**Disability Research Paper**

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**School Introduction to Students with Disabilities**

**Dr. Harris-Looby**

***The Deaf Community***

"**The deaf community within the United States is a unique community with deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals who share a common language and social network which include Deaf clubs, sports and theatre. The Deaf community supports Deaf children and their families. It is a place where Deaf people have a sense of belonging in the same way that people from different ethnic backgrounds share experience when they gather together" (Padden, 1988).**

**Padden (1988) further noted that the Deaf community is growing in adversity; it is not a single society with one purpose which one can "sign up for". It is a diverse meeting of individuals who come together for many purposes but who share some basic experience, communication and commitment. The communication will be in sign language. The commitment will be to support other deaf people and to have a place to meet.**

**According to (Jamie Berke) 2008, the Deaf community is protected by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which provides free and appropriate early intervention services from birth to 3 years of age and covers school years (age 3-21 years). If a student is eligible under IDEA or has a 504 plan, the school must ensure the hearing aids are functioning properly, the student has access to assistive technology (such as an FM system), and that those using assistive technology - including teachers - are trained properly in the care and use of that technology.**

**In addition, The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) covers four sections for people with disability:**

1. **Employment – which applies to businesses with 15 or more employees**
2. **Ensures all state and local government activities and programs are accessible to the Deaf community**
3. **Ensures all businesses are open to the public - regardless of size they must be accessible**
4. **Nationwide relay service to make the telephone system available to persons with hearing impairment and/or speech disabilities (Berke, 2008)**

***Are the brains of deaf people structurally or organizationally different from others?***

 **According to Dr. Looby (personal communication, June 29, 2015), Chapter 9 Deaf and Hard of Hearing slide presentation number 3 “Students who receive special education because of hearing loss are a heterogeneous group”. He believes their level of functioning is influenced by:**

* **Degree of hearing loss**
* **Age of onset**
* **Attitudes of parents and siblings**
* **Opportunities to acquire a first language**
* **The presence of other disabilities**
* **The extent to which a child successfully interacts –this depends largely on others’ attitudes and the child’s ability to communicate in some mutually accepted way.**

**From this perspective the following questions are asked, are the brains of deaf people structurally or organizationally different from the brains of hearing people? Do they process language in the right hemisphere because they are deaf? No. The brains of Deaf people process sign language in the left hemisphere of the brain just as hearing people process spoken language (Neville, 1988). Deaf people think signs or pictures rather than words. This constitutes a mental process that is radically different from the norm. The mind of Deaf people is different from hearing people, not saying that the brain of Deaf people is different from hearing people (Bellugi, 1988). The view of deafness as culture holds that children and adults who cannot hear are isolated from the main stream because communication with hearing individuals will always be laborious (Dolnick, 1993). The study always found that Deaf students tend for the most part to socialize with non-Deaf students and was attributed to shared language and experience.**

***Higher Education for Deaf Students***

**The early educators of the deaf had formed schools for the deaf with support from federal and state governments in the first half of the 19th century.The formation of the first schools created the modern Deaf community in the United Stated of America. ASL, American Speech and Language proliferated through these schools and deaf communities. Most of the graduates of the first schools for the deaf lived and worked in the same locality as the schools and communicated in ASL. ASL is a legitimate language in its own right. The goal of the bilingual-bicultural approach is to help deaf students become bilingual adults who can read and write with competence in their second language. They maintained contacts made at school and formed a constellation of local and regional communities that revolved around schools, churches, social clubs and associations. Newspapers and periodicals, known as the ‘Little Paper Family’, were published with news and announcements in the Deaf community (Ulloa, 2002).**

**According to Ulloa (2002) deaf individuals were forced to attend separate schools, seek one another for communication, form a community of their own and resist the salient, negative, stigmatized, outsider roles given to them by the hearing community. In the context of problematic communication between the deaf and the hearing; the Deaf community was created to provide its people with an interpretive framework that allowed them to acquire a distinctive linguistic and social knowledge and to adapt to the debilitating effects of stigma and marginalization.**

**Ullao (2002) goes on to say that in the twenty-first century there has been an increased recognition of ASL as a language in education, research and public policy. Additionally, a proliferation of academic, secondary and university level programs have offered ASL and deaf studies.**

