"Long Term Consequences of Language and Educational Options"

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Introduction and Purpose

- Early detection and intervention is crucial to fluent language acquisition for children born Deaf.

- Children who are born deaf *and their families* will benefit greatly from the ability to choose involvement in both the world of spoken languages and the world of sign languages

- We believe this is a global issue

What we will share

- Personal perspectives from a deaf daughter and a hearing mother

- Research that supports the need for exposure to both spoken and signed languages

- The concept of Social Capital – bridging and bonding

Erica's perspective:
Life in American Sign Language

- <u>Liberating</u>
  - Reflects an individual's values, capabilities, and needs.
  - Social capital: Your belongingness, happiness, emotional well-being, sense of place.

- <u>Bilingual Education</u>
  - Learning proceeds easily and comfortably.

- <u>Deaf Community</u>
  - The culture grows because of the community. The community grows because of the culture.

Every Door We Open

- **Timing is Critical: First Things First**
  - Families and children need to be exposed to their languages and worlds, therefore involve Deaf Mentors and Experts from the start.

- **Acceptance**
  - Sign language keeps all doors open and will give children who later become adults a community of peers which is essential for full acceptance of self

- **Social Capital**
  - Written languages, spoken languages, and sign languages give access to both hearing and deaf cultures.

Language is the key to your sense of self and relationship to others.

- A language clearly grants you *freedom* and *ability* to acknowledge and respond.

- Language is an asset, allowing an entrance into an incredibly *diverse, close, dynamic, and vibrant* global world.

"When parents do not follow their child's lead, the child is more likely to feel that their hearing loss is a deficiency rather than an asset."
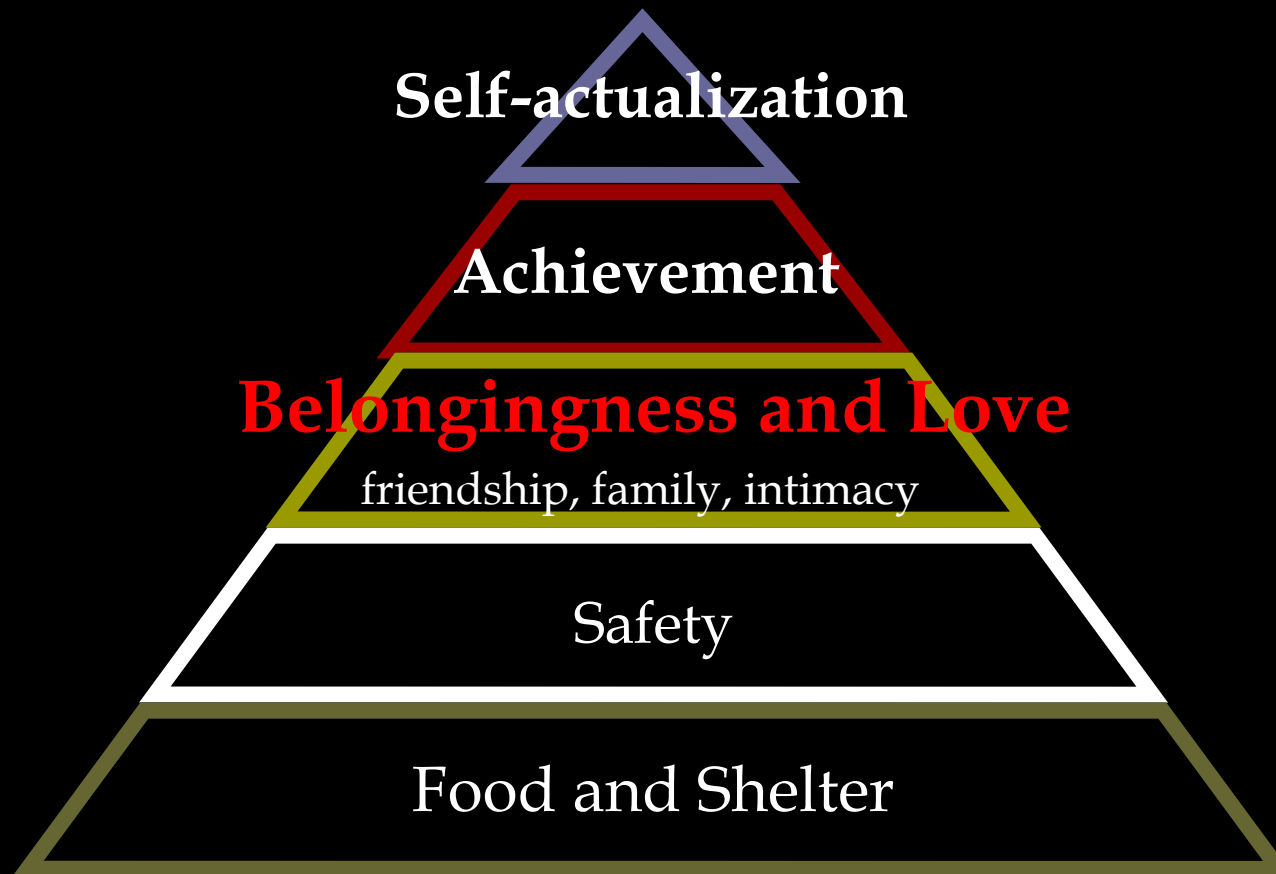
Theory and Research supporting acquisition of both spoken and signed languages

