

# Audism and The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health Model in *CODA* Film

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## ABSTRACT

Injustices in the form of discrimination are experienced frequently in the workplace by oppressed groups, including people with disabilities. Discrimination towards deaf people is audism, and it can spur from many groups or bodies, as well as Deaf people themselves. This research aims to elucidate whether there is disability or not in employment context in Leo and Frank characters from *CODA* film by Sian Heder, considering they are subjected to audism a lot in their work space. This research looks at *CODA* film by using the framework of audism and The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health model by World Health Organization. This research uses qualitative methods to gather corresponding data from *CODA* film. The result shows that Deaf people are found a lot of times discriminated against by society. The ICF model shows that even though Frank and Leo are impaired, they become abled through certain circumstances such as a system that enables deaf workers and devices supporting their working tasks. This research indicates that negative stereotypes and misconceptions about Deaf individuals often lead to systemic barriers in hiring practices and workplace integration, resulting in underemployment and limited career advancement opportunities. Despite the growing visibility of Deaf representation in media, such as the film *CODA*, there is insufficient analysis of how these portrayals influence societal attitudes and employment prospects for Deaf individuals. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the representation of audism in *CODA* and its implications for the employment experiences of Deaf characters, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of the intersection between media representation and employment outcomes.

**Keywords:** audism, *CODA*, Deaf, employment, ICF

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Disability studies looks at the diversity of human functioning and behavior. It critically evaluates the significance that society ascribes to these differences and separates the population into the competent and ward of the state, the normal and the pathological, and the disabled and non-disabled (Linton, 1998). It makes an effort to bring forth the subtleties and elements of disability that are still largely hidden (Ferguson and Nusbaum, 2012).

The term 'disability' might confuse people with 'impairment.' Over the course of the twentieth century, people had been associating disability through the lens of medical discourses (Cooper, 2013a). That was not until 1970 when a group of activists fought to contest that idea – usually called the medical model – with a 'social model.' In the social model, the problem no longer lies within them – the society is responsible for it. According to Disabled People's International (1982), impairment means the functional limitation within the individual caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment and disability means the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers. Disability studies has shown that disability is comparable to ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and other identity markers in

its lived and constructed realities and that it demands nuanced, critical attention. According to Goodley (2016), just as in race theory, people of color (POC) are a minority position, in disabilities studies the minority position in society is called people of color (PWD). This marks that disability studies is becoming more prominent amongst other studies. For this, disability studies also may be interchangeable with other studies to explore the potential it has for itself and the partnering studies. As humans progress, disability studies has been influenced and impacted by other studies. Not only that, the ideas and concepts from other studies have also impacted disability studies.

Disabled people, like other marginalized people in other studies, also experience oppression and discrimination. The term discrimination is now commonly understood to include unjustified discriminatory effect as well as intentional or automatic discriminatory treatment. Basically, discrimination is the difference in treatment. The difference in treatment can be caused by skin color, class or ethnicity, and it can also be due to differences in gender, economy, religion, even disability and so on. For deaf people, the appropriate term for it is audism, which is frequently used to refer to a set of presumptions that encourage unequal treatment of people based on their hearing disability (O'Connell, 2022). As a direct result of their impairment, disabled people encounter a wide range of experiences. Some of these identity-forming experiences can be better characterized as exclusion, rejection, or isolation, or sometimes, they might even be pleasant rather than negative.

The social model states that the political experience of oppression, rather than the type or degree of impairment, is the defining characteristic of a disability identity (Oliver 1990; Barnes 1996) and Deaf people are very much included in this discourse. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) concurs with the social model and pushes it a step further by putting context as one of the deciding factors to determine whether a person is impaired or not. Hearing (dis)ability has less to do with deafness as much as it has to do with language and communication (Eraser, 2019). Deaf people take part in a language and express similar beliefs, with that said, deaf people are connected through "Deaf culture." Deaf culture is not limited to only a peculiarity of language form. Deaf culture refers to a complex background of unique social customs, a common past, and a network of social organizations (Padden and Humpries, 2005).

Disabilities in film have been misrepresented and appropriated with disability rethorics such as inspiration porn, which is the representation of people with disability as inspirational for non-disabled people on the basis of their lives' circumstances (Haller and Preston, 2016); kill-or-cure narratives, which portrayed the death of disabled person(s) as sacrificial or represented disability as something that must be 'cured' (Dolmage, 2014); and many more. Jeffress (2022) mentioned that, among many more, disabilities in film should portray disabled people wanting to be making their own decisions, to be able to live independently, and yearning to be heard. Disability is always in need of healthy representation in media, such as film, as it is one of the ways that people can learn about it.

