among current and potential members as possible competition for Kitaifa, the organization is much smaller with fewer staff and humble housing. Several graduates of the

Buguruni School for the Deaf in Dar es Salaam founded Vijana in 2001. The staff are all in their twenties and thirties, and only a few of them have college degrees or experience outside of Tanzania. The organization's main funder is The Tanzania Society for the Deaf, a hearing-run organization. Vijana is still working to establish a presence outside of Dar es Salaam, and has plans to open several regional offices in the coming years.

Currently, much of its work includes sign language training for deaf and hearing people, interpreter training, job counseling, and an incredibly effective effort to lobby the Ministry of Education to allow specific deaf students into secondary school.

**Huruma** is an organization that primarily provides deaf and disabled people with apprenticeships and wages to work in the crafts workshop. The workshop is a bustling, confused, crowded, high-energy space full of deaf and disabled people making various craft items. There are paper, pot, and glass bead makers wearing dark blue coveralls covered in splotches of color from their work. Women making beaded jewelry are surrounded by boxes and bags of brightly colored homemade and store bought beads. Tailors are pumping their feet on what seem like antiquated sewing machines, and other crafts people are making photo albums, cards, lamps, and other goods to be sold in the gift shop. The deaf people are signing; many of the hearing disabled people participate in the conversations as well. Those who use wheelchairs park their hand cranked bikes outside and walk around on their flip-flop covered hands and their bony knees. Huruma also has a deaf *cheza n'gombe* (traditional dance) group that was started by a deaf woman and now includes a dozen dancers and drummers, along with the hearing director. They have been on tour all over Tanzania and, in 2008, made a trip to England to raise funds and perform. Unlike the rest of Tanzanian society, the workshop is a place where being disabled, having facial disfigurements, using sign language, and missing limbs are all unremarkable traits.

The organization is a project by the Anglican Diocese of Selous, with close oversight from the Bishop. Huruma also receives significant funding and resources from the Anglican Mission Society, which funds the program's director, purchases products from the workshop, and sends groups of volunteers for short-term work. It receives support when its products are purchased by several individuals and organizations, including the European Union. It has also gotten significant grants from foreign governments like England, Japan, and others. Due to its close connection to the Anglican Church and lack of registration with the Government of Tanzania, it is difficult for Huruma to access funding from other sources, except through personal connections. Huruma runs successfully, largely on the personal networks of the leadership. Volunteers from the local ex-pat community make a significant contribution, especially in the busy pre-Christmas season.

In addition to providing jobs to deaf and disabled people, the organization provides weekly worship services in Kiswahili and LAT, offers loans to employees, provides physiotherapy to local disabled children, and teaches a sewing class for deaf adult students. All of these organizations have different mission statements, projects, and funders, as shown in Table 5, below:

Name	Type	Mission	Projects	Funders
Kitaifa HQ	Deaf, National	To have a Deaf community with a better standard of life, that builds its capacity, is self-determining, has self-confidence, values and develops itself and participates fully, through LAT, in all development activities, economically and socially in co-operation with the Government and various institutions.	Capacity building for branch offices, seminars, sign language research and training	Associations of the Deaf, FCS, Abilis, TASAF
Vijana	Deaf, National	Working to plan and create an environment which will promote the development of the deaf people so that they are able to better compete in the labor market and hence participate effectively on poverty reduction effort in Tanzania by directly supporting them through design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation to different programs that address their economic, education and some social needs.	One on one support of deaf people to find work, education and healthcare, seminars, sign language training	TSD (applying for FCS, TASAF, Abilis)
Huruma	Religious, regional	Transforming the lives of people with disabilities in Tanzania through handicrafts training and employment	Employment, religious services, physical therapy	Anglican Church, British Charities, Foreign Gov.
Kitaifa Selous	Deaf, regional	Same as Kitaifa HQ.	Seminars, counseling, sign language training	FCS, Abilis, TASAF,

*Table 5: Organizations that participated in this study*

### **Ideology and Development**

Ideology, politics, and material concerns are major factors in the ways that organizations interact with their donors, each other, and deaf individuals. Each group has their own values, agendas, and interventions. This section will review, from the top down, the kinds of influence each group uses and how it affects deaf individuals.

Each organization has certain conditionalities (to use a World Bank and IMF term) that participants must meet in order to receive funding. On a larger scale, each organization listed above must align themselves with the ideologies and expectations of other groups in order to garner support. Donors set their priorities and agendas, while NGOs, FBOs, and other organizations must conform to those standards and appeal to the grant-giving audience. The standards include simple distinctions; for example, the Global Fund only supports programs that address issues around HIV/AIDS, malaria, and TB, so only projects that work on those diseases are considered. Less clear, though, are other organizations with broader mission sets.

Likewise, organizations that receive funding from donors and work in Tanzania each have specific missions, ideologies, and values. All organizations reported a common goal: improving the lives of deaf people. The motivations for ‘improving lives’ are varied: moral obligation, self-interest, and social justice. In some cases, the specific methods and interventions employed by these organizations are informed by these varied ideologies and, at times, intersect and look quite similar. In other cases, though, the activities or efforts actually contradict each other. Tensions between organizations are highest in situations where funding and resources are an issue, and a lack of resources is common to all of these organizations. Scarcity of funding, personnel, and materials unites organizations in their situation but divides them, often quite starkly, in reality.

In participating in an organization like Vijana or Kitaifa, deaf people must, at least implicitly, accept the uniqueness of deafness among disability groups and adopt sign language as

their medium of communication. Huruma is an explicitly religious organization, and mandates certain behavioral expectations that extend to a more personal nature. While Huruma is predominantly a place of employment for deaf people, they are also required to commit to abstaining from certain behaviors deemed immoral by Anglican doctrine. As mentioned earlier, the organization can terminate the employment of individuals who break these rules, even when the infraction was outside of the work place and working hours—and it has done so.

All organizations require some political, personal, or practical concessions from participants. Religious ideologies are, in some cases, easier to identify and point out certain situation-specific contradictions. For example, in communities where there are clear inequalities between the sexes, punishing pre-marital sex (as can only be evidenced by pregnancy) objectively disproportionately focuses on women. Additionally, through many of my interviews with deaf women and studies by other researchers (e.g., Lange 2008; Sa and Larsen 2008) elsewhere in Tanzania, decision-making is also an imbalanced calculus with violence, gender, and dominance significantly shaping sexual encounters. However, secular organizations also require certain compromises on the part of participants. In reality, most of the compromises asked by deaf organizations (like using sign language and distinguishing deaf from other disabled people) are far less controversial and, for the most part, easily practiced in the presence of other deaf people and abandoned in other situations, if need be. Additionally, there is no chance of deaf people being forcibly removed from the organization for those infractions; deaf people can, however, be ostracized for their misbehavior, which carries social consequences but not livelihood ones. None of the interactions between donors and organizations or organizations and recipients are value neutral. Given the stark lack of State-provided social services or support of any kind, deaf people are forced to participate in deaf development and conform (at least publicly) to the

ideological structures of each organization. Certain organizations provide livelihood and material support, others support the top down government lobbying required for sustainable nationwide change, and still others teach deaf children and their parents to sign. Real life, however, is messier.

Due to various material, political, and social differences, tension and competition hinder the work where organizations' efforts could compliment each other. These tensions are not solely caused by stresses about funding, but are certainly exacerbated by it. Religious organizations and organizations run by hearing people (especially those from outside Tanzania) have larger networks from which to draw funding, and better access to and awareness of funding opportunities. Older organizations with better notoriety also enjoy a certain advantage in courting and maintaining donors. Outside donors are unlikely to fund multiple organizations working on similar areas of support. For example, Vijana workers applied for funding for various projects but were consistently turned away because, as they described, "The donors tell us that Kitaifa does work with deaf. And they are already funding them." At the time, Kitaifa was conducting HIV/AIDS education for urban deaf clubs and Vijana was building a project to teach sign language to rural deaf people—these are two very different projects, but because both included deaf people, donors were uninterested.

### **Getting Real Work Done**

The community of organizations working with deaf people is becoming increasingly interconnected. As mentioned several times before, these organizations compete for all kinds of resources; they must constantly search out ways to distinguish themselves from other groups when interacting with outside audiences and deaf people, as well.

During conversations with organizations' leadership on the topic of other organizations in the same sector of work, it became clear that, given the limited amount of funding, each

organization had developed discourses around who was doing the most important work for deaf people. Conversations repeatedly returned to the question of, as a British missionary termed it, “Who is doing the real work?” The concept of getting ‘real’ work done is as loaded as it is illuminating.

In Selous, a major field site of this research, Huruma and Kitaifa Selous have a particularly troubled relationship. They are very different organizations with very different kinds of interventions, but both focus on deaf people. They are both located in Selous and their work often clashes in terms of ideology, time, and culture. For example, Huruma leadership highlighted their intervention as ‘really benefitting’ deaf people. “We are the only ones who really do anything for the deaf,” Andy, a British Huruma worker explained. He talked about the ideological and practical differences between his organization and Kitaifa who, “just waste time by hosting workshops.” In a separate but parallel conversation with leadership from Kitaifa Selous, the president exclaimed:

Where would Huruma be without Kitaifa? How would Susie find deaf people to work in her shop? Can you imagine? Susie going around to the villages, knocking on doors, saying, ‘*Samahani mama, viziwi ipo?*’ [Excuse me ma’am, are there deaf people here?] That would be ridiculous.

Here, the president explains the crucial relationship between his organization and Huruma. Huruma’s existence as a successful organization is completely reliant on the existence of and continuation of a deaf community. According to Mgunda, Kitaifa has helped lobby to establish a deaf school in Selous, has taught deaf people sign language, and has a membership of deaf people from which Huruma can recruit workers.

An additional conflict between Huruma and Kitaifa Selous is their varying conceptualizations of time and practical scheduling problems. Huruma employees, who make up a large percentage of the urban Kitaifa Selous membership, work a six-day workweek. Many of the

employees are also women who continue to be solely responsible for all domestic duties as well. Sundays are busy days filled with laundry, cleaning, and cooking. Kitaifa, like almost all other development organizations, do not host workshops on Sundays. They do this in part due to the predominantly Christian community's need to attend worship services and to allow workers (in this case, people employed at Huruma) time to take care of their private affairs. Therefore, in order for Huruma workers to attend workshops and seminars hosted by any outside group, they must miss work. Susie and Andy Hart, the founders and leaders of Huruma, are totally unwilling to allow their workers to miss work—especially for something they see as a waste of time. Further enflaming tempers is the clash of conceptualizations of time and acceptable practices in 'planning ahead.' Due to Kitaifa's planning process and the various constituents and concerns they have to negotiate in organizing workshops—exacerbated by Huruma employees' fears of requesting permission to miss work—Susie and Andy often feel that Kitaifa intentionally and inconsiderately waits until the last minute to inform them of upcoming events. Thus, the organization shows them a great deal of disrespect. Gross miscommunications have led to bad blood. In addition to these different ideas about time, simply attending workshops during Huruma hours steals away workers and decreases productivity.

Funding is not the only resource that organizations compete over. Well-educated, qualified personnel are a small number of the total deaf population. Huruma has often complained that Kitaifa keeps recruiting for officers from its workforce. The picture is a little more complicated, though. First, individuals volunteer to run for office. While Kitaifa leadership may suggest to individuals that they run, the entire membership of Kitaifa (which, according to its own description, is every deaf person in Selous District) must vote the person into office. Second, because of the relatively high salaries and the draw of work (especially work with other deaf people), Huruma is

able to hire any individual it wants, and often hires primary school graduates as soon as they finish school. Almost all deaf workforce in Selous who can read and have completed their education currently work for Huruma. Literacy is a requirement for working at Kitaifa because its employees are often writing reports and applying for funding. Huruma aggressively recruits primary and secondary school graduates but, ironically, very few of its workers utilize their math, literacy, or other skills learned in school. Kitaifa officers have to split their time between Huruma and their other duties, and often find that Huruma leadership is unwilling to accommodate. A Kitaifa Selous officer, who also works at Huruma, describes:

My work at Kitaifa is volunteer. I might have two jobs, but the one at Kitaifa does not have salary for my position. It is hard to juggle these two things. It seems like I am always asking for forgiveness from someone. I try to plan, but it often doesn't work out as easily as I hoped it would. I think it is difficult for them to meet in the middle. I don't understand why. My work at Kitaifa is hard but it changes people's lives. Looking at the situation, they both deal with deaf people's problems. It is true.

Deaf participants generally agreed that both organizations provide important support. However, sometimes people had the expectation that Kitaifa should do the same as Huruma, which pays people daily wages. These two groups are fundamentally different entities with very different goals and methods. Kitaifa is a volunteer organization, focused specifically on deaf people and building what they consider the crucial foundation for improving the lives of deaf people: sign language and education. However, Huruma is a business-like entity that hires disabled workers and pays them salaries. Deaf people would often express a desire to earn the same kind of material support from Kitaifa. Additionally, some seemed to blur the kinds of support they got from each organization with that of the Tanzanian government.

A byproduct of the Tanzanian government being unable (and in some cases unwilling) to provide services to deaf people, these NGOs and FBOs take on the role of the State in that they

provide some of the traditional supports to local people that governments elsewhere provide. During surveys, interviews, and casual conversations, it became clear that many deaf people blurred the boundaries and expectations they had for the organizations they interacted with, with those of their government. Participants almost universally agreed that the Tanzanian State does not help deaf people. However, some also commented that the government supports their schools, provides shoes for their uniforms, and enacts other small interventions that, upon further research, proved to be false. In some cases, deaf Tanzanians have come to depend on these organizations for their own livelihoods and services, and have little to no faith in their own national government.

The competition and tensions between these organizations, and the incredibly important roles they play in deaf people's lives, have translated into tensions among deaf people. In the case of Huruma and Kitaifa Selous, this means that some individuals who work for Huruma have recently discontinued their membership to Kitaifa. This is due, in large part, to Huruma workers' limited opportunities to participate in Kitaifa-hosted workshops. Workers assume that because Kitaifa does not coordinate with Huruma to host workshops they can attend, the action is a blatant example of favoritism and corruption among Kitaifa leadership. During an annual membership meeting of Kitaifa Selous, a fight broke out between the Kitaifa officers and the disgruntled Huruma workers, which ended with half of the group walking out and swearing to never return.

In Dar es Salaam, where both Kitaifa and Vijana are headquartered, deaf people find themselves either choosing between membership in one organization or the other, or keeping their dual membership secret from the two groups. Leadership from each of these organizations have tense relations and see the other as unfairly moving in on each other's territory. Kitaifa members refer to Vijana converts as not being serious about improving the lives of deaf and just wanting to hang out together socially. In some cases, deaf people only attend social events with membership

of one group or another. However, membership from both groups have circumvented the inter-organizational tensions and have come together without the knowledge of their leadership to begin a savings and loan program solely for deaf people. They have promised to leave the quarrels of the two organizations out of their project.

### **Strategic Participation In and Use of Services**

In an extreme example of the importance of the services provided by NGOs, a young woman working for Huruma found herself unmarried and pregnant, an offense that guaranteed getting fired. She used a special loan from the Christian organization to travel back to her family's village and terminate her pregnancy. She requested the loan under the pretense that her mother was sick and she needed to go help her family through the illness. Even though she was comfortable with raising a child on her own, she realized that she would have no way to provide for the child if she was fired. In order to continue employment, she recognized that she would have to end the pregnancy.

Through participant observation and interviews, it became clear that deaf people found the support of organizations like Huruma and Kitaifa highly beneficial and, in many cases, crucial. Deaf people, as diverse as any population in political and religious affiliation in mainstream Tanzania, have assorted views about the various ideologies of the organizations they rely on. Participants in this study were also generally aware that one must conform to the group and behave accordingly in order to access services. In some cases, a person's beliefs aligned with the organization, while in other cases, there were points of agreement and disagreement. Even with the often-overwhelming benefits of participation in these groups, deaf people strategically chose when they joined and when they abstained.

A passive form of resistance that deaf people employ is keeping their membership to other groups secret in front of competing organizations. As mentioned above, deaf people who participate in both Vijana and Kitaifa keep their multiple affiliations private to ensure that they remain in the good graces of each organization. More aggressively, some deaf people in Selous, frustrated with their inability to attend Kitaifa-hosted workshops because of their work hours at Huruma, decided to stop paying the minimal membership fees for Kitaifa.

In other cases, especially in organizations with religious affiliation where behaviors like pre-marital sex, drinking, and drug use are banned, deaf people would work together to invent stories to cover up their behaviors, and conduct these practices only among people they could trust who either had no connection to the organization or were able to keep the information secret. During my fieldwork, it took several weeks to prove that I was not a spy for the various organizations, but had allegiance to deaf people outside their affiliation. After my loyalties became clear, I was invited over to a participant's home to share pitchers of *ulanzi* and *pombe* (local alcohol made from bamboo and corn, respectively).