- General theories of Human Development, particularly adolescence

- Theory of Social Capital ("Bowling Alone")

- Reports of adult recollections and perspectives (I wish I'd had....)

- Reports of research in mainstream programs

Theory of Human Development,
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Self-actualization

Achievement

Belongingness and Love

friendship, family, intimacy

Safety

Food and Shelter

Memories from the mainstream:
Belongingness

- *"I thought I had a good life in middle/high school until I learned about deaf culture/language and my identity. I realized looking back all the years of emotion and frustration. When I entered [college].... I felt like I was home where I belong."*

- *"To this day, [attending this college] was the BEST decision of my life. My world changed there...It is also where I met my husband. Growing up, I never thought I would get married and have children." (Research Participant, Oliva, 2004)*

Theory of Human Development,
Erikson, 5th stage: Identity Development (12 – 22)

- "Ego Ideal" – Who will I be when I grow up?
  - Deaf/hoh/CI children need deaf/hoh/CI role models

- "Psychosocial mutuality"
  - My opinion of me = others' opinions of me

"A defining moment for Summer during YSP was [when] her D/deaf peers described her as 'really friendly, outgoing, and always bursting with ideas…
No longer was she in a community that defined her as a shy, self-conscious, nerdy girl." (Oliva and Lytle, 2006)

Racial Identity Development (Tatum)
"Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?"

- **"Pre-encounter Stage"** **(Pre K – grades 4/5)**
  - Minority children "breathe in" beliefs and values of the dominant culture – "it's better to be white"
  - And to value the role models, lifestyles, and images of beauty/success of the dominant culture.
- **Parallel: "it's better to be hearing"**
  - "I thought I should try as hard as possible to look like, act like, pretend to be, hearing" (*Research Participant, Oliva, 2004)*
- The feeling of being an "outsider" grows

Racial Development Theory:
Encounter Stage (Middle/High School)

- The child "encounters" events, situations, comments that reinforce different-ness and/or

  belonging to a minority/less valued group

- Example:

  - Teacher comments "you should be a great dancer"
  - African American girl tells a white friend – invalidation
  - African American girl tells an African American friend – validation

- Result: Bonding Social Capital

Encounter stage:
Mainstreamed Deaf "Tween"

- *I was also very much a loner, shy, and did not have any social experiences (or very minimal)…*

- *I did not know where I belonged; I struggled with depression and self-esteem issues…*

- *I believe some of these issues are because I did not feel valued by my peer group. All my relationships were with adults…*

- *I was eager to please them, but I needed peer relationships and the 'fun' of belonging. (Research Participant, Oliva, 2004)*

Racial Identity Theory:
Immersion; then Internalization

- Immersion: Individual surrounds him/herself with symbols of culture
  - "The deaf adults I meet are my teachers."
  - "The majority of my friends are hard of hearing - we provide emotional support to encourage each other to survive out there." (Research Participant, Oliva 2004)

- Internalization: A strong sense of self; establishes meaningful relationships across groups (bridging social capital)
  - "I cherish my deaf friends--we don't have to explain why we do this or that or why we feel this way or that way"
  - "I find myself involved in both worlds – hearing church, hearing health club, deaf sports, deaf events…" (Research Participant, Oliva, 2004)

Theory of Human Development: *Kleiber*
"The fourth environment" – Unstructured Leisure Contexts

