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### The Challenges of Deaf Women in Society: An Investigative Report

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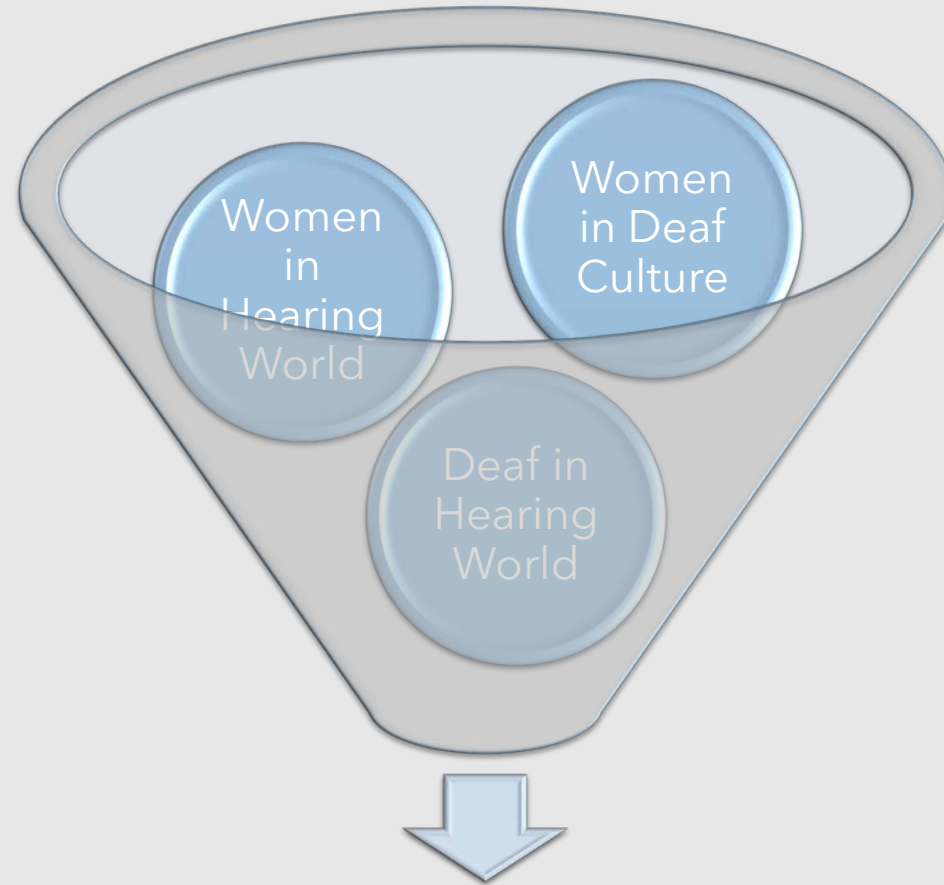




THE CHALLENGES OF  
DEAF WOMEN IN  
SOCIETY: AN  
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Megan Harris





Challenges of Deaf Women in Society



# PART ONE: DEAF HISTORY

# Background Information

- Historically, the Deaf were perceived developmentally disabled, they had no legal status, and thus could not marry, represent themselves in court, or receive an inheritance
- Deaf people were considered both uneducable and incapable of receiving salvation due to quote from St. Augustine based on Romans 10:17. no hearing = no faith = no salvation
- The prevailing belief in the late 1700s to 1800s was that if a child was born deaf, the parents must have done something wicked. It was common practice to abandon deaf children by roadsides as soon as parents realized

# Manualism vs. Oralism



# Manualism

Abbe Charles-Michel de l'Épée

- First Deaf School (Saint-Jacques National Institute, 1794)
- Taught manual sign
- Devoted to Deaf Education

Abbe Roch-Ambroise Sicard

- Successor to l'Épée
- Public displays of students led to Deaf schools across Europe and America
- Only in it for fame and recognition



# Oralism

Jacob Rodrigues Péréire

- First Deaf “teacher”, private instructor
- Methods were secret, yet ineffective
- Lost influence in France as l’Épée proved successful
- Public displays spread oralist methods across Europe

Baron Joseph Marie de Gerando

- Wealthy, influential, and foremost oralist
- Carefully researched Péréire’s methods after his death
- Ran the school after Sicard’s death, but was unpopular during administration





# Taking Deaf Education to America



# Thomas Braidwood

- Contemporary of P ereire, equal in reputation and apparent success
- Owned several Deaf schools throughout Britain
- Turned away Gallaudet to maintain secrecy of methods
- Later attempted to start an oralist school in America at the same time as Gallaudet, but failed

# Thomas Gallaudet



- Traveled to Europe to learn how to educate the Deaf
- Attempted to learn oralism in England at Braidwood's schools, but was turned away
- Went to France and learned manualism from Sicard
- Returned home and founded the first American school for the Deaf in 1817
- The school was successful, and became the model for deaf schools nationwide, which taught sign that became what we now know as American Sign Language
- His son, Edward Gallaudet, created the first Deaf college, now known as Gallaudet University in 1857

