27

Deaf People

A Different Center

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In Chapter 1 we quoted our friend Howard, who said "I never knew I was deaf until I went to school." Howard's statement shows that the meanings of DEAF and "deaf are, at the very least, not the same. DEAF is a means of identifying the group and one's connection to it, and "deaf " is a means of commenting on one's inability to speak and hear. During a conversation with another friend, we began to understand that behind the two supposedly straightforward terms "deaf " and DEAF lie worlds of meaning that are rarely described.

The subject was whether a mutual acquaintance could use the telephone. She couldn't use the phone, our friend told us, because she was only "A-LITTLE HARD-OF-HEARING." We understood this to mean that the woman could hear only a little, not well enough to use the telephone.

On another occasion, another Deaf friend brought up the name of a woman we did not know, and explained that she had many of the recognizable characteristics of a person who could hear well, because she was VERY HARD-OF-HEARING. Our friend added that this woman regularly used the telephone to conduct business.

At the time, we did not recognize the conversations as strange; we did not think about the fact that these ASL terms, if translated literally into English, would mean the opposite of what they mean in English. Instead of using A-LITTLE HARD-OF-HEARING to mean someone whose hearing is only slightly impaired, and VERY HARD-OF-HEARING to mean someone who doesn't hear well, we and our friends used the signs to express exactly the opposite of their English meanings.

It was not until much later, when an older member of our community, Dan, asked if we realized that the signs A-LITTLE HARD-OF-HEARING and VERY HARD-OF-HEARING were being used incorrectly by some Deaf people, that we began to understand. Dan offered an explanation for these "errors": he said they were the kinds of mistakes Deaf people are inclined to make because they lack skill in the English language. We were not surprised by the explanation; at one time it would probably have occurred to us to say the same thing. Deaf people cannot hear English, so they learn it imperfectly. In this case, it was simply a matter of getting the meanings backward. Deaf people ought to be made aware of these kinds of incorrect uses of signs, Dan told us.

But if they were mistakes, we wondered, why did so many Deaf people, including those fluent in English, use them in this way? Perhaps these were not errors at all, but simply a different set of meanings. Signs from ASL are often thought to be direct representations of spoken words, but in fact they are independent of English. Although signs and their translations may have overlapping meanings, signs are not simply codes for English words. We told Dan he should describe signs in terms independent of the English words used to translate them.

But Dan was ready with his next argument. Surely we had noticed that not all Deaf people use the terms in the "wrong" way. Some, in fact many, Deaf people use the signed phrase A-LITTLE HARD-OF-HEARING to mean a person who can hear quite well and VERY HARD-OF-HEARING

for someone who cannot hear well at all. What explanation did we have for that? We had to agree that these terms were also being used according to the "correct" English definitions.

Faced with two opposite sets of meanings, Dan decided that the way to resolve the contradiction was to assign a "correct" definition for HARD-OF-HEARING, and for that he chose the one that conformed to the English meaning. The other use of the term was simply incorrect in his eyes, and no amount of arguing could sway him. There must be one official definition, and any others must be simply wrong.

Our first clue to an explanation for these backward definitions came from a story another friend told us. At a football game between two Deaf schools, he saw members of the home team refer to the opposing team as HEARING. Even though the name of the opponents' school was prominently displayed on the scoreboard, the home team had strangely "forgotten" that the opponents were also Deaf. We exchanged laughs. But it occurred to us that this "error" brought out a key concept in defining HEARING: HEARING means the opposite of what we are.

The sign HEARING has an official English translation, "can hear," but in ASL HEARING is aligned in interesting ways with respect to DEAF and HARD-OF-HEARING. In ASL, as in English, HARD-OF-HEARING represents a deviation of some kind. Someone who is A-LITTLE HARD-OF-HEARING has a smaller deviation than someone who is VERY HARD-OF-HEARING. In this way, ASL and English are similar—and yet the terms have opposite meanings in the two languages. The reason for this is clear: for Deaf people, the greatest deviation is HEARING.

This is the crucial element in understanding these "backward" definitions: there is a different center, a different point from which one deviates. In this case, DEAF, not HEARING, is taken as the central point of reference. A-LITTLE HARD-OF-HEARING is a small deviation from DEAF, and thus is used for someone who is only slightly hearing. VERY HARD-OF-HEARING is someone who departs from the center greatly, thus someone who can hear quite well.

