Become a Deaf Role Model too!

Kindergarten for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Argyroupolis
Own your identity. Love who you are in the world. Love your deafness.

- Nyle Di Marco (Deaf Activist)
Deaf adults as Role Models for the Hearing World

In this Guide we use the term "Deaf" (with uppercase D) to refer to deaf and hard of hearing people (children or adults) for whom technical support with hearing aids and cochlear implants is insufficient to acquire spoken language through natural interaction.

Most Deaf people (approximately 95%), worldwide, have hearing parents who do not come into contact with Deaf adults and sign language before the age at which formal primary education begins. The majority of hearing parents do not come into contact with deafness, even after their child is diagnosed deaf. It may sound paradoxical, but it happens all over the world. However, it is very important for these families to have the necessary information and support that will allow them to help their child develop a language with which he / she will have full interaction with his / her family.
Because in many families, the parents/guardians and caregivers are hearing who have never met a Deaf adult, Deaf adults as Role Models can play a vital role in developing the Deaf children’s knowledge, skills and perceptions. Thus, when children lack standards with which they can identify, they are statistically more likely to have low self-esteem, to have limited social and professional choices (Hintermair, 2008).

**Deaf children benefit from seeing Deaf adults move around in their world on a daily basis.** For example, how they ask for a subtitle device in a museum, what strategies they use to be served in a bank or a restaurant, how they handle the rude look or questions from people in the grocery store. In addition, for Deaf children, a Deaf adult as a Role Model can serve as a mentor for both the child and the child’s family (Cawthon et al., 2006). But before we refer in detail to the benefits for Deaf children when they see Deaf adults as Role Models, let us give the definition of the term.
Clarifying the term “Deaf adults as Role Models”

There are many definitions of Role Models in the literature, both in terms of the personal characteristics of the Role Models and the operation of a Role Model relationship:

- From informal guidance, up to focused guidance, such as the Big Brothers / Big Sisters program (Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001),

- guidance relationship, as a relationship in which the Role Model provides personal support to an individual in need of infrastructure and guidance (Rhodes, 2005).

The Modeling Process: Experiences and Perspectives

The Modeling Process involves many elements, and individuals’ relationships with their Role Models vary widely. Modeling processes may include support, guidance, or simply friendly support (Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001), teaching or guiding the individual through important life transitions, or providing emotional understanding (Cawthon et al., 2016; Foster & MacLeod, 2004).
Deaf adults can be great Role Models for Deaf children and their families. Deaf adults have experiential knowledge and experience from the social and educational system of the Hearing World. They know and can suggest what was effective in their lives and what was not. Through their personal life experience, not always pleasant or with a positive impact, the Deaf learned how to be more functional both in the world of the Deaf World and in the Hearing World (Kourbetis & Hatzopoulou 2010). Based on their experiences, they can show families that deafness is not an obstacle to achieving goals. The prospect of meeting and getting to know Deaf adults who can convey the experience of growing up Deaf and the opportunity to ask questions about what it is like to be Deaf, could overturn negative stereotypes about the Deaf (Sutherland et al., 2003). In other words, “seeing is believing” (Sutherland et al., 2003 p. 5).
The Impact and Benefits of Deaf Adults as Role Models

Researchers have identified many ways that Role Models can have an impact on the lives of Deaf children and their families. First, they can positively influence parenting behaviors, which in turn can affect the Deaf child (Rogers & Young 2011). Second, their native sign language skills and their relationship with the Deaf community can influence language and Deaf identity development of the children (Cawthon et al. 2016). Deaf adults as Role Models associated with the Deaf community also help boost their self-esteem and pride in being Deaf (Nikolarazi and Hadjikakou 2006).

