

ABSTRACT

Emerging Adults with Cochlear Implants: Their Experiences and Lifeworlds By Christy Mae Neria

There is a fundamental gap in understanding the experiences and lifeworld development of emerging adults with cochlear implants (CI). Many studies using quantitative data describe the functionality of CIs with children. Moreover, there is a limited body of studies using qualitative methods such as ethnographic case studies where the narratives of emerging adults with cochlear implants are gathered to represent their experiences with being CI users. The goal of this research was to uncover the experiences of these emerging adults. In this study, five deaf emerging adults with CIs were interviewed over an extended period of time about their experiences and their social and emotional responses to the CI itself. Using a phenomenological lens, each member participated in a series of in-depth interviews and observations in order to reveal their identity, self-perception, and overall lifeworld in response to their CI. The results from this research suggest the CI is a social construction, the CIs were “not perfect” devices, participants handled adversity similarly, participants experienced increased autonomy, and the role of social support was an important factor. As a result of these data, three archetypes for CI users were established based on the participants’ narratives.