Based on the information that has been provided above, the researcher intends to unearth the difference in treatment, or discrimination, specifically towards deaf people in an American film entitled CODA that stands for 'child of deaf adult' directed by Sian Heder. With 111 minutes time duration, this film revolves around the life of Ruby, a teenager who was born from a deaf family. Ruby is a family member of a fishermen family. Her dad, Frank Rossi, and her brother, Leo Rossi, are the ones who are doing the physical work while her mom, Jackie Rossi, is the ones sorting the back-end side of the business. Fishing is their only means of putting food on the table. Hence it is important to know that employment is crucial for people with disabilities since being disabled frequently results in social isolation and being employed is one way to lessen this isolation and a key instrument in eradicating poverty (Schur, 2002). Employment gives Deaf persons a chance to become financially independent and is essential to their welfare and quality of life (Svindal et al., 2019). As fore mentioned, Deaf people are protected under the ADA of 1990 and that includes discrimination from

employers against qualified individuals in job application procedures, job training, firing, advancement, hiring, compensation, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment. The things that the researcher wants to focus on are the mistreatment that Ruby's family are getting in terms of employment because of audism, and how said discrimination gives a negative stamp of disability to Ruby's family as a way to discredit them in something they are capable of despite their specific impairment. In the film, there are a few scenes that point out the possibility of disadvantageous further situations for deaf people that also serve as a reflection of the very definition of disability

The researcher explores some literature that is placed within the domain of this thesis. The first one is a short article written by Lyden (2021) titled CODA. In this article, the film CODA is examined through summaries of the story and how it corresponds with the elements of the film. It emphasizes on the relationship between the theme of the film and music's correspondence, just as how CODA means 'child of deaf adult' and at the same time the musical term for a concluding passage of a piece. It also makes clear that Deaf people should not be stigmatized and marginalized for who they are, or even viewed as disabled. Lyden fills the very short article with surface level analysis with fewer references than other articles have to offer. The second article is written by Bauman (2004) titled Audism: Exploring the metaphysics of oppression. This article desperately seeks the definition of audism. It ties audism with other definitions of oppression such as racism and ableism to find a resounding answer to challenge all the 'common sense' about Deaf people and discriminations towards them. Bauman dives deep into metaphysics of Aristotle, and Derrida's critique of phonocentrism to search the origin of what begets hearing people to have this hierarchical power over Deaf people. Ultimately, this article is orienting towards the way people should rethink what makes a human being a human. Bauman structured his argumentation as orderly as possible, creating an easy to comprehend writing. The third research is by O'Connell (2022) titled "Opportunity Blocked": Deaf People, Employment and the Sociology of Audism. This research examines the employment of Deaf people, but not limited to, in Ireland and how audism plays a hefty role in it. O'Connell argues that stigma and stereotypes of Deaf people more or less constructed the way employers see them. With that said, Deaf people subconsciously regulate their behavior to blend in their work environment because they feel like they are watched within said environment and to get social acceptance. It makes Deaf people reluctant to disclose their identity and therefore slows the impending growth of Deaf identity. This slow growth of Deaf identity and the awareness of society regarding it, will develop a self-imposed barrier on Deaf people, and therefore creating internal problems on their socioeconomic opportunities. O'Connell meticulously structured his argumentations even though their study is limited within Ireland. The fourth article is titled Disability and employment – overview and highlights (Vornholt et al., 2017). This particular research dwells on what defines disability, specifically the inclusion of mental disorder in the disability studies discourse. It involves the ICF-model as the basis of the research to refer disability as something that is created after a person interacts with the environment. The research interacts with barriers and enablers to employment as the bridge of disabilities and employment. This article is structured well and concise, making it easy for the reader to understand the content. After conducting research on the previous studies of this thesis, there has been many research on disabilities and employment, specifically a number of studies regarding employment of Deaf people. It turns out that audism has a great deal in affecting employment of Deaf people. However, the researcher found that there has been little to none research on the film CODA by Sian Heder. With that being said, the researcher believes that this thesis will prove useful for further research in the realm of Deaf people and employment.

The researcher believes that there is a connection between audism and deaf people's stance in the context of employment, and the ICF-model helps demystify the confusion of impairment. Audism,

found in many scenes of the film, promotes stereotypes that are not coherent according to the ICF-model of disability. For example, if a deaf person is able to do their job properly without a problem just like a non-disabled person, in that context, they are not disabled and should not be labeled so. If those stereotypes continue to echo, they will hinder the employment of deaf people and endanger their livelihoods.

By analyzing the film's representation of audism and its impact on the employment landscape for Deaf individuals, this study contributes to the discourse on how media can shape societal perceptions and potentially mitigate the barriers faced by Deaf individuals in the workforce. The novelty of this research lies in its intersectional approach, combining media studies with disability studies to explore the implications of CODA on the employment experiences of Deaf individuals. By using the ICF model, the study challenges dominant stereotypes and emphasizes the importance of environmental factors in shaping the experiences of Deaf individuals in the workplace. This approach not only highlights the need for more inclusive representations in media but also advocates for a re-evaluation of societal attitudes towards Deaf individuals, eventually aiming to foster a more equitable employment landscape.

## 2. METHOD

Humphrey (1977) juxtaposes the word Deaf as 'black' in racism in the process of searching for a term that suits discrimination against Deaf people before coining the term audism. Eckert and Rowley (2013) explains that audism is a system of discrimination based on an individual capacity or ability to hear in the perspective of an individual who hears. Audism actualises in the form of stereotype threats – confirming negative stereotypes of an individual's upbringing group culture (Steele and Aronson, 1997), that assume superiority of the ability of being able to hear over being Deaf. Bauman (2004) argues that the root of audism comes from the way we think about what makes a human, human. It has to do with the western assumption that language is human and speech is language, hence deaf people are inhuman and deafness is a problem (Brueggemann, 1999). This is also why Jacques Derrida (1974) explores phonocentrism which is a historical assumption that speech is the most human form of language. Phonocentrism offers a dominant viewpoint through which the systems of advantage establish and maintain power by establishing a normalcy that prioritizes speech over sign language and hearing over deafness. The idea of individual audism does not inherently have to be against the idea of acknowledging that there is a bigger system in play in the discourse of audism.