Cawthon et al. (2016) also argued that Deaf adults as Role Models are most effective when they have high expectations and communicate effectively with the Deaf child (e.g., they share a similar accessible way of communication: sign language). All this strengthens a child’s resilience to psychopathology and resilient Deaf children can more easily survive in the Hearing World (Hauser 2015). This improves the child’s sense of self-confidence and sureness in the child’s future success (Foster and MacLeod 2004). In addition, according to Gale et al. (2019), the results of their study showed that Deaf adults also serve as language Role Models and usually provide educational support and information.
Leeson (2006, p. 14) stressed the importance of Deaf adults’ participation in education. Thus, “... the stigmatization of sign languages in the education of the Deaf in many countries ignores the experiences of the Deaf adults, whose experiences must be taken into account in shaping future educational policy.” This study also showed how important this opportunity is for the Deaf to be Role Models. They help families find practical solutions to common challenges faced by Deaf children and young people as they move into adulthood.

Gale et al. (2019) consider that, when Deaf adults regularly come in contact with young Deaf children, in addition to language and socio-emotional development, cognitive development is also positively affected. Also, Cawthon et al. (2016) argue that Deaf Role Models appear to contribute to a number of developmental processes (for example, parental attitude shift, language development, identity development, and psychosocial development) not only for Deaf individuals but also for their families, which we will present next.
a. Parental behavior

The recommendation for Deaf adults as Role Models to reach out to families to support them and to work with other professionals has been published as a best practice (Moeller et al., 2013). The second explicit recommendation focuses on collaborative work and recommends that early intervention groups include “deaf or hard of hearing people (Role Models / mentors)” (Moeller et al., 2013, p. 440). The intention of this recommendation is to create a strong team that, through interdisciplinary collaboration, focuses on the family and “includes professionals with experience in the early development of children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing” (Moeller et al., 2013, p. 440).

Overall findings showed that parents who had access to mentors or Role Models showed a positive change in attitude, moving towards a more optimistic outlook on the potential of their Deaf children (Cawthon et al., 2016; Rogers & Young, 2011; Watkins, Pittman, & Walden, 1998).

Parents who did not come into contact with Deaf adults as Role Models focused more on their academic careers of their children. Overall, parents who had a Deaf adult as a Role Model working with their family showed a positive change in their expectations for their child’s future (Rodgers & Young, 2011; Watkins et al., 1998).
In addition, parents who worked with Deaf adults as Role Models came to understand that developing a Deaf identity contributes significantly to their child’s overall well-being (Selwood, 2005). Furthermore, representing different well-qualified professionals, who happen to be Deaf, in leadership roles in early intervention programs is important for parents to see that Deaf professionals can have different skills and occupations (Gale et al., 2019; Yoshinaga-Itano, 2014).

b. Language improvement

Language development is defined as an important developmental process that Deaf adults as Role Models can support Deaf youth. Special attention must be paid to the communicative and linguistic development of a Deaf child.

International studies show that the academic progress and social and emotional development of Deaf children is directly related to the acquisition of sign language as a first language (Hoffmeister & Caldwell-Harris, 2014; Hrastinski & Wilbur, 2016; Mayberry, 2007; Ormel, Hermans, Knoors & Verhoeven, 2012).

Research on Sign Language Acquisition by Deaf Children of Deaf parents who learn a signed language naturally have shown that these children follow language development in parallel with hearing children of the same age (Hatzopoulou 2008). No research has shown analogous results for Deaf children of hearing parents without any exposure to sign language. On the contrary, hearing children who grow up in a sign language communication environment, from the first years of their lives, achieve the expected language development, in sign language (Kourbetis & Hatzopoulou 2010).

In such language environments Deaf children of Deaf parents learn Sign Language naturally just as hearing children of hearing parents learn spoken language. The most important difference of these linguistic environments is that Deaf children with signed language communication have a natural language stimulus in the most critical phase of their language development, while Deaf children without signed language communication do not have.
Parents who worked with Deaf adults as Role Models provided more attainable and accessible language models (both using sign language and spoken language) for their Deaf children. In addition, their children were shown to have greater linguistic benefits in both expressive and receptive levels in both languages used (sign language and spoken language), indicating that a Deaf adult as a Model or Mentor can contribute directly to language skills, development of young Deaf children, albeit within a limited time frame, that of early childhood. Whether Deaf adults as Role Models can support the language development of Deaf individuals in later developmental periods has not been adequately investigated (Cawthon et al. 2016).