Once we had noticed the different meanings, we began to watch how these terms were used. Many of our friends, like us, did not use one definition exclusively, but often switched meanings according to context and situation. The switching never seemed awkward or confusing, but was normal and expected; the shifts were unconscious. Until our friend brought them to our attention, we had never thought about how we used the terms.

These definitions of DEAF and HARD-OF-HEARING are not remarkable and isolated examples, but are indications of a larger world of meaning where there are conventions for describing relationships between conditions and identities. Within this world of meaning—compared to that of English and the world of others—there is a different alignment, toward a different center.

We knew from our conversations with friends and colleagues that these labels and definitions and many more that Deaf people give themselves and others would compose a rich area of study, one often overlooked in favor of "official" or literal English meanings. When we began writing this book, people often asked us about whose lives we would describe. One friend asked if we would only write about our professional friends, or if we would also include "the average Deaf person." He reminded us that there were a lot of "average Deaf people" out there and we couldn't write only about "exceptional" Deaf people. Not all Deaf people were like us, and he wanted us to be sure to address the problems of those victimized by poor education.

Another friend, testing us, asked if we planned to write about "peddlers," the itinerant vendors who make a living by selling tokens and alphabet cards in exchange for donations. Would our book be about only the "hard-working, honest Deaf person," he asked with a hint of irony, or about all Deaf people, including the seamier types? Other friends suggested we write a book that would set "a good example" to the "hearing world" by focusing on "the intelligent Deaf."

Each recommendation, each label, points to a group within the central category of DEAF, but more clearly to us, the recommendations taken together reveal a rarely described world of meaning used by people who refer to themselves as DEAF. As we began to sort out the different categories, we focused not so much on who was in each category as on how each category was used as a way of talking about the self and about relationships with other people.

Some of the labels we came across are not used to establish commonality, but are used to label certain people as having lesser status—to marginalize them. To ignore the ways that Deaf people use a variety of labels, those which mock and tease as well as those which praise and respect, not only would paint an overly romantic picture but would make our description less rich. Each label, however petty or harsh some might seem, in its own way helps us to understand the group's deep beliefs and fears.

We started with what seemed to be the most straightforward distinction, that between DEAF and HEARING. What is DEAF? DEAF is first and foremost the group's official name for itself. Deaf organizations take care to specify "of the Deaf" in their names, as in the American Athletic Association of the Deaf, the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf, and the National Association of the Deaf (NAD). These official names contrast with that of an organization recently founded to meet the needs of adults who have lost their hearing at later ages: Self-Help for the Hard of Hearing (SHHH). Although this group's membership includes people who are deaf, its social and political agenda is distinctly different from those of the other organizations. A look at the programs for recent national conventions makes the differences clear. The NAD regularly features workshops on sign language, on improving the image of Deaf people in the media, and on how to lobby for local social service agencies "of, by and for the deaf." In contrast, SHHH offers workshops on promising new medical treatments for hearing impairment, on improving lipreading skills, and on how to use assistive devices such as amplifiers. Although in recent years the term "hearing impaired" has been proposed by many in an attempt to include both Deaf people and other people who do not hear, Deaf people still refer to themselves as DEAF.

A chance meeting with a Deaf acquaintance on the San Francisco subway (the BART) told us something about what DEAF is not. After the usual greetings, we began to make conversation: Did he work in San Francisco? Did he enjoy riding the subway? He did, and he told us he always rode the Bart because he could take advantage of a "handicapped" discount that made the subway much cheaper than driving to work. But then, quickly, he added, "I don't like using this disabled discount." We nodded sympathetically, and he continued, "But, hey, they offered it to me anyway, and look at how much money I'm saving." We congratulated him on his effective use of public funds. But we took note of his uneasiness and understood that for him the term "disabled" describes those who are blind or physically handicapped, not Deaf people.

"Disabled" is a label that historically has not belonged to Deaf people. It suggests political self-representations and goals unfamiliar to the group. When Deaf people discuss their deafness, they use terms deeply related to their language, their past, and their community. Their enduring concerns have been the preservation of their language, policies for educating deaf children, and maintenance of their social and political organizations. The modern language of "access" and "civil rights," as unfamiliar as it is to Deaf people, has been used by Deaf leaders because the public understands these concerns more readily than ones specific to the Deaf community. Knowing well the special benefits, economic and otherwise, of calling themselves disabled, Deaf people have a history, albeit an uneasy one, of alignment with other disabled groups. But as our friend on the subway reminded us, "disabled" is not a primary term of self-identification, indeed it is one that requires a disclaimer.