Deaf people have also experienced audism on an institutional-level. Lane (1992, p. 43) also defines audism as "the corporate institution for dealing with deaf people, dealing with them by making statements about them, authorizing views of them, describing them, teaching about them, governing where they go to school, and in some cases where they live; in short, audism is the hearing way of dominating, restructuring, and exercising authority over the Deaf Community." He explained that institutions have assumed authority over Deaf people, purportedly acting in Deaf people's best interests while preventing them from having a say in the issues that concern them the most. The institutions that usually project audist behaviors are educational and medical institutions, but in this research, the local authorities are responsible for taking off opportunities from Deaf people. Bauman (2004) pushes the definition further by defining it as a system of advantage based on hearing ability. Though Eckert (2005) argues that definition needs to keep in mind on the advancement of Deaf ethnos and Deaf ethnicity as well explain about the system and the relation to Deaf communities. Thus, Eckert and Rowley (2013) refurbish the definition by saying it is a systemic system of exploitative advantage that emphasizes and upholds the subjection of Deaf Communities of Origin, Language, and Culture.

The ICF-model is a long and extensive revision of the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH) by varieties of experts from different backgrounds (Bickenbach, 2019). The ICF-model is an amalgamation of the medical model and social model disability (Sharma, 2016). The ICF-model introduces (and differentiates) impairments of body function and structure, activity and capacity limitations, and participation restrictions. Those impairments refer to what most frequently accepted as 'normal' (Vormholt et al., 2017). The ICF-model proposes the idea that disability needs to be examined through environmental context with particular activity demands, such as work-environment (Vormholt et al., 2017). A Deaf person will have a restriction in communicating with a person that only uses verbal language as a way to communicate, but they will not have a problem when the tasks are not requiring them to communicate with others. Such a case does not determine a disability of a person (Wiersma et al., 1988). The ICF-model shows that a person is not impaired, but becomes impaired by the context (Vormholt et al., 2017). barriers and enablers, or facilitator are two sides of the same coin that influence one another. For instance, an employer might be inclined to hire individuals with disability or might have negative associations with such employment. Thus, the employer's recruiting policies can either be a barrier or an enabler for those with disabilities. Another illustration is the development of policies to protect workers with disabilities from wrongful termination. Although they are frequently well-intended, these could actually deter businesses from hiring a candidate with a disability (Niehaus & Bauer, 2013; WHO, 2011). An example of a facilitator is the organizational culture or climate, since it can contribute to increased inclusion, inclusive attitudes and behaviors among an organization's members. (Vornholt, 2017).

This research uses The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) model and descriptive qualitative research method to analyze *CODA* film. Data collection of this research is conducted in a systematic way and through numerous processes with qualitative data collection. Before anything, the researcher collects raw data by watching the *CODA* film many times on the researcher's personal computer and tries to gather as many dialogues and scenes that are beneficial or relevant to be analyzed by the approaches of the study. Moreover, focusing only on *CODA* may limit the generalizability of the findings. While the film provides valuable insights into the representation of Deaf individuals, it may not fully capture the diverse experiences of Deaf people across different contexts and cultures.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The researcher aims to highlight all sorts of audism that are manifested in the *CODA* film, whether they are from the characters, institutions, or the overall society and environment in the film. After investigating the audism targeted to deaf people shown in the film, the writer will try to justify why calling it a discrimination towards deaf people is valid using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) Model under the context of employment.

#### 3.1 Results

##### 3.1.1 The Enactment of Audism in the Film

This subpoint focuses on how discrimination towards deaf people gets portrayed in the film in whatever forms they may be. Ruby's family received many kinds of discrimination throughout the film from mockery to employment limitation. The discriminations present nothing good for them, and the discriminations also serve as major conflicts that Ruby's family have to face. The discrimination that Ruby's family have to handle around the film is called audism, a term coined by Humprey (1977) for discrimination towards people with hearing disability. In this part, the researcher explains and elaborate more on the many kinds of audism portrayed in the film that Ruby's family,



deaf people, have to experience. Sub-points below highlight the many varieties of audism portrayed in the film such as individual audism, internalized audism, overt audism, and institutional audism.

### 3.1.2 Institutional Audism

Ruby's family are fishermen that operate on a boat to regularly fish on the sea. Ruby acts on the ship to help with whatever she can whether it is to pull the nets, or watch over the horizon, as seen in the film. Leo more or less does the same as Ruby, just more frequently because Ruby is still in highschool while Leo has graduated and is doing fishing as a full-time job. Frank is the head of the ship as he is the one with the boat license.

They usually fish together, but in the film, this can be implied that it is not always the case. Ruby fights with his family over her schedule of singing practice and fishing with Ruby abandoning her regular fishing schedule as the result. This would later become a 'problem' for Ruby's family business. Leo and Frank have to fish just the two of them on the boat on the day an investigator is going to do a regular check-up on them. Their only concern is the investigator would deem them not qualified for any fishing, or to be precise boating, activities. Leo and Frank do not seem to have worry that Ruby will not be accompanying them on the boat as a hearing person.

