ON BECOMING:
DEVELOPING AN EMPOWERING CULTURAL IDENTITY FRAMEWORK FOR DEAF YOUTH AND ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an historical review and synthesizes formative research on identity development of youth and adults. Authors provide an overview of the published research evidence on patterns and processes impacting minority identity development among varied cultural minority groups. In addition, stages of minority identity development pertaining to "Deafhood" as Deaf youth transition from childhood to adolescence and into adulthood are highlighted. Included are stages of identity development in majority youth as they relate to the interface with minority youth development.

The research summarizes theories and findings in the disciplines of social psychology, psycholinguistics, socio-linguistics, and education to examine the domains of social, emotional, cognitive, and linguistic development.

The article concludes by establishing a framework that applies to Deaf as well as to other cultural minority groups in Ontario.

This research synthesis and consequent framework can inform broad principles and a trajectory that promotes positive cultural identity development for all youth. Policy implications are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

> *"In mainstream settings, the trend is towards cochlear implants. But it must be remembered that cochlear implants do not make a Deaf person hearing. When the person with an implant comes to this realization it is too late. Deaf students in mainstreamed settings have few opportunities to discover their true cultural identity and this has profound and life-long consequences. We know that language is integral to this cultural identity. We talk about providing 'choices' for Deaf students, but we (parents, educators and policy makers) are, in fact, limiting their freedom to be who they really are. Research demonstrates that being deprived of this cultural identity has a direct impact on language development and mental health. In many ways, we have crossed into the danger zone."*

> Betty McPhee, Teacher of Deaf students, Northern Secondary School, Ontario[i]

1

Terms of Reference and Statistics

Identity development becomes a particularly important area of study related to Deaf children, youth and adults who find themselves in the minority in their environment.

Statistics demonstrate a clear trend away from Provincial Schools for the Deaf which provide a sign language environment toward "mainstreaming" Deaf children in Ontario and across Canada. "Mainstreaming" refers to Deaf children attending hearing public schools where they are in the minority. In mainstream environments Deaf children are primarily placed in auditory oral programs with hearing students where only spoken language is used. They have little or no access to Deaf role models, few Deaf peers, no or minimal access (through an interpreter) to sign language, no access to the history of Deaf people, Deaf arts or literature. Some of these programs have self-contained classes with Deaf students together in one classroom within the public school. Some self-contained classes use signs to support spoken language. Most of these programs do not provide a natural signed language with its own vocabulary, grammar and social rules of use – American Sign Language (ASL) or langue des signes quebecoise (LSQ).[ii]

Results of a longitudinal Ontario study by Akamatsu, Musselman and Zweibel (2000), demonstrated that 93% of Deaf children were initially enrolled in auditory oral programs. By preschool, 67% were educated orally; by elementary, 58% were educated orally; and by adolescence only 31% were educated orally. This shows a 62% shift from oral programs in the early preschool years for Deaf children to signing programs for Deaf adolescents.

More recent statistics demonstrate a continuation and escalation of a trend towards this auditory oral approach. Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services' (MCYS) Infant Hearing Program (IHP) Cumulative Report from the implementation of the IHP program in November 2001 until March 2009 demonstrates the following: of 1,577 babies identified as Deaf, 1,150 received auditory verbal therapy (AVT); 50 were in dual programs (both AVT and ASL); and 122 were enrolled in ASL programs. Most recent statistics (2010) demonstrate 588 newly-discovered Deaf babies and their families received AVT; four families were enrolled in dual programs; and 15 were in ASL programs (MCYS, 2010).

Over 4,300 Deaf students (junior kindergarten to grade 12) currently attend schools in Ontario. Less than 350 or 8% of all Deaf students attend the Provincial Schools for Deaf students in Ontario. Those students receive their education in ASL/English or LSQ/ French. 97% of Deaf students attending local public school board programs are in oral education programs (Malkowski, 2011).

The current statistics across Canada are even more dramatic, with 99% of Deaf children (junior kindergarten to grade 12) enrolled in mainstream school board programs; less than 1% attending Provincial Schools for Deaf students; and 96% of Deaf students in oral-English education programs. (Malkowski, 2010).

With this large proportion of Deaf students mainstreamed as a cultural minority group within school board programs in Ontario, the issue of minority identity development becomes particularly pertinent.

In examining minority identity development we must also consider the data on literacy amongst Deaf Ontarians. 52% of Deaf Ontarians have a low level of skills in document literacy compared to 38% of the general population (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1998).

University attendance and employment today among Deaf youth and young adults is significantly lower than among their hearing counterparts and lower than a decade ago. These realities result in barriers in adulthood, such as to professional employment. A study by Woodcock and Pole (2008) used data from the Canada Community Health Survey 1.1, which was a cross-sectional survey conducted by Statistics Canada with a total of 131,535 respondents. Their findings revealed that Deaf respondents were more likely to have achieved less education and less likely to be working than their hearing counterparts.

Unique Cultural Circumstance of Deaf Children

We refer to Deaf children and youth as members of a cultural minority group by virtue of their having been born Deaf. We operate on the premise that it is a Deaf child's birthright to have access to a visual sign language and to the history, literature, values, and norms that they share with others like them just as other cultural minority groups have.

We also take the position that embracing a minority identity is desirable for reasons well articulated below:

> *"... [It is important to] help to break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies; national unity, if it's to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions... It can form the base of a society which is based on fair play for all".*
>
> Pierre Elliott Trudeau, 1984

As already noted, recent statistics from the Infant Hearing Program in Ontario, Ministry of Children and Youth Services (Weber, 2010) indicate that only 3% of families identified with Deaf infants in 2009 and 2010 received access to signed language, exposure to a Deaf adult, and to Deaf culture.

This is largely due to the fact that many hearing parents choose cochlear implants for their Deaf children because they believe it will make their children part of the majority (which they see as good for their futures) rather than part of a minority (which they see as limiting their future opportunities). The assumption is that the more "hearing-like" their child can be, the more opportunities that will be open to them. To receive a cochlear implant in the province of Ontario, the parents must commit the child to be engaged in auditory verbal therapy (AVT), which – often based on hospital policies – precludes their exposure to ASL.

These practices and policies are rooted in the deficit model of the child as "disabled", which the child internalizes as inferiority. It also has the effect of reducing or delaying Deaf children's full language competence, which has profound implications for their identity development.

As a result, 97% of Deaf children in Ontario will enter schools in our province with no early access to their own fully accessible signed language or to Deaf culture. This presents an increased stress on Deaf children's early cultural identity development which is particular to this minority population because approximately 90% of Deaf children are born to hearing parents. Most other students of minority culture backgrounds enter school with a foundation of their families' particular cultural identity, which is also their own. For Deaf children this is not the case when their parents are hearing. Deaf children's cultural identity is passed down through other adult members of the Deaf community and shared with their peers. It may also be passed across peers by Deaf children with Deaf parents.