One of the most interesting and often-seen cases of subversion in the use of these organizations' services, was deaf people using organizational activities for their own purposes instead of learning to produce paper from elephant dung or understanding ways to decrease corruption in local government. In spite of these organizations' efforts to train deaf people in the various curricula of glass bead making, democracy, and governance, deaf people used the time and space the organizations provided to develop and further solidify deaf networks. As in the case of the workshop in Saadani, rural deaf people with no sign language used the time to meet other deaf people; deaf signers used it to catch up with existing friends or find out where non-signers lived to teach them sign language and bring them to other deaf events. Due to the limited access to

communication, these workshops and workplaces become venues for the spread of information. Deaf church congregation members reported that one of the most beneficial aspects of attending services was finding out about the week's events instead of the sermons. Catholics would attend mass and then visit a deaf (protestant) church to see about the community's events.

### **Conclusion**

This research builds on existing literature in development studies. First, it investigates the contexts in which NGOs who work with deaf people exist; second, it investigates the micro-dynamics of NGO personnel and participants who work to satisfy their own needs within the development intervention. Like other scholars, I recognize that organizations have their own ideologies, which are affected by a variety of pressures—including transnational discourses, competition for resources, and power differentials based on nationality, class, or economics (e.g., Goldman 2005; Murphree 2005). In the case of deaf people in Tanzania, it becomes clear that the unintended consequences of development activities are not always negative. Here, my research departs from most development studies scholarship. Most of the literature on development and the local effects of various programs and policies focus on the negative, unintended consequences (e.g., Jackson 2005; Tsing 2004). In this ethnographic account we see that, despite the various structural and ideological limitations, deaf people find ways to modify the development activities to benefit their own needs. This is particularly clear in terms of workshop trainings, which likely impart very little information regarding the particular topic but provide the conditions for participants to develop a space where it is safe to be deaf.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: DEAF SPACES

The women's deaf club meets every Wednesday in Temeke, near the school for the deaf. They sit under a big tree in-between several small *hoteli*<sup>34</sup>. A local political leader allows the women to use a shed in the back of her house to keep their plastic chairs. As they set up the chairs in a circle, Tina starts to take orders for sodas. She orders from the group's favorite *hoteli* where a friendly waitresses are making a concerted effort to learn LAT. While we chat, a few of the women crochet small scarves to sell. Tatu brought a bag of trinkets she is selling and the women took turns telling me why each piece is an important commodity for a woman to own. The topics covered in today's conversation are varied as usual. Sinde plotted out her plan to run for office in Parliament - a seat is reserved for people with disabilities but to date a deaf person has never gotten it. Everyone agrees she has a chance. Obama's support of abortions becomes a heated discussion, part of the ongoing talks about what future expectations of America where now that a man of African descent was leading the nation. While the women are discussing a savings and loan plan for deaf people that's being organized, a few hearing young men gather around us and start to laugh and mock the sign language. As soon as someone notices the women immediately jump out of their seats and start yelling. The men realize their error and shrink back into the closest *hoteli*. Tina goes to our favorite waitress and explains the situation. She walks over to the men and explains in Kiswahili that they will get no service from the *hoteli* if they tease deaf people. The deaf club members sit down, smiling and continue sipping their drinks. For the moment, they can sign with the support of each other and a few well-placed allies. But when everyone boards their buses to return home that evening they will not have that same protection.

*Excerpt from Field Notes: Temeke, May 2009*

Deaf Tanzanians have figured out ways, despite the stigma, exclusion, and lack of support, to develop a community and sense of connection—even without many of the traditional structures communities have. Almost all deaf people are born to hearing families. Generally deaf people do not find their community until late childhood and even adulthood. Additionally, deaf communities often act with very limited support from governmental or societal structures. Deaf people have to build and maintain community, largely on their own. Generally, what support they do get from

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<sup>34</sup> Small open air restaurants

outside parties (religious organizations and donor groups) is given for one purpose and, superficially is used that way, in reality the benefits of the schools, workshops, church, and other supported spaces are used to create and maintain community and support networks rather than HIV/AIDS training or baptisms. Deaf people in Tanzania carve out safe spaces to sign, develop networks, and find support. Through this research I found that deaf people must first meet other deaf people, often through deaf schools or, as adults, in deaf clubs. Second, deaf spaces in Tanzania require a physical space that can, even for a few hours a week, create to a safe space to be deaf. Finally deaf people must be able to spend time away from their families and be allowed to choose to seek out other deaf people. In Tanzania these deaf spaces serve specific functions and are the creation of deaf people themselves. These spaces are often temporary but some are more permanent. Deaf spaces are as crucial as sign language in building and maintaining deaf networks of support and a sense of community. While in a deaf space, the norms of mainstream are flipped where being deaf is normal and signing is the only acceptable form of communication. Additionally, with time these deaf spaces have a formative effect on hearing people. First acclimating hearing people to sign language and deaf people and, then, through consistent exposure, the recent converts begin to appreciate the various contributions deaf people make outside their own spaces.

### **Engagement with Relevant Literature**

This chapter builds on the current literature on deaf spaces (Breivik, et al. 2002; Friedner 2010), where scholars first document the existence of these spaces and also show the temporary nature of the phenomena. I show some of the critical factors for their existence. I also move beyond their work to show how these spaces have a lasting formative effect on both hearing and deaf people. The work presented here builds on the foundational work of Groce (1996), Johnson

(1991), and Bahan and Nash (1996) on finding and theorizing assimilation communities. It also builds on the work of Kisch (2004; 2007) and Kusters (2010) in expanding our understanding of assimilation communities as complicated, non-utopian theories of what they call “shared signing communities.” According to Kisch and Kusters, approaching these communities with value judgments (this is the “right way” or “wrong way” for deaf people to exist) closes off any further examination of the more important questions of how various relationships open up or close off opportunities for the various members. My research goes a step further to show that, unlike all previously documented shared signing or assimilation communities, the community living in Mnazi is not driven by heredity and isolation, but by economics and migration.

### **First Meeting**

I only met deaf people at Huruma no one before that. Before that I had no idea. Then, when I became deaf, a whole new world opened up. I realized there were schools for deaf people and all that. Maybe I had seen one before. I had never seen sign language anywhere else. Here in Selous it is different you can see sign language and deaf people here. You don't see that in other places. Really there are no deaf people anywhere else. (Ester)

When I was really little I had never met a deaf person. I had never even heard of a deaf person. (Sia)

Community starts with a first meeting. Deaf people recall their first meeting as a significant moment in their lives. People who are born or become deaf soon after often describe meeting deaf people the first time at their arrival at deaf school. Late deafened usually meet deaf people at a deaf club, workshop, or place of work. Some rural deaf knew of deaf people in nearby villages but had no regular contact. Finally, there were people in this study who hadn't met another deaf person at all until they met my RA during our interviews. In almost all cases these individuals thought they were alone in the world, the only deaf person and alone in with their trouble communicating. Participants describe their experiences when they first met deaf people as

overwhelming, scary, and, often, one of the happiest days of their lives. Many participants described the great relief they felt when they finally arrived at a deaf space and saw people who were like them. While it took several weeks and months to figure out sign language and how to communicate, people described an immediate sense of liberation once they found their place. As James describes, “I didn’t see deaf people back then. I was all alone until I went to deaf school. I was isolated. Then when I finally started school that was when I met deaf people.”

In Katavi we met Ruth. She was a single woman in her forties who lived with her younger sister and her family. She washed laundry for her neighbors and had a very limited home sign system. We began the interview and my RA Renada began by explaining that I was hearing and she was deaf. Renada, dressed in pants and a button down top, with a clipboard and folders of papers, was the first deaf woman Ruth had ever met. When she realized Renada was deaf Ruth began to cry. She took Renada by the wrist and took her around to the huts near hers and explained, in her own sign system, that Renada was just like her. She was so proud of being like Renada. Renada took the story back with her to Kitaifa and brought herself to tears in the retelling. She explained that, while they were both deaf, their lives were completely different. Renada, who grew up with deaf siblings, said she could not imagine how lonely it must be to be completely without other deaf people around.

### **Proper Spacing**

Tanzanian deaf communities, like others in the world, are filled with members who join later in their lives. Deaf spaces, as defined here, are specific, bounded, and often temporary. Within these spaces the most important characteristic is that being deaf is unremarkable, in fact expected, and sign language is the dominant form of communication. Those who cannot use sign language are ostracized instead of the reverse in mainstream society. These spaces are intentionally

built and maintained. Usually these spaces have fixed hours of existence and then fade back into mainstream, unremarkable spaces. Temporary spaces include events like deaf clubs, sports games, and religious worship. The more permanent spaces, like homes, schools, and organization offices, are rare occurrences and bolster, through their continued presence, the existence of the more temporary spaces. From the schools deaf marriages result and build deaf homes and build a network of people who can establish organizations. From the organizations workshops and seminars get planned and clubs get funding. The permanent spaces are an important source of continuity for other community structures.

Additionally, permanent spaces generate the temporary spaces. Graduates of deaf schools, a permanent space, often graduate, settle near their alma mater and form or join deaf clubs, temporary spaces. Deaf clubs and participation in deaf organizations are fed by the more permanent schools and homes. For several reasons, deaf people, if able, move to urban places. This is likely due to the availability of services, and then the larger mass of deaf people then generates its own social gravity, attracting more members. Larger urban areas are likely spots for deaf school placement by the government or other donors and thus likely places for deaf networks to grow.

The relationship between permanent and temporary spaces is reciprocal. Permanent spaces provide a launching place for temporary spaces and in return the latter recruit members and keep the community informed of the former's activities.

## **Schools**

Deaf schools are one of the most significant factors in developing deaf networks and a sense of community. One of the oldest and widely known origin myths in deaf history is the story of Abbe L'Eppe and how he found two deaf girls in the forest and founded a school to train them

(Padden and Humphries 1988). Nicaragua's founding of a deaf school was the catalyst and sustaining space for the development of a sign language and a multi-generational deaf community (Senghas 2003; Senghas, et al. 1994). Other researchers found that children in deaf schools learned to rely on each other to learn and thus developed long lasting relationships and networks that last into adulthood (Reilly and Reilly 2005). Deaf schools in Tanzania are among the most important centers for the beginnings, recruitment, and maintenance of deaf communities.

The first deaf school in Tanzania was established in 1963 in Tabora. The school was founded by a Catholic priest with a strong commitment to oralism for deaf education. He continues to run the school with continued fervor for oral education and dislike for sign language. 1963 marked the beginning of an era in which deaf children from all over Tanzania began to attend formal schooling, even if it was a small fraction of them. As proof of the generational nature of deaf schools, the founding members of Kitaifa were all attendants at Tabora. Even though Tabora was an oral school early attendees described signing in dorms, at night, away from the watchful eyes of hearing staff and teachers. As more schools began to accept students a larger and larger number of students were able to attend school. The handful of schools for the deaf and other pertinent information is presented in Table 6:

School	Location	Established	School Owner	Slots	Status	Level
Tabora	Tabora	1963	Catholic Archdiocese of Tabora	140	Boarding	Primary
Buguruni	Dar es Salaam	1974	Tanzania Society for the Deaf	200	Boarding and Day	Primary
Mwanga	Kilimanjaro	1981	ELCT (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania)	100	Boarding	Primary
Mugeza	Kagera	1981	ELCT	100	Boarding	Primary
Luhuwiko (St. Vincent)	Ruvuma	1984	Catholic Archdiocese of Songea	190	Boarding	Primary
Iringa	Iringa	1993	Anglican Diocese of Selous	120	Boarding	Primary
Njombe	Iringa	1994 (2000) <sup>35</sup>	ELCT	120	Boarding	Primary & Secondary
Twiga	Dar es Salaam	2006	Unknown	120	Day	Preschool & Primary

*Table 6: Deaf Schools in Tanzania (pre-2004 data adapted from Muzale 2004)*

All of the schools, save one, are run by religious organizations. Buguruni is run by an organization of British hearing donors who receive the bulk of their funding from UK NGOs, individuals, and Oxfam. Common among all the schools, though, is the lack of deaf people in leadership positions. In several schools deaf adults work as cooks, janitors, and dorm staff, and only a small handful have teachers who are deaf. In fact, throughout this research I only met three deaf teachers.

A significant factor in deaf education is the issue of school fees. In 2002 President Kikwete ordered that all primary education become compulsory and free. However because deaf schools are boarding schools children's families are forced to pay fees for their children to attend. While school fees are quite low, 80,000 Tsh (or 47.20 USD) prevented children from attending who had

<sup>35</sup> Njombe's primary school opened its doors in 1994 and the secondary in 2000.

families who were unwilling or unable to pay. Many parents were doubtful deaf children would benefit from formal education and were unwilling to expend already limited resources on a gamble. Table 7 is a breakdown of the annual costs for families in 2009:

Type	Charge in Tsh (USD) <sup>36</sup>
Tuition	25,000 (\$14.75)
Room and Board	15,000 (\$8.85)
Uniform	30,000 (\$17.70)
Sweater	10,000 (\$5.90)
Total:	80,000 (\$47.20)

*Table 7: School Fees at Selous School for the Deaf 2009*

I spent time at the Selous School for the Deaf when students were arriving for the academic year and watched several families return home with their child, suitcase, and enrollment papers because of the school fees. Socio-economic status of families is a significant influence in deaf children's access to education.

The total number of spots available in deaf schools is just over 1000 and combined with the “deaf units” in hearing schools fewer than 2000 deaf children are likely to receive any formal education at a given time in Tanzania. The number of children without access to formal education far exceeds the capabilities of the State. World Federation of the Deaf researchers estimated that approximately 3% of deaf children receive any formal education at all throughout their lifetimes. Based on government data, Tanzania is ahead of this world average. Even with schools that cater only to deaf students the quality of the education leaves much to be desired. Graduates of deaf school consistently get lower scores on national placement exams than their hearing peers. It is clear that children who attend deaf school are receiving a better education than those who never enroll at all. Students also gain other important skills and connections: namely the socialization and

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<sup>36</sup> Currency conversions using October 2011 rates

matriculation into a community of deaf people and connections to others that will support them throughout the rest of their lives. Through schools deaf people meet friends, spouses, and get connected to organizations. In fact, students who attended deaf schools were more likely (61%) to choose deaf marriage partners while deaf people who did not attend deaf school partnered with deaf 24% of the time. Schools were also important for another reason: learning sign language. As mentioned earlier, approximately 75% of deaf people in this study learned sign language from attending a deaf school. Sign language remains one of the most important factors in deaf people's access to community, employment, and social support.

## Homes

A more personal permanent deaf space is a home where multiple deaf adults live. Most deaf people interviewed chose to date or marry a deaf person. In homes where both parents are deaf their offspring are raised using sign language. In other cases groups of young men or women will share a room in a house. In these homes and rooms sign language is the only acceptable form of communication and deaf people are unremarkable. As mentioned above, deaf children, most often born to hearing parents, almost never occupy deaf homes. Instead, they will seek out other spaces like schools.

Rahema's home, just a mile from Selous School for the Deaf, hosted deaf students constantly. For holidays and breaks from school, instead of going home to their hearing families, kids would stay with Rahema and the deaf people of Mnazi. If a young girl had problems with boyfriends, health, or teachers, she would often wander over to Rahema's to consult with the adult deaf women living in the area. Many called her *Mama Kiziwi* (or deaf mother). Once Rahema's boyfriend gave her a television, the home became the hang out for local deaf kids.

Deaf homes' boundaries are often not confined within the physical space of the home. In several villages deaf homes shared outdoor kitchens with hearing neighbors. Often hearing neighbors (almost exclusively hearing women) learned some sign language or gestures in order to cooperate with their deaf neighbors. People took turns watching each other's children and shared other domestic responsibilities.

### **Organizations**

As addressed in the previous chapter, organizations that provide services to deaf people are crucial for deaf Tanzanians. These organizations provide services, education, work, and space to build community. Two with the most secure status and longest standing are, of course, Vijana and Kitaifa both established and run by deaf people. Key here is that each organization has a physical office space where deaf people work and others come in to petition or help and often to simply be around other deaf people. During my time volunteering in each of these offices people who did not work at the organization or have specific business would spend extensive amounts of time there. The physical structure allowed people a space to gather, no matter the day or schedule, to meet with and be around fellow deaf people.

### **Deaf Church**

Immanuel Church was founded with the support of Deaf Missions International from Australia around 1999. Pastor Peter is a deaf man from Kenya who has established deaf churches all over the region. He began in Kenya, went to Uganda and Rwanda and founded churches there too. He was originally trained and supported by Andrew Foster. Foster (1927-1987) is an important historical figure in deaf development and missions and he was the first African American get a bachelor's degree from Gallaudet College. He is often described as the father of deaf education in Africa (Kiyaga and Moores 2003). After graduation he founded the Christian

Mission for Deaf in 1956 and traveled to Africa establishing schools all over the continent, all told a total of 54 (Christian Mission for the Deaf 2007). After Andrew Foster's death his widow reduced the support given through the Christian Mission for Deaf Africans and Pastor Peter lost his funding and had to seek elsewhere to continue his work.

When Pastor Peter arrived in Tanzania in 1997 he struggled to set up the church. He recalled, "The government didn't believe a deaf church could survive. They didn't believe that a deaf man could be a pastor, go to secondary school, or go to college. I had to take my transcripts with me everywhere." He said Kitaifa helped in the small ways they could, by lobbying government or introducing him to key people. The church began in 1999 with 15 members and has since grown to a congregation of over 100. There are branch churches in Bukoba, Mwanza, Morogoro, and Moshi.