The investigator, Joanne, arrives on the boat not knowing that Leo and Frank are deaf. Somehow, she made it on the sea on the boat without really communicating with Leo and Frank. Small talks are made between them, but only those that can be shrugged off without verbal replies and at that point the investigator still does not know that Leo and Frank are deaf. Not until there is a sound of the machinery of the boat bothering her that made her ask both Leo and Frank directly about it. To no surprise, she finds out at that moment that Leo and Frank are deaf with Frank clear writing on the paper.

#### Dialogue

JOANNE : *"Hey, is the engine regularly maintained?"*

Frank shrugs. She tries again.

JOANNE : (CONT'D) *"When was the last time you had your engine checked?"*

Frank gestures to his ears and shakes his head - Can't hear.

JOANNE : (CONT'D) *"Yeah, it's loud! That's why I'm asking."*

Finally Frank grabs her notebook from her and scribbles. Deaf.

Joanne stares at him in surprise. She gestures to Leo.

JOANNE : (CONT'D) *"Him too?"*

Frank nods, then returns to work. Joanne sits down, stunned. She looks concerned, pulls out her phone and turns away from them a call. (Heder, 2021, 01:07:39-01:08:26)

Soon it has been found out that Joanne called the coast guard, for reasons that can only be implied as 'safety measures.' This in itself is individual audism. She, as an individual, feels like Leo and Frank's hearing disability would cause errors in fishing and sailing. She does not believe that Leo and Frank, deaf people, are able to execute activities such as sailing boats. Leo and Frank impliedly have the ability to sail boats without problems. Joanne reported to the coast guard not because Leo and Frank had done something wrong, or even breach any prohibited sea territories, but because purely her doubts on Leo and Frank's ability to sail boats.

This individual audism carves way for a more thorough investigation, particularly on the true motives of Joanne's report on the coast guard. Ruby's family go into a coast guard hearing court session to find out the full sanctions that they are going to get.

#### Dialogue

COAST GUARD OFFICER : *"You failed to obey an order by federal law enforcement to board your vessel. On top of that, you were operating your vessel in a negligent and dangerous manner due to your... disability. I have no choice but to administer the minimum fine, which is \$1,000. And an additional penalty of \$1,500."*

FRANK : *"We can't pay that unless we can get back on the water."*

RUBY : *"Officer, what do they need to do to be able to fish again?"*

COAST GUARD OFFICER : *“You will be required to have a hearing individual on board at all times to answer radios, hear ship whistles, etcetera. We will be monitoring you regularly to make sure you are in compliance. Do you have that person?”* (Heder, 2021, 01:13:34-01:14:33)

The coast guard officer states that Leo and Frank are being negligent and dangerous because of their disability. Leo and Frank did not trespass any law besides not having any hearing deckhand on board. That law itself is questionable because Leo and Frank were having no trouble sailing. Leo and Frank are capable of sailing on their own. The penalty is too harsh on Ruby’s family because to have the fishing license back, they need to have a hearing deckhand, and if not Ruby, they need to hire one. It is too expensive for them to hire a hearing deckhand. This backhanded law only provides more problems for deaf people no matter how they cut it. In this institutional audism, an institution purportedly acts on deaf people’s best interest (Lane, 1992) and in this case the coast guards who are not giving solutive plans for Ruby’s family and only making them more difficult to earn a living.

To conclude this subpoint, it is important to know that the film sheds light on the discrimination faced by deaf individuals in society, particularly in their ability to work and earn a living. Ruby’s family, who are fishermen, are faced with individual and institutional audism where they are doubted and penalized because of their hearing loss. The coast guard’s ruling that they need a hearing deckhand on board at all times not only questions their ability to sail but also puts a financial burden on them. This highlights the need for society to recognize the capabilities and abilities of deaf individuals and to work towards removing barriers and biases towards them. The film serves as a call to action to break down these institutionalized barriers and to promote equality and inclusivity for all individuals regardless of their abilities or disabilities. This particular sub-point will serve as a segway to a more in-depth analysis to breakdown the impairment of Ruby’s deaf family and their eligibility for employment in their family business using the WHO ICF model of disability.

## 3.2 Discussion

### 3.2.1 The Use of ICF Model of Disability on Leo and Frank to Clarify Their Impairments on Employment Context

This subpoint will focus on the two male characters of the film that have been introduced before, Frank and Leo. They are two members of Ruby’s family with Frank being Ruby’s father, and Leo being Ruby’s older brother. They both do heavy work in the family business, which is sailing, and fishing with nets. They both also have the same level hearing impairments. The reason they are the focus of this subpoint is because they are the ones who are involved in the situation that subjected them against a specific kind of audism, which is institutional audism.

Based on the instances that happened on the boat with Frank and Leo and also the courtroom, this can be deduced that those are, though implicit, audisms, particularly institutional audism. Discrimination limits opportunities for minority groups, especially in labor markets (Pager, 2007), not excluding audism. Institutional audism happens when an institution assumes authority over deaf people. Ruby and her family’s opportunity to earn a living is taken by an institution which is the coast guards.

The thing is, it does not necessarily have to be specifically institutional audism that takes away deaf people’s opportunities. Any kind of audism would do, given the proper context. If an employer does not want to employ a POC (people of color) because the employer prefers a white person to work for them, that is individual racism, that so happens to take away a POC’s employment opportunity. It does not necessarily need to be an institution that enacts the discrimination.