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Our friend's uneasiness brought us back to an earlier debate among Deaf people about how they should represent themselves to others. Beginning during World War II, Deaf organizations and political leaders began to complain of an alarming increase in the number of deaf peddlers who were soliciting donations from the public. Although deaf peddlers have existed at least since biblical times, these organizations made it clear that peddling by these "able-bodied louts" would no longer be tolerated by "honest and hard-working" Deaf people.

An older member of the community used the sign BEGGING when he talked about peddlers, but technically, to avoid vagrancy laws, peddlers do not beg but sell inexpensive tokens in exchange for "contributions." After the war years, they sold packets of adhesive bandages with small cards explaining that they were deaf and had trouble finding jobs and feeding themselves and their families. The backs of the cards characteristically had an illustration of the manual alphabet with a short note: "Learn to Communicate with the Deaf!" After the war, railroad stations and downtown bars were favorite places

for peddlers. A dime or a quarter was the usual contribution; on a good day, a peddler could make between $25 and $30. Peddlers still make their rounds today, but popular wisdom has it that they are "heavily into drugs." Their places of operation have been upgraded to airports and shopping malls, and they sell not bandages but combs, pens, scissors, or religious bookmarks.

The debate about peddlers probably reached its highest and most emotional point after the war. Along with the subject of sign language, a frequent topic in columns and letters to the editor in popular Deaf newsmagazines was the "problem" of peddlers. Arthur L. Roberts, the president of the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf ("The Frat"), wrote relentlessly against peddlers in the organization's publication. In one editorial he wrote: "Tell citizens they should refuse to contribute a cent to these able-bodied louts who ride around the country in good automobiles, stay at good hotels, 'work' only a few hours daily, and ridicule the gullibility of the public which supports them with their ill-gotten means of livelihood" (Roberts 1948). Roberts also made attempts to confront peddlers personally, including posting a list of names of alleged peddlers in the local Deaf club hall. The hearing son of a reputed "king" peddler, an attorney, threatened to sue him for libel and the list was removed.

The NAD established a Committee for the Suppression of Peddling, and in its official publication, the *Silent Worker,* invited readers to offer suggestions for "wiping out peddlers." Occasionally a minority voice was printed, decrying the leaders for their vicious campaigns:

> How I wish Mr. [Arnold] Daulton and his committee for the suppression of peddling could come down to Arkansas and get a glimpse of the number of unemployed here—men with mouths to feed and no money to feed them with. I just don't have it in my heart to condemn these men when, after months of struggling with their conscience, they take to peddling. I have been loud in my protests against peddling, but I know that to solve a problem you must get to the root of it. Get our Arkansas peddlers jobs! I'll bet my last nickel there wouldn't be any peddling in our town then. (Collums 1950).

The Frat and the NAD, with their new leaders, wanted a visible social and political agenda, and a crackdown on peddling was consistent with their beliefs about how to improve the lives of Deaf people. They believed that Deaf people's economic difficulties stemmed from a public image of them as lazy and ineffective. Each Deaf person was individually responsible for maintaining an appropriate image to the public. Roberts firmly believed that eliminating peddlers would also eliminate the larger society's perception that Deaf people were beggars.

A play set in a fictitious Deaf club, *Tales from a Clubroom* (Bragg and Bergman 1981), brings to the surface the tensions revealed by the controversy about peddling. The club's members snipe about a "flashy well-dressed" peddler who comes to their socials and acts as if he is one of them. But the peddler has a ready answer for those who accuse him of not getting a job and of stealing from the "hearies": "You accuse me of stealing money? Who, me? No, you're wrong. I'm only taking back what hearing people took from me because I'm deaf " (Bragg and Bergman 1981:113). Whatever the justification raised for peddling, it is counter to the way most Deaf people see themselves or want others to see them.

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Peddlers are drawn from the ranks of what is often referred to as "the average deaf person." Leo Jacobs, in *A Deaf Adult Speaks Out* (1974), identifies nine categories of deaf people: the average deaf adult, prelingually deaf adults who come from deaf families, other prelingually deaf adults, low-verbal deaf adults, uneducated deaf adults, products of oral programs, products of public schools, deafened adults, and hard-of-hearing adults.