Deaf people who attend hearing church services described that they get no substantive benefit from their experiences. Instead they satisfy expectations from family members and use the time for private conversations with God. Those who attend deaf church services describe the benefits as many, and chief among them is finding out what is happening in the deaf community. They also cite learning religious doctrine and being able to participate in worship service.

Each Sunday the small cinderblock room behind a large hearing church fills with plastic chairs, benches, a pulpit, layers of blue and white sheets as decorations and over a hundred deaf parishioners and their children. The services are characteristically long sets of multiple sermons, choir performances (where the deaf participants sing with their hands and voices—quite an experience), prayers, blessings, and the longest and most well attended part, the announcements. Representatives from Kitaifa and Vijana as well as the deaf soccer leagues, heads of local deaf clubs, and others take turns standing in front of the congregation sharing news. They spread news

like recruitment for programs with the vocational training programs run by the government (VETA), encourage people to enroll in the recently established savings and loan scheme for deaf people, warn people of recent crimes, and announce births. When the announcement portion of the service begins neighbors elbow their fellow congregants awake from their mid-service slumber to ensure that no one misses the valuable information. One week Makale arrived at work at Kitaifa headquarters wearing a t-shirt for another church and several other deaf workers gave him trouble for not attending the deaf church. He announced, “I make sure someone tells me the news. I don’t miss anything.”

After church people linger around the area discussing the week’s events and slowly gather at a local *hoteli* to continue their conversations in a post-church deaf club. The owners and servers at the establishment have come to expect them at the Y2K Bar & Hotel and usually already have seats gathered in a corner for them. Most people sit and chat without purchasing food or drink, but a few gesture to the waitress for Cokes or Fanta. Both the cinderblock room and the Y2K Bar & Hotel transform, just for a few hours, into deaf spaces. LAT becomes the form of communication, each member has complete access, and being deaf is, well, normal. The phenomenon is very similar to deaf clubs and sports teams that meet weekly or monthly.

### **Deaf Clubs**

“In the afternoons everyone is finished. We would all get together and chat. It wasn’t structured or controlled by anyone. We all enjoyed talking and keeping up with each other.” (Mathayo)

The deaf club is an old and nearly worldwide-recognized facet of deaf communities. In Tanzania the various clubs have widely varied levels of formality, funding, participation, and frequency of meetings, but there are some commonalities as well. Some deaf clubs operate on budgets that allow them to purchase sodas for people who attend while others have no income at all and informally meet at an individual’s home. Generally the leadership of these clubs pulls from

deaf people who have formal education, employment, and the ability to sign well and communicate in Kiswahili. These leaders are chosen informally (the person who can host the club at their home) or formally (through annual elections). Deaf clubs are temporary spaces that are important sources of information both in the global sense and within the community. They also serve as a site for reaffirmation of community. Members seek advice from other members, material and emotional support, and a sense of normalcy and belonging, even if temporary, knowing they must return to the hearing world that is often indifferent and even, at times, openly hostile.

First, none of the clubs, no matter how well funded, have a permanent, dedicated space. They are all temporary takeovers of traditionally hearing spaces that are transformed into something completely different for a few hours a week or a month. Generally, the clubs meet at bars or restaurants and the relationships between the club members and the establishments are sometimes tense. In fact, deaf people are seen as cheap customers (not entirely untrue) and are hard to deal with. The successful establishments generally have a waitress who figures out some gestures and signs and works with the group each time. In Dar es Salaam one deaf club was kicked out of the café because the young deaf men were causing trouble and in another the deaf were asked to leave because so few of them bought food or drink during their meetings. Due to their level of income just traveling to the club can be a significant cost. Purchasing food outside the home is often seen as wasteful or lazy. Meeting in businesses that expect attendees to make purchases is a long standing source of friction. Weekly at the given hour deaf people start to trickle in and women make a circle and men make another. Sometimes they all sit together in a circle, but usually, after there are more than 10 people in attendance the genders break off to chat on their

own. For a few hours the entire corner of the café is filled with the sights and sounds of deaf people, hands moving, banging on tables, and loud laughter.

At the Temeke deaf club a young man, David, sat in the corner slightly behind Eric, who brought him. He had a newspaper that Sinde had finished reading and he glanced between the paper and the deaf people around him. Eric explained that David had recently gone completely deaf and did not know any sign language. Over the months David increased his signing and decreased his paper reading. He participated more and more as he began to learn sign language. He still relied on lip reading but was able to communicate with anyone at the club. After a few months he even had a deaf girlfriend and began to come to the club on his own, sitting in the middle instead of the corner.

*Excerpt from Field Notes: Dar es Salaam June, 2009*

Deaf clubs are important sites for community recruitment and maintenance. Late deafened adults, recent deaf school graduates, and others seek out the clubs as a way to enter a new deaf community. These clubs are especially important for late deafened adults or deaf people moving in from rural areas who rely on them for sign language learning and an initial entrance into the local deaf networks. Expert signers spread information about new signs and correct new signers. The deaf club is also an opportune place for ethnographers to make contacts and solidify language skills.

Hamidi explained, “After I finished school at Tabora I moved to Dar es Salaam and started attending the deaf club. There I learned sign language, met friends, and heard about Kitaifa.” Topics discussed at deaf clubs are wide ranging. Given the election of President Obama, his resulting early administration, and his East African ancestry, many of my conversations began with, transitioned to, or wrapped up with theories about his grandmother actually being from Tanzania instead of Kenya and theories about the United States’ new relationship with Africa. Other topics included national level politics, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and China. Around voting time older members of the community would explain how to vote or register with a political

party. During holidays and soccer games attendants would plan meetings at various events to sit together. Couples talk about challenges with parenting or marriage and seek advice from other community members.

Deaf club meetings provide opportunities for deaf community members to tell stories. Given the rarity of hearing attendants and, even more rare, Western hearing signers, many of the stories were directed at me as an effort to educate me on Tanzanian and deaf culture. A common set of stories centered around the four presidents of Tanzania and their varying love of deaf and disabled people. The history of which presidents adopted disabled orphans or hired deaf house staff praised the presidents but condemned the rest of the political establishment for their lack of support to deaf people. Another common thread of stories focused on gender relations and family planning. Being a newly wed myself, the older deaf women took it upon themselves to educate me and the other young women about proper behavior, strategies for improving domestic relations, and how to raise children. In a late night conversation about where deaf clubs are, Nyawe said, “I go to a deaf club everyday! I go to work at Huruma.” Mgunda replied, “Huruma doesn’t count! You can’t talk there you can only work. That’s not a club.” Free and open conversation is key to the definition and survival of deaf clubs.

## **Deaf Sports**

Deaf sports are another important but mobile and temporary deaf space. Attendance at deaf clubs decreases when there’s a game and increases again once the 15-week season is over. In Dar es Salaam the deaf sports league was established by Hamisi, who was also a founding member of Kitaifa in the 1980s. He is the official score keeper for games. Generally, deaf sports means soccer, and only men play. Women, especially wives and girlfriends of players gather on the sidelines with older men or those who do not play to cheer their teams, the audience is usually

overwhelmingly male. In DSM there are enough deaf people to field several teams based geographically. In Selous, however, there is just one team and it splits according to the numbers that show up in order to play against them. The teams in DSM are generally well equipped. Most of the players have cleats and jerseys and each match has two game balls. The games are always played by the Saba Saba Fairgrounds.

During one of the games the audience noticed a nun walking a group of orphans across the park. The children brought out sympathy in the crowd. One gentleman explained, “those children don’t have a chance. They will have such hard lives.” Given the constant refrain in interviews and conversations about the *maisha ngumu* (hard life) deaf people experience, it was an interesting change of position for deaf people to express, from their own space, pity for another marginalized population.

Later, toward the end of the game, a young woman who was attending classes at VETA pulled Hamidi to the side to talk to him about some trouble she was having with the hearing instructor and her hearing classmates. They talked through her concerns and Hamidi provided her some strategies to keep up with her classmates even though she was unable to understand the teacher. He explained, “Make a friend of one of them and copy their notes.” She said, “But they are selfish and impatient. I hate them.” He replied, “I know. That’s how hearing usually are. But you want to pass, right?” They ended the conversation with her promising to try to work it out. She was going to VETA through the support of a Kitaifa recommendation. Her success would reflect on future deaf pupils. Another woman explained to me that she came to games to see other deaf people. She was poor and had no money to take a *daladala* (bus) across town to the women’s club, and besides, she said, “All they do is gossip. They are nosey.”

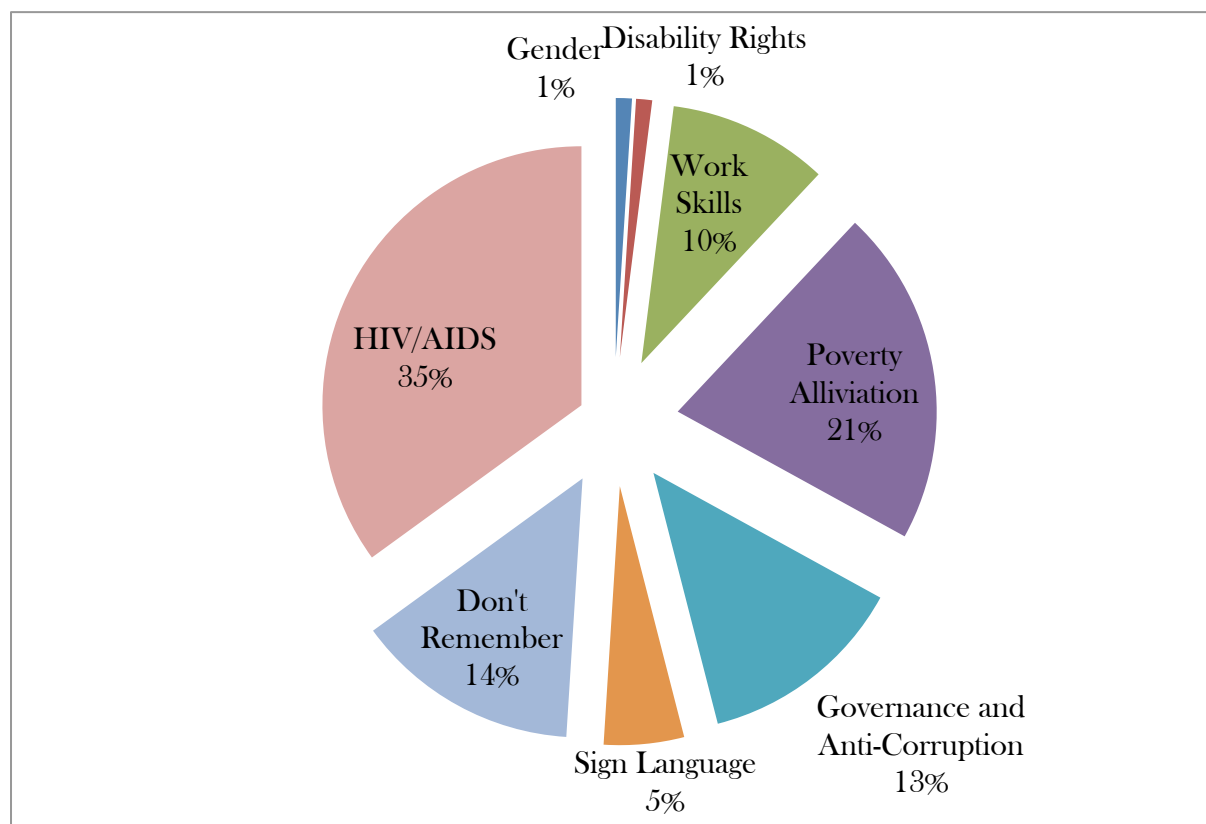
As the game ended, Temeke 9 to Kibaha 1, the players joined the crowd to catch up on conversations and slowly head home via the *daladala* stop at the main street or by foot. Each individual or couple loaded onto the various vehicles or walked their own way home and the space slowly melted back into a hearing space where voices and sounds dominate and deafness becomes strange. The jarring transition from sitting in a crowd among friends and conversations to join to the solitary ride home among the hearing seemed sad.

## Workshops

Workshops and seminars are a relatively new and important deaf space especially for rural deaf. In the current international development climate, donors dispense massive amounts of funds in order to teach certain skills and knowledge to local communities. Deaf organizations have hopped on that gravy train. Workshops are usually one to five day training courses with varied start times and extended *chai* (tea) and lunch breaks. Each participant receives a notebook, pen, and bottle of water and sits at a table in the conference room of a community center or local hotel. Another significant feature of these trainings is the per diems, each participant receives payment to compensate for lost wages. Most workshop attendees are unemployed or severely underpaid, so the per diem for a single day of participation often triples their entire month's income. Deaf trainers from Dar es Salaam or the nearest urban area travel to various sites and conduct these workshops.

Workshops, like other deaf spaces require certain behaviors like communicating in sign. During one workshop on entrepreneurship in Selous two hearing workshop facilitators were talking in Kiswahili. One of the deaf women walked up to them and scolded them for not signing in front of deaf people. She said, "Shame on the two of you, you are friends of the deaf and you are here with us. You need to use your hands not your big mouths."

Over the course of this research I attended seven workshops hosted by various organizations. I saw workshops on several different topics and went to rural, urban, regional and national level conferences. Using participant observation I found that many attendants appreciated the workshops for the opportunity to meet with other deaf people and share news more so than the specific content. In this study approximately 61% of participants attended workshops and each person thus far attended to an average of two. The topics varied with most people reporting attending seminars on the topics of HIV/AIDS, poverty alleviation, and anticorruption. Notably 14% of people, mostly non-signers, could not recall the topics at all. In Figure 16 see the various kinds of workshops deaf people reported attending:



*Figure 14: Survey data on types of workshops deaf participants attended*

The great irony of these workshops is that generally the topics are completely lost on the audience. Deaf organizations write grant proposals to donors using all the appropriate jargon and discourses of empowerment, poverty reduction, and anti-corruption. However, as savvy as the grantees are in current development theories it is rare that participants can describe even the most basic concepts communicated during the training. This is for several reasons. First, if the workshop is hosted in a rural area, often the majority of attendees do not know LAT and likely no sign system at all. Second, even if the attendees use LAT they have limited Kiswahili literacy and are unaccustomed to a classroom or workshop environment. Ice-breakers, group work, and presentations (the kinds of behaviors Western based donors think are perfect for imparting knowledge) are outside their skill sets and comfort zones. Third, those who have attended school have the language skills and background knowledge to benefit from the trainings usually spend their time catching up with deaf friends and sharing information among participants. Facilitators have limited freedom in changing the topics or format of the seminars due to funding constraints.

Arguably, the most beneficial aspect of these workshops is not the content imparted but the social interaction and networking. New signers gain exposure to LAT and the deaf community in their area, and signers meet non-signers and have a chance to catch up with friends and acquaintances. Deaf attendees also have the rare experience of being part of a group, in public, who can demand respect from community members.

For the entire course of the seminar the conference room and surrounding facilities become a deaf space. Local shop and café owners quickly learn to gesture enough to attract deaf business, and the novelty of signers hanging out in front of the building quickly wears off. Deaf workshop attendees can move throughout the area without fear of being ostracized and have a network of people to support them.

Workshops are among the most contentious and politically charged deaf spaces. Attending workshops provides both material and symbolic rewards. Per diems are a significant amount of money for all deaf participants and attending formal workshops carries a professional air that increases social status among both deaf and hearing networks. Some local agencies, due to politics and limited resources, will often select the attendees and bar others from coming. People who are not invited to attend point out that often a specific constant cadre of people are chosen. These fights are limited to urban seminars, as the rural communities are far less organized and attendance is more about geographic availability than any undertones of favoritism or limited space.

### **Shared Signing Communities: Mnazi**

Yeah. People who live there sign really well. You can meet people on the street and talk to them easily. It is good there. Some hearing people can sign too. Really those are more short conversations though. Mostly the long conversations in sign language happen with deaf people. There are lots of deaf people there. It is good. I like Mnazi very much. (Young deaf man and resident of Mnazi)

In extremely rare cases there are a cluster of deaf homes all living in a small geographic area. In these cases the deaf space expands, though in modified form, to an entire neighborhood or village. Mnazi, a suburb of Selous, is the most likely candidate for Shared Signing community status. However, there are two more: Kitulo, a village in southern Tanzania and Yombo Doyya, a slum outside of Dar es Salaam, are also potential examples of these communities. In these areas the deaf space no longer has sign language as the dominant language but it remains an acceptable and unremarkable form, and deaf people do not outnumber hearing people but occupy expanded positions in the community.

According to Bahan and Nash (1996), communities with deaf people as members of the “assimilation communities”, where deaf people have better equality and hearing people accept and even use sign language. According to the authors, the community must be geographically and

genetically isolated, hearing people view deaf people as members of the community and not in terms of the pathology of deafness, there are positive community wide views and usage of sign language, deaf people enjoy more equal rights, there is a higher percentage of deaf people in the community compared to surrounding communities, deaf people consciously choose to remain in the community, and, most importantly, the instances of deafness span three or more generations. Bahan (2002) also explains that the population density of deaf people in these communities often climbs to over four percent. Additionally, in specifically cultural terms, deaf members of the community practice a “village first” identity as contrasted with a “deaf first” approach to community membership (Johnson 1994).

