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Autism

Autism in children is the subculture I am researching. Information was gathered by interviews and participation and observation. People I have interviewed Teachers, skilled trainers, peers and outsiders that isn't really around autism people much. Also went to high schools, elementary schools, and organizations interviewing and learning more from different points of views. Observing and playing in with the autistic students help finding more about autistic students. The reason I picked this subculture is because working as an A+ leader at an elementary school and seeing a lot of autistic children a lot with their skills trainers made me want to learn more about them. Going to Easter Seals Hawaii helped with my research a lot. They told me what autism is and where you could go for help if you need assistance.

"Autism's a brain disorder that distracts a person's ability to communicate and relate to other people", says an informant from Easter Seals of Hawaii. "Autism started being noticed around 1912. It wasn't as popular and extreme then as it is now. You can see there are a lot more autistic people now then there were ten years ago. It was just known as something that narrows relationships to people and to the outside world. Later, researchers found that autism runs in the family. It's found that genetic genes have something to do with it. One might start seeing some signs of autism as early as 2 years old. The most common sign to look for in toddlers is their development in speech. Other symptoms are having difficulty with social interactions and relationships. Autistic children play alone and make little eye or contact with people around them. Difficulties with verbal communication and delayed language development are common in children with autism."

"A skills trainer is someone who works with autistic people to help them learn, speak, and interact with others. Now days this require some college degree or certificate because of The No Child Left Behind Act. That means whoever works with students have to have some kind of college degree. Depending on the parents of the autistic child skills trainers go wherever the child goes. Some parents want the skills trainers with the autistic child all the time to help teach them everything." Says a skills trainer at Kailua High School. He has been working with the same child for five years. He also said that this autistic boy was like his little brother. The autistic child's parents are always busy with work and his skills trainer is all he has. "In school skills trainers help guide the child at lunch and make new friends. In the classroom they let the teacher do their job. Usually a skills trainer stays with the autistic child from elementary school to high school but sometimes parents want to change them if not satisfied." Says another skills trainer from Enchanted Lakes Elementary. "The child I work with has two skills trainers. Her two sisters also have autism and each have two skills trainers." She also said that it was really common to have more then one skills trainer.

"Teachers of autistic children usually meet with them in a classroom with other non-autistic children their age but in high school autistic students are in their own class with other autistic students. They share a bond together. Although high school is really different for most kids, to autistic kids it's almost the same. They grow but their mind doesn't really grow. They may be interacting better with people but in reading and writing it still could be like an elementary non-autistic child." Says a teacher from Kailua High School. A teacher from Maunawili Elementary said that it's hard to work with autistic children because you don't know what their abilities are. Some of them are better at reading and writing but others could have a more difficult time. Working with the skills trainers help because they know more about the child's ability better than us teachers but because autistic children are mixed with non-autistic children in elementary school it's harder to work with them during class time and the skills trainers are the ones that end up teaching them not the teachers." " Some skills trainers don't like working with teachers a whole lot because some teachers expects to much out of the children and push too hard." Said a skills trainer from Kailua High School.

Peers don't really interact with autistic students. They think that they're different and have nothing in common. Peers often tease and make fun of the autistic students. Pointing and making fun is part of a regular day. Teasing and throwing things occur on a bad day. Most of them said they are very embarrassed to interact with them but little do they know that they are actually helping them learn more. Elementary students said that they try to understand by asking questions and maybe going outside to play with a ball or something but then they get frustrated because they don't know what the autistic child is talking about or they can't understand why they do certain things so they fight or walk away. High school students make fun a lot and stay away from autistic kids like they have a disease. When asking a handful of them why they act that way, they said its because they think that they do have a disease and don't want to get it. When telling them they just have a brain disorder and don't really know any better, they still didn't understand and still think that it is contagious to get autism. In intermediate school, autistic children are often separated from other students.

Going on the streets and asking people if they seen other autistic children around what was their reaction, one said " I don't know what autism is but when I see crazy people or retarded people, I just stay away." Another said, " I know the difference between mentally challenge and crazy. When I see a crazy person I stay away. When I see a mentally challenge person I help them on or/and off the bus."

In conclusion I didn't know this research would touch me so much like it did. Finding out so much about this culture and what parents go through to help their child takes a lot of money and hard work. I still visit some kids I met and because I work with elementary kids I have a whole new look on each persons abilities in learning. Each autistic child is different in everyway and they just need some one to communicate to. They don't need sympathy; they just need that conversation to keep up the interaction.