

## Independence

## Egalitarianism

## Personal Choice

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American  
Hearing  
Culture

- Preeminent value
- Children dress at age 3, move out by 18; social stigma to live at home past 20s; seniors stay active, avoid becoming a burden
- Uncomfortable feeling obligated to others; avoid too much personal commitment; help to a unwritten limit

(equality across social structures)

- Open to breaking social structures, associating with lower class in labor, conversation, thanking for work, meals

- Preeminent and treasured “right”
- Freedom of choice = robust economy and market = continued demand
- diversity in products (food, personal care), jobs are plentiful and encouraged (“freedom”)

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Other  
non-US  
cultures

- Asia: desirable quality to have elderly dependent on family
- Dropping by is accepted
- Relationships without obligations are unacceptable (Stewart/Bennett, 95)

- Socially unacceptable, social structures are traditional and generally unbreached

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American  
Deaf Culture

- Dependence is a survival tactic, strategy; will sacrifice own opportunity to help collective group
- Information sharing seen as cooperative, not competitive

- Also open to breaking social structures (Gallaudet vs LV/less educated)
- Experience of being Deaf is universal despite social, educational status
- ASL is the great unifier

- Accessibility and ignorance generally limits freedom of choice in communications products, occupations, travel

## Achievement

## Work Ethic

## Informality/Friendliness

### American Hearing Culture

- Introduction/discussions of what one is doing is important—defines us as people (“I’ve been busy...”)
- Idleness is not an American value
- Success = achievements, accomplishments
- Time is to be used wisely, vacations and holidays are cut short, stay busy

- Work is part of American identity—it defines us; “she is a hard worker...”
- Work ≠ money, work = satisfaction
- has religious roots; we work to save ourselves
- Work and play are separated; play seen as escape from work

- Appreciate friendly (albeit superficial) relationships; cordial to others at gatherings, act polite
- Egalitarian social behaviors
- Use of first names
- “Call me,” “Let’s do lunch” are not obligations; friendliness
- No linguistic/stratified difference in personal references

### Other non-US cultures

- Traditional roles in family units that define identities; personal relationships more important than achievements
- Vacations/holidays > 4-6 weeks compared to 1-2 weeks US

- Work is important but not defining
- Asia: work to keep up with world economic pace, bring honor to family
- Latin: afternoon siesta; also intermix work and play; business may be social

- Communications are more structured, formalized
- Asian, most European: languages make distinction between formal, informal relations
- Parting remarks tend to be obligatory

### American Deaf Culture

- A person’s achievements are considered group achievements; “We” won, “We” beat the team
- Failure to recognize or credit group in accomplishments falls victim to “crab theory” and brings him/her down

- Less compartmentalized than hearing Americans
- Struggle over separation of worktime and offtime; often think that professionals are always on the clock and in business to support the collective

- Less formal than non-US, hearing
- Quicker to the point, more intimate, informal
- Encounters with same Deaf people are frequent, never a stranger—sharing of information or resources?

## Friendship

## Problem Solving

### American Hearing Culture

- Personal close friends are few—noncollectivist behaviors, US lifestyle is mobile
- Acquaintances/associates = “friends”; flexible, enjoy company; happen in commonalities: school, job, hobby, children; dissolve if relationship changes
- Don’t like impositions; will sever

- Great necessity to solve problems; Americans do not like conflict (men: “fix” mentality, women: discuss feelings)
- problems viewed as negative, pathological, ergo, must be resolved; business approach is formally followed

### Other non-US cultures

- Friendships are more binding, lasting, intimate, obligatory
- Russia: heavy obligation, no secrets, extremely close; solve problems quickly, emotionally
- Japan: obligation, duty, interaction (Stewart/Bennet, 101)
- France: difficulties put friendship on hold

- Change is positive, will lead to improvement
- Enduring hardship (rather than eliminating) proves beneficial; brings honor
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### American Deaf Culture

- Lifelong friendships; geography is no deterrent
- Educational backgrounds, activity backgrounds, experiences of being Deaf; information “grapevine” is reliable
- Difficulties are a concern because the community is small, problems can be lifelong

- Accept it or organize to solve it
- Affected by hearing American view of Deafness; deaf = problem, must solve
- Deafness is not a problem to be fixed; is “black-ness” or “Chinese-ness”?