To date there have been a handful of documented shared signing communities. Most notable are Martha’s Vineyard (Groce 1996; Kusters 2010), Yucatan (Johnson 1991), Adamorobe, Ghana (Frishberg 1987), and others. These communities hold an almost mythical status in the Western deaf imagination. Assimilation communities, as they have been referred to by earlier studies, are lauded as Deaf Utopias (Kusters 2010) where everyone uses sign language, people intermarry without concern, and deaf people are ranked equal among their hearing neighbors. But this overly positive reading of the social situation limits, as Kisch (2007) and Kusters (2010) argue, limits the anthropological investigation of the community. Instead, Kisch argues for a more nuanced reading of the communities, which she calls, shared signing communities to denote, not the assimilation of deaf people into the community but the shared mode of communication among all members.

Martha’s Vineyard, perhaps the most famous shared signing community, has an impressive role in the foundation and development of the American Deaf community, with its own sign language, Martha’s Vineyard Sign Language (MVSL). Researchers posit that MVSL was one of the

seed languages, along with French Sign Language, for ASL (Frishberg 1975). However, in terms of study and scholarship about these communities most of the work has been focused on documenting a new or unique sign language in use in the community. The case of Tanzania, and Mnazi in particular, is, potentially, quite novel. It follows several of the requirements as laid out by Bahan, Nash, and Johnson, but also diverges from the list in some surprising ways.

The people of Mnazi are not kept together by genetics or geography. In fact, most deaf people move into the community consciously and in adulthood. While sign language is accepted and even used by hearing community members, there are no signs that a new language is growing from this influx of hearing users. In the following section I review the *crème de la crème* of the deaf space: the assimilation community of Mnazi.

Generally, due to my horrific cooking skills my contribution to dinner is often soda. In preparation for dinner at Rahema's in Mnazi her hearing daughter and I walk to the nearby *duka* to purchase drinks. Terry prefers to sign with me, so as we walk we discuss about her day at school in LAT. When we arrive at the *duka* she greeted the shop keeper, saying, "Shikamoo." And he responds, "Marahaba." She then requests several sodas, a certain number cold and others warm, and the various flavors we had memorized from the requests of the family. He collects the sodas and tells her the total. She looks to me, I pay, thank the man and we leave. As we walk back I realize that the entire conversation, between three hearing people, was completely in sign language.

*Excerpt from Field Notes: Selous February 2009*

This kind of interaction, anywhere in the world, is extremely rare. It is especially surprising in a country with such limited support for deaf people and such strong stigma around disability and difference. There are several conditions that help facilitate the development and maintenance of assimilation communities and some unique to Mnazi.

### *Density*

The factors that influence the situation in Mnazi are high density of deaf people, public signing, economics, and, unique to other assimilation communities, the population has moved to

the area by choice. Due to the demographics of the population of deaf people living in Mnazi and the relatively deaf friendly atmosphere deaf people have a more active participation in public life. Each of these factors is clearly interrelated and an increase in one leads to an increase in another. It is difficult to ascertain which of these factors is the most significant or begets the others. What is clear, now, though, is that each affects the other and all contribute to more welcoming circumstances for deaf people.

It is impossible to know the percentage of Mnazi's population that is deaf. Population statistics are difficult to get for the entire country and even more complicated for deaf and disabled people. However, based on extensive fieldwork, I can say, at least anecdotally, that Mnazi has a higher density of deaf people than other similar areas. Nearly all the deaf people living in Mnazi know sign language. Those who are not completely fluent in sign language are actively working toward it. Most of the residents have also attended some amount of formal education. The population of Mnazi is, compared to the larger deaf population in Tanzania, a rare gathering of elite individuals. This is not to say they are living comfortably and are not poor—but relative to the isolated, uneducated, rural majority of deaf Tanzanians—have more security and safety.

### *Economics*

Many deaf residents of Mnazi are employed by the nearby deaf school or Huruma and are thus bringing in wages competitive to or above those of their hearing neighbors. Additionally, both the school and NC pay regularly and the employment is consistent. Thus deaf residents of Mnazi are sometimes in a better financial situation than many other residents. A relatively large publicly signing deaf community has shaped the view of hearing people about their deaf neighbors. Hearing landlords and store owners seek out deaf tenants and customers. Several mechanic shops, welders, and shop owners explained that they look for deaf employees because they are well trained and consistently show up to work. Communication barriers were not a concern for many businesses in

Mnazi. In most other parts of Tanzania hearing perceptions of deaf people include an assumption about their inability to be independent. They often believe that deaf people are uneducated, cannot communicate (*bubus*), and lazy. In Mnazi deaf people are a demographic that hearing people seek out.

As I mentioned earlier some of my most unexpected but enlightening information came from participant observation. In order to work with some of my informants, especially women who were employed six days a week and spent the seventh hectically catching up on all their domestic duties, I spent time with them while they were running errands. I was helpful, in that I could carry things, and it was a great chance for me to observe deaf people interacting with hearing community members in various settings. Valeriana, a young deaf woman who lives in Mnazi and works at Huruma , asked me to accompany her to the market on a Saturday afternoon. The market was full of people selling and buying, talking and negotiating. The stalls were full of various wares each carefully displayed by shopkeepers looking to attract business. Valeriana needed specific items and carried half of her month's wages wrapped in a terry cloth handkerchief balled in her fist. As we moved through the market we entered only specific shops where the seller could sign. The first was an Asian man selling fabric, and he teased Valeriana for being gone for so long. His older father came out to greet us, and while his signing capabilities consisted mostly of gestures, he knew to speak slowly and clearly, making sure that Valeriana could see his lips while he spoke. The second place we stopped at was selling *jikos* (stoves), and Valeriana picked up on a heated negotiation on price with the shopkeeper. Apparently this conversation had been happening over the course of several weekends and was nearing completion. Finally the two compromised. Valeriana agreed on his price and he threw in a *zawadi ya kiziwi* (a gift for the deaf) as a bonus for purchasing. As we walked away he tapped her on the shoulder and reminded her to tell her friends

that he was “*rafiki ya viziwi*,” a friend of the deaf. Outside Selous and Mnazi I have walked through markets with deaf people in Arusha, Dar es Salaam, Kitulo, and other places both urban and rural. I have never seen so many places cater specifically to signing deaf people. Shop owners seek out deaf patrons and work to keep their business.

Most of the deaf residents in Mnazi have had some level of formal education. Those who did not learn LAT in school have learned through the aggressive sign language campaigning of Kitaifa. The deaf who are new to the community learn from the other signers. After finishing over a decade at a deaf school where (with the exception of a few of the schools) sign language is an accepted practice, deaf people sign in public with more confidence than new signers. These signers set the standard for new signers and hearing community members. More public signing begets more public signing and more hearing acceptance and even, in a step beyond, participation in signed communication. As one woman describes,

There is a lot of deaf people and there are many hearing people who sign too. It is great! I think it is because there are so many deaf people here. So hearing people learn to sign. Over here, over there. There are so many! All the little kids know how to say “*shikamoo*” and I say “*marahaba*” back. It is very good! So many people like to do it. It is fun to see hearing people sign. They also know how to speak more clearly and look at us when they are talking so we can understand.

### *Mnazi Unique Among Shared Signing Communities*

The deaf community at Mnazi is not the result of multiple deaf children born into families in a small geographic location. Deaf people move to Mnazi by choice. In all other cases of shared signing communities, the seed that begins and structure that maintains the situation is a constant multigenerational hereditary deafness. These communities are often isolated and result in some level of intermarriage that perpetuates the instances of deafness. In the case of Mnazi the overwhelming majority of deaf people moved to the area in adulthood by choice. Mnazi is the location of a deaf school, established in 1993, and Selous, the urban center that Mnazi neighbors,

has an active Kitaifa branch office and Huruma. It is likely that these institutions (the Kitaifa office and Huruma) are both significant influences on the deaf community at Mnazi. The large population provides a workforce and membership to the organizations, and the organizations provide various kinds of support including employment and social activities.

### **Conclusion: A Good Use of Space**

In concert with existing Deaf Studies literature (Breivik, et al. 2002; Friedner 2010) on deaf spaces, this research shows that in Tanzania as in other parts of the world, deaf spaces are crucial for developing networks of other deaf people, learning sign language, and connecting to a larger community of people for friendship, family, and protection. They are formative and agentic. The ethnographic research shown here proves that these spaces are formative for both hearing and deaf people. Hearing people, with prolonged exposure to deaf people and deaf spaces, are also deeply affected by their experiences and often have more positive views of their interactions with deaf people. The spaces described in this chapter function as points of entry into a specifically deaf network, sites for knowledge production and transmission, places where deaf people can participate as unremarkable regular citizens in conversation and community, and situations where deaf people can work together freely and safely to combat the various forms of oppression they face on the outside.

These spaces are also agentic; within them, seeds of resistance against abusive families, unfair bosses, and neglectful government find a way to germinate. Building on scholarship about the various kinds of alternative kinship practiced by East Africans, the deaf spaces explored here open up our understanding of ethnicity as moving beyond religion, class, and geography. Deaf people in Tanzania felt kinship with deaf people across the country and separated from their own biological families in order to move to places like Mnazi.

My research also provides a novel contribution to the study of shared signing communities in that, to date, all of the communities recorded have been based on hereditary deafness. Mnazi, the nascent shared signing community presented in this chapter, is built not on families with deafness across several generations, but on deaf adults choosing to move there and live near other deaf people. The deaf space that exists in Mnazi also opens up some interesting opportunities to theorize how hearing people exist and participate in deaf communities or networks. Unlike Western Deaf communities, there is no hostility in Mnazi toward hearing people simply based on their hearing abilities. Instead, all those who are willing to communicate visually (through LAT, gesture, or careful lip reading) are welcomed as potential allies. In this way, one might say that the deaf community in this poor corner of Southern Tanzania is more developed than those seen in many Western countries.

**CHAPTER EIGHT: MAISHA MAGUMU<sup>37</sup>**

Bernadetta was 17 when she got married and gave birth to her first daughter. Soon after the birth, Bernadetta's husband began to complain that she had not given him a son and started to beat her. After the birth of their second daughter Bernadetta's husband beat her so badly that she began to bleed from her ears. When she awoke one morning after a particularly brutal beating, she realized she had lost her hearing. Raised an orphan, she had no family of her own to turn to. Her situation grew worse when her husband's family disowned her after he told them she had become deaf due to contracting HIV/AIDS while working as a prostitute. She was not a prostitute and Bernadetta explains, "The only man I have ever been with, to this day, is him. So if he thinks I have AIDS, well, then he gave it to me. I don't, though, I just lost my hearing from his fists." Once Bernadetta was on her own, she met a deaf woman living in the area and began to spend time at other various deaf women's homes learning sign language and making friends. She explains, "Life is hard as a deaf person. But, I have to tell you truly, life was harder as a hearing orphan with a terrible husband and his mean family. I had to become deaf to find family and friends who love me. Now I have teachers who teach me to sign, work to earn money, and women to protect me from my husband if he comes around again."

*Excerpt from Field Notes: Selous, February 2009*

In this chapter I provide a more in depth view of how deaf people experience stigma and oppression in the different areas of their lives and how they respond and resist in creative ways. Each of my informants experienced their own kinds of violence in their lives. Even through difficult and often slow paced interviews with participants who had limited or no language, these individuals and their families told stories of violence experienced and strategies for fighting it. The spectrum of violence was met with an equal variety of resistance. This chapter looks at the various kinds of violence experienced by deaf people and the strategies they have created to survive in an often-hostile environment. My intention is not, however, to romanticize resistance, as Farmer (2004) warns against, and this discussion remains grounded in the lived experiences and opinions of the people who are the subject of conversation. While the resistance deaf people exert in these

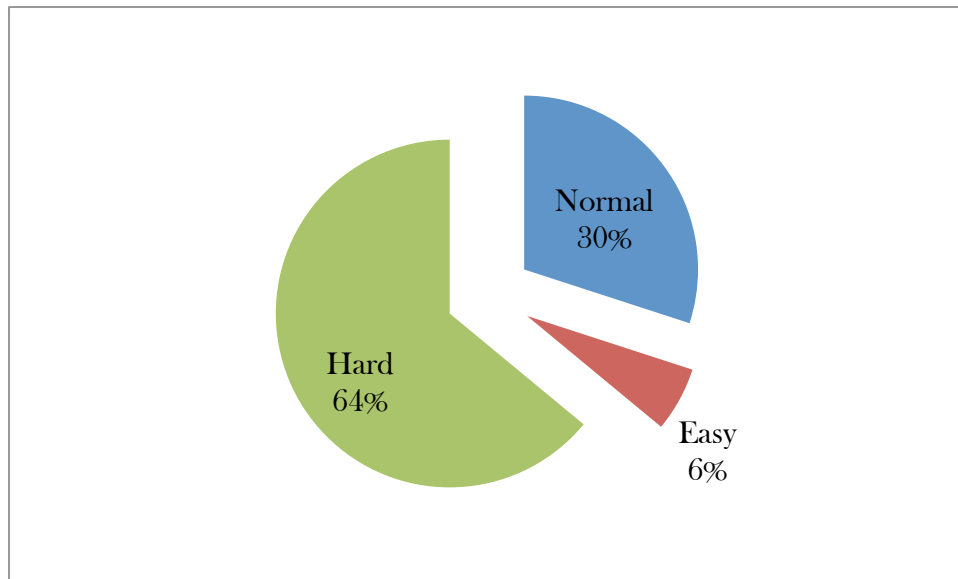
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<sup>37</sup> Kiswahili for Hard Life

highly imbalanced situations is brave, creative, and diverse, it must be clear that, even with these efforts, the safety of deaf people, especially those without support networks, is precarious.

Common strategies of resistance employed by the deaf people who I met, in various threatening situations, included passivity, overt disagreement, and opting out. Most commonly, resistance strategies included a significant amount of passivity. That is, rarely did I witness, or did deaf people report directly confronting abusers or unfair or discriminatory systems. Instead they relied on more covert forms of resistance, which sometimes passed for apathy, inaction, or indifference to outsiders when, in fact, participants were often very aware of their actions and intended outcomes. From early on in their lives deaf people realized they were at an extreme disadvantage in most situations in life and have responded by banding together to gain power in numbers. In situations where that is impossible, they find ways to strike out on their own and not return.

Bernadetta's story is one of many that I collected from deaf Tanzanians when I asked them to explain the often-repeated phrase, "*Maisha magumu*" (life is hard). Another informant, Ester, when asked this question succinctly replied in this way, "It is hard. Their lives are bad. That is all there is to it. It is quite simple." In surveys I asked deaf participants what life was like for deaf people compared to hearing people. Their responses, shown in Figure 17 below, overwhelmingly show that life is considered hard for deaf people.



*Figure 15: Responses to the survey question, "Is life easy, normal, or hard for deaf people?"*

Deaf people who participated in this study often had very strong opinions about why it was that deaf people's lives are so hard, most often pointing to a the lack of educational and work opportunities. Almost all respondents who said life was hard were aware of the cyclical nature of deaf people's dilemma. Because families and governments ignore deaf people, they are unable to get into and stay in school. Deaf people with poor education are unable to find good work or, in many cases, any work at all. And because of mainstream Tanzania's discomfort with sign language, hearing people pay them less attention and oppress them. Figure 18 shows the responses to an open-ended question on the survey:

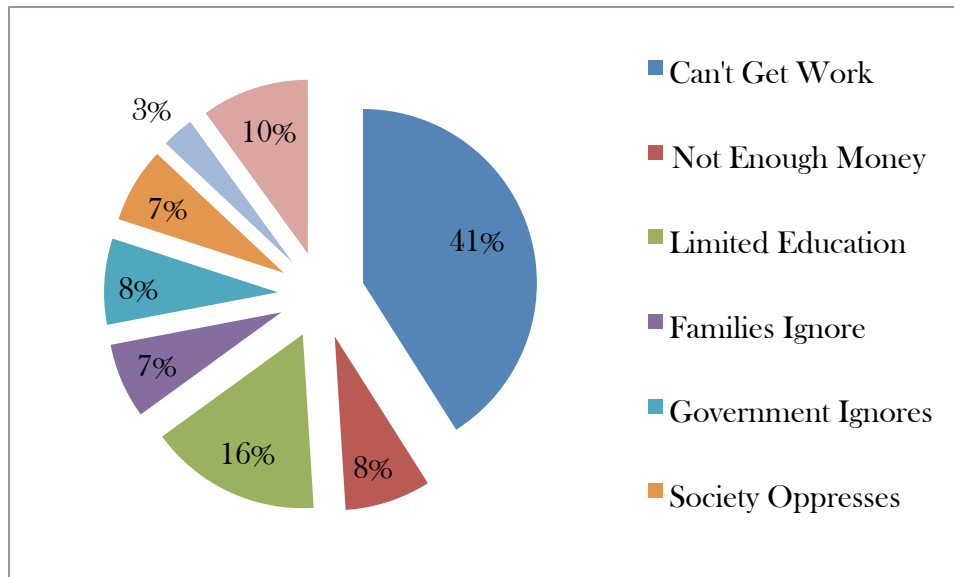


Figure 16: Responses to survey question: "Why is life hard for deaf people?"

