A final paper (also 1500 words or so) should accompany the sound object, pointing to readings that have been useful, to the object's intent, and more.

My sound object reflects the various paradigm shifts that took place regarding the social construction of sound. It consists of four different "acts" and each act reflects a salient paradigm shift I identified in our readings and discussion. In this paper, I will discuss all four acts and explain how and why I used certain audio clips to depict the paradigm shift that occurred in the world of sound. I will refer to specific excerpts from our readings that point to this shift and how it challenges our conventional perception of hearing. Ultimately, my goal through this piece was to create a sound that can possibly unite the experiences of the hearing and deaf community, bridging the gaps between how each community engages with the world of sound.

I start off Act I with a normal drum beat. I wanted to start my piece with a sound that closely resembles something I'd normally hear in songs in everyday life. I wanted Act I to reflect how our society typically views sound, hearing, and deafness. From my experiences, not a lot of people give too much thought about their relationship with sound. Members of the hearing community are just wired to understand sound as part of their default setting and to view deafness as a condition that deviates from their sense of normalcy. They don't typically really linger on the topic of sound because they have never been deprived of this ability. I wanted to reflect this mundane, thoughtless sentiment of sound in Act I by generating a beat with no particular impact or excitement. The sounds of these drums are something we've all listened to before in some beat or song—I wanted this Act to provoke as little thought as possible. A detail I added to further reflect the discrepancy between the hearing and deaf community is syncopation.

Through this, I wanted to accentuate the uniform off-beatness and staticness of the beat, thereby reflecting the friction between the hearing and deaf community. This friction is caused because the two communities think they are very different and don't have much in common. The friction is supposed to depict the lack of communication, interaction, and understanding between the two communities. The two seconds of silence I incorporated between each Act symbolize a moment of unity and shared understanding.

After Act I, I slowly eased into Act II. In Act II, I tried to incorporate a lot of random mixing of audio clips that do not sound as familiar to the ear, specifically by including more electric and machine mediated audios. I wanted to show that some sounds could only be produced through technology not through nature or with an instrument. To further highlight this, I put two of the same sound samples on different tracks in Ableton, 2 seconds apart. One sound sample is on a normal track while the other is processed through an electric track, and the two sounds juxtapose each other as they are being played at the same time. I drew inspiration from the excerpts in *The Audible Past* by Jonathan Sterne. In his book, Sterne mentions the invention of the phonautograph, the earliest known device to record sound. Sterne contends, "the ear phonautograph is an artifact of a shift from models of sound reproduction based on imitations of the mouth to models based on imitation of the ear…the abstraction of auditory perception and its condensation into a tympanic function define sound-reproduction technologies as we know them today" (Sterne, 51). Sterne interprets sounds as effects rather than as a natural phenomenon. Under his model, hearing is an instrument and a transducer not an inherent ability. In the specific part of my sound object I discussed earlier, I hoped to depict this duality of sound—natural sound and technologically-produced sound—by layering the two sounds on top of each other and

letting the electronically processed sound echo after natural sound. There are so many ways to process sound—through machines (i.e. telephones), with machines (i.e. cochlear implants), and by machines (AI-enabled voice-recognition devices). If hearing can truly be understood as a technical operation under Sterne's model, we must reconsider whether these device-mediated sounds should be viewed that much differently from the sounds we normally perceive. Given all these different methods to process sound, the old model of sound which solely depended on one's ability to hear, would be rendered obsolete.

In Act III, I tried to incorporate a lot of sounds with physical and visual associations. For example, the shaker sound in this Act was meant to evoke a sense of touch and vision—I hoped that the listeners could not only imagine physically feeling the motion of a shaker but also visualize it. Furthermore, just like how the phonautograph translates sound into visible tracings, I wanted to show through this Act that our senses are not completely disconnected from each other—they may in fact be deeply intertwined. I further explored this concept in my project by visualizing my sounds using the wavetable function in Ableton. I played around with wavetables and was able to visually see how my sound changed depending on my adjustments to the sound waves. This leads me to conclude that the experience of sound cannot be completely reduced to the sense of hearing—we can experience sound through seeing or feeling the beats of the sound. In experiences of sound that pertain to senses other than hearing, the Deaf and non-Deaf may engage in the world of sound together.

The final act, Act IV, is brief, consisting of a series of vibrations at varying notes. Like the shakers, I hoped that the physical feeling of vibration would be palpable—I wanted the

vibrations to transform the experience of sound into a tactile one by provoking imagination on how that sound would feel physically. I drew inspiration from the article, “Sound Studies Meets Deaf Studies,” where Helmreich discusses in length how vibrations could be used as a powerful tool to create a shared experience between the hearing community and the deaf community. He elaborates in the article, “vibration appears to cross distances between things, between people, between self and environment, between the senses and society, promising to shrink or break down such distances”. Because vibration is a physical experience, it is experienced by everyone at the same time, together in sync. I wanted to end my sound object by showing that the deaf community and hearing community could engage in the same experience pertaining to sound despite their apparent differences.

Through the four acts of my sound object, I hoped to reflect the various paradigm shifts concerning sound and hearing. Act I reflected the hearing community’s preconceived notions of sound and deafness; Act II suggested that hearing may be interpreted as a technical operation instead of a natural ability; Act III depicted how sound can be experienced simultaneously not only through the act of hearing but also through the physical motion of creating sound and observing it; and Act IV shared a mode of sound—vibrations—that can unite the experiences of hearing and non-hearing communities. These various models of sound and hearing produce incredibly powerful implications as it invites us to question if the deaf community and the hearing community have as many auditory barriers as conventionally conceived.

Citations:

Sound studies meets deaf studies. Retrieved March 14, 2022.

Sterne, Jonathan. *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. , 2003.

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