**Exclusion and inclusion in the context of deaf-led businesses**

In critical disability studies, interest is growing in exploring disabled people in various employment contexts and how they experience the construction of disability based on the social relational model and intersectionality (Mik-Meyer, 2016; Sang et al., 2016). However, these theoretical frameworks are still only applied to deaf people to a limited extent, particularly in employment contexts. My study will thus contribute to the increasingly lively academic debate on positionalities within disability and deaf studies by drawing from a qualitative study of deaf entrepreneurs in Denmark. The deaf-led businesses provide new contexts for research, being situated in spaces where communities of deaf people are creating their own ‘organizational culture’. A study of these spaces brings to light an understanding of how deaf people who own businesses have agency, develop strategies and use different types of capital strategically in order to succeed in business and to cope with overcoming the audist structures that surround them in a hearing-led labour market. From observations at three different deaf-owned businesses, semi-structured interviews with nine deaf entrepreneurs (eight deaf men and one deaf woman) and four interviews with employees from two larger deaf-owned businesses, this study examines how deaf entrepreneurs experience being deaf and construct their deafness in this context. In this presentation, I will present the preliminary findings of a template analysis of the interviews and observation through the lens of a social relational understanding of deafness, where deafness or disability is constructed through deaf-positive discourses and not by focusing on disability either as a stigmatized condition or an objective impairment.

**Reference**

Mik-Meyer, N. (2016), “Gender and Disability: Feminizing Male Employees with Visible Impairments in Danish Work Organizations”, *Gender, Work and Organization*, Vol. 22/2016 No. 6.

Sang, K.J.C., Richards, J. and Marks, A. (2016), “Gender and Disability in Male-Dominated Occupations: A Social Relational Model”, *Gender, Work and Organization*, Vol. 23/2016 No. 6, pp. 566–581.