# Women and Deaf Education

# Women Become Teachers

- At the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women did not have jobs
- Schools became inclusive of children with disabilities, created first version of special needs class to accommodate overwhelmed teachers, but were still understaffed across the board
- Underfunded schools saved money by hiring and paying female teachers 1/3 than male counterparts
- Men were leaving education for more profitable industries, and took their place in faculty
- By midcentury, women were in every school in America, including Deaf and special needs schools
  
- Women credited as successful teachers because of natural, maternal instincts that are used to raise their own children, used rationalization to hire women and offer little to no pedagogical training



# Women and Oralism

- 1867: the Clarke Institute founded by Harriet Rogers
- 1869: the Horace Mann School for Deaf-Mutes opened by Sarah Fuller
- Manualism vs. oralism debate devolves into gender discrimination, with women supporting oralism
- Female-run oralist schools provided good education, gained reputation
- Started associations, conferences, and journals to legitimize and further field
- Manualism became obsolete, and oralism the norm
- Once the novelty wore off, men took up leadership in oralist schools by the start of the twentieth century
- Women were continually paid 1/3 less than men



# PART TWO: CHALLENGES OF DEAF WOMEN

# Historical Treatment of Deaf Women

# Historical Deaf Women in School

- Deaf institutions provided first real opportunity for socialization of Deaf children; schools functioned as families
- All Deaf students seen as inferior, and therefore any education was viewed as impressive work of teachers
- Deaf culture has traditionally had more conservative view on women than the hearing world
- Deaf girls were taught social etiquette, homemaking skills, gardening, and other “feminine graces”, at a time when hearing girls were taught vocational skills for acceptable female jobs
- As a result, there was little chance of earning money or having financial independence after graduation
- Deaf girls grew up to be Deaf women who were expected to marry and fulfill a dependent, supporting role to their husband

# Deaf Associations

- As Deaf students graduated, they formed Deaf clubs and associations to continue social life started at school
- Executive positions were strictly male, and women were only allowed roles in local chapters
- Female members, however, provided refreshments, organized social activities, and maintained the clubs while limited in leadership and meeting participation
- Ladies' Auxiliary formed in 1909, became platform for women to assume offices in state run organizations
- Deaf associations, however set against women, were an unequivocal sign that Deaf culture and communities were not going to be moved from the fabric of society



Rights, Salaries, Education

# Educational Attainment by Hearing Status and Sex

Gender	Level of Education	1972		1190-1991	
		Hearing	D/HoH	Hearing	D/HoH
<b>Males</b>	Less than high school	47.9%	55.2%	26.7%	43.1%
	High school graduate	31.0	31.7	35.9	31.8
	Some college	9.1	5.4	17.5	13.0
	College graduate or more	12.1	7.8	19.9	12.1
<b>Females</b>	Less than high school	45.5	55.4	32.6	44.7
	High school graduate	37.5	34.1	36.9	32.0
	Some college	10.2	6.3	15.9	13.1
	College graduate or more	6.8	4.4	14.6	10.2

1972 National Census of the Deaf Population; 1990 & 1991 National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey (Brueggemann and Burch, 2006)

# Occupational Attainment by Hearing Status and Sex

Gender	Occupational Status	1972		1190-1991	
		Hearing	D/HoH	Hearing	D/HoH
<b>Males</b>	White Collar	40.2%	21.8%	44.3%	37.5%
	Blue Collar	51.8	71.0	48.3	53.6
	Pink Collar	8.0	7.1	7.4	8.9
<b>Females</b>	White Collar	53.5	36.0	65.9	61.9
	Blue Collar	21.2	49.7	14.4	15.2
	Pink Collar	25.3	14.3	19.7	22.8

# Data Analysis- Changes for D/HoH

*What caused such drastic change in two decades?*

- The 1970s wrought many advancements in human & women's rights
- IDEA legislation increased overall Deaf education, but had serious faults
- Rehabilitation Act (1973) and Americans with Disabilities Act (1991)
- Automatization decreased blue collar jobs needed/available

# Influence of Gender Segregation

- Gender Segregation (traditionally male/ female jobs) impact all occupational statuses
- Women would enter white-collar jobs, but were funneled to female jobs- less education, less pay
  - D/HoH women's education was enough for them to continue into female white-collar jobs
- Men's white-collar jobs required more education, but paid more
  - D/HoH men's education was not always enough for them to enter male white-collar jobs
- Men would instead choose blue-collar jobs, unable to move upward or backward into pink collar jobs



# "Male" and "Female" Jobs

White  
Collar

- Men: doctor, lawyer, professor, executive
- Women: nurse, librarian, teacher, clerical work, social work

Blue  
Collar

- Factory, construction, farming, driving

Pink  
Collar

- Childcare, cosmetology, waitressing

# Data Analysis- Gender Disparities

- D/HoH women rose in vocation and income to be comparable to Hearing women, but all women were underpaid across all statuses
- While improvements for D/HoH women exists, it seems dramatic in comparison because they were gaining rights and opportunities that others had already been succeeding with
- Hearing world/ men had less margin for growth when analyzed for their use of the same tools of education and better jobs
- **Conclusion:** industries/ job market view and value members of workforce for gender first, then other factors such as disability



