

Deaf Culture Question of the Week – May 21-25, 2012
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Which book below has led many deaf and hard-of-hearing people to redefine their own experience as deaf persons, their relationships with other deaf and hard-of-hearing people and their relationship with the institutions and social constructs that impact their lives (for example, education, social services, interpreting services etc.)?

- a) The Mask of Benevolence: Disabling the Deaf Community
- b) Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture
- c) A Journey into the Deaf World
- d) Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood
- e) Deaf Studies Talking: Open Your Eyes

Answer “d” – Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood by Dr. Paddy Ladd is a book that has generated a revolution among Deaf people and their hearing allies in terms of looking at the deaf experience as a journey undertaken by each Deaf individual and the community at large to define themselves and not be defined by others. According to Ladd, Deafhood requires Deaf people to evaluate and liberate themselves from the oppression they have faced historically from the majority hearing society. To this process of self-liberation, Ladd writes:

"...I found myself and others coining a new label of 'Deafhood.' Deafhood is not, however, a 'static' medical condition like 'deafness.' Instead, it represents a process - the struggle by each Deaf child, Deaf family and Deaf adult to explain to themselves and each other their own existence in the world. In sharing their lives with each other as a community, and enacting those explanations rather than writing books about

them, Deaf people are engaged in a daily praxis, a continuing internal and external dialogue." (Ladd, 2003, p.3)

The book has spawned a social movement among deaf people that has led to creating organizations and foundations to support and promote this self-defining view of the deaf experience. Visit the Deafhood Foundation website at: <http://www.deafhoodfoundation.org/Deafhood/Home.html>. Read more about the general concept of Deafhood at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deafhood>.

All of the books mentioned in the answer choices support this same theme of viewing Deaf people and Deaf culture from a positive, healthy, human difference rather than disability perspective. All of these books should be on the reading lists of DCQW enthusiasts. Why not read one or more of them this summer?

Citations in this Deaf Culture Question of the Week from:

Ladd, Paddy (2003). Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deafhood>.

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