>> BETTIE T. PETERSEN: Okay, okay, so oy say let's go ahead and start, because time is of the essence. And I really want the opportunity to just come together and talk. So, okay. You can see the title. That's what we're hoping you're all in the right place because this is what we're talking about. That's me. My name is Bettie T. Petersen. And just in December, I graduated with my Ph.D. So, yes, thank you. But I did share, I will share my dissertation with you at the end of the slide. You'll see that today. And I'll also share little bit of that information with you today during my presentation.

So, really, there's not a lot of time to even read what's on the slide, however, this session is intended to follow-up from my previous session last year at EHDI. So during that session, everything that we have up on the slide, that's really more so a homework I gave out to everybody who attended the session from last year. So I won't necessarily go over this too much. But it's just a brief overview of where this presentation is coming from.

So the idea that all of your and our internal beliefs and experiences, and our frames, and our lenses really impacts how we approach families, how we interact with families, and deaf and hard-of-hearing children. And so that is what this slide talks about. Okay, so the overall goal for this particular session can be seen up here. So recognizing that our beliefs impact how we are able to provide services. So backing up a little bit, it's important that we analyze ourselves, and also when we receive information from families about their experiences, whether it's early intervention, that during that process, and how the provider responds to all of the comments made by the family member does have a direct impact on those that they interact with.

And it is crucial to understand who I am, right? To know what my frame is. So what I think, and what I believe. So let me just go over that briefly. First, number one, I'm a mom. I have two transgender children. And so it is interesting, you know, because they did come out during COVID. And so I was doing my dissertation at the same time, so I was thinking about how up my beliefs, about being a parent, and being in a deaf immunity, and also I was thinking about my beliefs when it comes to what does transgender means and how does that apply to my family? And it's kind of a similar experience. I know they're completely different, but I do feel like I could easily relate the two with parenthood. And I was reading the comments from several different parents, and the comments they were saying, I completely understood them. I felt that same way.

I'm also a researcher. And I was doing my dissertation study. And while I was doing that, I recognized the impact of family stories. And you know, I have been working in early intervention for 15 years, so I should start saying that in working with families, so their experiences really hit home with me, and it really shaped how I approached the work. And I do feel like family stories are important. And, of course, I am an early intervention provider. And that is really when my heart is. I love just being there and alongside families. Okay. So in my study, I will just summarize that here for you.

Really, the big question is how do hearing parents understand what it means to be deaf or have a hearing loss? And the experiences that they have going through early intervention? So I started with a survey. It was an online survey. And there were 74 participants that were parents that took the survey. The parents were hearing who had a child who was deaf and hard-of-hearing ranging from birth to 17 years old. And from those individuals who responded on the survey, I did ask for volunteers if they wanted to be part of a case study interview. And there were several volunteers that wanted to be in the case study, so I needed to narrow those down. So I picked those who had children who were under the age of 4. Because I wanted to see what the impact of early intervention is and was, and at the age of 17, you pretty much know what that means and know what everything has happened. You have already been shaped up to that point. So I did pick five families.

Three of them were dads. And that was exciting for me, you know, because I wanted to hear from them. And the other two were moms. And I was just overall surprised that all of them wanted a bilingual, bimodal approach for their child. And I did not know that going in when I contacted them and before I moved forward. I just learned that later. There was a variety of hearing loss, a variety of situations for each particular family as well. And, really, the case study interview was just not so much an interview, but tell me about your journey. How did you get to where you are now? What did it look like? What have people said to you up to this point? What do you believe about deaf and hard-of-hearing culture and people?

And I will give you time read the slide up here. Yeah, come on in. If everybody gets closer, it will probably be easier to see. Yeah. So these five families did mention, they mentioned couple of things. Some of them were feeling a lot of like negative sort of feelings in their journey. And these are some of the things they shared. From the family of Jason, I believe the child, their child was identified at the age of 21 months, so that was a bit late. Has a mixed hearing loss. And it was interesting, because the dad wanted to learn how to sign. And I was like, oh, you know, why did you decide you want to do that? And you know, he responded saying, I was looking online and I found an article from Reddit actually that was talking about the importance of language acquisition, and the theory of mind, and those sorts of things. So he really wanted to have access to ASL or sign language. So he was looking for that. And at the same time, somebody reached out to him and said, hey, you know, actually, Deaf people will tell you that you are robbing the child of their Deaf identity if you use hearing aids. And the dad was like, are you serious? That's really the case? I mean, my child, I mean, hasn't, you know, grown into their identity yet. And so I feel like, you know, the dad was warned about something negative that never really applied or never really came to his particular situation.