# Identity Development

# Erik Erikson

- Psychoanalyst
- Developed theory of development of identity and personality
- Different models with different labels/ parameters today, but the general model is followed

## Erikson's Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development



source: [www.whaddayaknowabout.com](http://www.whaddayaknowabout.com)

# James Marcia

- Modified Erikson's work with identity continuum, specifically with adolescents in mind
- Levels of exploration and commitment to identity/roles
- Factors
  - Occupation/roles
  - Ideologies/beliefs
- Later studies augmented female identity factors to include relationships/ interpersonal connections
- Each status is not bound to sequence, but can be experienced in any order and even multiple statuses at the same time
- Adolescents have varying commitments within identity that might be solidified at various points
- Accounts for fluidity between statuses as life variables alter occupations, ideologies, and relationships

		Exploration	
		Low	High
Commitment	High	<u>Foreclosure</u> : commitment to an identity without weighing alternatives	<u>Achievement</u> : exploration leads to production of identity congruent with values
	Low	<u>Diffusion</u> : neither explored nor committed to an identity	<u>Moratorium</u> : exploration of identities without commitment to one

# Deaf Female Psychosocial Development

## **EXPECTATIONS**

Parents', community's expectations and attitudes on gendered intelligence and maturity, body image, bodily autonomy, mental health, roles and labor allocation within relationships

Parents' view of Deaf child as intact/ not deficit, and expect high achievement are overwhelming determinants of future success, professionally and interpersonally

# Decisions

Deaf or Mainstream Schools?

Hearings Aids/ Cochlear Implants?

ASL?

Deaf Culture?

Daily Routines?

Resources?

# Occupation

- Parents' expectations are a foundation for future success, but Deaf women experience setbacks based on labels in professional advancement





# Relationships

## Relationships

- Hearing Status of Partner
- CODA
- Partner communication expectations

## Family

- Goals and Priorities
- Plan for hearing and Deaf children

## Deaf Culture

- Couple involvement
- Family involvement
- Opinions

# Deaf Women's Personal Accounts



# Rebecca Dadey & Rachel Kolb

## ***Rebecca Dadey***

- Told by doctors that she wouldn't go beyond fourth grade reading level
- Parents gave her tools and opportunities
- Graduated with bachelor's and master's degrees
- Professor of ASL and Deaf film
- Triathlon athlete
- Mother of three

## ***Rachel Kolb***

- Chose to learn verbal communication as a child => 18 years of therapy
- Told she couldn't speak without an interpreter, be a writer, or ride horses without help
- Competitive equestrian, graduated from Stanford with bachelor's and master's in writing, gave TED talk to tell her story



# Jackie Roth & Beth Barbiers

## **Jackie Roth**

- Deaf Actress, performing on and off Broadway, co-producer of the first documentary on cochlear implants
- Grew up in oralist New York, was shamed by school and parents for ASL
- Proud to use ASL in her craft, and is an advocate for more diverse Deaf roles, as well as cooperation and unity within the realm of Deaf artists

## **Beth Barbiers**

- versatile outside back or forward for the U.S. Deaf Soccer Women's National Team
- Unknowingly HoH as a child, lost hearing completely due to Semicircular Canal Dehiscence at 22
- Suddenly isolated, turned to her athletic passions to find center
- Joined USDSWNT, was first encounter with Deaf people and ASL
- Also represented Team USA in track and field at Deaflympics



# Claudia Gordon & Meriah Nichols

## Claudia Gordon

- First female Deaf African American to graduate from law school
- Lost hearing at eight, left Jamaica to escape discrimination and pursue education
- Attended Howard University, law degree from America University
- Worked for Homeland Security, Obama administration, and now is Sprint executive over phone technology for enabling/ facilitating Deaf use and communication

## Meriah Nichols

- Suffered TBI from car accident at four years old, exacerbated by two more wrecks later in life
- => deafness, APD, cPTSD, depression
- Parents assumed she was fine, no lasting external issues
- Tried to ignore issues to avoid being labelled "disabled", changed her mind after accepting job in disability services at UCLA and encountered strength, accomplishment, and happiness from people with all manner of disability
- Single mother of three children, one with Down Syndrome
- Challenges of motherhood intensified by hearing and communication obstacles of deafness in a hearing community



Conclusion

# CONCLUSION



Deaf women's experience is multidimensional, and not perfectly encapsulated by stories and history



Facing communication barriers, isolation, perceived limitations, while also experiencing stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination for "disability" and gender



TO BE CLEAR: Deaf people can do everything we can do, except hear



Support from family, friends, and loved ones, or the lack thereof, shape experience, self, and future

# How can I help?

As a hearing individual, the best way to be a friend/ally to Deaf women is:

- self-education on deafness
- willingness to accommodate environments
- and to put forth effort into attempting to communicating and connecting

If/when hearing individuals have power/influence:

- advocate or initiate inclusion at every level of organization
- Promote and ensure women, Deaf communities, and people with disabilities are involved and authoritative at every level of decision and policy-making
  - *Especially* concerning themselves



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