

I've looked over and I've seen the Promised Land: the role of religion in building Deaf identity and community

Gillian Meller, Centre for Deaf Studies, University of Bristol

Research Methods

- ethnographic study of one traditional Deaf church and its congregation of profoundly Deaf BSL users
- Deafhood perspective that privileges Deaf accounts
- Colonialism as a tool for understanding the Deaf experience
- "creative narratives shaped out of a writer's personal experiences within a culture" (Goodall, 2000, p.9)

Key Findings

- use of religious belief and biblical imagery by both individuals and communities to forge authentic Deaf identity
- importance of Deaf Elders transmitting cultural knowledge and values to the next generation
- new perspectives on Deaf funeral rites (Meller, 2010)
- directions for future development of Deaf appropriate worship and church structures



Research from a Deaf cultural perspective:

Deafhood – positive ways of Deaf 'being-in-the-world' (Ladd, 2003), a linguistic & cultural minority with its own collective identity and culture mediated by sign language **not**

deafness - an impairment of hearing, discourses of treatment, educational intervention, assimilation into majority society, welfare and charity

Research Aims

- ✚ to consider the place and meaning of religion and public worship in Deaf community life
- ✚ to examine the role of religion in building Deafhood; both in the development of Deaf identity by individuals through the life-course, and how it contributes to the way Deaf communities conceptualise their existence and its meaning
- ✚ to explore Deaf use of religion as a resource for resistance against discourses of oppression

Gillian Meller gm0244@bristol.ac.uk



Centre for Deaf Studies
8 Woodland Road, Bristol, BS8 1TN

References:
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Ladd, P (2003) *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters
Meller, G (2010) 'Funeral Rites in the British Deaf Church: A Case of Disenfranchised Grief?' *Journal of Contemporary Religion* vol. 25 no. 2 pp. 267-280