The first category is an important one for Jacobs. In English one might say "I'm just your average American," but in ASL the phrase "average deaf person" does not have the same quality of normality; instead it suggests someone "simple" or lacking in knowledge of the world. Deaf people who are competent in the English language and have a reasonably good knowledge of others' world are not "average" but "educated." Jacobs rails against the victimization of Deaf people that has resulted in a large group of those called "average," those who suffer because of ignorance, poor education, or poor

childrearing practices. The term acknowledges the common belief that the average deaf person is more likely than not to have been victimized in this way.

The label L-V ("low-verbal") is used for educational unfortunates, but often also as a blanket term for low-income ethnic minorities. A common alternative term for L-V is "not smart." Jacobs describes these people as having "missed for various reasons a great deal of education that they should have received," so that they are almost illiterate. When we once inquired about attending a Deaf club in an urban area, we were told that we would not find it useful to go because members of the club were mostly L-V. Carol was told as a child that many Deaf peddlers were L-V, manipulated into working for unscrupulous king peddlers. More informal terms include, loosely translated, "those out of it," "locals," and "those who do drugs." Again, although these distinctions primarily refer to educational features, they are ways of labeling the uneducated, the working poor, and the chronically unemployed.

With his use of the term "prelingually," Jacobs acknowledges the official distinctions others use for the Deaf population. Those who "lost their hearing before the acquisition of language" are called "prelingually" Deaf, while "postlingually" Deaf is used for those who lost their hearing after having acquired "language." "Language" in this sense, of course, is used to mean English, not sign language. The distinction ignores those who have learned sign language as a first language, and who hence are native users of a human language, like those who are "postlingually deaf." The terms, as would be expected within an official frame with HEARING at the center, emphasize the role of onset of hearing loss and the presence of English, rather than the age at which any human language, including ASL, is acquired.

But Jacobs modifies this distinction and incorporates another; working around the official frame, he adds a new category: "prelingually deaf adults who come from deaf families." He writes that members of this category are "more outgoing and at ease with other deaf persons" and are less likely to have feelings of inferiority. "Other prelingually deaf adults," that is, those who do not have deaf families, form "the bulk of the deaf community," and "come from hearing families who have had trouble communicating with them when they were little." Jacobs adds the unfair generalization that "they are for the most part less aggressive and confident" than those "prelingually deaf adults who come from deaf families" (1974:56–57).

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Deaf children of Deaf parents may have a respected status among Deaf people because they display effortless facility in the language of the group. But like all the distinctions we have been discussing, this one is not simple. For one thing, outside the group, the notion that parents knowingly gave birth to children when there was a good possibility that the children might be deaf is not an acceptable one. This opinion of others has insidiously affected the way Deaf people view their own Deaf children. On the one hand they are respected and on the other stigmatized.

Out of this deep contradiction, the two groups, Deaf children of Deaf families and Deaf children of hearing families, play out their public images and respond to this tension in different ways. The husband of a Deaf couple told us that for a long time he harbored feelings of superiority over his wife when he introduced himself as having lost his hearing in childhood. His wife, on the other hand, introduced herself as having Deaf parents. By explaining that he had lost his hearing, he could avoid the silent condemnation he believed hearing people directed toward his wife, who had inherited her deafness. He himself could not be held responsible for his condition because he had become deaf "by accident," that is, through illness.

Stories we have heard about hearing children born to Deaf families also involve conflicting sentiments that reveal the complexity of the rules for categorization and identity. For example, a friend told us about a recent dispute at a local Deaf basketball club over a hearing son of Deaf parents who wanted to play for the club. Because this young man could hear, he would have been automatically barred from playing in any games sanctioned by the American Athletic Association of the Deaf (AAAD). Sports organizations like these are one of the few places where Deaf people exercise almost total control over their own affairs, from deciding their own rules to determining who qualifies as a

member. And one of the inviolable rules is that hearing players cannot play, on grounds of "unfair" competition. But in this particular case, the club's officers wavered and delayed action that would have removed the player. When the officers of the regional organization learned that the club had a player who was not "legally" Deaf, they pressed the club to act. Recognizing that the hearing player was in all other respects a member of the group, behaved as a Deaf person, and was virtually indistinguishable from his teammates, the club tried labeling him HARD-OF-HEARING. When the regional officers insisted on an audiological test, the club's officers knew they had played their last card and regretfully asked him to leave the team.