Many mental gymnastics are put forth by ableists and audists as reasons to keep people with disabilities (PWD), and also deaf people, away from working. One of the most used flawed arguments is “If there are ‘normal’ people, then why choose people with disabilities?” The question itself might

sound harmless, but if audism and racism get juxtaposed, just like Humprey (1977) did, it would sound like a very ignorant question by today's standards, thanks to the advancement of social movements that raised awareness in race discrimination. The question will be more or less like this: "If there are white people, then why should we choose people of color?" Suddenly the question poses a threat for minority groups, and people with disabilities are very well inducted in the minority groups spectrum (Goodley, 2016) as they are oftentimes devalued, discredited, stigmatized, and discounted. A more specific example is if there is an employer who does not want to employ deaf people just because they do not communicate like hearing people, however the work itself does not necessarily demand verbal communication, so the insistence on not hiring them is blatantly discriminatory. In America, employers with specific qualifications are even given money to facilitate people with disabilities to assist their works such as wheelchairs, and other assistive technologies if needed (The Justice Department, 2020). So there should not be any reason to justify any obsolete way of thinking that employers should prefer able people over people with disabilities.

People need to perceive 'disabled laborers' or employees from different perspectives. The term 'disability' gets thrown around by people so recklessly without understanding the vast background behind the word. If so, does having impairments equals being disabled? The answer falls into a gray area; it depends on what model of disability to refer to as there are so many models of disability throughout time. Two of the most popular models of disability are the medical model and the social model. Keep in mind disability studies is a growing field study, and experts have different opinions on each model. The medical model places an emphasis on the individual and sees impairment as a personal difference, deficiency, or absence. Whereas social model focuses on society and the adjustments that must be made to social structures and paradigms (Rothman, 2010). Both of these models spark discourses regarding their perspectives on disability. Which then in 2001, the World Health Organization, consisting of many experts, developed a disability model named the ICF model.

The ICF model recognizes the impairment of people with disabilities, but also takes into account the social construct surrounding particular disabilities. Throughout the film, it is clear that Ruby's family members face problems because of their hearing impairment, for instance when Leo was having a hard time mingling with other fishermen in the bar, and also problems because of apparent social construct regarding their disability, such as when Leo and Frank were reported because the investigator deemed that they are not eligible to sail boat and fish. The ICF model takes into account both of the issues. Thus, the only thing to do is figure out whether Ruby's family are rightfully labeled unable to sail boat because they have hearing impairment, or they were mistreated by the social construct that is standing behind their impairment.

The researcher focuses on Leo and Frank's occupation as fishermen as the life situation and the base of the diagram that will eventually be constructed. Referring to Diagram 1., at the top of the diagram, the ICF model requires us to identify the health problem of said individual(s), and the health problem or impairment that is apparent in the film is deafness or profound hearing loss.

Leo and Frank's hearing loss is implied to be profound hearing loss which medically means a hearing loss more than 81 decibels (Friesen and Woolridge, 2007), it is the most severe hearing loss. This is backed by the scene where the film changed the auditory perspective from a third person to Frank's. *We view this performance from Frank and Jackie's perspective. After the first few bars of music, we hear only silence. They watch Ruby's lips move, but no sound comes out.* (Heder, 2021,01:26:26-01:27:26). Heder (2021) affirmed that there is no sound at all in that scene as Ruby and her friends perform a musical performance in front of many people including Frank, meaning that Frank has zero perception on how to experience sound.

Moving on to the next component which is body functions and structures, the information above can be used to fill the component with the accurate information. In this component, the goal is to



perceive the physiological functions of individuals' bodies' impairment. To be precise, the severity of the health problem needs to be specified deeper into. From the information above, it would be accurate to address this component with 'hearing impairment' as Leo and Frank are deaf, and not just having trouble hearing or else it would be 'hearing problems.'

Now, in the activities component, the goal is to identify whether Frank and Leo's impairments pose limitations for them. The most obvious domain that is relevant for Frank and Leo's impairments and also serves as one of the biggest factors in the film is communication.

#### Dialogue

They stare at each other for a moment. Gertie boldly takes his phone and types in her number. Then pulls her own phone out of her pocket, waiting. He considers it. Then TEXTS HER.

Leo : "You work here? You're not even old enough to drink." She texts back.

Gertie : "These guys can't count to 21."

Then...

Gertie : "Good punch."

They share a grin, the sexual tension palpable. (Heder, 2021, 00:37:51-00:38:33)

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Finally Frank grabs her notebook from her and scribbles.

Deaf.

Joanne stares at him in surprise. (Heder, 2021, 01:07:55-01:08:06)

Frank and Leo undeniably have difficulties in communicating with people other than their family. It is not a total limitation as they can communicate with people who can also use sign language, and also via texts or handwritings. The film backed this other means of communication that they use besides sign language from the scene where Leo communicates with Gertie, a female bartender, via text messages, and Frank writes on paper to communicate with Joanne the investigator. The bold texts are written/texted or not verbal nor sign language.

Another thing that might pose arguments is that Leo has somewhat the ability to read lips, or lip-reading.

#### Dialogue

JACKIE : "The news! They're doing a story on the family!"

RUBY : "Now? I can't."

JACKIE : "How are we gonna do the interview?"

LEO : (stepping in) "I can lip-read."