- Critical to our sense of social support:
  - Coffee shops, bars, etc - where we go "just to talk.
  - This is where…
    - Belongingness and Love
    - Psychosocial mutuality
    - Ego Ideal and Identity Development HAPPEN
- Adolescents crave such environments:
  - *key element is absence of adults*
  - Malls, street corners, chat rooms
  - Hallways, locker rooms, cafeterias, school buses
- This is why
  - HoH and Deaf (and CI kids) talk about the barriers to these environments in all autobiographical accounts

Comments from former solitaire – *Fourth Environment*

- *"It was great to be involved (I raced on the swim team and played lacrosse and volleyball), but with this involvement came a lot of stress."*

- *"I always... missed out on team gossip in between drills (particularly in the pool when I couldn't wear my hearing aids),"*

- *"[I] always dreaded the team bus rides to meets because I could never follow all the chatter with all the noise on the bus (I would sit very quiet and feel invisible!)." (Oliva, 04)*

Research on Social Interaction, Acceptance, etc.   *among hoh and deaf school children*

- **<u>Keating and Mirus, 2003</u>**
  - Hearing – hearing interactions –
    - mostly >2 kids
    - often builds quickly to a multiparty interaction (3 + kids)
  - Deaf-hearing and deaf-deaf interactions = 2 kids
  - Deaf–hearing + one more hearing = deaf participant drops out

- **<u>Ramsey, 1997</u>**
  - Hearing-to-deaf: "directives and hints;" "caretaker talk"
  - "few parents of hearing children would judge sufficient for their own children the personal contact and peer interaction that was available…for the deaf second graders at [school]." (p. 74).

- **<u>Numerous others – See Reference/suggested reading</u>**

Gallaudet Freshmen, class of 2008 responses to:
Alone in the Mainstream

- *I felt like you were writing a story about my own mainstream experiences from kindergarten to high school…*

- *I went through so many similar experiences…*

- *Pretending I understood my classmates…*

- *Pretending I did not feel hurt when they said "it's nothing" or "I'll tell you later"…*

- *and laughing when everyone starts to laugh.*

- *It's really nice to know I wasn't the only one "alone in the mainstream," even if we solitaires are…*

- *Thousands of miles, and years apart.*

One more piece of evidence:
the adults' collective response

- Summer and weekend programs
  - Majority founded in last 15 years
- Labor of Love
  - Many founded/managed by volunteers or very low paid individuals
- When you ask them why they have done this work:
  - "to bring them together and show them what how they can benefit from [bonding social capital]" (Oliva, unpublished research)

Hearing Parent's Perspective:
What 22 years have taught me

- **First Contacts in Early Intervention make the most impact**

- **Seek your information from the "source"**
  - *Deaf Experts* and *Mentors.*

- **Deaf Mentorship is Critical in Early Intervention and currently there are only <u>two</u> states that practice this:** *Illinois and Minnesota*

The Current Limitations in Early Intervention

- No National State Model, No National Mentorship Program
- First Contacts, Intervention Training/Deaf-Hearing Ratios, Medical Models, Short Windows of Presentation Time.
- Consequences of a rushed presentation of language and options can lead to:
  - Language delays & non-fluency in any language
  - Families splitting along communication lines
  - Psychological and emotional separation during the teen years as deaf children become more identified with others using ASL
  - Adult separation from the family and problems dealing with illiteracy

Value of Mentorship

- The best information & experience I ever got was by going into a Deaf family's home and seeing with my own eyes.
  - Interactions with family members.
  - Technology

- Hearing families CAN learn sign language. Willingness to adapt and keep an open mind is critical is supporting a deaf child.

- Make priorities to both sign, spoken and written language accessible. Be flexible and follow the child lead.

Social Activities and Interaction

- Critical mass is essential. Similar language peers and role models are vital to all stages of development.

Critical Mass ⟶ Bonding Social Capital ⟶ Bridging Social Capital

- Seek interaction and activities with other Deaf families.
  - Summer and Weekend Programs

"Parents should be advised to take advantage of these in their great variety, every summer."

Parents and Professionals Roles

- Get the bulk of your information from the source (Deaf Professionals)
- Get Connected to Deaf Mentors.
- Be linked to resources that benefit the child.

"You don't have to be the expert but more importantly you direct yourself and network for support from those who are the experts."