For other minority youth, who enter school with a sense of their minority culture imbued through family relationships, the challenge is to navigate their own minority cultural identity as they are enculturated in school. An obviously strong example of discordant cultural identity of the education system with the identity of the minority cultural group is in the case of Aboriginal children. Historically, Aboriginal children have been removed from their natural cultural group with their families and community at home and placed in residential programs for the expressed purpose of assimilation. Aboriginal children who were deprived of access to their language and culture are seen today as victims of a crime. Deaf children are still being denied their natural language and culture but this is not generally recognized as an injustice.

For Deaf students, Provincial Schools provide the opportunity for children to live and learn within their native language and culture. Deaf children who have gone to Provincial Schools have found themselves immersed in a culture that is naturally theirs by virtue of the number of Deaf students, teachers, administrators, and counselors with whom they were readily able to interact.

Over the past decades, placement in Provincial Schools for Deaf children has dwindled significantly, yet we do not recognize that this denies Deaf children their language and culture and deprives them of a rich immersive experience.

Irene Leigh (2009) describes the journey Deaf individuals take as they try to find their niche. She argues that identity formation is largely a product of enculturation based on the family and community one grows up with as Urie Bronfenbrenner (1990) posits in his model of social development described later in this article.

For Deaf people who are socialized early on in the Deaf world, a sense of Deaf peoplehood, or "belonging" to the Deaf community, permeates who they are. However, as already described, most Deaf people are "born into a non-Deaf world where the language of family and the community is not fully accessible" (Leigh, 2009). They are constantly confronted by a disability perspective of who they are. They are therefore constantly trying to figure out their identity, how they can fit in, and whom they should emulate.

Many Deaf people who grow up in a non-Deaf world eventually learn about the Deaf world and American Sign Language, but their process of identity formation is not straightforward as they try to find a niche for themselves (Kuntze, 2010). This identity navigation through time, and emerging impact of the Deaf community on Deaf identity as Deaf individuals enter college and are exposed to other Deaf members and sign language, is a common theme found by many researchers (Najarian, 2007).

Understanding the developmental pathways of Deaf youth can identify supports and opportunities they require to transition successfully from the middle school years through adolescence and into productive adulthood.

Risk Factors

There is a dearth of statistical research studies on Deaf children, their identity and mental health development but the anecdotal evidence is compelling.

> *"Stats for children are hard to come by, but . . . for almost all CONNECT clients [seen as adults for mental health issues], who were language- and identity-deprived, [their mental health issues] could have been prevented in childhood. The only clients who do not have language deprivation issues are Deaf children of Culturally Deaf parents. Even Deaf children of Deaf parents may have identity issues, as they try to figure out how they fit into a hearing world.......but less so, if they belong to the Deaf Community.*
>
> *"We can safely predict that many/most clients with cochlear implants will have language delays and certainly identity issues."*

> Karen Frayn, M.S.W., R.S.W.,
> Director, CONNECT Counseling Services
> The Canadian Hearing Society[iii]

The risks are clear: Deaf Ontarians have lower literacy levels; fewer Deaf students continue to post-secondary education; preventable mental health issues persist; and the barriers created continue into adulthood in un- and under-employment. These risk factors, statistics on the current educational situation of Deaf children as a minority group in Ontario, taken together with their unique cultural circumstance all provide persuasive justification to explore minority identity formation of Deaf children as they transition from childhood to adulthood.

METHODOLOGY

General Review of the Literature: Identity

Our review of the literature first focused on seminal works over the last 40 years related to general models of identity development. These works had a major influence on our thinking

about identity among a variety of cultural minority groups. Theoretical perspectives include the fields of social psychology, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and education.

Interviews

Our research included an interview on mentorship efficacy with Karen Shaver, Vice President of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada; an interview on identity formation and identity text efficacy with Dr. Jim Cummins, bilingual expert; correspondence on social ground theory with Dr. Richard Dart, school psychologist with Deaf students; correspondence on identity development among Deaf individuals with Dr. Cathy Chovaz, Deaf psychologist; correspondence on statistics of Deaf children and youth in Ontario with Gary Malkowski, Special Advisor to the President, Public Affairs, at The Canadian Hearing Society and the first Deaf MPP in Ontario.

Review of the Literature: Positive Impacts and Deaf Identity

The literature review highlights findings related to Deaf children, youth, and adults as well as to other cultural minority groups. Much of the literature cited is *descriptive* of identity development but the authors placed additional emphasis on literature that is not only descriptive but also that demonstrates positive impacts on developmental trajectories.

Findings were used to establish a new and more comprehensive framework that actively supports identity development. The framework applies to Deaf youth as well as other cultural minority groups.

DESCRIPTIVE MODELS OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT: HISTORICAL REVIEW

Early Social and Identity Development Perspectives

Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Model

Renowned psychologist Erik Erikson posited the eight stages of psychosocial development from infancy to adulthood (Clarke-Stewart, et al, 1988). Each stage builds on the previous stage and the stages were intended to be chronological. Stages were identified as follows with identity development highlighted during adolescence (Erikson, 1968):

Hope:	Trust vs. Mistrust	(Infants, 0 to1 year)
Will:	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt	(Toddlers, 2 to 3 years)
Purpose:	Initiative vs. Inferiority	(Preschool, 4 to 6 years)
Competence:	Industry vs. Inferiority	(Childhood, 7 to 11 years)
Fidelity:	Identity vs. Role Confusion	(Adolescents, 12 to 19 years)
Love:	Intimacy vs. Isolation	(Young adults, 25 to 45 years)
Care:	Generativity vs. Stagnation	(Middle Adulthood, 45 to 65 years)

Wisdom:　　　Ego Integrity vs. Despair　　　(Seniors, 65 years onwards)

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner, co-founder of Head Start, presented an ecological systems theory of social development now termed "bio-ecological systems theory" to recognize the complex "layers" of the environment that interplay with a child's own biological development.

Bronfenbrenner identified the microsystem as bi-directional relationships and interactions of the child with his immediate family, school, and neighborhood (Berk, 2000). The interaction of structures within an environmental "layer" and interactions of structures between layers is key to his theory. Interactions at outer layers or contexts can also impact the inner contexts.

The mesosystem refers to the impact of the inter-connections of the child's microsystem (Berk, 2000) such as between the child's teacher and his parents, between his cultural community and his neighborhood, etc.

The exosystem defines the larger social system that impacts the child, such as workplace policies that impact parents' schedules.

The macrosystem incorporates cultural values, customs, and laws (Berk, 2000) and impacts all other layers of Bronfenbrenner's model.

Finally, the chronosystem refers to time as it relates to the child's environment. It can refer to the child's chronological age or to the timing of specific events. Children may be particularly vulnerable or resilient at different times in their lives and thus respond differently to the same event depending on when it occurs in their development.