Interestingly, those who answered that life was easy for deaf people were all deaf signers, active members of deaf associations, and often worked at a deaf school or other places with a majority of deaf people. Their explanations about why life was easy include, from a deaf woman "Deaf people can partner together." And a two deaf men living in Njombe commented, "We can communicate and work together" and "We can work together as deaf people."

### Experience and Resistance

Wow. It is really hard. Deaf people have very hard lives. I don't know because, well, for example they stay with their parents and it is hard for them to get out on their own. Deaf people don't get help from others the same way that hearing people do. (Ruby)

Deaf adults explained that even in early childhood their relationships with their parents were different from their hearing siblings. Literature on stigma and neglect of disabled children often sites the lack of state and community support as major contributors (Baskind and Birbeck 2005; Eklindh, et al. 1995). I argue that the lack of parental knowledge of LAT, stigma, and lack of support from community and government are three nodes in a cycle of negative interactions

between deaf children and their hearing families. In the very few stories that deaf people told me where their parents knew sign language, the relationship seemed much more healthy and beneficial for everyone involved. Once parents learn sign they seem to understand more about their children as whole complete people instead of mere burdens without agency. Generally, though, very few parents learned sign language and thus deaf children had difficult relationships with their families.

Those who lost their hearing later in life remember the marked change in family dynamics after they became deaf. Sia recounts, “My dad was a little bit afraid of me after I became deaf. He did not know what to do with me. He would lock me up— literally, he would lock me in the house so people wouldn’t see me and tease him.” Many deaf people talked about various challenges living at home with parents who were ashamed of them, outwardly hostile, or just completely ill-equipped to handle the challenges of raising a deaf child. Families generally reacted to a deaf child by locking him or her away. Most parents indicated that their decisions were based on a concern for the child’s safety. In most cases the only way children left such a situation was to be taken, often forcibly, to deaf schools. Those who did not have the opportunity to go to a deaf school waited until adulthood with the slim hope that they would marry or find work outside their family’s home. Very few deaf people who did not attend to school married or moved away from home. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, a very small number of non-signers who participated in this research married, and only 24% married another deaf person. The majority of non-signers have limited connection to deaf networks.

As discussed in greater depth in Chapters Four and Seven deaf schools are a significant feature in deaf support networks. To recap and build on this previous argument I will restate that for those children who did go off to school, once they adjusted to life at the deaf schools, their thoughts of—and their visits home— sharply decreased. Deaf schools are almost all boarding

schools, and most families could not afford or were unwilling to pay for bus fare for their children to come back home for a short visit. During an interview one deaf woman said, “Once I got to deaf school, though, you couldn't pay me to leave. I loved it. Then the school was closed for holiday. I stayed the whole time until the school was actually closed. Then I finally went home. I was home for two weeks and then right back.”

Deaf children tend to return home only when the school closes, and many soon find nearby deaf families to spend holidays with instead of their biological families. As early as the ages of 10 or 11 children begin to passively separate from their biological families and join deaf familial networks. They make choices, based on surrounding structural and social factors, to abandon a hearing home life filled with isolation and shame for a more inviting and nurturing situation with other deaf people. Deaf women living near Selous School for the Deaf were constantly hosting deaf children from the deaf school who could not or would not go home to their hearing families during holidays. One young woman, about to graduate primary school, told me that she feels more welcome at deaf houses than her own home.

The autonomy of children, and especially deaf children, is limited. However, many deaf adults described their passive withdrawal from their biological hearing. As two deaf sisters described,

You couldn't coax us to go home and visit our families after we figured out how wonderful deaf school was. We were accepted there, we didn't have to work in the fields, and we could talk to anyone we wanted. Oh we would make up all kinds of excuses and do chores around the campus so the staff would let us stay a little longer. We would tell our parents we needed to stay for extra lessons so they would give us permission. Ha! After a while our parents stopped asking and we stopped going home completely. (Rahema and Upendo)

While in many cases hearing parents were supportive of or at least agreed to the extended absences of their children I argue that this withdraw from biological families is an important act of

resistance early in deaf people's lives. They are resisting against the mainstream expectation that your biological family is your primary support network and also against the marginalization within those family structures.

Deaf children and youth often went to great lengths to avoid rejoining their hearing families after discovering a community of deaf people. In one case Sarah, a recent graduate of primary school, moved to Mnazi and lived with her friend Ruby until she had enough money saved from her job at Huruma to get her own room. Ruby's hearing boyfriend, Peteri, was very abusive to Ruby and began to beat Sarah and pressure her for sex. She sent text messages to her mother to ask advice and immediately her father called Peteri. Peteri told Sarah's father that she was lying. That in fact, he was trying to watch out for young Sarah because she was clearly hanging around with multiple men and was in immediate danger of getting pregnant. Sarah's father, believing the voice of Peteri over the broken Kiswahili text messages of Sarah, demanded she immediately move back home to her village. Completely devastated and unable to think of an alternative, Sarah attempted suicide. After taking Sarah to the hospital (I was the only person with a car) I returned the next morning to check her progress. Deaf women surrounded her and they were developing a strategy to first, convince her parents to let her stay in Mnazi, and second free Ruby from the relationship. Sarah said, "I hate being alone. If I go home I am totally alone. Here I have friends and family. I never want to go home." In this situation Sarah's parents, with limited literacy, placed more trust in the voice of a stranger to the pleas of their daughter. Sarah, with the help of an older deaf woman, traveled home to her family and the two of them explained her plans for the future, her safety in Mnazi, and her continued virginity.

As we will see with other segments of deaf populations, like with deaf youth, they utilize passivity and avoidance to move away from, avoid, or leave oppressive situations. These tactics

were often the most productive and least dangerous strategies for this already fragile group. Ironically, though, some of these children who felt so alienated in their families grew up to successfully complete their education, find employment and support their biological families in adulthood. It seems that in these cases, it was only after they achieved occupational success and substantially contributed in monetary terms to their hearing family that the relationship dynamics changed. In all 255 interviews conducted, however, all deaf people chose not to move back home to their biological families. They are generally unwilling to re-enter the seclusion of living solely among hearing people.

### **Domestic Resistance**

Women too, in efforts to survive domestic abuse and the asymmetry between genders in Tanzanian home life, often employed strategies involving high degrees of passivity. Physical violence from male partners, as described by interview participants, was an expected and, to a great degree, accepted part of adult life. In one instance during my fieldwork, a deaf couple was in the process of breaking up, and when other women described the situation they were careful to point out that Mila (the wife) was leaving her husband (James) after only a single physical altercation, and had not accepted his apologies. This was viewed by the women who knew about the situation as a selfish action. However, in other cases, where the abuse was ongoing or escalating, women found ways to control the situation, leave it, or to help others deal with those abusive relationships. Several of my informants were currently in highly abusive relationships. Lydia, a dear friend, was in an intense and abusive relationship with Farid, a hearing man. She explained to me after one particularly terrifying night,

He came for me in the night. My daughter heard him trying to break into the house. When I went to open the door *Mama Nymbani*<sup>38</sup> was watching us from her doorway. He was convinced I was hiding a boyfriend in the house. He dragged Terry<sup>39</sup> outside and made her stand there, her hair a mess, her eyes still sleepy. She was afraid and so was I. He made me get down on my knees to look under my bed with him. I didn't have any electricity so we had to shine our cell phones to see. When we stood up he hit me. I couldn't tell what he was saying, it was too dark. I could tell he was yelling though. He pulled me out to the courtyard where we could see each other. He pulled out a knife and said he would kill me if I cheated. He said he knew I was cheating. Terry was there, *Mama Nymbani* was watching, it was all very scary. So I took his hand with the knife in it and pushed it against my throat. I got on my knees and said, "If you don't trust me, then kill me. Now. In front of these people. They know I am faithful. They know my every move. They would tell you. I am faithful but I don't want to live if you don't trust me. Just kill me. I trust you."

Lydia's response to the volatile situation took me aback. She is a mother of two, deaf since birth, who single handedly supports herself, her children, her sister, and her niece. She had been in a long term relationship with Farid. From early on in our relationship Lydia would ask me to call him and explain where she was. Somehow he could trust the voice of a hearing person explaining where Lydia was and that she was not with another man, but he would not believe the same information from her partner through a text message. Lydia chose, in this case, to use extreme passivity and apparently relinquish her control to deescalate the situation. In other parts of her life Lydia is a leader, a negotiator, and rarely passive. She runs a household and is a leading figure in the community, particularly in the deaf community. In my relationship with her, I had not known her to easily bow to anyone and, over the course of my time in Tanzania, she had in fact hosted several women fleeing their own abusive partners precisely because she was one of the few women who could stand up to them. When we spoke later Lydia explained that one never wins with men if they yell back. You have to calm them down and thus take away their strength. She also utilized

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<sup>38</sup> Kiswahili for the landlord and home owner

<sup>39</sup> Lydia's eight year old daughter

the presence of observers which on the one hand witnessed her recognition of his power over her but also diminished his power because if he hurt her people would be able to report it. In her own way, Lydia made an intentional move to defuse the aforementioned situation by adopting a characteristic of passivity rarely otherwise seen in her.

Lydia was not the only woman who utilized this strategy. Many deaf women took an ultra passive stance with their partners in order to avoid altercations. In fact, as a woman researcher, I found it much easier to allow men to yell at me and not fight back in order to diffuse a situation. Later I, like the women in this study, would agree the men were right in their feelings and then continue on about our business as if nothing had happened. Deaf people often utilize this strategic passivity in order to diffuse, avoid, or control oppressive situations. Their passivity is often misinterpreted by outsiders as weakness or lack of confidence but in my experience with Lydia and others it is a true sign of strength.

Another example of passive resistance among women that I experienced involved taking advantage of sexist social practices and expectations in order to advance women's own objectives. Upendo, Rahema's deaf sister, was married to a deaf man, Allen, who was neglectful and mentally abusive. She moved away from her family, as is traditional, when they married. She suffered through her entire marriage and had no way to escape the arrangement. There is a practice in urban Tanzania in which a pregnant woman moves home just before the birth of her child to spend a few months with her own family, to give birth, and then to have help taking care of the newborn before returning to her husband's location with the child. In light of this practice, Upendo saw her chance. Just before the birth of her daughter, Mary, she moved back to Selous into the home of her deaf sister Rahema. She stayed there through the birth of the child and, a few months later, wrote to her husband and announced that she did not have enough money for the

bus fare to return to the coast. Allen, notoriously conservative with his money, was not willing to send money to Upendo to purchase a ticket because she might misuse the funds. Thus, Upendo was free to remain with her family in Selous until Allen was willing and able to come collect her. As of 2011, Mary is now 3 years old and Albert has yet to make the trip south to visit or accompany his family back home.

Sarah, a deaf woman in her late 30s and single mother of 2, told me how she left her partner. She had a son from another man when she moved in with her partner. As soon as her daughter was born her partner began to beat her son and treat her poorly. She did not know how to leave him without getting into trouble with him and with the rest of the village for being labeled uncommitted or promiscuous. She met with her deaf friends and one asked if her partner had ever asked her parents for permission to marry Sarah. When she replied no, the deaf woman said, “Well then, no one can be angry at you for leaving him. According to tradition you were never officially with him to begin with.” She packed up her belongings and her children and moved in with a deaf friend in a neighboring town soon after. Deaf women in this study had many creative stories on how they twisted generally patriarchal practices to their own advantage. Usually the success of their strategies was dependent on the presence of other deaf women to help them emotionally or materially.

A woman named Betty provides a striking counterexample to deaf women who rely on deaf support networks. Betty is a deaf woman in her forties who never went to school or learned to sign. After several long visits with Betty and interviews with her children and neighbors we pieced together her life story. Betty, born deaf, was kept at home by her parents to work on their farm while her siblings attended school. She ran away from home because her father beat her and she hated the hard labor of farming. Betty has been homeless for most of her adult life. She has four

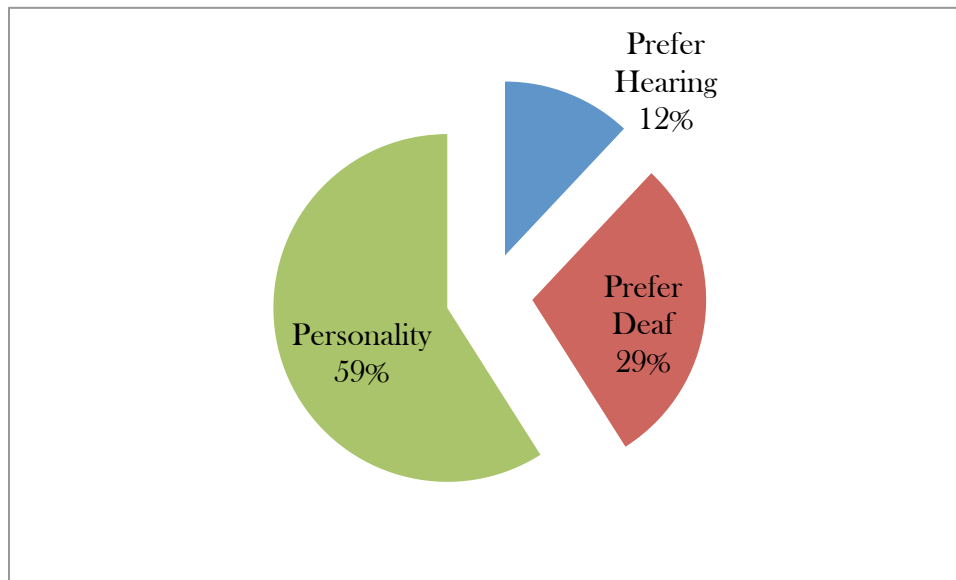
children from four different men and all of the children live with different families. Through our multiple conversations it became clear that she did not understand sexual reproduction or how she came to have these children. She did recount to us, however, the trauma and pain she had experienced in the form of sexual assault, likely from the fathers of her children. Her children reported that they all know who their fathers are but these men will not admit to having sex with a *bubu*. Betty begs on the street and sleeps between buildings at night. She showed us scars from beatings she received from people living in the town. She explained that she has no one to help her, no friends, no family, and her children are ashamed.

Deaf women have limited recourse in traditional community structures. Typically, deaf women live away from their biological families and rely on members of their deaf networks for support. Deaf women often rely on each other to hide their belongings, wages, and whereabouts from abusive partners. Generally women who marry hearing men are less able to take advantage of this deaf support network. Deaf men, unlike hearing men, are part of the social community of deaf people and thus certain kinds of pressures can be exerted. For example, if a deaf man is abusing or mistreating his wife the entire network becomes involved. Other deaf women can chastise him at club meetings, isolate him at social events, and sometimes bluntly criticize his behavior. Hearing husbands do not participate in deaf networks and thus other deaf people are unable to exert much influence on them.

### **Choosing a Spouse**

I found a mutual mistrust between hearing and deaf people, especially within the domestic sphere. This mutual distrust, especially in intimate relationships, is likely based on a lack of effective communication. Deaf partners are unable to have full access to spoken Kiswahili and hearing partners, especially men, are unlikely to learn LAT. In the general survey answered the

question that most people chose their partners based on personality. Their responses are show in Figure 19 below:



*Figure 17: Response to Survey Question: “How do you choose your partner?”*

Despite expressing these beliefs, in practice, deaf signers overwhelmingly choose deaf partners. In private interviews most deaf signers said if two people were completely the same in every way except they were either hearing or deaf, participants would choose the deaf person. Deaf people recognize that very few hearing people knew sign language, it was difficult to trust hearing partners’ fidelity, and deaf people have better sympathy for each other. In order to maintain the ability to sign freely in families, deaf adults often counseled deaf youth to consider marrying a deaf person. As a deaf man explained,

Hearing men are a little bit shady. I have seen it over and over again. Hearing boys are different. Often if they get a girl pregnant, they leave. They skip out. I have seen it. They don't feel bad. Deaf men stay and try to help.

Many also explained that if a deaf person marries a hearing person they cannot ever really know to whom their hearing partner is talking on the phone or who is at the front door. These warnings

often came in the form of cautionary tales in which a deaf woman married a hearing man often either for love or money (the story would also have the reverse genders). The marriage would begin wonderfully, the hearing husband would learn to sign, interpret for his deaf wife, and cherish and love her. Then, one day, she would ask innocently who was on the phone and the he would get agitated and avoid the question. This pattern of secrecy would increase over time until either the wife caught her spouse cheating on, stealing from, or murdering her. The tension deaf people spoke of around the deaf/hearing marriage was based in a long history of negative experiences with hearing partners, neighbors, employers, coworkers, and others. Speech is the weapon hearing people wielded against deaf people their entire lives and there was no reason to expect any different in intimate relationships.

Hearing spouses, mostly men, were uncomfortable with their wives communicating in sign language, especially in their presence. Participation and comfort with sign language is clearly gendered and hearing wives of deaf men were far more likely to sign than hearing husbands of deaf women. While there are no official numbers, of the 35 deaf women who partnered with hearing men I interviewed, only 3 had husbands who knew more than two or three signs. Conversely, hearing wives often attended deaf clubs, meetings, and socialized with deaf women. The same could not be said about hearing husbands, even if they did allow sign language in their homes. In cases with an uncomfortable spouse, deaf people would sign outside the home but immediately switch to speaking when entering their husband's presence.

