

Cultures and sub-cultures of the deaf and deaf-blind



Deaf culture describes the social beliefs, behaviors, art, literary traditions, history, values and shared institutions of communities that are affected by deafness and which use sign languages as the main means of communication (http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deaf_culture). Much is the same when describing the social cultures of the deaf-blind communities. They come from different social, vocational and educational backgrounds.

They have many jobs and roles: teachers, professors, counselors, homemakers, agency directors, business executives, government workers, and others. Some have their own businesses. Others are students, and still others are retired (http://www.aadb.org/FAQ/faq_DeafBlindness.html#do). While there are many traits and beliefs that are similar to many other cultures and communities, there are also many characteristics and practices that make the deaf and deaf-blind cultures and communities unique.

As with many other cultures, the deaf and deaf-blind also face biasness and prejudices, this unfortunate behavior against these minorities is referred to as audism. First and foremost, the greatest differences of the deaf and deaf-blind culture, from most other cultures, are the unique methods of communication and language, which the deaf and deaf-blind utilize. Deaf and deaf-blind people use many different ways to communicate.

They use sign language (adapted to fit their visual field), tactile sign language, tracking, tactile fingerspelling, print on palm, tadoma, Braille, speech, and speech reading, to name a few. The communication methods vary from individual to individual, depending on the causes and severity of their combined hearing and/or vision loss, their background, and their education (http://www.aadb.org/FAQ/faq_DeafBlindness.html#do). Many <https://assignbuster.com/cultures-and-sub-cultures-of-the-deaf-and-deaf-blind/>

modern modes of communication have also become available to bridge technological gaps for the deaf and deaf-blind members of our society.

Such devices include Teletypewriters (TTY), which can relay typed text to and/or from one impaired person to another, Voice Carry Over (VCO), which allows a person who is hard of hearing or deaf to use one's voice to receive responses from a person who is hearing via the operator's typed text. There are also more self-explanatory modes of technology such as video conferencing and captioned telephones available to assist in communicating.

Aside from communication and language, there are also such things as beliefs and customs that have lent towards the deaf and deaf-blind cultures. A positive attitude toward being deaf is typical in Deaf cultural groups. Deafness is not generally considered a condition that needs to be fixed. Culturally Deaf people value the use of natural sign languages that exhibit their own grammatical conventions, such as American Sign Language and British Sign Language, over signed versions of English or other spoken languages.

Deaf culture in the United States tends to be collectivist rather than individualist; culturally Deaf people value the group (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deaf_culture#Values_and_beliefs). Culturally Deaf people have rules of etiquette for such things as, getting attention, walking through signed conversations, and otherwise politely negotiating a signing environment. It is also commonplace for them to arrive early for certain events, to ensure an optimum seat, and to stay longer, as this will allot time for solidarity amongst one another and to carry conversation.

As is with many minority groups, deaf and deaf-blind people have a more closely knit bond and relationship within their culture and subculture. These bonds within their communities not only offer protection of one another, but also provide a feeling of strength from within the culture. Deaf and deaf-blind people take great pride in their history, as well they should. In 1000 B. C. , the Torah protected the deaf from being cursed by others, but denied them to fully participate in rituals of the Temple.

Later, in the 1850's, John Flourney, proposed to Congress that land be set aside in the western territories for the creation of a deaf state, where deaf people could better enjoy their own community and flourish unrestrained by prejudice and the often restrictive good intentions of hearing society. As time went on, many other advancements, in areas like employment, sports, and technology occurred to the benefit of the deaf communities.

As recently as 1990, when the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed, have steps continued to be made in the interest of people with such disabilities. It is with great progress and through many trials and tribulations, that society has evolved to accept, support and embrace the differences of the deaf and deaf-blind cultures. Yet there are still many steps to take and hurdles to overcome. We can only hope, as we do with so many other prejudices within our own culture, that the term " audism" is a thing of the past, and that we all only see one another as fellow man, equal to one another, despite our differences.