According to Bronfenbrenner's theory (1990), children rely on the relationships in the immediate microsystem to establish the foundation to explore other parts of their environment. Children missing affirmation in the child/parent or child/other significant adult relationship may seek attention in other inappropriate ways. These deficiencies show themselves especially in adolescence as anti-social behavior, lack of self-discipline, and inability to provide self-direction (Addison, 1992).

Bronfenbrenner and Addison highlight the potent impact of the environment on the child's evolving state of being.
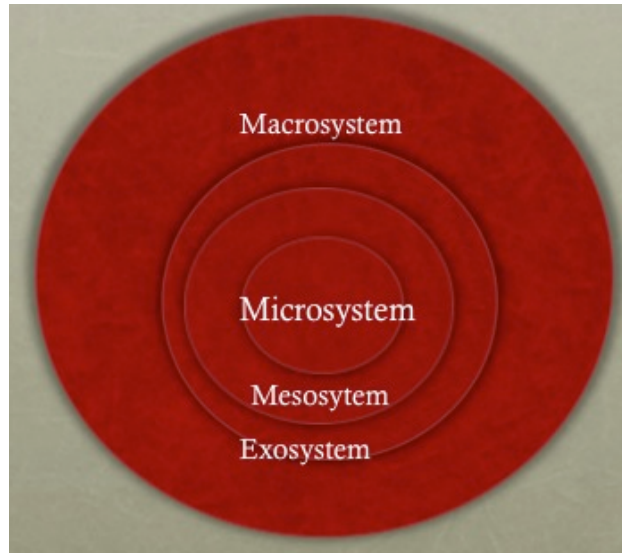
Figure 1. Bio-ecological Systems Theory
Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Berk, 2000

Identity: Development Frameworks

Kurt Lewin's Social Ground Theory

Social psychologist Kurt Lewin posited the theory of "social ground" as early as 1939.[iv] He proposed that an individual's behavior is determined by their perception of their objective environment and their personal relation to it.

"A person's social ground is the understanding that he or she is an individual who is also a part of a wider minority social grouping. This concept applies to all people of every culture, religion and racial group. Children [and youth] in general, need to be equipped with the knowledge of who they are in a historical, [social] and cultural context [and to have that acknowledged]. When children are not allowed to know, understand and accept their social ground, they may feel isolated. [In contrast], social ground literally "grounds" the child by providing the background which relates specifically to him or her"[v] (Cripps, 2000).

Lewin's Social Ground Theory has evolved into "minority identity development theory" over the decades. While early social development theories were chronological, minority identity development theories tend to be experientially-based. Like Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems model, they clearly acknowledge the role of individual development as well as the impact of the environment in describing successive stages of development.

Most notable is the work of Cross and Helms.

Cross' and Helms' Minority and Majority Identity Development Theory

In the early 1990's Cross described minority identity development and Helms described majority identity development as it impacted race relations among African-American and Caucasian students (Tatum, 1992).

These frameworks were examined and found to be extremely useful when applied to cross-cultural interaction among Deaf and hearing educators in the first bilingual schools for Deaf students in the United States (Grace, O'Donnell and Staver, 1989; Philip and Small, 1992). They were later adapted by Small (2000) for bilingual bicultural Deaf education teacher training at York University.

The framework applied to Deaf youth follows the course of identity development of students from pre-encounter with their own minority group (and an implicit assumption that the majority is better) to internalization of their own cultural identity seen as a strength (and as a point of departure to discover the world).

In Cross' and Helms' models, minority and majority individuals cycle through these stages and sometimes re-cycle through them. It is important to note scenarios that may occur when individuals naturally interact with each other as they go through majority and minority identity development. For example, an individual from the majority in the Pseudo-independent stage will be inclined to want to be with individuals from the minority while perhaps still unintentionally perpetuating racism. If that person interacts with a minority individual in the Immersion/Emersion stage who is inclined to wish to be only with other minority individuals, the two will in all probability, clash. However, both are progressing along in their identity development and at some future time could collaborate beautifully with one another to eradicate racism in their midst and promote an empowering educational environment" (Small and Cripps, 2009).

Minority Identity Development

Stages	Values	Strategies
Pre-Encounter	Think majority is better	Think minority has nothing to do with his personal life
Encounter	Events force him to confront racism	Forced to focus on his identity as a member of minority
Immersion/Emersion	Denigrate majority and glorify minority	Surround with symbols of minority identify and avoid symbols of majority
Internalization	Secure in minority identity	Build relation with majority who respect
Internalization/ Commitment	Commitment; proactively recognize and go past oppression	Point of departure to discover universe

Figure 2. Minority Identity development adapted by Small, A. (Cross, 1992)

Majority Identity Development

Stages	Values	Strategies
Contact	Lack of awareness of cultural and institutional racism and own privilege	Stereotypes
Disintegration	Awareness and guilt, shame, anger, cognitive dissonance	Denial or attempt to change significant other's attitudes of minority group; withdrawal
Reintegration	Pressure to accept status quo	Guilt and anxiety redirected as fear and anger at minority; blame minority for discomfort
Pseudo-independent	Abandon beliefs but may still unintentionally perpetuate system	Actively affiliate with minority and/or alienated from majority who haven't begun to examine their own racism
Immersion/ Emersion	Uncomfortable being white; can't be anything else	Seek to learn from white anti-racists
Autonomy	Newly defined sense of self	Energized to confront racism/oppression; can forge alliances because more consistent anti-racist behaviour

Figure 3. Majority identity development adapted by Small, A. (Helms, 1992)

Majority identity development impacts minority identity development as students interface with each other and as educators interface with their students. The framework can be used to examine our assumptions as policy makers, educators, health professionals, linguists, etc. as we make decisions about the educational environments we create in the school system in which the minority child finds himself. Minority and majority peers can also use this framework to examine the stage they are in as they interface with each other as well as with the adults in their lives.

These frameworks are useful in describing the stages of minority and majority identity development. They provide great insight for individuals studying and working in multicultural systems. Rather than being chronologically-based, these identity models are based on a progression of values as individuals are impacted by their environment.

However, these models do not shed light on which environmental experiences have a positive impact on individuals to progress from one stage to another. For this, we turn to another body of research.

BEYOND DESCRIPTIVE MODELS:

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

There is a need to identify how children and adults grow from one stage to another so that the models are not only descriptive but rather, prescriptive. The next section of this article sets out to identify features that empower students to grow in their identity, progressing from stage to stage in the process of "becoming".

Kambon's Affirmative Model

Richardson et al (2010) point out that the minority identity development framework by Cross and others focused on minority identity developed in reaction to an oppressive environment only and ignored natural identity development within a more nurturing environment.