From empirical studies, pilot projects and applied practices the results are encouraging and are constantly confirmed. The goal of all is to avoid the continuation of language deprivation of the Deaf at any age. Deaf adults, native signers have been used as language models for the development of educational materials in many countries such as Greece, the Netherlands and the United States with the aim of teaching sign languages as a first language and bilingual education (Czubec, 2021; Kourbetis, 2018; Kourbetis & Karipi, 2021).
c. Culture and Identity development

Culture is defined by Parasnis (1996) as a way of life. It is a complete model of human knowledge, beliefs and behaviors that you acquire as a member of society. It incorporates the ideas, assumptions and values of a group and shapes everything we do. There are two different ways of looking at deafness: deafness as a disability and a medical condition or Deafness as a culture with its own values, traditions and customs (Wald & Knutson, 2000).

Identity is the way individuals perceive themselves and how the individual is defined by others. Thus, while it is a personal choice, identity is also shaped by external influences. Identity formation continues throughout life.

The evolution of a Deaf person’s identity is a long process of self-discovery, and often there is no transmission of Deaf culture from parents to children, unless a person is born into a family with Deaf members. Parasnis (1996) describes it as a horizontal transmission of culture since it takes place from peer to peer, rather than vertically, from parent to child.

The identity of Deaf or hard of hearing people develops based on the degree to which being Deaf or hard of hearing is more important in everyday life. The identity of a Deaf person depends on whether the parents are Deaf or hearing and often on how the parents describe their children (Leigh, 2009).
If the social environment and interactions play an important role in identity development, then Deaf children need significant time and experience with adults who have succeeded (Cawthon et al. 2016). Deaf adults as Role Models seem to contribute significantly to the development of identity for Deaf teens, providing opportunities for the development, evolution and "testing" of one's identity. Social media is a key mechanism by which individuals develop their identity. Hintermair (2008) describes a theoretical approach to what he calls "identity work", in which individuals seek to unite different individual elements of their lives into a substantial, targeted whole (Chandler & Roberts-Young, 1998). Thus, identities adapt and respond to an individual's daily interactions, a process of social formation that leads to different perceptions of self and others in different experiences and situations (Baumeister, 1997).

Because many of the Deaf Role Models come from the Deaf community, the community seems to be a key resource for both formal and informal relationships with Deaf adults as Role Models for Deaf youth.
In short, we would say that realistic expectations for the Deaf, positive reactions to deafness as a disability, and contact with Deaf adults as Role Models will help develop a cultural identity and contribute to healthy Deaf-Hearing world relationships. Hearing adults living or working with Deaf people of all ages will benefit from contact with Deaf adults in understanding and accepting Deafness and Deaf Culture.

d. Psychosocial development

The positive benefits to social relationships created through interaction with Role Models seem to have broader psychosocial benefits that can be conveyed in multiple contexts. The opportunities for Deaf youth to build cultural relationships with the Deaf community seem to contribute significantly to psychosocial well-being (Hintermair 2008; Jambor & Elliot, 2005).

Deaf adults as Role Models and mentors can help a Deaf person develop personal skills, as well as resilience and strength (Hintermair, 2008). Also, Deaf adults who had a mentor in the workplace, whether deaf or not, also reported having an increased sense of self-confidence (Foster & MacLeod, 2004).
Young Deaf people who worked with a Deaf Adult as a mentor or a Role Model had increased self-confidence (Rogers & Young, 2011) and higher self-esteem than those who did not have a mentor (Selwood, 2005). In another study, young Deaf people who worked with Deaf adults as mentors also showed improvement in their relationships and social interaction (Selwood, 2005).

So, we conclude that these psychosocial processes, increased self-esteem and confidence, acceptance of Deafness and improving relationships with peers, contribute substantially to their resilience and psychosocial health. These benefits are said to significantly affect the lives of young adults beyond adolescence.

Conclusions

In summary, the literature review we conducted showed that Deaf adults as Role Models for Deaf people contribute to substantial developmental processes in many periods of their lives, ranging from early childhood to adulthood.

