

Deaf Culture Question of the Week – Mar 19 - 23, 2012
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What are terms used within Deaf culture to refer hearing people and Deaf people?

Answer: “hearies and deafies” – These terms “hearies” and “deafies” are used within the Deaf community and primarily by Deaf people themselves. They don’t carry a negative or insulting connotation but are more like “short cuts” to designate hearing people and deaf people. They are considered “in group” slang terms meaning that in most cases only Deaf people use these terms. It is considered inappropriate for individuals who are not members of the Culture to use these terms.

These terms are also used in the singular form to indicate one person who is either hearing or deaf. The function served by these terms, “hearie” and “deafie,” is to clearly separate “in group” from “out group.” Generally when Deaf people use the term “hearie” they are indicating that the person is from “the other group of people who are not like us.” When they use the term “deafie” they are indicating that “the person is one of our own.” The term “hearie” will sometimes be used in contexts where the Deaf person is expressing his/her frustration about how a hearing person may think, act, or not understand Deaf people. “Deafie” may also be used in contexts where the Deaf person is pointing out that his own behavior or the behavior of another member of the culture is “so typically Deaf-like” or “embarrassingly Deaf-like.”

All cultures have “self-identification” and “other identification” terms like these. Deaf culture is no different.

Deaf Culture Questions of the Week are archived at: <http://www.wsd.wa.gov>