



## DEAF CULTURE

Throughout history, culture has been defined in numerous ways.

*Culture is the complex whole, containing knowledge, beliefs, art, moral, rights and habits, besides all those skills and habits, an human who has learned this through being member of a society.* Edward Tylor, 1871.

Today, it is generally accepted that a culture...

- Has historic traditions
- Has ideals, values and norms
- Is not inborn
- Is the sum of: all experiences, knowledge and values that influences our behavior

*The deaf community comprise those deaf and hard of hearing individuals who share a common language, common experiences and values, and a common way of interacting with each other, and with hearing people.* Baker & Padden, 1980

**ISSUE:** *How do we, as Deaf people, define ourselves? The Deaf Community generally accepts that we have a Deaf Culture. But how do we define Deaf Culture? What is part of the Deaf Culture? Who belongs to the Deaf Culture?*

Other ways we are defined:

- Minority group
- Diaspora
- Deviated group
- Deafhood

Deaf community as a **MINORITY**:

- Deaf people as a group is minor in amount compared to the rest of the inhabitants of a country
- Deaf people have shown will to protect their culture, tradition and language through organizations and events
- Sign Language is defined as a minority language

Deaf community as a **DISAPORA**: *Paddy Ladd*

- Deaf people as a group do not have specific territory
- Are often integrated in the capitalistic system
- Experience oppression in school, work and social life
- Oppression creates a group identity (dichotomy)

Deaf Community as a **DEVIATED** group: *Michel Foccault & Hilde Haualand*



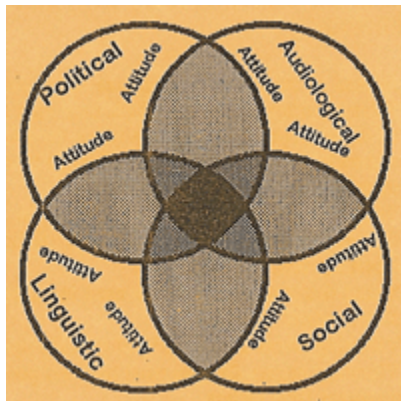
- Medical perspective of deafness: sick vs. healthy
- Use the medical perspective to show distinction and categorize deaf people
- Ambition to “fix” deafness

Deaf Community as DEAFHOOD: *Paddy Ladd*

- Not a medical view
- A discursive process
- Becoming aware of your identity as a member of a Deaf community/world
- To be part of Deafhood is to be a culturally Deaf person in a Deaf community

## IDENTITY

The four avenues to membership in the Deaf community are: audiological, political, linguistic, and social as indicated in the following figure:



**Audiological** refers to actual loss of hearing ability.  
**Political** refers to the potential ability to exert influence on matters which directly affect the Deaf community on a local, provincial, or national level.  
**Linguistic** refers to the ability to understand and use Sign Language fluently.  
**Social** refers to the ability to participate in social events of the Deaf community.

Hearing people, e.g. parents, relatives, professionals or friends, can be accepted as members of the Deaf community only if they have an appropriate attitude towards the Deaf community. This means they can enter into the Deaf community via three avenues: political, linguistic, and social.

Sourced from <http://www.deafsa.co.za/asp/deafculture.asp>