So it's almost like people want him to know all of the potential negative possibilities. However, I mean, let's just think about it. In the scheme of life, grand scheme of life, there's a lot of negative things that can happen to us. And we ignore a lot of the potential negative things that can happen to us. If we think about everything negative all the time, I mean, for example, some people that have transgender children don't want to hear about transgender culture and all of that and negativity surrounding it.

So for Phil, their family, they also decided they wanted to have bilingual bimodal communication for their child as well. And you know, as they were progressing through their journey, they decided to go ahead and get a cochlear implant. And then one day, their uncle called and said, oh, you know, I am so sorry about your son. It's so terrible. Ugh, I feel so bad. And Phil's dad was, like, no, no. I mean, my kid is amazing. My kid is awesome! I mean, he's going to be like -- he's going to be amazing in the future too. So you don't have to be sorry about anything. And it was just interesting, because for me as a parent, and during COVID, that's when my children came out as transgender, and I meet these parents and I'm saying, I know it's a little different. However, when my kids came out as transgender and I was telling other people about it, they said, oh, I'm so sorry. And then that was just an additional weight of their pity on me. And I didn't want that.

And I did reach out to another friend, and I told them about what happened in my life. And they said, oh, that's amazing! Can we celebrate this? And I didn't know that was a reaction that was possible. So, I mean, will it be the right response all the time? No, because there's no right response. And it's important that we recognize that pity can be heavy. It can make the grieving process worse and impact the parent. Danielle. She was a Special Ed instructor. So she already saw the benefit of ASL and signing. And she said that she had a kindergarten class. And she just decided to teach the whole class sign language, you know? Like, why not? And she said that she recognized the immediate improvement in their student's literacy skills. And so this mom already knew the benefits. And so she wanted to continue with that.

However, if she was to hear that signing is a lazy way out when she heard that, I mean, she already knew what the benefits were. And so she immediately reacted to that comment different. And, however, these comments continuously come up in conversations. So it's important that we recognize, I mean, for any one of you who are still learning or want to learn a new language, I'll tell you right now, it's not easy. It's not something you can just sit down and you just absorb naturally. It isn't. It requires efforts. And then moving on to Jasmine. So Jasmine wanted to bilingual bimodal communication approach as well. And heard a lot of people saying you have two options. You have to pick one language or the other. And, you know, she was like I just kind of want my child to have all of the opportunities available to them. And they can pick what they want as they progress in life.

And also she did talk to several other Deaf adults. And some, you know, say or told her, hey, I grew up with only spoken English, and later I learned how to sign and my family can't sign. And so I don't have a relationship with them anymore. And so this mom is saying, hey, I don't want that, because I heard people have these sorts of experiences. And so I wanted to make sure that my child had both opportunities, or all opportunities and made that decision for themselves in the future. So then we move on to Mathew.

And oh, my goodness, it's so fun to talk with this family. But this comment, how SLP, I had previously been involved with the Deaf Community, and I sign, and so I know, you know, about the Deaf Community. I know my stuff. So I know their language skills are never good for their comments. And the dad was honestly offended. And he was saying, you're talking about my child here. (Chuckles softly) And honestly, you see a lot of people at this conference, you know, with Ph.D that are deaf. And so, obviously, Deaf people can have good English skills, right? It's just interesting, I think often when people say things about Deaf adults, they just don't realize that they're talking about that Deaf adult was once a child. And when talking about this child, and these families we're working with, you know, those children will become adults. And if you feel like Deaf adults can't do something, then what are you -- what kind of message are you sending to the child? Is like, why not create a belief that anything is possible for your child? So this is the same point here, case in point. So deaf and hard-of-hearing children that we work with will be adults some day.

And we know those Deaf adults will be socializing with those Deaf adults. And it's important to recognize that, oh, if you don't want to be around those Deaf adults, then what are you doing around Deaf children?

This is just a cute picture actually of this girl I used to work with. And she's now 15. So I'm going to ask what do you really feel about deafness? Is it this sad trauma or celebration? Or somewhere in between? It could vary. It just varies by individual. And your personal beliefs. But also the beliefs of the person who is identifying the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing person. Some might say, oh, I identify as deaf. Or I identify as hard-of-hearing. Or hearing impaired. I have heard that as well. Whatever they took on as an identity, and that's to be respected. And where do you stand to look at what do you believe? Where do you stand and why?