### **Controlling the Purse Strings**

New wage earning opportunities for women have both affirmed and disrupted gender relations and power dynamics in Tanzania. Deaf women earning wages, for example working at Huruma or a

local deaf school, have ushered in a new set of problems and response strategies in domestic life. Earning their own money means that women have more decision making power in how family resources are spent. But it also means they are now saddled with more responsibility-- that of an external occupation as well as all of the work in the domestic sphere. During interviews, women complained about their husbands taking their wages, spending the money on alcohol and going out with friends. "Money that isn't used grows legs, and walks into my husband's pockets." Sia explained. This left women feeling stuck in a worse situation than if they were when not working: tired, crunched for time and broke.

In order to combat husbands stealing their earnings, deaf women have developed several strategies. The first is relying on their employers to maintain a savings account-or similar arrangement in which they can hold most of their wages to and withdraw from before a major purchase. The second was joining savings schemes with other women. Each woman takes a portion of her earnings and gives it to one of the group members each month. Each woman gets a significant boost in income every few months. This process rids women of the difficult task of saving money around the house (deaf women, like other poor Tanzanians, have extremely limited access to formal banking) in order to make larger purchases. If the money is not physically in the house, women explain, it cannot be spent by their partners. The final strategy which I witnessed among deaf women was to hide their money with a friend. Beatrice, a young mother with a deaf husband whom she met in primary school, was having trouble keeping her money to herself because her husband, Msiba, kept spending the money at the local bar and leaving Beatrice and their daughter, Calista, hungry. Finally Beatrice decided that each payday she would visit a friend and leave all of her earnings there. Over the course of a few weeks of Beatrice not bringing money home, Msiba became suspicious. One day he followed her, found her friend's house, and beat

them both before taking both their week's wages. Since then, both women have begun hiding their money in the home of Rahema (who unlike the other women—is single).

### **Alternative Networks of Support**

As has become clear throughout this study deaf people in this often have closer relationships with other deaf people than their own biological family members. Traditional networks of support, like parents and community members, are often inaccessible to deaf people. Deaf people resist this exclusion by developing their own networks of support. Rahema, a matron in the Selous deaf community, is consulted regularly before younger deaf people make life decisions. She has counseled deaf people on whom to marry and helps mediate domestic disputes. Other older deaf community members have organized donations for deaf parents with sick children or to help with various expenses for deaf people who are having a hard time. Bernadetta, a deaf woman and single mother of two, explained,

I like deaf people because they are like me. When I invite hearing friends or family into my life they judge my situation. They see what my house looks like, what my children look like. They don't understand. They go and talk to other hearing people and gossip. They say, oh those deaf people have such hard terrible lives and they laugh at us. But with deaf people they see how hard my life is and what is happening to me and they keep it quiet. They respect me and how hard things are and they empathize. Hearing people, they aren't helpful and they might even steal from me. One hearing friend—her husband is friends with my husband—she told her husband where I live. A few days later my husband stole everything from me when he found out where I moved. There is no way deaf women would do that. They protect me. I like to have deaf friends better.

Bernadetta describes here a similar sentiment of many signing deaf people. She does not trust her hearing family members or peers to understand her life or the way she lives. She can, however, rely on other deaf people as sources of support who don't judge her.

Although I have discussed the ways that deaf people often pull away from their biological families to create new ones, these networks sometimes seem familial. For example, deaf children at Selous School for the Deaf introduced me to their “siblings.” These siblings, however, were not biological family members but rather other deaf students attending the school. As mentioned previously, deaf children often prefer to spend time with deaf adults than their own hearing families.

Additionally, deaf people rely on other deaf signers to transmit various kinds of knowledge. Adila, a woman soon to have a baby, relied solely on the older deaf women she knew to teach her about pregnancy and child rearing. I asked her what advice her mother provided and she replied, “We can only communicate through text message, and that helps but isn’t enough to teach me.” Adila’s situation, even if completely unsatisfactory, is one of privilege. She, a primary school graduate, and her mother, with enough literacy in Kiswahili to communicate via text message, and both have enough income to afford cell phones. Both high educational and income levels are required for this kind of communication between deaf children and their hearing parents. It is quite rare.

### **Internal Dynamics**

My life? I think pretty good. I would say life here in Tanzania is pretty good. I will say, even though I am the leader of Kitaifa, that deaf people who are outside Kitaifa have hard lives. Their lives are even bad. (NGO Leader)

As discussed in Chapter Five, deaf people are members of various organizations and desperately need the support that these organizations provide in order to access education and healthcare, among other services. In Chapter Six it became clear that even with the various programs and services provided, deaf people sometimes utilize the spaces provided by these organizations toward other ends. Deaf people are political agents interacting with organizations as

well as with their own political agendas and ideologies. The competition and tensions among different organizations affect individual deaf people as well. Deaf participants' strategic interactions, avoidance, and co-option of organizational activities and resources is an essential resistance tactic. It is subtler and not overtly ideological like other examples of resistance in the anthropological literature but still, I argue, a valid example. Deaf people, only in extreme cases, opted out of participating in any organizational activities. Generally they participated, but on their own terms.

At times deaf people would debate, rather heatedly, which organization was doing "real work" or who had deaf people's real interests at heart. In an all-out revolt several members of a local Kitaifa branch decided not to pay their membership fees. The fee was very low-- 2000 Tsh for the year (\$1.13), but they decided that they could communicate their dissatisfaction with the organization by abstaining from paying. Kitaifa needed membership numbers to increase, not decrease in order to maintain external funding, and the annual meeting soon after the abstention became very heated. Local members brought complaints of corruption, favoritism, and a lack of transparency against Kitaifa. For several months afterwards disgruntled members no longer attended meetings, spoke to leadership in the organization, or participated in organizational events.

Resistance, as other scholars have shown, can consist of jokes, behind the scenes conversations, and avoidance. Some participants had jokes about the various organizations according to their own affiliations. One group of women, after church one Sunday, explained to me that the name of Kitaifa should be changed to *Chama Cha Watu Wazee na Viziwi wa Tanzania* (the organization of old deaf people in Tanzania). They all thought the acronym CHAW-VITA was hilarious and more fitting than its current name. Some deaf people resisted the in-fighting between organizations and decided to participate in several organizations while hiding their multiple affiliations. If I ran into one person at the Vijana office, before I would leave they

would remind me to say that we had actually met at an alternative location in order to keep their secret.

Deaf people resisted the tensions between organizations. In one case, mid-level leaders from both Vijana and Kitaifa met in order to establish a deaf savings and loan program. As they developed the constitution and rules for the program, all participants constantly reiterated that this program was not from any one organization but, “deaf people ourselves.” All of the developers decided to keep the program quiet until the final stages to avoid becoming affiliated with one deaf organization over another. Here, these founding members were also resisting the exclusionary practices of hearing people. They were not interested in excluding hearing people but controlling the situation so that there would continue to be equal access.

Many deaf people complained that hearing people like to talk together and if more than one hearing person is around the situation becomes untenable. One seamstress described,

I would get a customer and negotiate my price, pick out the fabric, and turn to start my work. While my back was turned the hearing customer would start talking to the hearing tailors around me. They would negotiate for a new price I would lose customer. I'm deaf! I wasn't watching them. How could I know they were talking to each other?

Deaf people were consistently giving each other ideas for combating situations where they needed to control communication between multiple hearing people. Often it was a total failure. However, as mentioned in Chapter Seven deaf spaces were one of those sites where they could enforce accessibility of communication through sign language. Deaf Tanzanians were incredibly welcoming of hearing people who could sign, make an effort to gesture, or at least face the deaf person while speaking. Unlike some Western Deaf cultures, there are no jokes at hearing people's expense or overall exclusion of individuals because they were hearing. Deaf people in Tanzania were instead quite pragmatic about individuals joining their social circles.

### **Conclusion**

The various forms of oppression and resistance build on the existing literature on marginalized communities' responses to state power (e.g., Hulme and Edwards 1996), international aid organizations (e.g., Igoe 2005a), and religious bodies (e.g., Hodgson 2005). It is clear that deaf people experience overwhelming and, in some cases, heart breaking oppression and abuse at the hands of their families, spouses, and others. Structural violence (Farmer 2004) is a daily experience for deaf people. On the other hand, deaf people find creative and sometimes successful ways to combat these power imbalances, and often find that relying on other deaf people is the most effective strategy.

## CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

After a particularly long day at the poverty reduction seminar, we go to the next-door *hoteli* called Morogoro Star Bar for dinner. Mariam, an outgoing deaf leader in Dar es Salaam, notices a fellow patron refer to her group as *bubu*<sup>40</sup>. She reports her findings to the group and instantly they begin to act. A deaf man from Western Tanzania offers to stuff cloth in the hearing man's mouth so he can really understand the inability to communicate. Beginning with dirty looks and planning, the group figures out who had the best speaking capabilities, which turns out to be Mariam, and chart out a response to the gentleman and his friends, outlining how inappropriate the term *bubu* was when referring to deaf people. As the woman went over to convey the message the entire group watches, ready to jump into action. The spokeswoman returns to the group and signs, with her back to the recently lectured men, "*Message sent and received.*" In response the group cheers, high-fives, and raises their glasses to the hearing patrons. The hearing man and his friends are clearly shocked at the interaction and later bought Mariam a beer as an apology.

*Excerpt from Field Notes: Morogoro, November 2008*

Throughout this dissertation, I have traced the major themes of the study of sign language, identity, organizational participation, and deaf spaces, with an eye toward the disconnect between public and private articulations of deafness and the intended and actual uses of these markers of deaf life. Through language choice, group affiliation and identity, participation in organizations, and the establishment of safe spaces, deaf people have found ways to foster a support network outside of mainstream Tanzania. Deaf people in this study did not identify the importance, or even existence, of a "deaf community." However, when they were able, deaf people tried to live, work, and socialize with each other. The situation of deaf people in Tanzania is far from equitable, but it is improving. Though still not able to serve all deaf children, deaf schools continue to accept and educate children using LAT among their deaf peers. More deaf students are entering secondary school and even university with the goal of improving the lives of other deaf people. With many founded and run by deaf people, organizations have made significant strides in national level

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<sup>40</sup> A derogatory Swahili word for deaf person

lobbying and awareness campaigns. They have also successfully made connections with international donors of various types. Through their activities and interventions among rural and urban deaf populations, these organizations have played a significant role in the creation of deaf spaces. Sometimes in subtle ways and sometimes in overt ways, these deaf spaces are formative—not only to deaf participants, but also to hearing people around the edges.

Like any other group of people, deaf networks and communities are in flux. Older deaf Tanzanians reported seeing a significant change in the last 15 years in the ways that hearing people perceived, received, and engaged with them. Universally, they recognize that this change has been positive. Gathering in public, through deaf clubs and workshops, is becoming more acceptable. However, many venue owners discourage deaf people from gathering in their cafés because the signing scares hearing patrons away. Even with the ever-present discrimination, deaf people continue to find spaces that will allow them a few hours a week to gather.

Only very recently—over the past few years—a pattern has been emerging wherein deaf people first attend deaf school at age 7 or 8, graduate between the ages of 18 and 21, and then transition directly into a workplace, community, organization, or household that is predominantly deaf. For young adults who attended deaf school and moved immediately to Mnazi, joined Kitaifa, and got work at Huruma, the insecurity and isolation of being a lone deaf person is a distant childhood memory. They have lived most of their lives in a relatively safe environment, surrounded by a deaf community. The kinds of concerns, expectations, and plans that these few privileged deaf people reported on surveys are markedly different from those of people who have been surrounded by hearing people, both in childhood and adulthood, without access to a deaf network. This is an exciting and important change for a segment of the deaf population in Tanzania. As these young adults grow into positions of leadership in their various deaf networks

and mainstream neighborhoods, the contours of the experience of deafness in Tanzania will likely shift drastically. Simply being able to sign in public without fear or negative consequences will have lasting implications for how deaf people operate amongst themselves and in the mainstream. One deaf man and NGO leader said,

I am deaf, my wife is deaf, and we work with hearing people, so they can talk without including us in the conversation and that is uncomfortable. I don't always know what is going on. So, when people see us and see that we are deaf, we have to slowly build trust with them. Often, when people first see a deaf person, they assume we are bad or stupid or should just be ignored. But we slowly build cooperation and relationships with the hearing people around us, and then after a while, they get used to it. But we can't move fast—we have to ease them into that relationship.

When I asked my informants why hearing people were so uncomfortable or even hostile to deaf people, they would often explain, as Rahema does,

They are afraid because they have never seen what deaf people can do. They have never seen that we can read, write, raise children, and work complicated jobs. You know, it isn't enough that they see one of us be successful, though. They have to see us. They have to see many of us, many times, being successful and smart and then, after a while, they will believe and change.

This situation is similar to how hearing parents change their opinions of their deaf children once those children have grown up, graduated from school, and found employment. To Rahema and many others, it was not enough for public awareness drives and posters to tell people that the deaf are equal—they had to experience it themselves.

In another important development, the nascent shared signing community of Mnazi in Selous provides a totally different set of social interactions between hearing and deaf Tanzanians. Deaf people in Mnazi are valued customers and employees, neighbors and friends, community and household members. As the norms of mainstream stigma about difference and disability fade into the background, deaf and hearing residents gather in the streets to escape the heat of their homes and catch up on local news. A deaf woman who sells baked items every morning wanders

around to collect debts, and a hearing woman returns a borrowed pan. Hearing children greet deaf adults respectfully, signing “*Shikamoo*,” and the adults respond, “*Marahaba*.”

The novel ways in which hearing and deaf people interact in Mnazi do not come from legislation or support from the Tanzanian government, but from a critical mass of deaf people who sign in public and participate substantively in the economic and social life of the larger community. Mnazi is not a utopia; there is still disparity, oppression, and stigma. But living and interacting there feels remarkably different from other places in Tanzania where deaf people live.

### Research Questions Revisited

This dissertation research began with the intention of studying *the* Deaf community in Tanzania. My research questions centered around participation in daily life, national deaf NGOs and international discourses, and the construction of a specifically deaf identity. However, it became clear early in this research that local reality required me to think about my study population in a different way, and to conduct ethnographic research according to their own lived experiences. Though developed over several funding cycles with the best intentions, my research questions were loaded with assumptions based in Western-centered understandings of deaf people. The transmission of international ideologies and discourses was clear only to the elites of my sample. Through participant observation, I was able to gain entry to and understanding of deaf people’s lives within both exclusively deaf networks and their mainstream communities, including biological families, neighbors, and the general public. It became clear that the stigma around disability and sign language varied, but was still a formative force in how and where deaf people interacted with each other and outsiders. In this section, I briefly recount my research questions and provide summarized answers based on previously presented research.

**RQ1: Among deaf Tanzanians, what affects participation in daily life?**

Several factors influence deaf people's participation in Tanzanian mainstream society. One factor is the lack of support from larger scale government institutions and services, like education and legal protections. Another is the major issue of stigma associated with disability, particularly with sign language. Last are the specific demographic characteristics of a deaf person or group of deaf people and their ability to be highly influential. The education level, signing ability, urban or rural residence, and connection to a larger deaf network all have significant impact on deaf people's participation in daily life. As Rahema described above, hearing people will not be convinced of deaf people's abilities until they see it for themselves. She believes, as many others do, that they set an example that, over time, will change the opinions of hearing Tanzanians for the better. Deaf people are able to more fully participate in public life by voting, working in a wider variety of occupations, and accessing healthcare if they know and use sign language and are members of a deaf support network. Due to their lack of connection to effective support networks and their associated protections from discriminatory practices by village residents, isolated rural deaf people have far less access to mainstream Tanzanian life.

**RQ2: How do national deaf NGOs, as sites of transmission of international discourses of deaf culture, affect identity formation in deaf people?**

Whether national or regional, deaf NGOs are only "sites of transmission of international discourses of deaf culture" to the most elite of deaf Tanzanians. The ideologies associated with Western-based deaf culture are only present in the highest levels of deaf organizations in Tanzania, and are only utilized during specific instances of appealing for funding or attending international meetings. In reality, deaf NGOs provide a set of logistical conditions: a respected forum for deaf people to gather, monetary benefit for attendance, and space that participants utilize, not for the intended purpose (HIV/AIDS awareness or anti-corruption education), but for connections.

During NGO interventions, mainly in the form of workshops, deaf people meet and develop relationships with others, and maintain their deaf networks of support. Deaf people in Tanzania were far less ideological and more pragmatic in their approach to their identities than documented Western groups. It is clear from this research that deaf people identified less with widely recognized markers of East African identity such as ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, or village residence; their ability to develop and expand their alternative networks was due in part to the interventions, resources, and space provided by NGOs, specifically deaf or otherwise.