JACKIE : "You're not going to get all of it!" (Heder, 2021, 00:58:08-00:58:22)

Lip-reading is a way to try to visually interpret a speaker's lip movements during speaking (Sarhan et al., 2021). Leo mentions this ability, though scrutinized by Jackie, when Jackie and Frank were about to be interviewed by a news crew for their newly found business and Ruby has a singing lesson appointment with her teacher Mr. V. in this dialogue, "*Leo watches the conversation -- we see it through his eyes. He focuses on Brady's lips, but the banter is too fast for him. He's only catching some of it. After a while, he's exhausted and tunes out.*" (Heder, 2021, 00:35:58-00:36:24). Leo's lip-reading ability is not something that he can utilize in every occasion as he is not well adept at it and it is very hard to apply it on certain situations that consist of a lot of people talking too fast or even at the same time. This is backed by the fact that Leo was having a hard time keeping up with the banter by the fishermen in the bar.

The next component is Participation which means involvement in life situations (CDC, n.). For this component, it is necessary to look back on what sort of life situations that has been used to initially base this diagram around with and that is Ruby's family occupation/employment as fishermen. There needs to be an investigation whether Frank and Leo have restrictions in this component or not, or in other words, whether they have problems in their involvement in life situations or not (CDC, n.).

For the sake of being in order in terms of components from top to bottom, it is necessary to fill this component based on the information that have already been gathered. The ICF-model is multidimensional and each component may intervene with each other due to those arrows. Therefore, when filling each component, it is crucial to keep in mind the components around it as it may get affected or even affect other components. So, Frank and Leo's employment gets restricted due to difficulties in communication because to some degree, Frank and Leo's occupation requires coordination and communication.

It has been established that a person is only disabled by context. In other words, It is only when a person is in an environment that does not suit their diminished or divergent talents and capacities that they are considered disabled, regardless of their physical or functional limitations (Vornholt et al., 2017). Environmental Context falls under the Context Factor alongside Personal Factor. Those are the components in the ICF-model that may or may not alter other components and as well as the situation for people with disabilities depending on whether the environment acts as barriers or facilitators.

The ICF's environmental factors component covers the social and physical "context" in which a person participates, lives, works, and plays. This component's vast reach includes all physical environment characteristics, including all man-made and generated aspects, including technology, geographic and climate-related characteristics, and all natural elements (Day et al., 2012). Those elements may serve as something that further hinders people with disabilities' capacities or perhaps help accommodate them to lessen the limitations that they experience in certain situations (Mitra & Shakespeare, 2019).

The researcher focuses first on the possibilities that the environmental factor component sets out to be barriers for Leo and Frank. This is a broad discourse because the possibilities are quite vast. However, the scope can be somewhat minimized by remembering that this research is based on the employment of Ruby's family, and there can only be so many chances of certain situations that can act as barriers. The only conflict that correlates with Leo and Frank's employment is when Joanne, the investigator, halts their fishing activities of the day which eventually gets them temporary suspension on sailing boats. However, even though audism may pose as barriers, Leo and Frank eventually are able to sail and fish again, though through abiding the law which has been proven as institutionally audism.

That regulation segues into discovering the facilitators of the environmental factor component which one of them is Ruby. In the activity's component, communication is the domain that Leo and Frank have difficulties in, or considered limited in. That influences the participation component, making Leo and Frank considered having limitations in participation due to difficulties in communication. Adding more into it, it is a necessity to include the environmental factors that may change the state of participation component from limited to having no limitation if the environmental factor proves to act as facilitators.

The regulation, via the coast guard, says that they must have a hearing person boarding their boat if they want to return to fishing. The reasons are never explicitly stated by anyone in the coast guard side, including Joanne the investigator. It is what it is because it is the law. The researcher implies that they are assuming that deaf people are incapable of fishing without the help of hearing people, which has been discussed that it is an institutional audism because there has been no evidence in the film that they need any help from hearing persons to boat a ship or to fish. However, for the benefit of the doubt let's agree that it is the case. Even so, their employment should still be alright considering Leo and Frank or Ruby's family usually have Ruby on board as one of the eligibility for deaf people to sail a boat.

On the communication part, not only Ruby can handle it, but Leo and Frank can also use Video Relay Service to help them communicate with people on the phone. JACKIE: *“Do you have a second to call Grandma?”*. RUBY: *“Use the video relay.”* (Heder, 2021, 00:19:30-00:19:37). The purpose of Video Relay Service is to give deaf and hard-of-hearing persons telephonic access via a sign language interpreter (Brunson, 2021). Ruby’s family has VRS at their disposal to use and that makes far distance communications easy. There are also smartphones and the internet visibly being used or interacted with in the film. All of those things from Ruby to VRS, points to the notion that Leo and Frank’s environment factor act as facilitators, not as barriers, as those instruments support and help their occupation/employment.

### 3.2 The ICF Model and Deaf Representation in CODA

After implementing the environmental factors from the film, there needs to be an observation to see whether it changed any limitations on either Activities and Capacities, and Participation or not. Since the environmental factors act as facilitators (supporting Leo and Frank’s job desk in their employments), the Participation component should change from restricted, to having no limitations.

As for personal factors, they are particular backgrounds of an individual that are not related to a health condition or state of health such as age and gender (DIN, 2001). It also may affect a person's body functions and structures, and activities and participation negatively or positively. Explicitly clear, Leo and Frank are both male, but their exact age are never explicitly shown. In the film, there is no age or gender issue that resulted in affecting Leo and Frank’s body functions and structures, and activities and participation. Therefore, the Personal Factors component does not affect the rest of Leo and Frank’s diagram.

