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Understanding Deaf Culture

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Understanding Deaf Culture

My honors project about deaf culture has shaped my perspective towards my future career as a speech language pathologist. Over the course my undergraduate education I have been prepared to diagnose and treat a wide variety of disorders among different demographics. However, until working on this project, I had not been given the opportunity to study cultural differences among the people I will be working with. Deaf culture is something that I have always had an interest in learning about and this project has been incredibly enlightening. I have always been taught to perceive individuals needing speech therapy as disordered, but this semester was the first time I had the privilege to see past the disorder and look at the uniqueness of this population. One of the most important realizations I made was that there are many negative misconceptions surrounding the deaf community, some of which I initially believed. Since learning this, it has been a goal of mine not only to address the misconceptions I held true, but to also change how others view their culture. Many people think that an individual who is deaf would rather be hearing and often that is not the case. People from the deaf community are proud of their culture and don't feel as though they have been given any sort of shortcoming. This is the same thought process I have adopted while working on this project.

Another spectacular aspect of deaf culture is American Sign Language (ASL). This is a verbal language that has all the complexities as English or any other spoken language, however it is purely visual. The deaf community uses ASL as their main form of communication and it allows them to have their own sense of humor, literature, poetry, and more. It is the 6th most used and leading minority language in the United States. I have been able to learn a little bit about this amazing language and begin to understand some of the syntax. I plan to continue learning more signs after this project is over because this is a topic I am passionate about. Deaf culture is unique and extensive with its own history, art, and technological advancements. This project has allowed me to gain a deeper appreciation of a culture different from my own. It has corrected fallacies I previously believed and prepared me to be a better speech language pathologist in the future.