**RQ3: How do social contexts of living in Tanzania affect deaf people's constructions of themselves in terms of a deaf cultural community, deafness, and disability?**

This question might be the most loaded of my research questions. I began this research centered on my assumption that deaf people in Tanzania would make the distinction, like I did, between “deaf” and “disabled.” As the opening story in Chapter Five shows, the division between someone who is deaf and someone with disabilities is not an assumed distinction, and can be potentially harmful to everyone involved. After my RA's puzzled reaction to my desire to only interview deaf people, I realized that I needed to reframe my research. Instead of clear boundaries between groups, I found that deaf people largely do not distinguish themselves from other people with disabilities, and only do so in certain situations for mostly pragmatic reasons—like competition for resources between various development organizations.

**Implications: Theoretical and Applied**

The implications of this research are useful to academic researchers as well as applied practitioners. I agree with Ferguson (2005a) that applied and academic research inform each other and, while certain knowledge is privileged in certain settings, both have important contributions to make to their own fields and to others. This research addresses gaps in the literature, including the

dearth of research on deaf and disabled communities in East Africa, perspectives on deafness and disability in the context of the developing world, and studies of engagement with a previously silent population: deaf non-signers in rural places. This research also diverges from the existing literature in several important ways. It pushes beyond existing literature on kinship and connection in East Africa by showing a group that unites with each other outside of any of the usual connective tissues (ethnicity, religion, class, political affiliation). It also problematizes the Western centered notions of deaf communities, identity, and deaf people's distinctions from other disabled groups. I focus specifically on the methodological and theoretical implications of working with deaf people who have extremely limited or no language, those I have labeled non-signers. Ethnographic research of people who live on the margins of their community and of language may have insights into larger anthropological questions: like the relationship between language and culture. It is my intention that this project contribute to theoretical discussions in academic circles, provide insights to researchers embarking on similar studies of deaf people with limited language, and inform the deaf and hearing people who have dedicated their lives to improving the rights of deaf people and their access to public life in Tanzania and elsewhere.

### **Implications for Practicing International Development**

Building on the findings of this research and echoing many scholars and practitioners of international development, I highlight the importance of seeking context-specific needs, expectations, and realities before planning or conducting interventions. To many, this point will be painfully obvious. Equally obvious, though, is the surprising rarity of organizations that actually follow this advice. Specific to deaf development, I offer a number of suggestions. First, put resources into sign language. Learning and using sign language is necessary for the equality of deaf people. In this dissertation, I highlight the power imbalances in language standardization and

tensions around ownership and representation in the development and documentation of LAT. However, given the stark distinction between the life courses of deaf people who learn sign and those who do not, it is clear that the importance of deaf people having access to language cannot be overstated. Second, avoid the assumption that deaf people and communities in the developing world have a Western destination. That is, given the myriad variations in how people live and relate to each other, it is short sighted to assume that they would all end up, or want to end up at the same cultural location. Deaf Tanzanians think about and interact with hearing people differently than many Western deaf communities and value judgments should be avoided. Finally, when monitoring or evaluating a development program or intervention, remain open to the unintended consequences. In some cases, they can be positive. Maintain the flexibility in programming to modify projects to capitalize on the ways that local participants utilize activities and resources.

### **Implications for Social Science Theory**

This research has addressed several gaps in the anthropological, Deaf studies, and development studies literature. To date, there have been relatively few ethnographic studies of deaf populations outside the West. Several linguistic anthropologists have conducted important studies on the birth, growth, and diminishing use of sign languages in other countries (e.g., Schmaling 2003; Senghas, et al. 1994). Other researchers have studied deaf schools and the role of deaf youth in peer to peer education and socialization (e.g., Reilly and Reilly 2005). Additionally, there is important recent work that seeks to problematize the strict distinction between deafness and disability that has been, and continues to be, the default position in most Deaf studies scholarship (Brueggeman 2010; Burch and Kafer 2010b; Friedner 2010; Rashid 2010). Through combining the specific nuances of the Tanzanian context, the complexity of the deaf population, and the

transnational discourses and realities of the development industry and its interventions, this project can begin to truly explain the complexity of the deaf experience.

This research also contributes to several major themes within the larger bodies of literature on resistance. In the various studies of resistance among oppressed people, this project focuses the ethnographic lens specifically on the passive and subtle forms of resistance among some of the most marginalized people in society. In many cases, deaf people in Tanzania do not specifically refer to their actions as resistance. Yet, like those documented in other ethnographic studies (e.g., Bebbington 2004; Crewe and Harrison 1999), deaf people utilize the desperately needed interventions from development organizations for access to material support to suit their own purposes: to develop and solidify networks of support among other deaf people. While no one articulated this as a particular goal, they did cite money, skills, and the prestige of participating in workshops and seminars as reasons for their participation. From extensive participant observation, it is clear that individuals used these varied deaf spaces as opportunities to meet other deaf people and spread information. Gendered tactics of resistance are of particular interest here as well. Often cut off by language and stigma from the already limited support of state and familial structures, deaf women utilize existing, generally oppressive, patriarchal practices to passively deescalate, avoid, or escape abuse. Deaf children in Tanzania also begin the slow process of withdrawing from their hearing families and communities in order to matriculate into more accessible supportive deaf networks; in some cases, this withdrawal is not a conscious decision.

The alternative networks that deaf Tanzanians participate in challenge traditional anthropological conceptualizations of how East Africans relate to and support each other. Ethnographers have begun to take seriously the role of urbanization in shaping how traditional power relations, gender roles, livelihood options, and networks replace familial or ethnic support

structures (e.g., Hutchinson 1996; May 2002; Weiss 2002; White 1990). Unlike other groups in East Africa, simply looking at typical affiliations of deaf people will provide one with a rather thin description and understanding. These alternative networks fulfill the form and function for deaf people who are marginalized from traditional structures of support. They provide information, support in times of illness and economic hardship, protection from abuse and predation, and emotional and social kinship.

Deaf people in Tanzania are unique among deaf communities in the literature in another aspect: their borders. Deaf people in Tanzania generally reject the social model of disability, embrace the medical model, and associate deaf people with all other disabled groups. Unlike Western Deaf communities that are sometimes hostile to the hearing, deaf Tanzanians are pragmatic in their inclusion requirements. Anyone who is willing to sign or otherwise communicate effectively is welcomed into their networks. Deaf people in Tanzania generally conceptualize their own place in both mainstream communities and deaf networks in dynamic terms, with more permeable boundaries than those in the West. This could allow them to avoid some of the border tensions seen elsewhere. This is particularly important, as Deaf Studies literature and conversation continues to rely on a set of assumptions that, with effort, all deaf communities around the world will evolve to the high standards set by Western Deaf communities. The unilineal evolutionary model, where all deaf communities around the world are making progress toward a single, utopian kind of existence, is highly problematic. In fact, as anthropological literature broke down the Western biased assumptions of the evolutionists, so too does this research provide an important counterpoint to this model.

Further, the context of sign language being a central fixture in the development and maintenance of deaf networks, spaces, and even communities provides an important site for

theoretical and ethnographic investigation of deaf Tanzanians, specifically in terms of public and hidden transcripts around representation, language, and power. On the one hand, in conversations with outside audiences, LAT is widely recognized as the language of deaf Tanzanians and is universally supported. However, on the other hand, in private or hidden conversations, there are significant tensions surrounding its use and questions of power, particularly in discussions of language standardization. The standardization of LAT is an ongoing process. It is strongly encouraged by international deaf organizations like the WFD (WFD 2006), viewed as a necessary step in ensuring that deaf children have access to quality education (Mpingwa and Muzale 2007), and required in order to receive recognition and support from national level government and aid organizations. However, in order to standardize LAT, certain signs—and thus the voices of individuals who use those signs—are marginalized. Even with extensive measures taken by researchers like Muzale and others to ensure that the process is inclusive, it is necessarily exclusionary. Additionally, the frustrations expressed by deaf Tanzanians about what some call “Kitaifa sign” focuses not on resistance against the language itself, but rather on the representation of power imbalance within the organization. It is staffed by elites in the capital city and receives credit and recognition for a language that was developed and is used by an entire country of deaf people.

From both secular and religious organizations to deaf- and hearing-run ones, the research presented here has looked at sites of international and national aid intervention to tease out the varied ideologies, practices, and tensions that exist on multiple levels. At the organizational level, different groups were superficially aligned in their goal of “improving the lives of deaf people.” However, their specific conceptualizations of what “real work” looks like were very different. These differences were exacerbated by competition over material and human resources, and the

resulting tensions that influenced individual participants. Additionally, the objectives of these organizations in their interventions often fell short, with unintended consequences. Development studies—particularly studies of conservation efforts—have been instrumental in bringing attention to the often-negative unintended consequences of the involvement of external parties, with resources and influence acting on (instead of with) a local community or area. In the case of this study, though, the unintended consequences were not all negative. A positive unintended consequence of deaf development interventions that I focus on is the creation of deaf spaces. As I mentioned above, these spaces are crucial in the creation of networks, transmission of information, and language learning. They also affect those on the edges of the space—specifically, hearing people who interact with the deaf. This last argument is an important jumping-off point for practitioners working on deaf and disability issues in applied situations.

In the story that began this chapter, Mariam's victory illustrates that deaf spaces are formative, not only to the deaf people who operate within them, but to hearing people as well. In order to resist the oppressive structures that exist throughout their lives, deaf people in Tanzania carve out spaces, largely within the context of deaf schools, churches, and organizations. Hearing people, such as the residents of Mnazi, bartenders and wait staff who work at *hotels* where deaf clubs meet, shop owners near a deaf church, and others who interact with deaf people in deaf spaces, learn to sign and accept deaf people as equal community members, employees, or customers. In Tanzania, this kind of change happens almost completely outside of government support. It is likely that with more attention to deaf people and enforcement of existing legislation, deaf people and the hearing people around them will continue to find ways to cooperate in mutually beneficial relationships.

Knowledge of sign language is a significant marker in the life trajectories of deaf Tanzanians. Signers have better access not only to deaf networks of support, but also to their mainstream community and family. Signers have better jobs and earn more pay. They don't live in isolation and exclusion, rather they live among deaf and hearing people with access to public life, political participation, and the formal and informal protections afforded by having networks outside of a family unit. Deaf people in Tanzania are strong, creative, and brave. Their access to language is their access to most tools to combat the unspeakable abuses and violence that they experience in their lives. Learning LAT is life changing.

### **People without Language: Implications for Anthropological Theory**

Man's uniqueness in the animal kingdom, as we have seen, arises largely from his capacity to build and manipulate symbols. It is language, man's great symbolic code, that allows him to transcend so many of the limitations imposed by biology, to build cultural models of his world and transmit them across generations. (Keesing and Keesing 1971)

Language is a foundational aspect of what it means to be human, and therefore, by extension is integral to the field of anthropology. It is widely accepted that one's experience is mitigated through language. Language is also one of the most important access points through which researchers access cultures and emic perspectives. In this way, language stands as a portal through which both participants and researchers engage with reality. The research presented in this dissertation focuses on people who have no formal language and, in some cases do not have even the most fundamental communication skills. The study of this segment of the deaf population has implications for anthropological theory regarding the relationship between language and culture. These implications are important, first, for building further investigations, and second, for providing methodological insights into how to access similar populations. Finally, this research

provides new ways of thinking about a population which opens up space for a reassessment of the relationship between language and culture.

The existing literature on people without language is focused on stories of the extreme. For example, the most well known cases are “wild children” (e.g., Lane 1979) who are raised by wolves or other animals and who grow up outside of human groups, or cases of extreme abuse or neglect (e.g., Curtiss, et al. 1974; Natalie 1993) in which a child is locked away from family members and intentionally denied human interaction. In a more recent example the highly romanticized account of an ASL interpreter teaching a “man without words” sign language (Schaller 1991) reminds the reader of the story of salvation like that of Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan. Schaller shows the process where she helps a deaf man finally become whole when he learns ASL. Researchers have flocked to these cases as rare opportunities to learn about the cognitive effects of late language acquisition. Accounts like these are focused on the investigation of inherent linguistic capabilities and theorize how these extreme cases inform theory of mind and the nature of humanity. It follows then that deaf people, due to their inability to easily access spoken language, would attract interest from researchers.

The ethnographic research presented in this dissertation provides a very different view of people without language. It presents people as members and participants in their communities in a variety of ways—despite their limited access to power and privilege. The non-signing participants whom I worked with may be without language but they are not without communication. Though the ability to use sign language was a significant shaper in the lives of deaf people in my study, language is just one aspect of human communication (Levi-Strauss 1952). Deaf non-signers’ worldviews are likely not directly shaped by metaphor, category, and the other ways that we, as hearing people, organize our lives, according to scholars like Lakoff (1987). It is also clear that

non-signers are engaging with and thinking about the world around them. Deaf non-signers in Tanzania and elsewhere can provide insights into anthropological theory regarding the role of language in the mediation and transmission of culture.

### *Ethnographic Particulars*

At the start of my research project, my initial assumption of non-signers was that they were completely marginalized and isolated from their communities—essentially non-members of society. This assumption was frequently and readily confirmed by comments from hearing family and village members during interviews. One very apparent example of this non-membership, was of a young deaf man who was not allowed to live in his family's compound but was instead given a hut outside the walls. His family explained that he is lazy and only lives off of their charity. But when we visited him, the young man showed us his garden where he grew vegetables for his younger siblings, pointed out the fields where he worked for his neighbors and described the earnings that he gave to his mother. In both qualitative and quantitative terms, non-signers are disadvantaged compared to their signing and hearing peers. As described in detail in Chapter Four, non-signers have less opportunity for work, education, marriage, and support networks. Even though these individuals live on the margins they still participate in their families and communities.

It became clear after spending time with non-signers, developing shared communication systems, and participating in and observing their lives, that these people contribute substantially to people around them. And they do so despite the horrific violence and oppression they experience. Though I assumed that the deaf did not have a lot to say, I found that these participants actually had a significant amount to share about their situations, their families, and their communities. Even during the limited amount of time I spent with non-signers it became clear that most were active and opinionated community members. The research presented here is the first ethnographic

investigation of people who live without formal language and will be useful for researchers working with a spectrum of marginalized people. This research provides important mechanisms for tackling questions of how individuals' engagement with and experience in their communities is mitigated by their positionality, in this case their language.

### *Methodological Implications*

More comprehensive understandings of the lives of non-signers is accessible but requires innovative and flexible methodology. I posit that accessing an emic perspective without a shared, formal language, is definitely possible. The research is rewarding, useful, and provides voice to those who were previously unheard. As I mentioned earlier, conducting research requires much more time with non-signers than other people with formal language. Not only did we have to develop a shared communication system, but it was also important to build rapport with community members who often spend most of their lives avoiding excess attention and have never been asked questions about their lives, thoughts, and experiences. This work requires in depth knowledge of local spoken and sign languages and training in gestural communication. My research assistants, who came from rural families and have worked with non-signers in the past, were invaluable. They were able to gain access, build rapport, and observe communicative acts—even the most subtle—that far surpass any outside researcher. We cut out pictures of presidents, pictures of food items, pantomimed, and made all manner of gestures, no matter how inappropriate for otherwise conservative hearing audiences, in order to effectively communicate with our participants. It is also important to triangulate various strains of data and to maintain a critical lens when analyzing data—particularly in terms of the contributions of hearing family and community members.

*Theoretical Implications*

For non-signing participants, it was very difficult to gather in-depth life histories complete with their own reflexive accounts of aspects of their cultures and communities as compared to other village members. I was not able to discern marked differences in opinions between non-signers and their hearing peers about topics such as raising children, domestic relations, and an important Tanzanian rural ethic: hard work. Within individual villages almost all community members agreed on these topics. However, where these opinions diverged was in regard to the roles of non-signers in the community. Repeatedly, non-signers showed me that they were paid less than their hearing peers and it was clear that they saw this as fundamentally wrong. They saw their efforts and contributions as equal to their hearing peers and therefore felt that their compensation should be too. There were hearing community members who took issue with the inequitable pay for deaf people, but this was not the norm, and they were most often family members of a deaf worker.

Non-signers are clearly participants in their communities and practitioners of observable cultural behaviors. Their point of view is unique in that they are, in many ways, isolated from much of public life. But they find ways, as we have seen, to participate in and add substantively to their families and communities. It was also clear that non-signers participated in their communities' social practices, gender roles, and in the requirements of being a responsible village and family member (through working, tending children, helping around the home), and that they enacted similar cultural activities as their peers. Non-signers also conceptualized themselves and their roles in their communities differently than hearing participants.

Working with non-signers shows that language is only one of a variety of access points to culture. Nor is language, especially in the formal sense, the only way to learn about, absorb, or

experience culture. Bodies use all of their senses to access information as exemplified by the less traditional means through which non-signers engage with their own communities and cultures. Theorizing culture as necessarily and even solely tied to language is, especially in relation to the data presented here, an ableist and audist reading of how humans work.

The research presented in this dissertation, while not specifically focused on the anthropology of language and culture, opens some interesting opportunities for further discussion both methodologically and theoretically. Non-signers access culture, values, relationships, and other aspects of community life through their own unique lens. If language is the major mediator of reality, what do deaf people without sign language contribute to the conversation? I found from my experiences with the deaf that their contribution to this discussion is similar to their contributions to their community: important but unrecognized.