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## Core American Deaf Values/Morés

- fluency in ASL
- residential school experience
- Deaf parents

(Padden, 1980)

- respect for and use of ASL
- sacredness of the hands
- disassociation from speech
- the passing on of cultural values thru stories
- importance of social activities

(Kannapell, 1989)

- 100% access to communication
- common language
- strong relational bonding > common experience
- feeling of equality

(Smith, 1996)

- audiological deafness
- identification with, affiliation to, and participation in the Deaf-World
- ASL as primary language
- adherence to core cultural values

## Insiders vs Outsiders

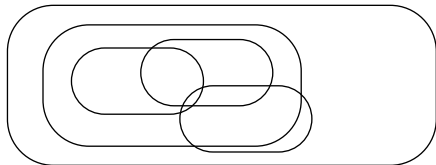
## Communication and Information Sharing

### a. Straight Talk

#### American Deaf Culture

- residential schools = enculturation to Deaf way; although using oral methods, students bonded through use of forbidden signs
- result? us vs. them
- enculturation periods: 1) birth (if Deaf parents); 2) Deaf school; 3) transfer from oral/SEE program; 4) adulthood (college)

- structure of Deaf Community:



cuts through family, educational, socio-economical factors

- *hearing loss does not define status in Deaf community, rather individual identity and actions*

- communication is a valuable commodity; dealing with hearing people to obtain information becomes time consuming and frustrating at times
- Deaf have little tolerance for ambiguity; direct and clear communication is the goal
- Ambient information is missing; hence, information is passed on through obligation; “gossip” serves as ambient Deaf information?
- Five perspectives:
  - a) straight talk
  - b) direct personal comments
  - c) keeping others information
  - d) sharing personal information
  - e) clear access to visual information

- Directness in communication compared with Israeli norms:
  - a) rough is real, authentic; smooth is suspect, artificial; Deaf have little patience for ambiguity, hinting and vague talk feel inappropriate and offensive
  - b) telling it “like it is” in order to protect; if Deaf people don’t tell you the truth, who will?
  - c) minority groups from all over the world, exist within majority—leads to solidarity; army life creates shared experience; Deaf live around hearing, find common ground in schooling
  - d) the “situation”—Jews always on alert for fighting, warring situations; Deaf experience continual oppression and ignorance

#### Affects on interpreters

- “half-breeds”; advantages of both worlds, yet lack of automatic full understanding of both worlds

- filtering expectations of ambiguity and individualistic/low-context content and behavior

- conveying cultural/lexical intent from Deaf to hearing (or vv.)
- filtering direct talk into indirect talk while maintaining accuracy, faithfulness

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Interpreters are “half-breeds.”...Yet interpreters, by virtue of their privileged status within the majority culture, their access to mainstream jobs and outside information coupled with their inside information, are to some extent too powerful.

They are overly concerned with “role” in the abstract, the rules and codes of conduct prescribed by their profession rather than “HAVING HEART,” an understanding of the “role” within the current context.

—Smith, 1996

## b. Direct Personal Comments

## c. Keeping Others Informed

## d. Sharing Personal Information

### American Deaf Culture

- personal comments demonstrate closeness, connection, loyalty, sincerity, friendship
- comments can be positive, negative, or mixed
- shows caring (collective behavior?)
- sharing of information is more important than other things
- familial closeness permits sharing of this information
- ASL is visual language; Deaf world is visual—ergo, everything is open for comment
- serves as collector of ambient information

- can't call to Deaf person to ask where he/she went; polite and expected to inform group reason for leaving or whereabouts, even emergencies or unplanned exits
- as explanations are required, Deaf tend to give lengthier reasons leading up to the behavior or action ("I got up this morning, went to the store, bought some bread, got in the car, leaving parking lot, got hit—that's why I'm late.")
- give explanations of health, work, travel, relationships, etc.—not to do so? keep information for self, perceived as insult
- informing other Deaf that others (Deaf or hearing) know sign

- Topics 'taboo' to hearing are less to Deaf people
  - a) monetary issues are openly discussed: how much is house, car, clothing, etc.; how will Deaf know a good deal without comparison, input?
  - b) bodily functions less embarrassing, issue of shared information and familial trust protects from embarrassment

### Affects on interpreters

- interpreting same meaning/expectations to hearing
- not taking comments personally

- how to interpret stories which have "low value" to hearing
- convincing Deaf that interpreter follows confidentiality standards; do low-context cultures care about ethics?

- hearing reticence to discuss money, bodily functions skews accuracy, faithfulness? (bowel movement, safe sex, etc.)