In addition, the literature review also revealed two key elements for the effective effect of Role Models on Deaf people: high expectations and effective communication. These two elements influence the transition, from home to school and to the workplace. The ways in which high expectations are expressed and influence communication by Deaf adults as Role Models for Deaf people in professional settings may reflect what is seen in analyses of effective mentoring of young people belonging to minority groups (Allen et al., 2004; Cawthon et al., 2016).

However, further research is needed to understand the long-term benefits that Deaf adults may offer as Role Models.
References


Helga Stevens was born on August 9th, 1968 and attended a School for the Deaf in Hasselt and then attended a Hearing School in Sint-Truiden.

She studied law at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven and became the first deaf lawyer in Belgium. She pursued her postgraduate studies at the University of California in the United States.

From 1996 she started her active involvement in the Deaf community of Belgium, but also of Europe, participating in the European Union of the Deaf (EUD). She is a politician in the New Flemish Alliance Party, as well as a member of the European Parliament since 2014. She has been an elected member of the Flemish Parliament since 2004, while she has been a Senator since 2007.

In October 2016, she ran for President of the European Parliament.

She is known for her support work for Persons with Disabilities.
Dr. Robert Davila was born on July 19, 1932 in Southern California to Mexican-American parents. At the age of 8 he loses his hearing due to meningitis. His parents then send him to the California School for the Deaf in Berkeley.

Davila graduated from Gallaudet University with a Bachelor’s in Education in 1953. In 1963 he completed his postgraduate studies in Special Education at Hunter College and later in 1972 was awarded a PhD in Educational Technology from Syracuse University.

He was the ninth president of Gallaudet University, the only university in the world where all programs and services are specially designed to accommodate Deaf and Hard of Hearing students. He was appointed to the post following protests by the Deaf President Now movement. He remained in this position from 2006 to 2009.

Davila has served as Secretary-General for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation US Department of Education from 1989 to 1993 during the presidency of George W. Bush.
Benjamin James Bahan is a Professor of American Sign Language (ASL) and Deaf Education at Gallaudet University and a member of the Deaf community. He is an important capital in ASL American literature, as a narrator and author of Deaf culture.

Bahan was born to Deaf parents in New Jersey and attended the Marie Katzenbach School for the Deaf in West Trenton, New Jersey. Later, in 1978 he graduated from Gallaudet University with a degree in Biology. He then studied Linguistics and of ASL acquisition at The Salk Institute in La Jolla, California. He completed his studies at Boston University with a master's degree in Deaf Education and a doctorate in Applied Linguistics. In 1996, he became Professor and President of the Department of ASL and Deaf Education at Gallaudet University.

He is famous for his writing which includes the following:

"Bird of a Different Feather"

This is an allegorical story of a bird born into an eagle family. In his book, he essentially captures the experiences of Deaf children born into families with hearing members. In the book he raises various issues about religion, identity and cochlear implants.
In 1996 he co-authored with Robert J. Hoffmeister and Harlan Lane, one of the most famous books ever written on the Deaf World and its language. The book contains valuable information on the education of the Deaf, the natural development and acquisition of ASL, as well as further information such as the advantages and disadvantages of technology for the Deaf.

In 2008 he co-wrote and co-directed the film with his collaborator Dirksen Bauman "Audism Unveiled". It is a documentary about the oppression of the Deaf and, consequently, their difficulty in developing a sense of community and identity of the Deaf.
Become a Role Model too!

My name
What does the term ‘audism’ mean?

Deaf and Hard of Hearing people in recent years are being actively represented through unions and organizations and are claiming, more than ever before, access and equal rights same as the Hearing.

Unfortunately, many people in the Deaf community continue to experience forms of discrimination in their daily lives. Whether it is discrimination in communication, or with theories and conjectures about what Deaf people can or cannot do, or are excluded from social or work environments.

The real problem therefore is referred in the literature with the term “audism” (Bauman, 2018 Eckert, & Rowley, 2013). The term describes the discrimination and prejudice that Deaf people suffer.

“Audism” is a pathological approach to Deafness that negatively stigmatizes people with hearing problems. “Audism” reflects the medical view of deafness as a disability - a disease that must be treated. Anything that deviates from the “normal” is unacceptable. It therefore describes this negative attitude towards Deaf and hard of hearing people. It is seen as a form of discrimination, prejudice or a general lack of willingness to accept those who cannot hear. People who practice “audism” are called “audists”.