CDC gives out many examples of ICF use with individuals, and one of them can be seen in Figure 1. Leo and Frank’s environmental factors act as facilitators to help their employment which can be seen in Figure 2 and Figure 3. The arrows that link the components may misleadingly be interpreted as causation, but it is actually read as a description of a process disability creation (Bickenbach, 2019). In Leo and Frank’s diagrams, after digging up data from the film to fill the components, it is shown that there is no disability found in either of them in employment context because their environment factors act as facilitators that overwhelmingly support their employment despite their impairments.

Discrimination towards deaf people is a prevalent issue that often gets overlooked in our current society. Deaf people in CODA are discriminated against from many sides, including employment. Audism, a term for discrimination towards deaf people coined by Humprey (1977), endangers Deaf people in the film by not acknowledging their ability to do a certain job because they have an impairment, which has no correlation whatsoever. This creates problems because in the film, Leo and Frank, Deaf characters, get their opportunity blocked by getting their sailing license confiscated by the officials. The ICF-model of disability (2001) helps to explicate the impairment/disability of Deaf people in the film in employment context. Context factors play an important role in the analysis by insisting on seeing the environmental factors on the Deaf individuals to see whether they act as barriers or facilitators for them. Results overall show that Leo and Frank’s environmental factors act as facilitators that support them in doing their job. Therefore, Leo and Frank should not be considered unable to do their jobs because the ICF-model finds no disability to be found in them in terms of employment (CDC, n).

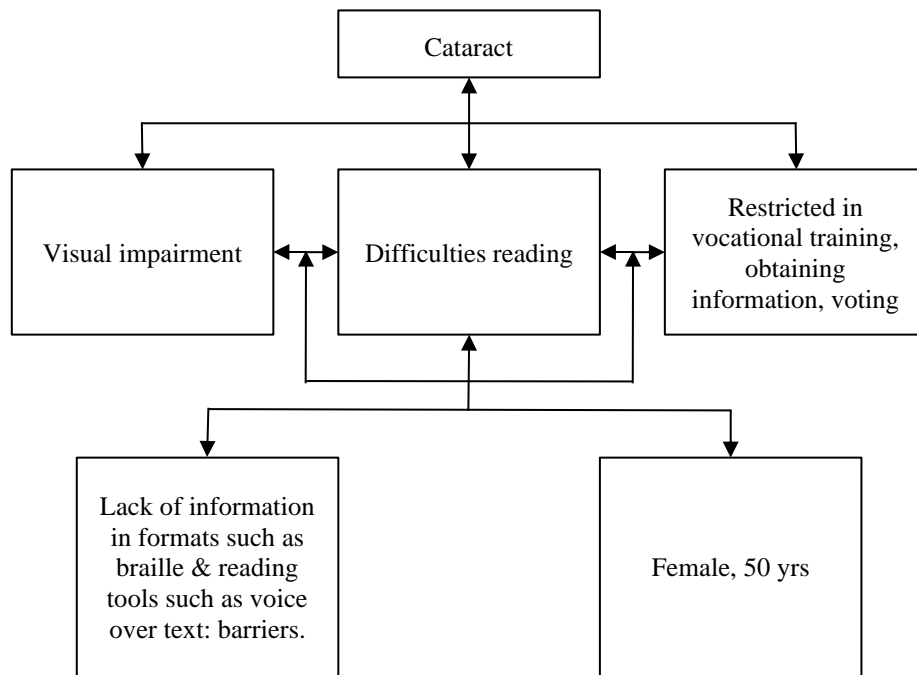


Figure 1 Example of ICF Use (CDC)