The club probably would not have tried to violate the rules if the hearing player had not had Deaf parents. There would have been no question of his being allowed to play. Despite the national organization's watchfulness, there are stories of other basketball clubs where "arrangements" are made allowing hearing children of Deaf parents to play, either "illegally" or at non-AAAD-sanctioned games. No such allowance is ever made for genuine outsiders.

Hearing children of Deaf parents represent a special problem. They have blood ties to Deaf people as well as knowledge of the customs and language of the group. The club officials knew their efforts to keep the player would be supported by the members, and their attempt to label him HARD-OF-HEARING was a desperate but not impossible move to keep him within the category of DEAF. When that move failed, they had no choice but to remove him. In matters where these labels count, such as competing fairly for a prize, the boundaries between DEAF and HEARING are firm.

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Real HARD-OF-HEARING people walk a thin line between being Deaf people who can be like hearing people and Deaf people who are too much like hearing people. They can be admired for their ability to seem like others for specific purposes, but they are viewed with suspicion when they begin to display behaviors of the others when there is no apparent need to, such as when there are no hearing people present. A friend who uses the telephone "without effort" confided that in the presence of new Deaf acquaintances she finds herself feigning difficulty on the telephone to avoid being categorized toward the hearing end of the HARD-OF-HEARING continuum. Another Deaf woman whose Deaf parents and friends call her HARD-OF-HEARING remembers that in her adolescence her parents showed surprise and disbelief when she described having problems communicating with her hearing co-workers. "But you can hear and talk," they told her. Since she was more like hearing people, she was not entitled to make the kinds of complaints Deaf people use about the difficulty of communicating with hearing people.

A hard-of-hearing friend who successfully walks this line was described as "DEAF but really HARD-OF-HEARING," an acknowledgment of his ability to use his skills selectively. HARD-OF-HEARING people can also be DEAF, but there is an imaginary asterisk by their label, qualifying them from time to time.

The label HARD-OF-HEARING involves discussion about having characteristics like hearing people, but being called ORAL is a stronger accusation. A Deaf man reported that though he had no hearing and his voice was barely intelligible, he had become used to being called HARD-OF-HEARING because his mouthing behavior was very "hearing-like." He had lost his hearing at six years of age and did not mind being called "deafened," but he drew the line at being called ORAL. Because ORAL represents a misaligned center, the results of having made wrong choices in life, it is an unacceptable insinuation to someone who considers himself DEAF.

The sign ORAL incorporates a long social and political history of the role of the school in the community. "Oral" schools promote ideologies counter to those of Deaf people; "manual" schools, which allow use of signed language in the schools, are ideologically appealing to Deaf people. Although the term "oral" is slowly losing its traditional context—many schools are no longer represented as either "oral" or "manual," the labels having been replaced by newer terms such as "total communication"—it is still used to represent an ever-present threat, the malevolent opposition.

At a conference for teachers of ASL, a woman stood before her peers and warned that while teachers squabble among themselves about signed language and the different "sign systems," there are "oralists"

out there hatching new plots to remove signed language from the education of Deaf children. Let us not forget our true enemy, she proclaimed.

ORAL recalls many extreme stereotypes; our friends gave us two: MIND RICH and ALWAYS PLAN. ORAL individuals are stereotypically represented as members of the establishment, as coming from hearing families that are inflexible about their children's behavior. As the belief goes, the richer the family, the more likely the family will embrace oralism (MIND RICH). The second stereotype portrays a typical ORAL person as one who actively tries to pass as hearing, and must be alert to every possible situation in order to pass successfully (ALWAYS PLAN). In its strongest connotations, ORAL means one who "cozies up to the opposition" and uncritically embraces the world of others.