## e. Access to Visual Communication

## Connectedness: The Community as Family

## a. Introductions

### American Deaf Culture

- all participants need to have comfortable, unobstructed view
  - a) lighting should be maintained
  - b) free from distractions: poles, ceiling fixtures, people, etc.
  - c) may necessitate higher stool, platform, standing or standing on objects
  - d) centerpieces at dinner tables should be low or removed
- eye contact is maintained; to refuse contact is rude
  - a) hearing tendency to react to ambient sound information; requires that we ignore or explain reason for breaking eye contact

- Deaf often value schoolmates more than family > common language, world perception, experience
- Leads to more familial, information sharing exchanges
- Deaf Community is a small world, everyone is connected to everyone else somehow
- Three perspectives:
  - a) introductions
  - b) name sign systems
  - c) hugging

- Introductions create connection to the collective group; “you are who you know”; can speed acceptance or entry into comm.
  - a) person-to-person:
    - names (inc. maiden)
    - school (name of residential or mainstream)
    - family status (Deaf parents, children, hearing parents “but” have Deaf sibling(s), parents sign(ed))
    - friend or acquaintances
  - b) mediated: C introduces A and B; C provides pertinent connection information, inc. name signs
  - c) hearing to Deaf: unless CODA, check for attitude, knowledge, sign teacher—name dropping of Deaf can increase trust; “but...”

### Affects on interpreters

- controlling environment, lights, structural needs, location needs
- learning to judge value of ambient information

- filtering hearing expectations and comments about families and their perceived values
- understanding and correctly explaining name signs

- if interpreting, mediating the mechanics of HC to LC introductions
- identifying position/place in community



## c. Hugging

## Attitude

## Value of ASL and Preservation of Deaf Culture

### American Deaf Culture

- greeting ritual, no different than other countries: JPN, FRA, US; outsiders struggle with appropriateness
- Deaf hug more, wider range, closer than hearing; parting has more meaning than greeting
- Rules:
  - a) appropriate with person who shares connection; often given after periods of separation, but not more than once in a day
  - b) absence of hug may indicate relationship problem
  - c) timing is everything; after “hi”
  - d) parting hug implies closeness and closure

- sign ATTITUDE does not necessarily mean the same thing as English “attitude”—refers to language (ASL) and acceptance (or nonacceptance) of Deafness and Deaf people
  - a) good ATTITUDE: support of Deaf ways of life, language, views on deafness; DEAF-HEART
  - b) bad (LOUSY) ATTITUDE: paternalistic behavior/superiority; THINK-HEARING
- collectivist cultures devalue degrees, status—hearing or Deaf members who demonstrate BIG-HEAD, BOAST, STUCK-UP are shunned

- Like other oppressed language communities (Hawaiian, Breton), ASL = Deaf Community; they are indelibly combined
- *Because non-Deaf people deny its 1) validity as a language or 2) use with Deaf children, main reason for great separation between Deaf and hearing*
- Three perspectives:
  - a) feelings about ASL
  - b) skill in storytelling
  - c) preservation of folklore

### Affects on interpreters

- accepting hug after interpreting assignment; professional behavior or connection?
- understanding/explaining reasons for hugging to low-context audience

- how to manage ethical, professional (individualistic) guidelines with group (collectivist) behavioral norms

- resistance to give up what “my friend told me” or “my ASL 101 teacher said” in favor of group’s accepted language norms
- accurately/faithfully conveying importance of literary intent

## a. Feelings About ASL

## b. Skill in Storytelling

## c. Preservation of Folklore

American  
Deaf Culture

- learning ASL for first time akin to 'rebirth,' 'connection,' 'waking up'
- other comments about ASL or acquisition like:  
'mine,' refined, suits my needs, noble, God-given, liberating
- implication is that ASL is a right, a need, way of life, worth fighting for—a 'cause'

- not only valued for entertainment and social purposes, but also as an identifier of fluency, 'heart,' ATTITUDE
- storytelling skills may supercede social or personal behaviors, i.e., can be a jerk but a great storyteller

- ASL is non-written language, ergo, its protection and values are passed down thru formal and informal performance
- Types of folklore: jokes, tales of the old days, personal experience, legends, ABC/123 signplay (Carmel, 1982); group narratives, fingerspelling mime, one-handshape stories, skits (Rutherford, 1993); original poetry (Lentz, Valli, Miles, et al); despite retelling, lessons and variations are enjoyed; moral: there is humor to be found in fighting back
- Examples include:
  - jokes: interpreter steals money, please BUT, hitchhiker, motel joke
  - legends: civil war, Deaf alarms

Affects on  
interpreters

- sharing same respect for ASL
- putting aside biases, personal preferences about ASL; educating ourselves on correct usage

- understanding dynamics of ASL storytelling in order to convey cultural/lexical intent from Deaf to hearing

- knowledge and understanding of folklore > able to convey cultural/lexical intent from Deaf to hearing

## Values of Collectivists

### a. Loyalty

### b. Reciprocity



American  
Deaf Culture

- Four perspectives:
  - a) loyalty
  - b) reciprocity
  - c) decision making in the group
  - d) importance of social interaction

- group membership determines actions of Deaf people
- acting to preserve the “Deaf side” or the success of the group > for a job or opportunity, choosing a Deaf over a hearing person, despite equality in communication skills
- answers why Deaf people will forego geography, skill over Deafness and/or communication