Recently, it was very eye-opening experience that I had. I was talking with a group of people, a person who was transgender about the concept of being transgender. And that person's foster child was raped by a transgender person. It's a story I got. So I'm, like, you know, it was an upsetting story to have to think about that as well. But I also had to recognize their experience, that person's experience. And that experience impacted her beliefs. At the same time, tried to provide a new experience, a more positive experience is what I was trying to provide there. And it's the same with these types of situations. Do you want to go down one -- oh, don't make generalizations. Men, women, or their persons, right? Everyone has their individual experience.

And if we look at ourselves, and then how our past experiences have impacted our beliefs, it depends on what experiences you've had with Deaf adults. Is it positive or negative? Have you had any experiences with deaf adults, positive or negative? I'm also recognizing that some people have not had good experiences. And that impacts their believes. And the same thing goes with families. And these five families in my study, they had many different experiences with Deaf people before as well, before they had a child who was Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing. And in one family, the father lived near the School for the Deaf. And in his opinion, he saw that was their own community, the Deaf Community was their own community. And either you're in the Deaf Community, or you're out of it. And that was just that person's feeling.

Now the mom of the same family went to high school with a Deaf person, and they were friends. And so she was like, oh, we have the same experience. I have the same experience as this Deaf person and the same classes, so within one family, they had two completely different experience and beliefs about and what meanings they made about deaf and hard-of-hearing children. And that's important too. So that's why I say, to look at yourself and your experiences and how they impacted your beliefs. And then maybe how your beliefs, maybe they evolved, changed overtime. I mean, mine certainly have. So think about that. So some of this here was already mentioned, but more specifically, it's important to really analyze and self-analyze and then document what you say, the words that you say. Because the words that you say could find, or a parent could find offensive, or a child. So it's important that you analyze and take a look at that. Also think about what words could you choose that would be more inclusive and affirming? Like when we say "hearing loss" maybe we can say "hearing level" or "hearing difference" or "hearing range." So think about words you're using and be consistent with. And think about those stereotypes. And are we perpetuating stereotypes? When we're mindful to those words, then, you know, put in a change to have a more inclusive affirming word.

Now, look at what words your program uses. The materials and pamphlets, websites, things you give to the parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing children and families. Like, what are they seeing? What words are being seen there? So make sure that those words are updated. What does your website look like? Are you using the words that are inclusive? Are they affirming words? And then are Deaf people included in your program? And that's Step 3. It's so important to include Deaf adults. If they're not involved with your program, how can you partner with Deaf adults? You don't center to have them in your program directly, but you have to partner with the community. You can ask them to analyze your materials as well. Like, take a look at these and take them to a Deaf adult. I've done that. And 5 different ways that families can meet Deaf adults. There's so many ways to meet a Deaf person or be around a Deaf Community. It's important to see the possibilities available. So the last one here is that use both ASL and English. I'll share one more story from a family, the same dad who said that, or SLP said that, you know, Deaf people don't have good English skills or language skills. He went to an event at the School for the Deaf, and an audiologist was presenting and was speaking saying, who we are, what we do, and then said we're now moving to a signing model. And to be more accessible for all.

And they still had the interpreters. And the dad got that experience. It was very impactful to him, because they saw they respected both languages. So in his experience, I add that family had a positive experience using both ASL and English from that experience with the audiologist at the Deaf school. So it's important to cherish both languages.

Sore that's all I have. This QR Code, this is my dissertation. It's about 100 pages, but the family stories are really fun. And they're in sections, so you can read through and see their experiences. That's it. I think we might have maybe 2 minutes left if there are questions briefly. And thank you all for coming. Thank you. Oh yeah, come on up. Do you have a question? Yeah, I mean, do you want to speak? Okay. Either way.

>> So I wanted to share a story I was experiencing when I was growing up. So I grew up speaking. Anyway, so a lot of member in my family said, hey, you know, you can't do this, this, and this, and this just to let you know, you'll never be able to get into a college. I mean, the list was never-ending. And I've experienced that as adults growing up and I believed it. It constantly pushed down if made me feel less than, and hearing their comments and opinions and hearing all of that. And one day I decided, you know what? I'm going to go to graduate school. And I'm going to be the first person in my family to get and earn a graduate degree. And now I have over 60 cousins and I'm the first in my family to do it. Yeah, the power of words are exponential. And how we use our labels can be helpful or hurtful.

>> BETTIE T. PETERSEN: Thank you for sharing.