“Audists” can be hearing or Deaf.
It is also important to note that the terms “audism” and “audist” do not necessarily refer to people who may not be familiar with Deaf culture. As the authors of the Deaf Choice website point out, if you are unfamiliar with the Deaf community, you obviously do not know the “rules” that apply in this community. On the contrary, the label “audist” is more often used for those who have knowledge of Deaf culture but choose, for one reason or another, to ignore or reject it. As with any form of discrimination, intent must be taken into account when discussing “audism”.

The term “audism” was introduced by Tom Humphries in 1977. The term remained inactive until Lane (1992) revived its use 15 years later. Humphries originally applied the term to individual attitudes and practices, but Lane and others have expanded its scope to include institutional and group attitudes, practices, and oppression of Deaf people.

The first half of Harlan Lane’s book, The mask of benevolence: disabling the deaf community, is the most extensive published research and discussion on “audism” to date.

According to Humphries, “audism” is manifested “by those who constantly judge the intelligence and success of the Deaf based on their ability in language and the culture of the hearing”. It also occurs when the Deaf themselves “actively participate in the oppression of other deaf people by demanding from them the same set of standards, behaviors and values required by the hearing”.

American psychologist Harlan Lane described "audism" as a way for "hearing" to dominate the Deaf community. This idea was supported by the fact that adapted environments for Deaf people offered limited visual stimuli while continuing to favor the hearing. Thus, Lane invoked the idea of institutional "audism" according to which only the ability to "listen" is promoted.

The contributions of Humphries and Lane to the concept of "audism" helped to bring to light previously hidden perceptions and beliefs. Institutional oppression is inherently difficult to detect, as it is often presented in the form of practices that follow "common sense". The presentation of "common sense" - that is, the ability to hear as a dominant value - has its roots in fundamental issues of human identity. The idea of metaphysical "audism", which is based on the notion that speech is a fundamental principle of human identity, appeared in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, with the work of Brenda Brueggemann and H-Dirksen L. Bauman. Brueggemann identified the problematic reasoning on which metaphysical "audism" was based: "Language is human. Speech is language. Therefore, deaf people are "non-humans" and deafness is a problem".
Nevertheless, research on the grammatical structure of signed languages and psycholinguistics, advocates that everyone is able to learn and communicate by speaking, signing or writing and speech is not the superior and only form of human language.

The following information was retrieved from a library guide created by librarians from Gallaudet University (https://libguides.gallaudet.edu/c.php?g=773910&p=5553053)

"Audism" (from the Latin audire, which means "I hear", and the suffix -ism, which is placed for a behavior, belief or attitude) has several meanings:
“The notion that one is superior based on one’s ability to hear or to behave in the manner of one who hears.”, Tom Humphries, Communicating across cultures (deaf-hearing) and language learning. (Doctoral dissertation. Cincinnati, OH: Union Institute and University, 1977), σελ. 12.

“The corporate institution for dealing with deaf people, dealing with them by making statements about them, authorizing views of them, describing them, teaching about them, governing where they go to school and, in some cases, where they live; in short, audism is the hearing way of dominating, restructuring, and exercising authority over the deaf community. It includes such professional people as administrators of schools for deaf children and of training programs for deaf adults, interpreters, and some audiologists, speech therapists, otologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, librarians, researchers, social workers, and hearing aid specialists.” Harlan Lane, The mask of benevolence: disabling the deaf community (New York: Knopf, 1992), p.43.
"The belief that life without hearing is futile and miserable, that hearing loss is a tragedy and the "scour-age of mankind" and that deaf people should struggle to be as much like hearing people as possible. Deaf activists Heidi Reed and Hartmut Teuber at D.E.A.F. Inc., a community service and advocacy organization in Boston, consider audism to be «a special case of ableism." Audists, hearing or deaf, shun Deaf culture and the use of sign language, and have what Reed and Teuber describe as "an obsession with the use of residual hearing, speech, and lip-reading by deaf people." Fred Pelka, The ABC-CLIO companion to the disability rights movement (Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO, 1997), p.33.

