

## Abstract

The emergence and development of technology and geo-social networking apps has changed the way men meet other men for friendship, dates or sex. Undoubtedly, the largest and most popular platform facilitating these meets is Grindr. They state that 'Grindr is a global community for men of all backgrounds to connect with one another. We strive to create a safe space where all are welcome to be who they are and express themselves without fear of judgment.' (Grindr LLC, n.d.) This sounds like the ideal world but unfortunately, this is not the case for many Deaf people using these apps.

I will present the initial findings of what I believe is the first exploratory research on the usage and experiences of Deaf gay men using such apps. An online survey was completed by 52 men from 10 countries and gathered data on the apps used, motivations for use, Deaf identity, language barriers, the use of webcams, meeting face-to-face and patterns of use. Results showed numerous disconnects between the Deaf and hearing men using the apps, thereby affecting connections. In addition, the perception of some of the Deaf men using the apps is that they are judged because of their deafness.

From the comments received via the survey, there is evidence to suggest that that Deaf people appear to be trying to help the hearing person by making them feel better about the fact that there may be communication tactics that need to be employed when communicating. The Deaf person is displaying *submissive posture* in that they 'either consciously or unconsciously internalizes hearing people as authorities...reflecting a state of inferiority or powerlessness' (Leigh & Andrews 2017) which may affect the way their masculinity is perceived.

**Keywords:** Deaf, dating, apps, communication, disconnect.

**Biography:** Paul is a qualified British Sign Language Interpreter and part-time PhD student at Durham University and has been working with the Deaf community for 12 years. His Master's Degree by Research completed in 2014 was titled 'A Study of the Identity, Culture and Language of a Sample of the Deaf Gay Male Community in

Britain'. His research interests include deafness, interpreting, gender, sexuality and language.