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Ethnicity, Ethics, and the Deaf-World FREE

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Abstract

This article is concerned with ethical aspects of the relations between language minorities using signed languages (called the Deaf-World) and the larger societies that engulf them. The article aims to show that such minorities have the properties of ethnic groups, and that an unsuitable construction of the Deaf-World as a disability group has led to programs of the majority that discourage Deaf children from acquiring the language and culture of the Deaf-World and that aim to reduce the number of Deaf births —programs that are unethical from an ethnic group perspective. Four reasons not to construe the Deaf-World as a disability group are advanced: Deaf people themselves do not believe they have a disability; the disability construction brings with it needless medical and surgical risks for the Deaf child; it also endangers the future of the Deaf-World; finally, the disability construction brings bad solutions to real problems because it is predicated on a misunderstanding.

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