

Reflective Paper #7

In Deaf Culture this week, we focused on studying the definition and various types of audism. To understand this material, we watched several videos in which members of the deaf community shared their experiences of audism, we also read materials that focused on the development of the term audism as well as its several classifications.

Tom Humphries coined the term audism in 1975 and published it in 1977. In his article, he describes how after the term was defined, he felt better. The reason for this was that by creating a word, the problem now had a name. I think this is a great point. For example, when someone has a medical issue which is undiagnosed, the problem does not have a label. It is harder to fight something without boundaries or a definition. Once an issue has been diagnosed, it can be fought. As Humphries said, oppression is no longer an invisible beast, and it does not hold the same fear.

Audism can be divided into four different theories: individual, institutional, metaphysical, and laissez-faire. In addition to these theories, there are three different practices: overt, covert, and aversive. These terms provide further specification of the issues that deaf people are fighting.

After studying this material, I have realized that while many forms of discrimination are mainstreamed, such as sexism and racism, audism isn't a widely known issue. Understanding the spectrum of audist behaviors has opened my mind to all of the forms of discrimination against deaf people that I would not have noticed before this class. For example, while understanding it may be rude, I would not have thought that asking a deaf person if they were born deaf is as a form of metaphysical/aversive audism. As a hearing person, I cannot understand how many times a day deaf people must be asked audist questions such as this. Another example would be asking

if a deaf person can read lips. This question is one that most likely comes naturally to many hearing people, and I think many of these people do not understand how this comes across. While some hearing people may view this comment as problem solving and finding a way to communicate, they do not understand that with this question they are not only placing the responsibility of accessible communication on the deaf person, but they are also showing ignorance of how difficult it is to lipread.

A key foundation with many forms of discrimination, such as audism, is that many acts may be unconscious. For example, due to the systematic racism, many acts of discrimination are overlooked. For example, a store clerk may be more alert if they see a black person come into their store, but rather than knowing it is because the person is black, they may believe it was only a gut feeling. Another racist behavior, like the previous act of audism discussed, could be asking if you can touch a black person's hair, or asking anyone who is not white where they are from.

From this week in class, I have learned that the term audism is a difficult concept to learn and understand. However, even with its difficulty I think this is an important issue to discuss partially because by delving deeper into the topic and understanding the different acts of audism, hearing people may be able to better understand the reality of a deaf person living in a mainstream hearing society.