Kambon (1998) proposed that Black minority identity as well as Black collective behavior and personality could be examined from an Africentric framework (Richardson, et al 2010, pg. 233). Kambon outlined "African self-extension" and "African self-consciousness" as important developmental components.

"African self-extension" refers to interconnecting energy that enables people of African origin to transcend their individual experience and connect on a communal level. One might think of this as a "collective memory" that fortifies and binds the individual to his ancestors and to his current cultural group.

"Self-consciousness" allows full expression of the collective psychological or communal experience. When nurtured, the individual exudes and affirms their Black American life and their African heritage (Richardson et al, 2010). The four characteristics of self-consciousness are:

a) awareness of cultural identity,
b) recognition of survival priorities and of the need for cultural institutions that affirm cultural life,
c) participation in pro-active development of peoplehood, and
d) recognition of the detrimental effects of oppression (Baldwin and Bell, 1985 in Richardson et al, 2010).

In contrast to a reactive developmental framework, Kambon's model provides an important contribution that affirms positive collective self-identity. According to Kambon's model, cultural identity need not be affirmed in relation to the majority. Healthy cultural identity, particularly for minority cultural groups, can and must be affirmed in relation to their own collective positive experience.

One must therefore turn to research evidence on nurturing environments that promote positive cultural identity – as well as contexts that hamper positive identity development – in order to develop a comprehensive minority identity development framework.

Interactions and Expectations

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reports that classroom observation data with Hispanic and Anglo students indicate that teachers demonstrate positive interactions with Anglo students 34% more than with their Hispanic students (Cummins, 2011).

Furthermore, Rosenthal and Jacobson demonstrated in the 1960's the now famous "Rosenthal Effect", where teacher expectations of students determined student outcomes. These findings have been replicated many times over the decades (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968/1992).

Stereotype Threat

There is a series of studies demonstrating that self-image plays a role in task cognitive performance. In the 1990's, social psychologist, Claude Steele, posited that when an individual's social identity is connected to a negative stereotype, the individual tends to underperform in keeping with the stereotype. Spencer, Steele and Quinn (1999) found that when students in a research study were told that the reason for the study was mathematical, Asian women did better, yet when told the reason is to look at gender differences in math, the women did worse.

Given the research findings on the significant role of self-image on performance of children, youth, and adults, it is important to delineate positive influences on self-image and cultural identity in academic contexts.

Identity Texts: Language and Literacy

"Identity text" creation is a powerful academic tool to enable marginalized students to develop "identities of competence" (Manyak, 2004) in school. The term "identity texts" describes students' creative work and/or performances produced within the classroom and promoted by classroom teachers. Students share their identities as they develop their texts, which can be written, spoken, signed, visual, musical, dramatic, or combinations in multimodal form (Cummins and Early, in press, 2011). The identity text becomes a mirror reflecting students' identities back to them and for others to appreciate. When students share identity texts with multiple audiences (peers, teachers, family, sister classes, the media, etc.) they are likely to gain affirmation of self as they engage with their audience (Cummins and Early, in press, 2011, ch.1, pg. 7).

Identity texts have been a major focus in the Multiliteracies Project (Cummins and Early, in press, 2011). The Multiliteracies Project involves several university-based researchers, graduate students, and teachers in action research projects with students from kindergarten to high school to explore notions of multiliteracies. The project website[vi] provides descriptions of projects and showcases student work. Their findings indicate that the creation of dual-language identity texts by bilingual students has had a significant impact on students' self-image as well as on the quality of their learning. "Identity text creation:

- encouraged students to connect new information and skills to their background

- knowledge,
  - enabled students to produce more accomplished literacy work in the school language,
  - increased student awareness of the specialized language of school subjects,
  - affirmed students' identities as intelligent, imaginative and linguistically talented, and
  - increased student awareness of the relationships between their home language (L1) and the school language (L2)" (Cummins and Early, in press, 2011, ch. 3).

Similarly, a hub at Ryerson University's School of Early Childhood Education is conducting multiple studies demonstrating the positive impact of maintaining the child's first language and minority cultural identity on the child's overall first and second language acquisition and performance (Chumak-Orbatsch, 2008). Judith Bernhard,[vii] also publishing out of Ryerson University, demonstrates a statistically significant positive effect on pre-reading when preschool children have received affirmation about both language and identity from teachers, parents and others..

Clement et al (in press, 2011) report results from a creative writing class in a Mexican prison that demonstrate the power of identity texts even among adults. In their bilingual poetry, prison inmates envisioned alternate futures, self-constructing, imagining and expressing their identities beyond the prison walls (Kanno and Norton, 2003; Purcell-Gates, 2007).

In *Authors in the Classroom* Ada and Campoy (2004) document a myriad of pedagogical ideas for connecting students' identities to authorship. They describe a process by which authorship in educational settings can become a transformative event in the lives of students and their teachers.

Identity text creation is one empowering pedagogical tool for creating a minority cultural context and one method for transforming students and teachers. Thus, "both students and teachers are in a 'becoming' mode and the interactions they experience together shape their process of becoming (Cummins and Early, in press, 2011, pg. 12)". The setting can be as diverse as an elementary or high school classroom, as described by Cummins and Early (in press, 2011), a prison, as described in the Clement et al study (in press, 2011), universities, or employment settings.

Moje and Luke (2009) review the research highlighting how views of literacy impact identity and how views of identity impact literacy. This interaction is consistent with the effect of identity texts on both the learner and the teacher. Clearly, the writing *process* becomes greater than the *product*.

In examining the process of identity text development, Cummins and Early (in press, 2011) draw upon the work of Skourtou, Kourtis-Kazoullis and Cummins (2006) to describe a progression of three pedagogical approaches for identity text development:

1) First is a transmission-oriented approach which is the most narrow in focus. It aims simply to transmit the knowledge and skills required in the curriculum. It may acknowledge the child's cultural background but this is not viewed as an intrinsically important part of the exchange.

2) The social constructivist approach draws on higher order thinking. Pedagogy is experiential and collaborative. Both teacher and student co-construct meaning. The child is an active co-participant in their learning.
3) The transformative pedagogical approach focuses on critical inquiry and social action as an integral part of the curriculum. It broadens the focus to examine with the child, the interplay of knowledge and power. The child is encouraged to apply his or her experience to analyze and impact the power relations in his or her life. This pedagogical approach encourages students to apply what is learned in an active way for meaning-making and to transform their lives and their environment.

They view these three approaches as nested within each other so that a transformative approach builds on both the transmission-oriented and social constructivist approach in the classroom.

This multi-layered pedagogical approach proposed by Skourtou, Kourtis-Kazoulis and Cummins is in keeping with the three broad literacy levels identified by Freire and Macedo (1987). Freire and Macedo's model progresses from the narrow functional level of literacy to the cultural level of literacy and then incorporates an analytic literacy level.