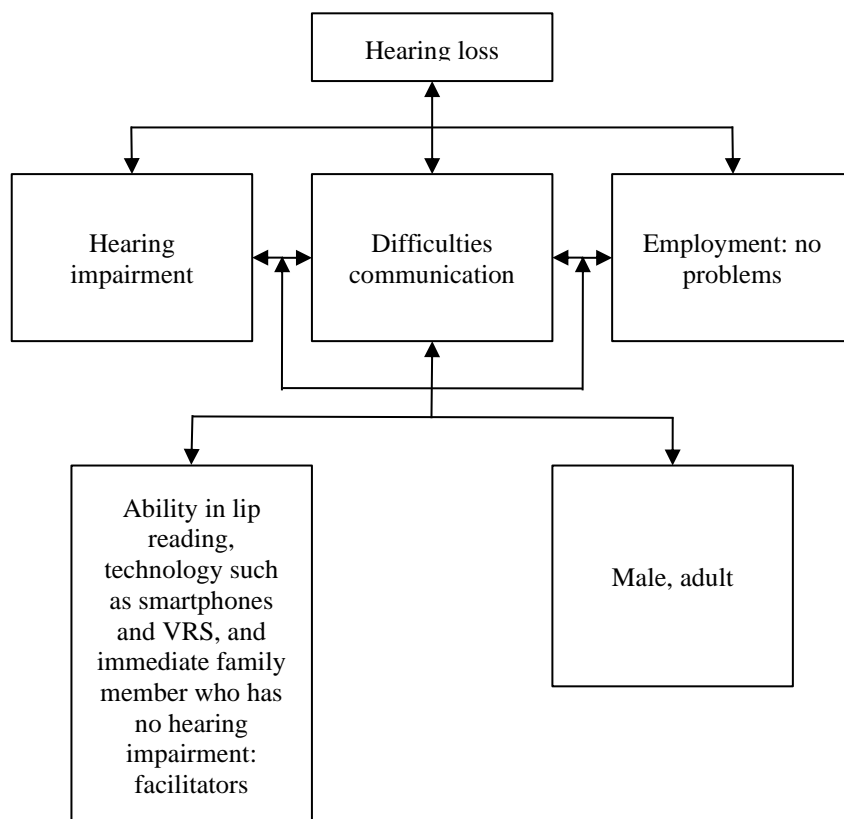


Figure 2 ICF Use with Leo

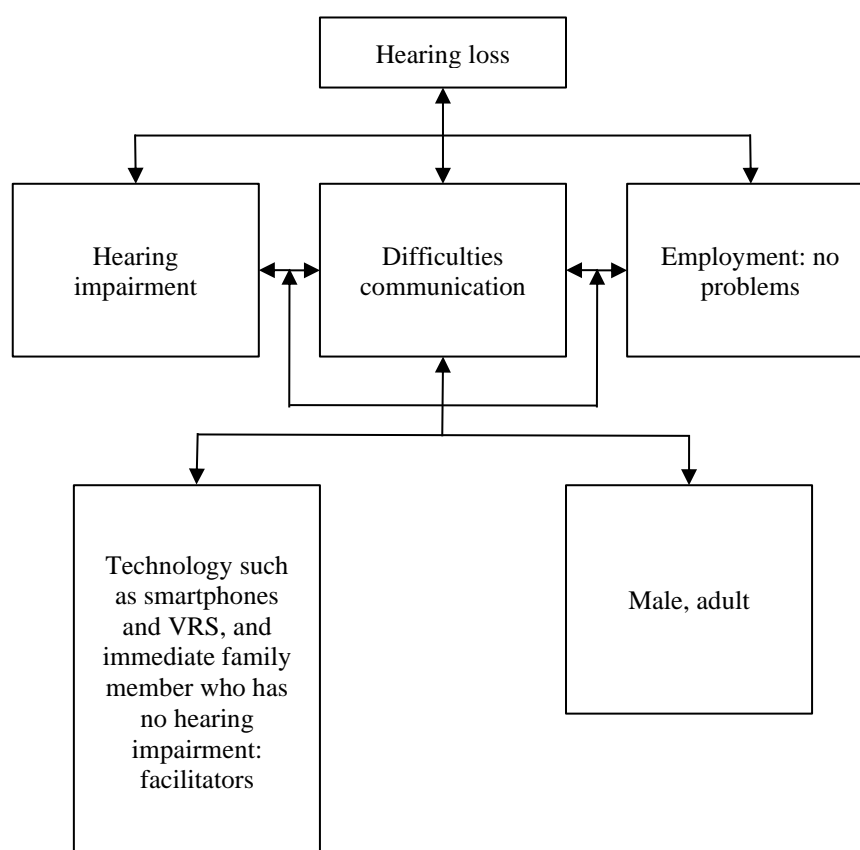


Figure 3 ICF Use with Frank

#### 4. CONCLUSION

CODA by Sian Heder illustrates the predicament of Ruby's family, which consists of deaf people, colliding with a plethora of conflicts that concerns with Humprey's definition of discrimination towards deaf people, or audism. Various indispensable aspects of Deaf people's precious lives are profoundly affected by audism, including their means of putting food on the table or employment, and in Ruby's family's case, it is fishing. The film does not overtly show Leo and Frank, Ruby's deaf brother and father, having any trouble sailing a boat nor breaking any kind of law in any explicit or implicit way, but they get unfairly sanctioned anyway, which is an act of sheer audism. This form of audism insinuates the idea from a hearing body, be it individuals, groups, or institutions, that deaf people are inherently inadequate to perform their job purely just because of their disability, which in this case is hearing impairment. This insidious notion proves to be immensely problematic for the lives of deaf people, including Ruby's family, and must be vindicated. Leo and Frank are the focal point of the issue as they are the Deaf workers in the family that got their rights snagged away by unfair regulations of the government.

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) model by the World Health Organization affirms that a disability needs to be meticulously examined through contextual factors with particular activity demands, and in this particular case, the work-environment. The environmental factors of Leo and Frank's workplace are unequivocally proven to act as facilitators which comprehensively support their activities as fishermen, evincing that there is no disability found in the employment context for them. Therefore, any kind of unjustified or unwarranted justification to limit their participation in their employment, when there are no barriers found in it, are invalid and also proving even more that Ruby's family are being ruthlessly and unjustly discriminated against by the coast guard, because they are presuming that Leo and Frank require assistance purely on the basis of their hearing impairment while not allowing them to have a say in said issue. Finally, from



the ICF model, even though Frank and Leo have hearing impairment, they become abled in employment context because there are circumstances that support them in doing their work tasks such as systems that enable deaf workers and devices that support them.

This study highlights the urgent need for further research into the representation of Deaf individuals in media and its impact on societal perceptions and employment opportunities. Future studies could explore how different media portrayals of Deaf characters influence public attitudes and the potential for policy changes that promote inclusivity in the workplace. Additionally, research could investigate the effectiveness of specific support systems and technologies that facilitate Deaf individuals' participation in various employment sectors, assessing their impact on job performance and career advancement. Comparative studies examining the experiences of Deaf individuals across different cultural contexts and industries would also provide valuable insights into the broader implications of audism and the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing discrimination.

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