Resilience In Deaf Professionals

Abstract

This Research paper is mainly about Deaf people who are professionals in the New York Rochester area and they are involved in a small study that helps us understand how Deaf people can obtain resilience. It is a small study of only 10 people who are all from a diverse backgrounds and all use ASL as part of their language (some also speak English but not all). They all talk a bit about their experience throughout their lives and agree on certain topics that covers their experience in a majority hearing job.

As humans, all of us have gone through a difficult time at some point in our lives. Once this occurs, there are three possible outcomes. One, people get back on their feet without any regard to what they went through, the second outcome is simply one that takes some time while the third one indicates that a person might never be able to get back on their feet. There is a specific word used to describe those who are able to bounce back into their normal life without no change, the word is “resilience”.

Resilience has Risk factors and Protective Factors. Risk factors are, for example, a person who is raised in a hearing home with no one to sign, when they are isolated, or when parenting is not the best, etc. Protective factors are when people have support from peers, or family members, or when they have good communication within their environment, etc. When talking about Deaf people, we can conclude that they face more risk factors than hearing people. Some are born into hearing families and have poor communication skills or they have none at all and have to figure out things by their own will. As mentioned in the article “Deaf parents of deaf children often serve as role models on how to be resilient and negative life as a Deaf individual (2016, pg.3)”. When a Deaf child is in a mainstream education, there is a higher probability of them having risk factors due to the lack of communication skills that they might have. This article is mainly to show how resilience is experienced by a Deaf person.

There was a total of 10 participants that identified themselves as hard of hearing or deaf, they all came from diverse ethnicity and backgrounds and are all from New York (Rochester) area. There were 6 women and 4 men, some had College (doctors, masters) and others did not. Their main languages were ASL and some used both ASL and spoke English. All had 5 children or less, and only one participant used a cochlear implant. These people were selected by a first come basis. They were contacted through email, and the first ones to answer were the first to be interviewed by two professional Deaf people. Each professional interviewed 5 people in ASL; from there two interpreters were hired to transcribe the videos from ASL to English after that, one other interpreter was hired to verify that the transcriptions matched the videos. If there were any misunderstandings or anything that was not clear, then they would contact that person for further explanation. At the end they were payed $50 and it was funded by NTID and RIT’s Innovative Fund Project.

Audism and Linguicism

There were two topics that stand out the most in this research; one was being treated differently

because of their hearing status also known as Audism and the other was people treating other people different because of the language they use also known as Linguicism. Several people expressed their thoughts about feeling secluded from their co-workers. Working with people who were hearing, even if they knew how to sign, they were outcasted because they wouldn't provide them with any information or they were not as friendly with them as with other hearing co-workers. For two of the people that work in a medical setting, they have interpreters to aid them but if the interpreter is needed elsewhere by another deaf colleague they must leave the meeting to help the patient. Here, you could say that there aren't enough interpreters staffed for all of the deaf staff to be able to do their job. In the other hospital the interpreter was not so closely known with what was going on in the meeting, so the Deaf client had to be sure not to miss anything; it caused him to be exhausted. Another person explained how it was ok for hearing people to be late but for her to be late 15 minutes to her meeting made the interpreter leave and miss out all of the information; instead she went back to her desk and finish working.

Network Challenging was another topic that all the participants commented on. In order for them to improve within their job, going up the ladder mainly consisted of socializing and having the correct connections in order to move up. For Deaf people it is harder because most people with connections do not sign; they are limited, and it is not their fault. They often have to work harder than hearing people; In the article (2016, pg. 10) it talks about how hearing people have to work hard but Deaf people have to work twice as hard. One person was alright with that because he wanted to be successful. Another person was African American and that combined with being Deaf meant she had to work extra hard; this person talks about how after finishing school hearing people got the jobs, hearing signers got jobs but Deaf did not. It was because it would take them a while to accommodate them, but it didn't mean that the couldn't take that extra effort to do it. This in other hands leads people to try even more to get the job; trying harder and harder and even sometimes being turned down if wanting to move up the ladder. This often causes people to just quit, not wanting to try anymore.

Protective Factors

The Deaf Community is one great protective factor (definition in first paragraph) for Deaf people. These participants stated that having people, family, friends, co-workers, who supported them and were there to give them encouragement makes them feel good, helps them solve problems, it is a network of help and suggestions for them. Having a Role Model showing you how it is that they have experienced a few things, is important for these participants also. Finding a Role Model is often difficult, because of the communication barriers but if you find someone in your work area who speaks the language you do it is important to network; it will show you that you are not the first in that position and that you are not alone. Also, when people have children, they often want their children to follow their jobs, doctors often want their children to be doctors, etc. this also happens with Deaf parents who have Deaf Children, they usually pass this on. The Deaf parents can teach their children how to deal with hearing norms, how to do it in their jobs when situations can arise, for these Deaf children with Deaf parents their role models are their parents.

For those who do not find a Role Model (and even those that do) rely on believing that "Deaf Can". It is important for them to be optimistic on that because they are the ones that are most often faced with negativity and risk factors. One person described them overcoming the risk factors by noticing that it's not important to be number one, it is important for them to be aware

that everyone has weaknesses, that everyone brings something good to the table and not everyone is perfect. Another person talks about how she developed Resilience, by telling herself that she had to keep going, she had to try and not give up, she couldn't give up.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Deaf people have several risk factors that hearing people do not have to even think about doing when they go to work. This Article expresses many things that a lot of Deaf people might experience. One thing that did make it easier for them was that in the area that the study was taking place has a large area of people who are Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing. They have the support around them, there are many Deaf professionals in the area that they can find help in. In rural places, or smaller towns it would be much harder for them. Especially finding a Role Model that has experienced something like they have, maybe even solving a problem, or learning how to deal with different situations. One of the participants said something very important that did strike me as interesting; "I think no one takes the time to train Deaf Individuals on how to succeed in a hearing world" (2016, pg. 14) This is something that I had not realized. For hearing people it's easy, they learn most of the things from their parents, if there is something odd the parents usually explain it to them in some way that they can understand. But if you are Deaf, and you have risk factors around you, how do you learn to deal with it? Who teaches these things if you are the only Deaf in your home? Maybe for those people who have signing family members, it could be explained, they are a bit more aware of the hearing world. Resilience is a big thing, that does not only affect the hearing world it affects the Deaf World twice as hard, it does have risk factors, but there are ways to get around them, there are ways for people to be able to have protective factors.

References

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