- The functional level deals with decoding and meaning-making.
- The cultural level takes into account the cultural messages in literature. It ensures students' ability to analyze the cultural messages inherent in the literature they read and to play an active role incorporating their own culture and identity in their writing.
- Critical literacy focuses on the connections between literature and power relations just as the transformative pedagogical approach is intended to encourage students to critique, analyze and use literature as a means to act upon their environment and transform their lives.

Freire and Macedo, who were concerned about empowering pedagogy, described the important role of educators in encouraging all three levels of literacy. Thus, identity texts and this process of literacy development become empowering tools for students to impact their environment and transform their lives.

Role Models and Mentorship

"Every child needs an adult that is irrationally crazy about them."

Urie Bronfenbrenner

The importance of social acceptance and affirmation is widely recognized amongst academics in a variety of fields, including social psychology, sociolinguistics, education, etc. Mentorship can be a means of providing social acceptance and affirmation.

Research on mentoring programs by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada (Karcher and Nakkula, 2010) is not only examining efficacy of mentoring programs but also examining the features of effective mentoring relationships. This research can provide insight into the positive role mentors can play in identity formation.

Many effective mentor relationships with minority youth – including gay, depressed, African American, and Hispanic – are cross-ethnic in the U.S. (Shaver, 2011). Perhaps contrary to intuition, researchers have found that same race or culture is not the defining characteristic of effective mentor relationships (Jacovy, 2002). While there are different outcomes for same race versus cross-race matching, none are better or worse. In other words, findings suggest that race in and of itself does not determine the effectiveness of a mentoring relationship.

"Measuring Reach" highlights the elements needed for a strong mentor relationship and mentor program as part of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada Mentoring Research Agenda 2008-2018"[viii] These elements include training, structured activities, parental support, parental involvement, and best practices.

A review of 55 evaluations by David Dubois et al (2002) of the effects of mentoring programs on youth provide evidence of effective outcomes when theory-based and empirically-based "best practices" are utilized and when strong relationships are formed between mentors and youth. Youth from backgrounds of environmental risk and disadvantage appear most likely to benefit from participation in mentoring programs. However, poorly implemented programs actually have an *adverse* effect on such youth. (Dubois et al, 2002).

Research evidence from mentorship studies indicates that the most effective mentorships all have the features of shared, goal-oriented interactions with youth in active, participatory roles in decision-making and negotiating activities (Karcher and Nakkula, 2010). These features have in common student "agency": the youth is empowered as "agent" of his own actions and can effect change on his own environment. Collaborative, mutually negotiated activity styles were consistently found to be more effective than unilateral decision-making of either the mentor or mentee. Little comment was made on reciprocal negotiations (where mentor and mentee took turns doing what they wished).

Findings also consistently suggested the benefits of goal-directed (instrumental) activities for adolescents in high school over purely social interactions. These were collaborative relationships where activities focused on shared goals or competence.

The findings in these mentoring social relationships is in keeping with the findings related to identity texts. What is consistently effective is that the child or youth is valued for what he brings from his own experience.

Findings on all of these environmental factors must be included in an updated model of minority identity development that goes beyond the descriptive models. Children, youth, and adults are in a constant state of emerging identity or "becoming" as they interact with those around them. An updated framework of minority identity development must include these nurturing features for a more comprehensive prescriptive framework.

We first turn to the literature on Deaf minority identity development. Findings from the literature of this cultural group can expand on learnings from other cultural minority groups.

DEAF MINORITY IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Deafhood

In 1990, British Deaf Ph.D, Paddy Ladd, coined the term "Deafhood" "to begin the process of defining an existential state of Deaf 'being in the world' " (Ladd, 2003). "Deafhood" refers to Deaf identity and is a sharp contrast to the medical term "deafness". "Deafness" assumes a loss and has been broadly applied to all Deaf people, as has the term "hearing impaired", which initially referred primarily to "hard of hearing" elderly adults and rendered the true nature of Deaf collective existence invisible. "Deafness" and "hearing impaired" also imply a deficit, which "Deafhood" does not.

The notion of "Deafhood" relates to Lewin's theory of "social ground". The Deaf individual determines his sense of connection with the understanding that he is part of a broader social minority grouping.

"Deafhood" also relates to Bronfenbrenner's theory of the impact of the external system on identity development.

Ladd's framework for "Deafhood" defines Deaf individuals according to their collective heritage and affirmation of self. This is in keeping with Kambon's model. As described in Kambon's model, cultural identity need not be affirmed or determined in relation to the majority. So too, Ladd emphasizes that a healthy Deaf identity must be affirmed in relation to an individual's own Deaf collective positive experience.

Like Kambon's model that fortifies the individual with his collective African heritage, Ladd's model of "Deafhood" fortifies the Deaf individual to address and combat "audist" attitudes. "Audism" is a term referring to the devaluing of the language and culture of Deaf people. "Audism" assumes a superiority of speaking and hearing and promotes a "deafness" or medical/deficit perspective of Deaf individuals. In contrast, anti-audist attitudes would not only stop the devaluing of Deaf individuals and their signed language but would also encourage environments that promote "Deafhood" – the collective minority – as a rich resource in our society (Small and Cripps, 2009).