***The language and culture of The Deaf***

**The language, community and culture of deaf individuals entered mainstream American society and culture. During this period the invention of communication technologies that rendered obsolete old avenues of social intercourse such as deaf clubs that forced people to seek other, non‐deaf ‘spaces’. This era also saw the deaf community as diverse individuals from different scholastic, social, economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds splintered from national organizations and formed their own special interest clubs and associations. These developments occurred in spite of medical advances, such as cochlear implants, that some deaf people saw as potentially reducing the incidence of deafness and threatening the existence of the community.**

**Ullao (2002) described the American deaf community as a linguistic community of ASL users. She stated that members of the Deaf community include the profoundly deaf, the hard of hearing, the prelingual and the postlingual deaf and those who have intelligible speech and those who do not. The particular degree of deafness is not a criterion for membership. ASL is a language for deaf people, a basis for group identity, a criterion for membership of the deaf community and serves as the ethos for the deaf, a world view that sign language relieves the deaf from communication barriers with the hearing. Entrance into the Deaf community is a transforming process that involves the acquisition of ASL and deaf cultural traditions from contacts at school and social gatherings.**

**Becoming a member of this community means more than just learning American Sign Language. You need to be willing to enter the Deaf experience. The diagram below is an illustration developed by Baker & Cokely (2008), which explains how a person qualifies for becoming a member of the Deaf community.**

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**Baker and Cokely (2008), explain that the center of the diagram represents Deaf culture. To be accepted and fully participate in the Deaf culture, individuals MUST possess all four characteristics that define the culture: social, audio logical, linguistic, and political. The Deaf community is illustrated by the other shaded portions of the diagram. Individuals must have at least TWO of the characteristics to participate in the community of the Deaf. Readers can gain some extremely valuable insight from the set of 4 characteristics listed below:**

1. **In the Deaf community social skills are important. Individuals need to join in the social life of the Deaf community to experience these characteristics. This means having attended a Deaf residential school, or having Deaf family members, spouses, or friends. A hearing person who uses American Sign Language, regularly attends Deaf community events, and advocates Deaf issues (a sign language interpreter, for example) will understand the shared experience through having close relationship with groups in the Deaf community.**
2. **An essential characteristic is Audio logical - individuals MUST have a hearing loss to get credit for this characteristic. It doesn't matter if you are deaf or hard hearing, to a Deaf person, hearing loss means deaf. Deaf is a term used in the community of the Deaf to mean a life experience instead of a hearing loss.**
3. **Within the Deaf community linguistic is the key ingredient in ASL. Individuals must use and advocate American Sign Language. The participants not only need to memorize vocabulary, but also learn how to ask questions, make sentences, carry on a conversation, and provide information. Individuals need to learn and respect the signing customs and etiquette of Deaf culture and use them to appropriately sign in ASL.**
4. **Politically, individuals need to be a passionate advocate of Deaf issues and ASL. Political members of this community are usually deaf people who hold positions in deaf organizations like the National Association of the Deaf. All of the characteristics of the Deaf community are linked by attitude. Individuals need to love the Deaf experience. If individuals have the proper respect, the willingness to learn about Deaf issues and deafness, and are enthusiastically involved, they will be accepted by the Deaf community whether you are deaf or hard of hearing.**

***Recommendations to assist Deaf Students***

**Recommended interventions for the classroom teacher and parents are produced by the Division for Communicative Disabilities and Deafness. (The primary purpose of DCDD is to promote the welfare, development, and education of infants, toddlers, children and youth with communicative disabilities or who are deaf or hard of hearing). The Committee on Deaf and hard of hearing recognizes that students with hearing loss are educated in a variety of environments and through a variety of approaches. The purpose of this committee is to act as a venue for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, and their families to gather and discuss the challenges that they encounter on a daily basis. This committee encourages a closer examination of such challenges as access to the general education curriculum, sensitivity to diversity within the population, and a careful understanding of medical and technological advances, among others. It also serves as a forum for proposed solutions. The committee seeks to connect teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing from across the country with one another so that their concerns may be heard by the broader education community (CEC, 2009).**

**References**

Bellugi, 1988Deaf People Phycology of deafness , deaf culture

http://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-layout/psychologyofdeafness.htm