Pilot Study:
Understanding how DeafBlind
People Make Meaning of
Their Avowed & Ascribed Identities

Presenter: Sarah Morrison

Co-Presenter: Najma Johnson

Purpose of This Pilot Study

- How DeafBlind people make meaning of their avowed and ascribed identities?
- To understand how DeafBlind persons navigate the pathological descriptions that have been used to define them.

Goals in This Research Field...

- There is a need for findings, publications, and articles that are socio-cultural-centric in terms of *DeafBlindhood* as there are rarely any.
- Therefore, this study will provide a better understanding and insight of where and how past articles stand in terms of them following a pathological-based model or a culturally-viewed model.

Framework:

- Phenomenology was used with Glickman's Deaf Identity Scale as a framework for this study.
- By conducting this study, the findings will provide insights on our identity, our culture, our perceptions on both how people perceive us, and how we perceive ourselves.

Participants' Age

8 out of 14 participants (57%) were 40 years old or older.

5 out of 14 participants (36%) were 34-39 years old.

Communication

6 out of 14 participants use Protactile ASL to communicate.

2 out of 14 participants use ASL to communicate

3 out of 14 participants chose 'other':

- I use Tactile and ASL
- ASL (or other sign language), with lighting, otherwise use tactile. Learning PT.
- ASL with some Protactile ASL (not skilled with PT)

Question: Do you prefer a hearing interpreter or Deaf interpreter?

6 out of 9 (67%) prefer to work with a Deaf Interpreter.

Participants' Identity

10 out of 14 (71%) identify as DeafBlind.

2 out of 14 (14%) identify as Deaf with Usher Syndrome

Educational Background: School Attended

4 out of 14 (29%) attended to a Deaf school.

5 out of 14 (36%) attended to a Mainstreamed school.

4 out of 14 (29%) attended to both, Deaf school and Mainstreamed school.

Educational Background: Highest Degree Earned

12 out of 14 (86%) have a Master's degree.

2 out of 14 (14%) have a BS/BA degree.

Various oppressions related to DeafBlind researchers AND those found in researching DeafBlind people's experiences such as **Vidism** and **Distantism**

Factors:	Quotes from Various Participants:
Language	<p>I WAS BLOWN AWAY. I'd always felt kind of frustrated with tactile signing, and would tire so quickly. PT was sooooo different. We chatted for hours (two of us, then three, then even four!) and I never felt tired or wanted to stop. It FIT. It felt natural.</p>
Community	<p>I think it's about spirits and found my new "home" like Harry Potter found his home at the Hogwarts school.</p> <p>Home means where you feel that you belong to the community. Where you have all support system, accept each other, feel safe, can be yourself without worrying about being judged by other people.</p> <p>That's how I found and became DeafBlind.</p>
Accessibility	<p>I began calling myself a DB the moment I couldn't see anyone's face. I knew a tactile method so I began using it on my own with family. I grew fond of the identity as time progressed with braille, touch, *TASL, **PT, Haptics, mobility, adaptability.</p>

Findings

- What stood out in this study were Glickman's marginal and immersion scales, and how the participants responded to external factors pertaining to their identity.

Factors:	Quotes from Various Participants:
Medical	<p>I identify as Deaf-Blind. As mentioned previously, if one looks at the definition of Deaf-Blind by both, HKNC and RSA, one will see that the “combined hearing and vision loss” pertains to me. My hearing loss is in the moderate to severe range. I have no hearing in the upper range. My vision loss is in the “less than 10 degree fields” and 20/200 vision.</p>
Social	<p>I would have to say the major influence was my first time at Seabeck. The PT immersion and being surrounded by folks who were culturally DeafBlind or understood DeafBlind culture. All that made me "click" to my DeafBlind identity.</p>

Influences of Human Connections

- Patton (2015) considers the guiding assumption of ethnographic inquiry as one “that any human group of people interacting together for a period of time will evolve a culture” (p. 100).
- Difference between **ascribed** and **avowed** identities
- The journey to discovering our DeafBlind identities

Patton, M. (2015). Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods. Los Angeles, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

In closure...

- These findings emphasize the need for more emic studies regarding Deaf people with diverse identities that have been overlooked in numerous studies.
- In closure, with this type of research, both Deaf Studies and DeafBlind Studies can participate in transformative work to improve connections among non-marginalized and marginalized communities.

References:

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