According to Ladd's model, "Deafhood" is defined "not as a finite state but as a process by which Deaf individuals come to actualize their Deaf identity" (Ladd, 2003). As Deaf individuals (from birth or later in life) construct their identity as Deaf people within society, Deaf collective existence – "Deafhood" – emerges as a resource for the individual and society. Ladd (2003) identifies stages from a deficit dimensional stage through a human rights dimension, a linguistic minority dimension and finally to a "Deafhood" dimension including identification with a collective culture, history, literature and arts.
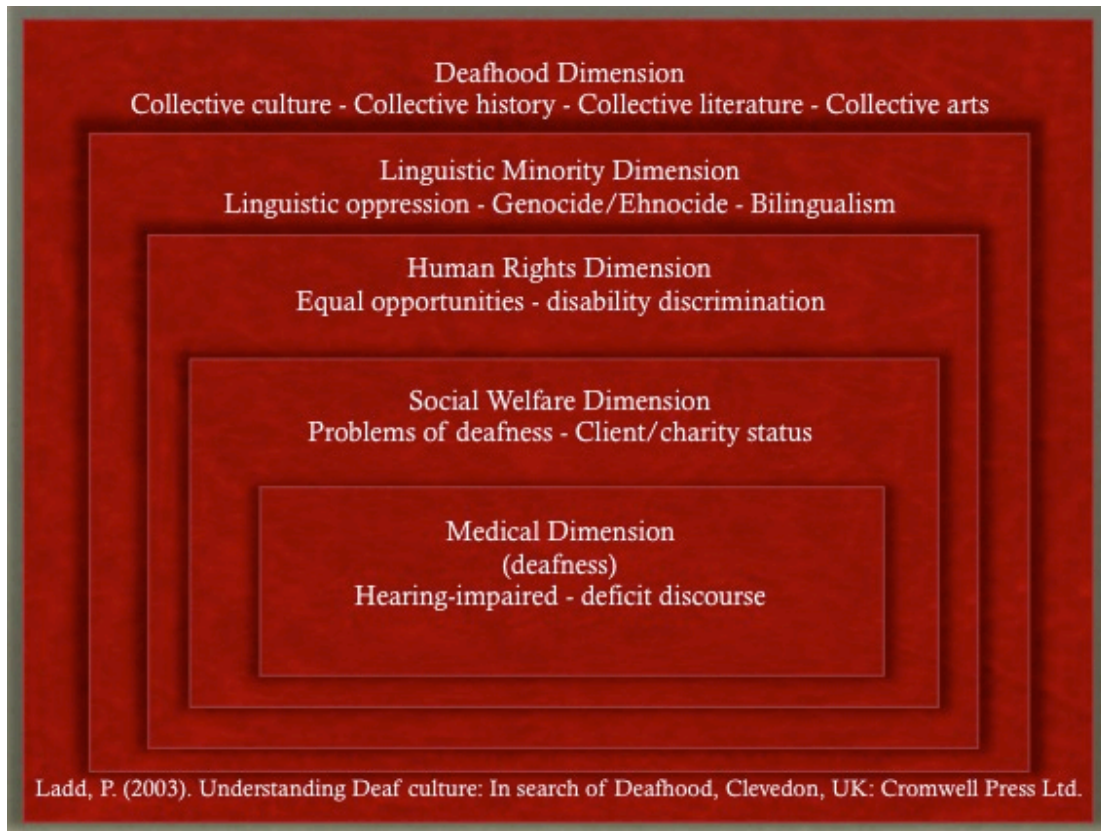
Figure 4. Dimensional stages from deafness to Deafhood, including terminology associated with each stage (Ladd, 2003, p.170).

Just as a general framework for minority identity development must encompass "peoplehood", as Kambon and others assert, so a minority identity development model for Deaf people must incorporate "Deafhood". This begs the question: 'How does one foster "Deafhood" as children transition from elementary school programs to junior and high school and on to post-secondary programs through to employment?'

Connecting the concept of "Deafhood" to the minority development theories already presented yields some answers.

Deaf Cultural Space

Many school boards across Canada, including in Ontario, work to provide access for Deaf students with an eye towards "inclusion" and "universal design". One cannot deny the importance of access as it begins to provide a level playing field for Deaf students in the mainstream. However it is simply not enough. A Deaf student may gain access to the curriculum with an interpreter present, but the curriculum and environment still does not reflect Deaf role models, Deaf literature created by great ASL poets, Deaf historical figures who impacted society, and endless opportunities for social participation and leadership.

An "inclusive" environment that provides access is still one in which Deaf students must constantly expend energy in attempts to be a genuinely equal participant in the school system. Enormous attention goes toward ensuring basic access in the classroom, for instance. Interactions take place through interpreters, auditory systems, and notetakers. In what we tend to call an "inclusive" environment, Deaf students must expend increased effort in attempts to establish direct and deep interactions with fellow students and teachers in their academic setting. Rarely are they effortlessly in the centre of interactions.

In contrast, for Deaf children, Deaf Cultural Space embodies an empowering environment that goes far beyond "inclusion". Deaf Cultural Space includes ASL, Deaf culture, Deaf role models and an environment where students are already in the core of the system both in academic studies as well as in the social arena where much learning takes place by osmosis. "The more empowered an individual or group becomes, the more is generated for others to share, as is the case when two people love each other or when we really connect with children we are teaching" (Cummins, 2003).

In this context, "empowerment" is the "collaborative creation of power". In an empowering environment, students' sense of identity is affirmed and extended in their natural and ongoing interactions with educators and fellow students. The school nurtures the child's spirit and in turn, the child's spirit is enhanced and acts upon the system (Cummins, 2003). As pertains to Deaf children, the educational system amplifies "who they are", rather than focusing on amplifying their hearing. (Small and Cripps, 2009).

A school system that incorporates Deaf cultural space and empowering interactions fosters "Deafhood" versus "deafness" in keeping with Ladd's framework.

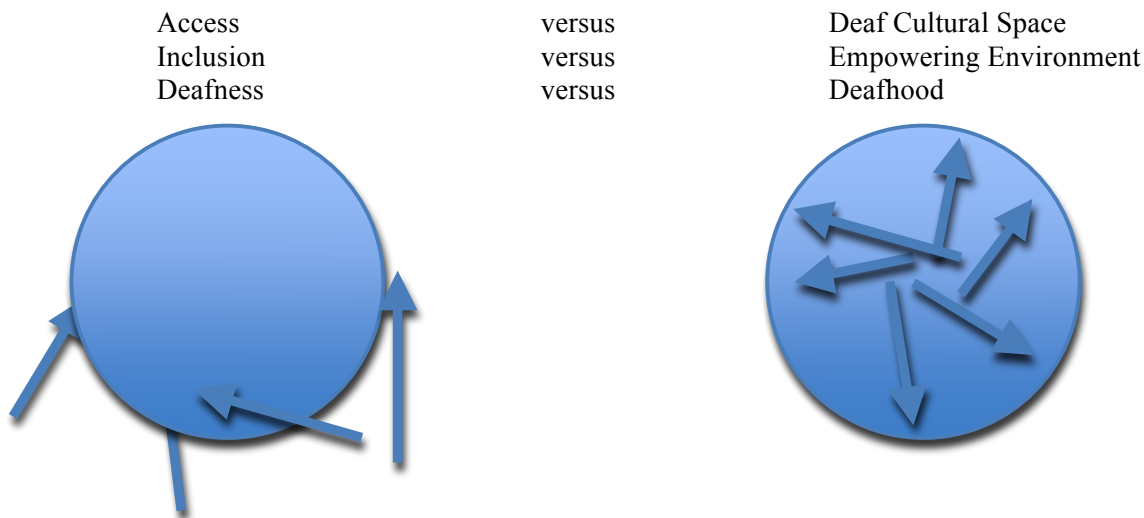| Access | versus | Deaf Cultural Space |
| Inclusion | versus | Empowering Environment |
| Deafness | versus | Deafhood |

Figure 5. Access versus Deaf Cultural Space (revised from Small, 2000)

The World Federation of the Deaf's (WFD's) (2007) Policy on Education Rights for Deaf Children states that "even in industrialized countries, the majority of current Deaf education programs do not respect the linguistic human rights of Deaf children. [In fact,] most Deaf education programs fall into the "language deprivation" category described in theoretical models

of education of linguistic minorities. "Language deprivation" for Deaf people means ignoring the use of sign language as a basic communication means, as a language of instruction, and as a school subject."