I would also like to revisit earlier references to debates about deaf culture. Culture, in the African context, is tied to ethnicity, religion, geography, or socio-economic status. In deaf communities in the West they are defined by their common sign language and clearly articulated community values. The deaf people in Tanzania develop and maintain networks of support. However, they relate to each other differently than deaf communities in the United States and Western Europe. Deaf Tanzanians do not draw the same boundaries and have different definitions for themselves in terms of “deaf” and “disabled.” While deaf Tanzanians do not articulate their own positions as members of a unique deaf cultural group, it is clear that as signers they have a common language and a common set of experiences that connect them to each other across other social markers. It is unlikely that Tanzanian deaf communities will ever articulate their position in mainstream society in the same terms as Western deaf communities but it is clear that deaf Tanzanians do have specifically deaf networks that they rely on throughout their lives. Is what

is happening in Tanzania an incipient deaf cultural group like those in the West? I think it is highly unlikely, given the different local realities, that Tanzanians will follow the same path as other groups. Deaf people have and continue to form networks of support that are crucial to their survival and success—but the form, boundaries, membership and understanding of that community are very different from those we see in the United States and Western Europe.

### **Final Thoughts**

To conclude, ethnographic research of deaf people with limited language is extremely useful. Deaf people—some who do not even know their own names—have survived adversity and abuse, and have stories to tell, even without language. Their insights about their own roles in their communities, relationships in their families, and frustrations as marginalized members of society are illuminating, heart breaking and, most of all, important. Unheard and unseen, these deaf people who cannot sign are viewed as incomplete humans, and are considered burdens that their families must shamefully bear.

Recall how Ruth, whose story opened this dissertation, taught her sister to change diapers, helped pay for school fees, and protected the family from her brother-in-law's abuse. Even though Amina saw her deaf sister solely as a burden, Ruth, a woman with extremely limited language and no education, trained and protected her sister and family. Through careful and patient ethnographic work, it became clear that Ruth was a crucial member of the family. Ruth's story is not unique. The deaf people who participated in this study play an intricate role in their homes and communities. This dissertation has aimed to shed some light on this small and often discriminated segment of Tanzanian society, which Western Deaf studies researchers know precious little about.

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### Appendix A: List of Named Participants

Name	Description	Sample Subsection
Adila	deaf young woman, early twenties, soon to be mother, works for a FBO, lives in Mnazi	integrated signer
Aikida	deaf young man, signer, lives in Mnazi, working for Huruma, member of Vijana	integrated signer
Albert	deaf man married to Upendo, lives in Dar es Salaam, member Kitaifa	marginalized signer
Amina	hearing, non-signer, living in a village outside Selous, makes pombe for a living and lives with her deaf sister Ruth	hearing
Batina	deaf young woman in her early twenties, lives with her hearing parents, parents do not like her signing in front of them	marginalized signer
Beatrice	deaf woman, early twenties, works for Huruma from home, Msiba's wife	integrated signer
Bernadetta	deaf woman, early twenties, works for Huruma from home, recently escaped her abusive husband, late deafened, learning sign language	marginalized signer
Betty	deaf woman, non-signer, lives in a village outside Selous	non-signer
Calista	Msiba and Beatrice's hearing daughter, three years old	hearing
David	deaf man, mid forties, sign language linguist and teacher	elite
Elsia	deaf woman, late thirties, works for Huruma from home, only signs at work, lives in Mnazi	marginalized signer
Ester	deaf woman, works at Huruma, officer at deaf NGO, lives in Mnazi	integrated signer
Fadili	young disabled man who was not deaf but we interviewed him anyway, lives in village outside Selous	hearing
Farid	abusive boyfriend of Lydia	hearing
Godfrey	one of my brilliant research assistants	integrated signer
Hamidi	deaf man in his mid forties, living in Dar es Salaam and an expert in LAT, married to Mremba, officer at Kitaifa	elite
Janeth	hearing daughter of Rahema	hearing
Jimu	deaf man, mid thirties, three deaf siblings (Neno and Mgunda), works for his brother's café, lives in Selous	integrated signer
Joyce	deaf woman, limited signing, works at Huruma, lives in Mnazi	marginalized signer
Lisa	one of my brilliant research assistants	hearing
Lydia	deaf woman, mid thirties, lives in Mnazi, has an abusive boyfriend who doesn't trust her because she's deaf	marginalized signer

Makale	deaf man, mid forties, lives in Dar es Salaam, officer in deaf NGO, has diabetes	elite
Mariam	deaf woman, mid thirties, leader of a deaf club, sign language linguist	elite
Mary	Upendo's hearing daughter	hearing
Mathayo	deaf young man, signer, lives in Mnazi, working for Huruma, member of Vijana	integrated signer
Mgunda	deaf man, mid thirties, living in Selous, leader in deaf NGO	elite
Mremba	deaf woman in her mid thirties, living in Dar es Salaam, married to Hamidi, member of Kitaifa	elite
Msiba	deaf man, mid twenties, works for Huruma, member of Vijana, Beatrice's husband, lives in Mnazi	integrated signer
Mwanitu	deaf woman, non-signer, living in a village outside Selous	non-signer
Neema	one of my brilliant research assistants	hearing
Neno	deaf man, three deaf siblings, lives in Selous, works at his own newspaper stand, one of the first to learn LAT	integrated signer
Nyawe	deaf young man, signer, lives in Mnazi, working for Huruma, member of Vijana	integrated signer
Peteri	abusive boyfriend of Ruby	hearing
Rahema	deaf woman, mid thirties, two deaf siblings (Rahema), lives in Mnazi, officer of Kitaifa, member of Nyena family, works at Huruma	integrated signer
Renada	one of my brilliant research assistants	integrated signer
Ruby	deaf woman, early twenties, works for Huruma, lives in Mnazi has an abusive boyfriend named Peteri	integrated signer
Ruth	deaf, non-signer, living in a village outside Selous, washes clothes for a living and lives with her hearing sister Amina	non-signer
Sarah	deaf woman, early twenties, works for Huruma, lives in Mnazi, lived with Ruby and Peteri	integrated signer
Sia	deaf woman, mid thirties, lives in Mnazi, working for Huruma, member of Kitaifa	integrated signer
Sinde	deaf woman, mid forties, living in Dar es Salaam, leader in deaf NGO	elite
Tatu	deaf woman, mid thirties, member of Kitaifa, lives in Dar es Salaam, member of deaf women's club	marginalized signer
Theresia	one of my brilliant research assistants	integrated signer
Tina	deaf woman, mid twenties, officer at Vijana, lives in Dar es Salaam,	elite
Upendo	deaf woman, mid thirties, two deaf siblings (Rahema), lives in Mnazi, member of Kitaifa, member of Nyena family, sells homemade pastries	integrated signer
Valeriana	one of my brilliant research assistants	integrated signer

William	deaf young man, signer, lives in Mnazi, working for Huruma, member of Vijana and Kitaifa	integrated signer
Zaituna	deaf young woman in her early twenties, lives with her hearing mother, shy signer	marginalized signer

### Appendix B: Translated Survey

1. Date: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Assistant: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Village: \_\_\_\_\_
5. GPS: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Questions:

6. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (male female)
7. Where do you live: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Where were you born: \_\_\_\_\_
9. When were you born: \_\_\_\_\_
10. years: \_\_\_\_\_
11. Religion: \_\_\_\_\_
12. Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_
13. Work: \_\_\_\_\_
14. When did you become deaf? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Why did you become deaf? \_\_\_\_\_

#### CHILDREN:

16. Children:      **YES**              **NO**
  - a. How many? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Boys \_\_\_\_\_      Girls \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Deaf \_\_\_\_\_      Hearing \_\_\_\_\_

d. Where do your children live?

17. Do your children go to school?      **YES**      **NO**

a. What grades? \_\_\_\_\_

**PARENTS:**

13. Are your parents deaf? **YES**      **NO**

14. Where do your parents live?

15. What kinds of work do your parents do?

**FAMILY:**

16. How many children do your parents have? \_\_\_\_\_

a. How many daughters? \_\_\_\_\_

b. How many sons? \_\_\_\_\_

c. Deaf \_\_\_\_\_ Hearing \_\_\_\_\_

d. **(Deaf)** Where do you deaf siblings live?

17. Are there other deaf in your family? **YES**      **NO**

a. **(YES)** Where do they live?

**MARRIAGE:**

18. Are you married?      **YES**      **NO**

**A. (YES): DEAF      HEARING**

i. Why did you choose a deaf or hearing spouse?

ii. Who:

iii. Where did you meet?

iv. When

1. Did you meet?
2. Did you get married?

v. Where does your spouse live?

vi. What kind of work does your spouse do?

b. (NO): Why haven't you gotten married yet?

23. Do you have a boyfriend or girlfriend? **YES** **NO**

a. (YES) Deaf Hearing

- i. Why did you choose a deaf or hearing partner?
- ii. Who:
- iii. Where did you meet?
- iv. When did you meet?
- v. Where does your partner live?
- vi. What kind of work does your partner do for work?

b. (NO): Why don't you have a partner yet?

**SCHOOL:**

24. Have you been to school? **YES** **NO**

a. (YES)

- i. Where (primary and secondary)?
- ii. Was it a deaf school? **YES** **NO**
  1. WHY? (How did your parents know about the school?)
- iii. When did you start and finish school?

iv. Did you like school? **YES** **NO**

1. Why?

b. (NO)

i. Why didn't you go to school?

ii. What did you do instead?

### **SERVICES:**

25. When you get sick where do you go for help?

a. Have you ever been to a doctor? **YES** **NO**

b. Where do your children go for healthcare? **YES** **NO**

c. How do you communicate there?

26. Do you know what HIV/AIDS is? **YES** **NO**

a. (YES)

i. What is it?

ii. Is it dangerous to deaf people?

iii. Where did you learn about it?

27. Where do you get your news?

\_\_\_\_\_newspaper \_\_\_\_\_TV

\_\_\_\_\_friends \_\_\_\_\_radio

\_\_\_\_\_Family \_\_\_\_\_neighbors

Other:\_\_\_\_\_

**WORK:**

28. Do you work? **YES**                      **NO**

a. **(YES)** What kind of work do you do?

b. Do you enjoy it?                      **YES**                      **NO**

c. Why?

d. How much money do you make for a day of work?

29. What work have you done in the past?

30. Do your children work?                      **YES**                      **NO**

a. **(YES)** What kind of work do they do?

b. If your children work, do they help you? **YES**                      **NO**

**DEAF:**

31. Do you see other deaf people? **YES**                      **NO**

a. How many? \_\_\_\_\_

b. Where?

c. when?

d. How many in a week?

32. What kinds of work do deaf people do (that you know)? (examples)

33. Are most of your friends deaf or hearing?                      **DEAF**                      **HEARING**                      **EQUAL**

a. Why?

**COMMUNICATION**

34. Do you sign language? **YES** **NO**

a. **(YES)** where did you learn it?

b. When did you learn it?

c. When do you use sign language?

\_\_\_\_\_ every day

\_\_\_\_\_ when I am with deaf people

\_\_\_\_\_ with my family

\_\_\_\_\_ at work

\_\_\_\_\_ at school

other: \_\_\_\_\_

d. Parents know sign language? **YES** **NO**

\_\_\_\_\_ gesture \_\_\_\_\_ 0-5 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_ a little \_\_\_\_\_ 5-20 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_ very well \_\_\_\_\_ 30+ signs/words

e. Family (siblings) know sign language? **YES** **NO**

\_\_\_\_\_ gesture \_\_\_\_\_ 0-5 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_ a little \_\_\_\_\_ 5-20 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_ very well \_\_\_\_\_ 30+ signs/words

f. children know sign language? **YES** **NO**

\_\_\_\_\_ gesture \_\_\_\_\_ 0-5 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_ a little \_\_\_\_\_ 5-20 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_ very well \_\_\_\_\_ 30+ signs/words

**g. your friends know sign language? YES NO**

\_\_\_\_\_gesture \_\_\_\_\_0-5 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_a little \_\_\_\_\_5-20 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_very well \_\_\_\_\_30+ signs/words

**h. neighbors know sign language? YES NO**

\_\_\_\_\_gesture \_\_\_\_\_0-5 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_a little \_\_\_\_\_5-20 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_very well \_\_\_\_\_30+ signs/words

**i. partner know sign language? YES NO**

\_\_\_\_\_gesture \_\_\_\_\_0-5 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_a little \_\_\_\_\_5-20 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_very well \_\_\_\_\_30+ signs/words

**j. Boss know sign language? YES NO**

\_\_\_\_\_gesture \_\_\_\_\_0-5 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_a little \_\_\_\_\_5-20 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_very well \_\_\_\_\_30+ signs/words

**k. Your coworkers know sign language? YES NO**

\_\_\_\_\_gesture \_\_\_\_\_0-5 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_a little \_\_\_\_\_5-20 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_very well \_\_\_\_\_30+ signs/words

1. Police know sign language? **YES** **NO**

\_\_\_\_\_gesture \_\_\_\_\_0-5 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_a little \_\_\_\_\_5-20 signs/words

\_\_\_\_\_very well \_\_\_\_\_30+ signs/words

35. How do you communicate with your parents:

\_\_\_\_\_sign language \_\_\_\_\_gesture

\_\_\_\_\_speaking/lip reading \_\_\_\_\_read and write

\_\_\_\_\_interpreter \_\_\_\_\_no communication

36. How do you communicate with your siblings:

\_\_\_\_\_sign language \_\_\_\_\_gesture

\_\_\_\_\_speaking/lip reading \_\_\_\_\_read and write

\_\_\_\_\_interpreter \_\_\_\_\_no communication

37. How do you communicate with your children?:

\_\_\_\_\_sign language \_\_\_\_\_gesture

\_\_\_\_\_speaking/lip reading \_\_\_\_\_read and write

\_\_\_\_\_interpreter \_\_\_\_\_no communication

38. How do you communicate with your friends:

\_\_\_\_\_sign language \_\_\_\_\_gesture

\_\_\_\_\_speaking/lip reading \_\_\_\_\_read and write

\_\_\_\_\_interpreter \_\_\_\_\_no communication

**39.**How do you communicate with your neighbors:

\_\_\_\_\_ sign language      \_\_\_\_\_gesture  
\_\_\_\_\_speaking/lip reading      \_\_\_\_\_read and write  
\_\_\_\_\_interpreter      \_\_\_\_\_no communication

**40.**How do you communicate with your neighbors:

\_\_\_\_\_ sign language      \_\_\_\_\_gesture  
\_\_\_\_\_speaking/lip reading      \_\_\_\_\_read and write  
\_\_\_\_\_interpreter      \_\_\_\_\_no communication

**41.**How do you communicate with your boss/teacher:

\_\_\_\_\_ sign language      \_\_\_\_\_gesture  
\_\_\_\_\_speaking/lip reading      \_\_\_\_\_read and write  
\_\_\_\_\_interpreter      \_\_\_\_\_no communication

**42.**How do you communicate with your coworkers/classmates:

\_\_\_\_\_ sign language \_\_\_\_\_gesture  
\_\_\_\_\_speaking/lip reading      \_\_\_\_\_read and write  
\_\_\_\_\_interpreter      \_\_\_\_\_no communication

**43.**How do you communicate with police:

\_\_\_\_\_ sign language      \_\_\_\_\_gesture  
\_\_\_\_\_speaking/lip reading      \_\_\_\_\_read and write  
\_\_\_\_\_interpreter      \_\_\_\_\_no communication

**ORGANIZATIONS THAT WORK WITH DEAF:**

44. Do you see organizations that work with deaf? **YES** **NO**
- a. **(YES)** what are they?
- b. Have you ever been to a seminar? **YES** **NO**
- c. Which ones??
- d. Do you like these organizations? **YES** **NO**
- i. Why?

**POLITICS:**

45. Does the Government of Tanzania help you?
46. Does the Government of Tanzania help deaf?
47. Who is the president of Tanzania?
48. Do you know where the government office in this village/town is? **YES** **NO**
49. Do you usually go to political meetings? **YES** **NO**
- a. Why?
50. Who is the Prime Minister?
51. Do you vote? **YES** **NO**
- a. Why
52. Who was the first president of Tanzania?

**LIFE:**

53. Are your neighbors **GOOD** **NORMAL** **BAD**
- a. Why?
54. The lives of deaf people in TZ are **RAISI** **NORMAL**  
**DIFFICULT**

## a. Why?

55. What kinds of problems do deaf people have?

56. What kinds of problems do you have?

57. When you have problems, who helps you?

**AFTER THE INTERVIEW:**

58. Did they know Sign language:

0	1	2	3	?	
none	a little		ok	good	don't know

59. Do they know how to read and write Swahili?:

0	1	2	3	?	
none	a little		ok	good	don't know

60. Did they speak and read lips?:

0	1	2	3	?	
none	a little		ok	good	don't know

61. Which way did the communicate during the interview?

speaking	sign language	gesture
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## Appendix C: LAT Sign Examples




	<b>PADIRI</b> Padre/Priest	81.255	Alama sanifu standard sign
	<b>PADIRI</b> Padre/Priest	81.256	Tabora
	<b>PADIRI</b> Padre/Priest	82.257	Songea

Figure 18: LAT signs for "priest" in first dictionary



[P:8]

**padri (n)**

*priest, padre*

Figure 19: LAT sign for "priest" in second dictionary