"An attitude based on pathological thinking which results in a negative stigma toward anyone who does not hear; like racism or sexism, audism judges, labels, and limits individuals on the basis of whether a person hears and speaks." Janice Humphrey and Bob J. Alcorn, So you want to be an interpreter?: an introduction to sign language interpreting (Amarillo, TX: H&H Publishers, 1995), p.85.
Forms of "audism"

"Audism" can be found in different forms in different social circumstances. It can affect someone's work, education, living conditions, etc.

1. Refusal to use sign language - imposition of spoken language

A typical example of "audism" is the refusal or failure to use sign language with Deaf people who are sign language users, along with their discrediting for their weakness in spoken language. Terms such as "Deaf mute" or "Deaf and dumb" depicts exactly this devaluation.

Other such examples of "audism" that contribute to denial of communication are when a Deaf person is asked to read lips or write when he has stated that he does not want to. Also when someone refuses to call an interpreter when asked.

2. Dominance of the perception that the Deaf cannot do much

Deaf people face some "weird" questions such as, "Can you drive?" which often infringe on their abilities compared to those of the hearing.

Deaf people can do anything but hear!

3. Approaching deafness as a tragedy

Deafness is not a disease and Deaf people do not consider themselves sick or disabled. In fact, many Deaf and Hard of Hearing - many of whom consider themselves part of the Deaf community and use D (Deaf) instead of d (deaf) - are proud of their Deafness and language. It is considered offensive when the Hearing World treats them as sick who need their pity.
As we said before, Deaf people can do anything. Saying things like, "You do something so good, even though you are deaf" can be very offensive. A very common example is commenting on how "well" one speaks and verbal assaults when one does not speak "correctly."

**Discrimination in the workplace and employment**

Discrimination in the workplace for Deaf people is frequent. Deaf people should but do not have equal employment opportunities. Despite their academic and scientific knowledge, they are sometimes subject to discrimination due to lack of hearing. The unemployment rates of the Deaf are significantly higher than those of the hearing.
Audism and Deaf Culture

The Deaf community is defined by its culture and language of which it is proud. Understandably, “audism” is a central topic of discussion in the Deaf World. Just as there is discussion of racism or sexism in all societies, there is discussion of “audism” in the Deaf community.

For example, many people who have encountered such derogatory behaviors have written books, plays, poetry, and more. It is also a common topic for Deaf students, newspapers and researchers interested in the social and cultural aspects of the Deaf community.

Similarly, advocacy organizations for the Deaf community often participate in the fight against “audism”, criticizing or diminishing a person for being Deaf. The Canadian Association of the Deaf notes that “audism” occurs at all levels of society and finds it just as unacceptable as any other form of fanaticism. The National Association of the Deaf in the United States in its statement on community values also includes “We are committed to the elimination of audism, linguicism, racism, and other forms of discrimination”.

Awareness of “audism” has spread to the Deaf and Hearing communities, and it is now considered a matter of human rights and dignity for a linguistic minority to have access to a fully human language (a Signed Language) that best suits the visual needs of the Deaf. Thus, the discourse around “audism” allows its users to perceive the hearing-centered tendency for Deaf people as a serious case of discrimination and oppression.
References


What is “Deafhood”? 


Ladd’s definition of “Deafhood” is:

“Deafhood is not seen as a finite state but as a process by which Deaf individuals come to actualise their Deaf identity, positing that those individuals construct that identity around several differently ordered sets of priorities and principles, which are affected by various actors such as nation, era and class.” (Ladd, 2003) p.xviii

In contrast to the medical approach to deafness, which describes Deaf people only for their hearing loss, the term “Deafhood” argues that deafness also has a positive view and does not need to be treated as a disease that needs treatment. Many other Deaf people, such as Ella Mae Lentz (2007), have used this term to explain a Deaf person’s only personal journey to discover and understand himself/herself as a Deaf person.