"In addition, the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities calls for state parties to recognize and promote signed languages (Article 21), facilitate learning of signed language by Deaf students, and promote the linguistic identity of the Deaf community in the education system (Article 24)". (Snoddon, 2009)

An ASL environment along with other reflections of Deaf culture are critical to enhance the identity development of Deaf youth.

Expectations

The same situation pertains to Deaf students in mainstreamed classrooms as has been found with other minority students regarding expectations. While access is partially addressed in the classroom with provision of interpreters, students lack direct positive natural exchange with their teachers without intervening interpreters, simultaneous conversations are missed, and student status in the classroom is largely affected by notions of disability. Just as was found with the famous "Rosenthal Effect" the notion of "disability" generates accompanying low expectations on the part of teachers and impacts student performance.

Stereotype Threat

In keeping with Bronfenbrenner's early bio-ecological systems theory, decisions that are made at a policy level have huge implications for the Deaf child's identity development. Examples include policies in the health care system that require a child not to have access to ASL in order to receive cochlear implants. This has significant implications for the individual child in their self perception. Implicit in the cochlear implant is the value placed on hearing, the devaluing of ASL and the notion of being Deaf as "disability".

Bauman and Murray (2010) provide an overview of the field of Deaf studies in the late 20th century which was based upon a medical "disability" perspective. With this perspective, the goal of Deaf education has been to "eradicate deafness", increase medical intervention and deny sign language – ASL. They point out the irony that large numbers of hearing infants are currently being exposed to sign language because of its known cognitive and linguistic benefits, while Deaf infants with cochlear implants are at best discouraged and at worst denied access to ASL.

They propose a new identity frame of "Deaf-Gain" rather than "Hearing-Loss" or "deafness-lack" for the 21st century, where Deaf ways of being are seen as a cultural resource for society (Bauman, 2009; Bauman and Murray, 2010).

Not surprisingly, research on identity among Deaf adults demonstrates a direct relationship between educational experience, social interaction, and identity. Nikolaraizi

and Hadjikakou (2006) report that Deaf Greek adults who attended public schools and interacted with hearing peers using Greek had a hearing identity. Those adults with a Deaf identity attended schools for the Deaf students, where they interacted with Deaf peers in Greek Sign Language. Deaf adults with a bicultural identity attended public schools, where they interacted with hearing peers in Greek, but they also had the opportunity to interact with Deaf role models outside school. Thus social interaction and mentorship played a significant role in establishing positive Deaf cultural identity.

Role Models and Mentorship

While Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada serves over 32,000 youth across Canada, few Deaf youth are served. There is only one Deaf program, "Joyful Hands," in Halifax, Nova Scotia where Deaf youth were matched with Deaf adults through Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada. Deaf children have been viewed as a "disability" group needing interpreters as a special service and the cost of interpreting has been cited as the problem in serving Deaf youth (Shaver, 2011) yet other minority language youth have been accommodated through the use of volunteers who know the language. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada plans to partner with leading national Deaf organizations to address this issue (Shaver, 2011).

Agency

General findings on the importance of "agency" in effective mentoring duplicates what we know facilitates early language development in young Deaf children. When young Deaf children have "agency" – when their language is acknowledged and they have an active role in negotiating their conversations fully – it has a positive impact on their linguistic competence (Small, 1986). So too, when all facets of the individual child's "being" – their culture, heritage, literature, etc. – are acknowledged and nurtured the greater the possibility of positive impact on their "becoming".

James Côté (2010) has demonstrated in his research that children need to know what they are good at and have that fostered rather than attempting to boost self-esteem by encouraging unrealistic expectations in areas of lesser competencies. Côté (2010) refers to this as the importance of nurturing self-efficacy versus self-esteem. His findings are highly relevant to Deaf children because, for example, many Deaf children are unrealistically reinforced for their spoken English abilities while other competencies, for which they have far greater skill, may be ignored.

Hauser et al (2010) beautifully articulate the negative impact of the disability perspective and cite the literature tracing the negative impact of perseverating on audition in the education of Deaf students. In contrast, they cite research studies that demonstrate positive impacts of educational settings that highlight and build upon the visual competencies of Deaf students.

A minority identity development framework must incorporate all of the empowering environmental factors and the empowering features that underly them in order to establish a prescriptive model to guide our policies.
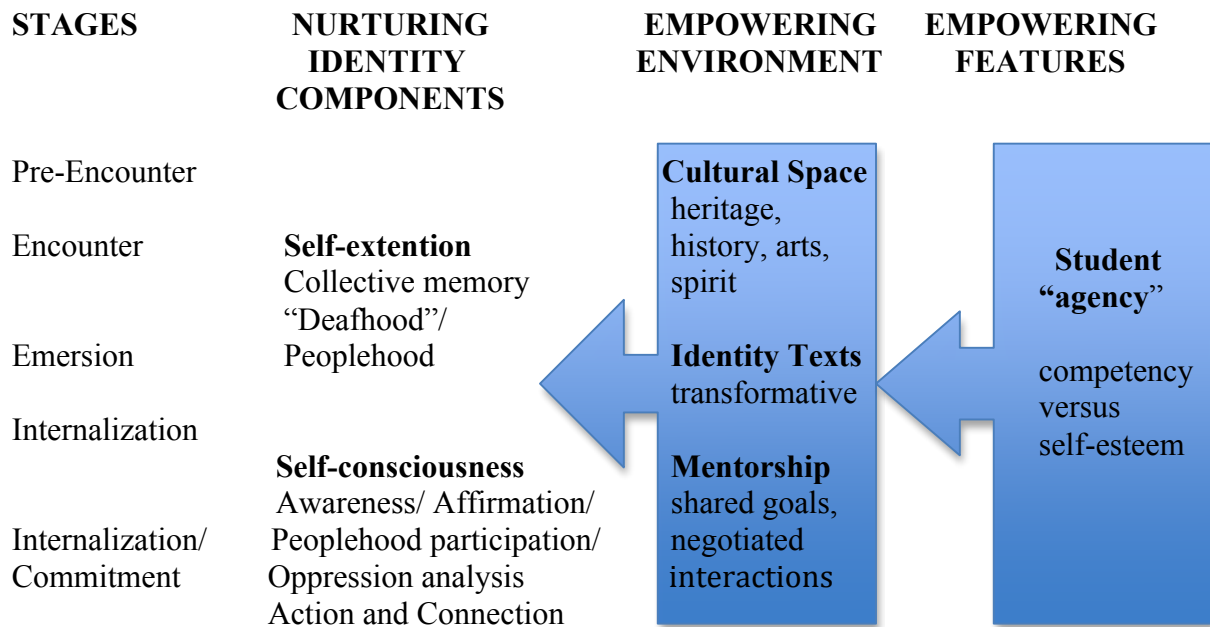
MINORITY DEAF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

