
Social Capital for Deaf Children and their Families: The role of Summer Programs

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Social Capital Defined – Why we need to be concerned

- Social Capital: “Bowling Alone” (Putnam, 2000)
 - Networks of reciprocity and trust
 - Family, friends, classmates (any kind of class),
 - commuter train seatmates, bowling league
 - Tripoly group, various groups of co-workers, etc.

- Two kinds:
 - **Bonding social capital** - links people who are share some important characteristic “Sociological super glue”
 - **Bridging social capital** – links across differences “Sociological WD -40”

- Tweens (and teens) need: “Bonding Social Capital”
 - Where will HOH and Deaf Tweens and teens get it?

Bonding Social Capital and developmental theories

- Classical psychology (Maslow and Erikson)
 - Belongingness, Psychosocial mutuality

- Identity Development: “Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?” (Tatum, 1997)
 - Middle School Transition

- “4th Environment” – Kleiber
 - Beyond home, school, and work
 - The cafeteria, hallways, locker rooms, malls, street corners
 - Absence of adults a necessary factor

Social Capital Needs of Hard of Hearing and Deaf Children

- Of course, young HOH and Deaf Children need to bond with their families
- As they grow older, they need bonding social capital with peers and role models
- Where will they get this opportunity to bond with similar peers and role models?
- Thus, the importance of “immersion” summer and weekend programs

“Immersion Programs” – recognized by the ACA

- The American Camping Association recognizes the need for “immersion” as well as “inclusion” opportunities
- Commonly accepted Immersion Programs
 - Diabetes, Autism,
 - Cancer, Obesity, Behavioral Issues
- Clerc Center List
 - http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/Clerc_Center/Information_and_Resources/Info_to_Go/Resources/Summer_Camps_for_Deaf_and_Hard_of_Hearing_Children.html

Social Capital and Young Adults' retrospect:

- *"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, Alone in the Mainstream, 2004)*

Summer Crider - K-12 background and early summer camps

- Self Contained Classroom, Waldorf School, Lab School (UF), FSDB (high school)
- Public School Summer Day Camp
 - Focus on Art, the Art Teacher, “fantasy animals” (my “secret place”)
- Cochlear Implant Family Retreat
 - Begged my mom to drive me to [one girl’s] home to visit. She was the only peer I knew who was deaf and smart like me
 - She was oral, but knew sign language. Her parents were really strict about not signing (we “sneaked signing” in her room)
- Week long Basketball Camp at UF
 - “Hearing Impaired”
 - Good for Basketball, no social recollections

Summer Crider – Social Capital - Young Scholars Program (Age 14) (Gallaudet University)

- Many adolescents my age, who shared my interest in theatre - fascinating, cool, funny!
 - unlike many of the deaf kids I was exposed to earlier
- Confidence and self-esteem increased immediately!
- Totally New Experience!
 - transformed from a shy, reserved girl to an outgoing, funny, and eager-to-become-best-friends-with-everybody kind of girl.
 - Recorded every laugh, every moment in my journal/scrapbook
 - brought with me to school everyday in the following fall to show my interpreter – EVERY DAY!
- Even at only age 14, I knew this was about “belonging” and I didn’t “belong” as a shy, reserved girl “in the mainstream” only.
- Thus my decision to transfer to Florida School for the Deaf and Blind for my high school years.

Summer Crider – Social Capital

- ~~In the public school, my hearing classmates knew me as the quiet deaf girl. At FSDB, I transformed because there were no communication barriers~~
- Before attending YSP, I would work so hard trying to “fit in”. I always pretended laughing at jokes I didn’t understand. After YSP, I didn’t do that anymore because I knew that in the YSP environment, I had “social capital” with people who shared the same sense of humor.
- At my hearing schools, I’d run for officer positions just to be noticed or to prove that I could be a leader. After YSP, I knew what my passions were and focused my energies in those areas. If not for YSP, I would still be focused on “proving myself.”

Rachel Berman – K-12 and Summer Camps

- Mainstreamed all my life as “the only one”
 - Many extra curricular activities
 - Middle school – started feeling communication barriers
- Clarke School Summer Program – Mom’s idea
 - “peers like me” (oral) -An “equal playing field”
 - Still connected to some of the people I met there; not connected to any kids from my public school years
 - Always sad to leave at end of session!!!
- Aspen Camp for the Deaf
 - Signing camp “Let me outa here!”
 - Deep self understanding – My life changed!!!
- Today: VP of GSA
 - I DO have leadership ability (never thought I did)!!

Rachel Berman – Social Capital

- The social capital that came from being surrounded by deaf role models during my camp years led me to this point.
- I truly believe that the best way to grow and find your identity is by being with others like you
 - it gives us the coping skills needed to get through our frustrations of being the "only one"
 - And a sense of comfort that you have a place and support system to fall back
- Social Capital – a “place” where there is no need to “explain” your “limitations”

Research Study on Summer and Weekend Programs – 2005 - 2008

- Survey of Summer Camps
- Observation at 12 summer and weekend programs
- Interviews with more than 50 managers/counselors
- Interviews with 14 former campers (retrospect)
- Half founded prior 1976; Half after 1995
- About 75% of the responding camps were “strong ASL camps” who advertised mostly within the signing community
- All of the former campers expressed great regard for their experiences

Most important (general) findings:

- All are Labors of Love (more than half founded since 1995)
- Most are so busy just keeping the programs alive that they have no time for evaluation, training, networking, be more intentional
- Are a drop in the bucket
- But the children (now adults) will attest to their value in no uncertain terms

What can you do?

- Educate families early – learn more yourself about the struggles of the adolescent years esp for hard of hearing youngsters
- Encourage them to plan to involve their family in planning for many summers
- Develop programs for families (summer, weekend, after school)
 - Educational
 - Recreational
 - Get them started early with family programs
 - Plan for local, regional, and statewide funding
 - Get these programs on the IEPs routinely
- If you are affiliated with an academic institution, encourage more research

Summer Camp references

- Clerc Center list of summer camps
 - http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/Clerc_Center/Information_and_Resources/Info_to_Go/Resources/Summer_Camps_for_Deaf_and_Hard_of_Hearing_Children.html
- American Camping Association
 - www.acacamps.org

References and Suggested Reading

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- Oliva, G. (2004). *Alone in the Mainstream: A Deaf Woman Remembers Public School*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.
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- Tatum, B. D. (1997). *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* New York, NY: Basic Books; Perseus Books Group.