- “you scratch our back, we’ll scratch yours”—constant pool of hours/work for activities such as moving, yardwork, presents, favors, car maintenance, babysitting, time, service, etc.
- opposite is true—no to little contributions = no to little help
- Deaf view of interpreters: “we taught and befriended you, turnabout is fair play”

Affects on  
interpreters

- understanding/interpreting collectivist values for individualistic audiences

- learning to submit ego over choice in interpreters (CODA vs skilled hearing signer) or request for relay interpreter (comfort level)

- balancing ethical behavior (compensation for services provided) with the pool of help

### c. Decision Making in the Group

### d. Importance of Social Interaction

### Conversational Behaviors

#### American Deaf Culture

- consensus vs. majority rule; decisions are voted upon, but rare is there any dissension; any disagreements are hammered out before the vote
- discussions leading to a decision can be lengthy
- Deaf people ask one another for advice on making purchases or other large decisions (mortgages, cars, moving, vacation spots)

- main characteristic of Deaf culture is group events: sports, panel discussions, conferences, board or community meetings; information/business is transacted but is more of an excuse to get together for purposes of shared information
- geography is no boundary, even for those not participating in the event, but supporting

- Four perspectives
  - a) importance of speech
  - b) getting attention
  - c) pausing conversations
  - d) driving

#### Affects on interpreters

- understanding references to group decisions when in an individualistic situations (doctors, purchases, etc.)
- careful of not breaking ethics referring to neutrality

- long distance commutes possible to large events
- certain expectation of interpreters to be aware of community events, news

- understanding/interpreting Deaf conversational markers and behaviors for individualistic audiences

## a. Importance of Speech

## b. Getting Attention

## c. Pausing Conversations d. Driving

### American Deaf Culture

- Not necessarily negative, but unweighted; depending on one's actions, speech ability is generally a neutral trait
- Does have negative connotation for many Deaf who experienced speech training in youth
- Deaf people will use speech enabled Deaf people for "interpreting" or communication bridging

- one-to-one attention: tapping on shoulder or leg, waving in person's direction, using vibrations of floor or table, use of a third person, use of lighting, throwing an object; uncommon, but sometimes clever uses of person's residual hearing
- group attention: (2h) TAP-on-shoulder—use of people paying attention to call others to attention; flashing lighting, (2h) waving of the arms to start "ripple effect"
- informing of presence: tap on shoulder
- showing of approval: Deaf "applause" or waving of napkins

- generally occurs when eye contact is broken or personal safety is in jeopardy (busy street, turning corner, negotiating a crowd, etc.)
- statistics show that Deaf drivers are a better safety risk than hearing (Moore and Levitan 1992): cell phones, stereos, sound drown out ambient alerts, increased visual awareness picks up flashing lights quicker
- dome lights turned on, often left on when car is parked
- conversation is either stuttered or paused often, should be in same line of sight

### Affects on interpreters

- handling situations where Deaf persons sign and speak simultaneously

- appropriate use of behaviors at a Deaf gathering

## Polite and Rude Behaviors

### a. Polite Behaviors

### b. Rude Behaviors

#### American Deaf Culture

- Polite behaviors:
  - a) formal requests and expression
  - b) disclosing personal information
  - c) passing through a conversation
  - d) catching up a conversation
  - e) reconfirming details
- Rude behaviors:
  - a) asking inappropriate questions
  - b) talking “in front” of Deaf people

- ASL employs “straight talk” or less ambiguousness, but use of DON’T-MIND, PLEASE + FOR-ME help to set polite tone for requests; CURIOUS generally is a polite way to precede a straight request for information—age, money, personal questions
- characteristic of collective cultures is to share personal information: costs, how processes work, marital or familial problems; seems to be a limit on certain information (borrowed from hearing?) or to avoid gossiping
- pass straight through conversation; stopping implies inclusion
- person who arrives late to meeting or conversation is updated
- always reconfirm address, phone, dates to ensure understanding

- Questions about audiological loss or how became Deaf generally are rude (ironically often explained in introductions)
- “You should speak more,” “Wear your aides” are perceived as rude and offensive comments (hypothesis?: similar to “black talk” between Black people, Deaf do sometimes chide each other on audiological loss)
- Deliberately voicing without signing, covering mouth to make a comment, talking through teeth in front of Deaf people is highly rude; leaving Deaf person out of phone call is rude

#### Affects on interpreters

- understanding/interpreting Deaf conversational markers and behaviors for individualistic audiences

- able to convey cultural/lexical intent from Deaf to hearing
- careful of not breaching professional ethics, behavior

- understanding logistics of phone interpreting and/or courtesy of phone use around Deaf people
- educating unacquainted hearing people about Deaf norms