STAGES	NURTURING IDENTITY COMPONENTS	EMPOWERING ENVIRONMENT	EMPOWERING FEATURES
Pre-Encounter		**Cultural Space** heritage, history, arts, spirit	
Encounter	**Self-extention** Collective memory "Deafhood"/ Peoplehood		**Student "agency"**
Emersion		**Identity Texts** transformative	competency versus self-esteem
Internalization			
	Self-consciousness Awareness/ Affirmation/	**Mentorship** shared goals,	
Internalization/ Commitment	Peoplehood participation/ Oppression analysis Action and Connection	negotiated interactions	

Figure 6. Minority Identity Development adapted by Small, A. (Cross, 1992; Kambon 1998; Ladd 2003; Cummins and Early, in press, 2011; Karcher and Nakkula, 2010)

The Minority Identity Development Framework we propose incorporates each of the descriptive identity stages identified by Cross (1992) as individuals encounter oppressive environments. These can be seen in the far left column progressing downward.

In the next column beside Cross' model, we include Kambon's (1998) descriptive identity components as individuals engage in nurturing cultural environments. This provides the balance of types of environments indviduals encounter and takes into account self-generated identity as well as external impacts on identity formation.

Moving across the model we identify specific empowering factors within the environment that nurture positive minority identity formation. Deaf Cultural Space that fosters Deaf heritage, Deaf history, Deaf arts, ASL literature, language, and spirit is highlighted as proposed by Ladd (2003). Identity texts as exemplified by Cummins and Early (in press, 2011), that are created through transformative interactions are proposed as empowering contexts for development.

Mentoring relationships that promote shared goals and negotiated interactions are recognized as having a positive impact.

Finally, the model identifies the research findings prescribing the important role of student "agency", moving individuls from one stage of identity development to the next. "Agency" acknowledges, draws upon, and promotes individual competencies, and unique differences that enrich our society.

According to the research findings and this prescriptive framework, "agency" is THE common underlying factor impacting minority cultural identity development.

RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings on minority cultural identity devlopment and the subsequent framework point naturally to both overarching and specific recommendations. We conclude by providing application of the findings to the variety of cultural minority groups in Ontario. We also articulate policy implications specifically related to Deaf individuals.

Applications Of Learnings To Cultural Minority Groups

1. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Health need to develop a common assessment tool to examine the cultural environment of minority children and youth in school, post-secondary institutions and as they transition into the work force.

Provide Cultural Space
2. Promote the primary language of minority children at home, prior to and after entering school.
3. Identify cultural and linguistic minorities as assets in our society.
4. Government support for free minority language classes for language minority children should be available.
5. Implement minority cultural space in the school environment. This includes history, arts, heritage and literature infused in the curriculum.

Combat Stereotype Threat
6. On a systems level, "identity safety" must be promoted through efforts on the part of policy makers, school administrators, and teachers to establish that diverse social identities add value to the school environment. Diverse cultural heritage, arts, languages, literatures, and ways of being would be acknowledged and valued by school personnel to nurture positive identity and increased competencies.

Include Identity Texts
7. Build identity text opportunities into the curriculum.
8. Provide teacher training on transformative pedagogy.

Offer Mentorships
9. Provide exposure and interaction with other minority language children and role models.
10. Establish provincial mentoring programs (primary, secondary and post-secondary transitioning to employment).

Ensure Agency
11. Highlight and actively promote competencies rather than self-esteem.

Policy Implications for Deaf Youth

1. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Health need to develop a common assessment tool to examine the cultural environment of the Deaf child and youth in school, in post- secondary institutions and as they transition into the work force.

Provide Cultural Space
2. Ministry of Child and Youth Services Infant Hearing Program (MCYS IHP) should promote the primary language (ASL/LSQ) at home prior to and after entering school. Families who do not know ASL must be supported to provide a fully accessible visual language for their Deaf child. Professionals (including audiologists and family physicians) require training to recognize the importance of a truly fully accessible visual language for Deaf children. Policies and practices that forbid access to ASL, such as those related to cochlear implantation, must be eliminated.
3. Government support for free sign language classes for Deaf children should be available.
4. Public School Board programs should implement Deaf minority cultural space in the school environment. This includes ensuring Deaf history, arts, heritage and literature are part of the curriculum.

Move to a "Deafhood" Model
5. All government departments should identify Deaf children, youth, and adults as a cultural and lingistic minority group, not as a "special needs" population as is currently the case.

Combat Stereotype Threat
6. On a systems level, "identity safety" must be promoted through efforts on the part of policy makers, school administrators, and teachers to establish that diverse social identities add value to the school environment. Deaf cultural heritage, arts, languages, literatures, and ways of being would be acknowledged and valued by school personnel to nurture positive identity and increased competencies.

Include Identity Texts
7. The Ministry of Education should build identity text opportunities into the curriculum.
8. The Ministry of Education together with the College of Teachers should provide teacher training on transformative pedagogy.

Offer Mentorship and Role Models
9. MCYS IHP should encourage families to visit Deaf schools and meet Deaf professionals early in their Deaf child's life.
10. The Provincial Schools and public school boards should establish specific mentorship programs as well as cross-age programming and inter-school activities to provide multiple opportunities for Deaf children of different ages to engage with one another. Inter-age activites and mentorship prgrams should be organized for primary and

secondary school lelvels.
11. Universities across Ontario should increase mentoring programs at the post-secondary level as students transition to employment).

Ensure Agency
12. Parents, teachers and counselors should highlight competencies rather than self-esteem. Children need to know what they are good at and have that fostered rather than attempting to boost self-esteem by encouraging unrealistic expectation in areas of lesser competencies.

The one action that could most positively impact Deaf cultural identity development for youth it is this: ensure Deaf adults, who are now on the fringes, move to the core of the education system that is shaping the future of the next generations. **Just as the First Nations community has a significant role in policy and programming decisions affecting First Nations education so too should the ASL community have an authoritative role in Deaf education. Deaf children need to see successful Deaf adults as role models and mentors and need to see themselves and their life experience reflected in their curricula. All recommendations above will undoubtedly advance if this first step is taken.**

"To be sure, human brain studies have taught us that the brain does not discriminate between signed and spoken languages. We – our social policies, our educational systems, our greater society – should not discriminate against them either."

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[i] Email correspondence, February 2011.

[ii] We do not deal in this article to langue des signes quebecoise (LSQ) as we do not operate in that community or educational system. It is important to note however that since the advent of Bill 4 in 1993, both ASL and LSQ are recognized languages of instruction in Ontario.

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[vi] http://www.multiliteracies.ca/,

[vii] Judith Bernard's projects are conducted at Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario.

[viii] Cited during interview with Karen Shaver, Vice President, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, January. 2011.

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