ORA FAIL ("oral failure") is a term used for those who are products of oppressive educational programs. Deaf teachers talk of having to take in "oral failures" in their "manual" classrooms, of having to take care of others' "rejects." One example appears in *A Deaf Adult Speaks Out:*

> The deaf pupils were only allowed to change to "manual classes" when they proved to be failures in the oral method, usually during their adolescence. These older pupils were generally considered to be brain damaged, aphasic or "slow" by their teachers. Thus many bright and capable youngsters were labeled failures in everything else. Thus incalculable damage was done not only to their self-image but also to their capabilities for optimum achievement toward desirable careers. (Jacobs 1974:34)

"Oral failures" are, like ORALS, those who pay the price for wrong life choices, but they can be redeemed and become #EX ORAL. (The symbol # is a convention used to represent vocabulary borrowed from fingerspelling.) Jacobs recounts stories of "oral failures" who recover from the damage done to them in their early years and, with the help of instruction in signed language, regain their hidden abilities: "Ted found himself when he discovered manual communication, and was soon making astonishing progress. He caught up with his age level, and displayed an extraordinary bent for mathematics. His language developed at such a rate that he was writing fairly adequate English at the time of his graduation from the school" (p. 36).

In *Tales from a Clubroom,* members of the club charitably call their resident oralist, Spencer Collins, an #EX ORAL because he has repented and joined their ranks. But his slow, lumbering manner remains a comfortable symbol to the others of his past and their own good luck in not being ORAL themselves.

Stories about people like Collins are popular. They are defectors from others' world, those oralists who, when they come of age and are free to make their own choices, join the world of Deaf people as adults and learn signed language. Carol remembers as a child attending an evening at a local Deaf bowling league where a friend pointed out a woman several alleys down. This woman's father was a prominent leader of oral education, the friend said, and yet here she was, mixing and signing with us like a regular. She had rebelled against her father and married a Deaf man! The defection was as significant as that of a daughter of a prominent Soviet party official. All it takes, Carol's friend explained, is a taste of our world and they want to leave the old one behind.

In fantasy storytelling, an ORAL is a powerful symbol of one in need of being rescued. At a party, a man told a variation on a Cinderella story with an impoverished ORAL girl. The simple structure of the fairy tale highlighted the idealized difference between those who are ORAL and those who are DEAF. This deaf Cinderella is given a pair of glass gloves by her fairy godmother, allowing her to sign effortlessly and gracefully. Her ragged clothing disappears under her godmother's wand, and she finds herself wearing jewelry made by Deaf artists. She goes to the Deaf club and falls in love with the son of the club president. With her glass gloves, she captivates the "prince" of the club. At midnight, true to the original story, she flees, leaving behind one of the glass gloves. The story ends as predicted: the "prince" finds the girl of his dreams, and she becomes his "princess," her magic gloves allowing her to erase her many years as an ORAL person and gain the difficult but admired skill of signing like a native.

A trendier accusation that one Deaf person can make of another, one some older members of the community find confusing, is THINK-HEARING. Its literal meaning is "to think and act like a hear-

ing person," but a more accurate translation is "to embrace uncritically the ideology of others." The term's range of meaning is similar to that of ORAL, except that the accusation can be made against any Deaf person, including those who are not ORAL, that is, not orally trained.

THINK-HEARING illustrates the present generation's sophistication with sign structure (which we describe in Chapter 5). Instead of an adaptation of an existing sign, as with ORAL which also means SPEECH or MOVING-LIPS, THINK-HEARING is a novel creation formed by combining selected elements from the two signs THINK and HEARING. THINK-HEARING goes beyond ORAL to include other unacceptable choices such as voicing opposition to ASL, or insisting that signers should use among themselves invented sign vocabulary developed for teaching English to deaf children. Older members of the community, more comfortable with the distinction between "oral" and "manual," or between not signing and signing, find accusations based on what kind of signing one uses unfamiliar. THINK-HEARING, through its self-conscious analysis of signs, emphasizes a modern realignment of the center.

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As we have said, to understand how these categorizations and labels work one must begin from a different center. Deaf people work around different assumptions about deafness and hearing from those of hearing people. The condition of not hearing, or of being hard of hearing, cannot be described apart from its placement in the context of categories of cultural meaning. Names applied to one another are labels that define relationships. The relationships Deaf people have defined include their struggles with those who are more powerful than they, such as hearing others.

A person who is "DEAF but really HARD-OF-HEARING" has skillfully managed his relationships across groups. Deaf people may use a politically advantageous label such as "disabled," but they must apologize for it among themselves. Jacobs borrows the supposedly scientific distinction between "prelingually deaf " and "postlingually deaf " and adds modifiers that readjust the relationships in ways that are more compatible with group knowledge. All of these adjustments indicate how well the center accommodates and, at the same time, how tightly it holds.

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