According to Ladd, Deafhood demands that the Deaf be freed from the oppression they have historically faced in a hearing society. In this process of self-liberation, Ladd writes:
“...I found myself coining a new label of 'Deafhood'. Deafhood is not, however, a 'static' medical condition like 'deafness'. Instead, it represents a process – the struggle by each Deaf child, Deaf family and Deaf adult to explain to themselves and each other their own existence in the world. In sharing their lives with each other as a community, and enacting those explanations rather than writing books about them, Deaf people are engaged in a daily praxis, a continuing internal and external dialogue.” (Ladd, 2003,) p.3.

Precisely because there is so much discrimination and stereotyping in the history of the Deaf, the idea of "Deafhood" aims to empower and enliven the Deaf so that they can deal with "audism" - a term used to discriminate against the Deaf.

In the context of "Deafhood" many Deaf people replace the word "deafness" with the word "Deafhood". Specifically, they describe these two words as follows:

**Deafness:** Deafness is a medical / pathological condition. The word contains a negative experience of oppression by people in the medical community such as ENT doctors, audiologists, etc.

**I am Deaf.**

**I can do it all!**
Deafness describes:

- A situation.
- A negative experience of oppression by hearing people who want to medically restore deafness e.g. cochlear implant, hearing aids.
- A medical condition.
- The oppression on the use of sign language.
- The imposition of "phonocentrism" - the idea that sounds / speech are inherently superior to any other language.
- The term "audism" which describes the discrimination against the Deaf, and the term "Colonialization" which describes the oppression of the Deaf by the hearing - equivalent to the oppression experienced by indigenous peoples in the colonized countries.

**Deafhood:** Deafhood is an identity where a Deaf person has their first language - the Sign Language and the Deaf community, the Deaf culture and an entire Deaf family.

Deafhood describes:

- A process.
- A positive experience of "Self".
- Humanity.
- The use of the natural languages of the Deaf.
- The disapproval of oralism (as a result of phonocentrism).
- The focus on language and culture.
- The acceptance of the different.
- The approach that being Deaf has a positive value.
Paddy Ladd states that the heart of Deafhood is the international spirit. Communication is difficult internationally because sign languages are not international and each country may have one or more sign languages. Sign language should be kept in its purest form, without influences from spoken language and other additional effects. Ladd supports the notion that one's national identity begins a process of 'enlargement' in a transnational community of Deafness. This shows that there are two approaches to Deafness. One is based on the effort to keep the Deaf within the limits of the oppression of the Deaf world as it was historically. The second approach focuses on trying to do the opposite - expanding the idea of what Deafness can mean, taking ideas from anywhere and adapting them to the life of the Deaf.
Ladd also identified seven principles of “Deafhood”, which are:

- Deaf communities have sign languages that have the gift of saying things that speech cannot.

- These sign languages are even more special because they can be adapted to cross international borders when spoken languages fail. This has to do with the huge grammatical similarities between sign languages.

- As a result, the Deaf can become the first truly global citizens in the world and thus serve as a Role Model for the rest of society.

- The Deaf were deliberately created on earth to manifest these qualities and the value of their existence should not be questioned.

- Hearing people who cannot use sign languages are actually disabled.

- Signed languages are offered as a gift to the hearing, as if they joined Deaf people and learned these languages, their quality of life would improve.

- While it is understandable that the majority of the Deaf have not yet had the opportunity for Deaf-focused education and socialization in sign language communities, the Deaf must commit to continuing to fight to ensure that all Deaf people have the «right» in these experiences.
Concluding with the phrase

“Deafhood is the cure for deafness!”

"Deafhood" was adopted by Gallaudet University in Washington during the May and October 2006 protests. Gallaudet University is still the only university in the world where all programs and services are designed specifically to accommodate the Deaf and hard of hearing students.
References

The early acquisition of sign language by native signers, Sign Language Role Models, is vital for the cognitive and social development of Deaf children!

Deaf Role Models can make a decisive contribution to the acquisition of this first language and support families of Deaf children, consolidating communication and helping acceptance!

But what does "Deaf Role Model" mean?

The answer to this question is found in this book which is addressed to the Deaf, parents, teachers and other experts in the Deaf world and the Hearing world.