



RESEARCH AT GALLAUDET

A Publication of the Gallaudet Research Institute at Gallaudet University



Winter 2000

Deaf/Hearing Cultural Tension in a Family

By Silvestro Menzano and Robert Clover Johnson

Few situations are more complex and challenging than that of a predominately hearing family with a deaf child. The complexity is not limited to choices regarding interventions that may or may not help establish usable hearing, nor even to motivating hearing family members to learn and consistently practice some form of visually accessible communication. Hearing parents and siblings must also come to terms with the fact that a deaf child is naturally predisposed to acquiring the language and culture of the deaf community, a language and culture typically “learned from scratch” by the rest of the family.

In a recent study, Dr. Laura Blackburn, currently co-coordinator of a teacher preparation program in deaf education at Northern Illinois University, decided to examine the “cultural tension” that tends to develop in such families. She was particularly interested in the nature and resolution of this tension in families striving to meet their deaf child’s needs by using sign language in their homes and involving members of the deaf community in their lives. Pursuing her study as a doctoral research project in Gallaudet’s Education Department, the resulting dissertation is entitled: “Linguistic and cultural interactions among Deaf/ hearing family members: Implications for family partnerships in early education.” Blackburn’s research was carried out as part of a larger research project being conducted at Gallaudet, directed by Dr. Carol Erting of Gallaudet’s Education Department, called “Signs of literacy: a longitudinal study of ASL and English literacy acquisition.” The larger project is a collaborative endeavor of Gallaudet’s Division of Academic Affairs and the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center.

The central question Blackburn explored in her research was: “How do deaf children and their hearing family members make sense of each other’s worldviews,

See Cultural Tension on page 3



Laura Blackburn

Parents’ Experiences with Support Services

By Silvestro Menzano, 1998-1999 Walter Ross Fellow

Hearing parents with deaf or hard of hearing children face many kinds of stress as a result of having a child with a hearing loss. For most hearing parents, this stress begins during the period leading to the diagnosis of hearing loss, which occurs increasingly early in infants’ development due to improved technology. But diagnosis is only the beginning of a long journey; the diagnosis of hearing loss serves to initiate parents into the often confusing world of deafness. To navigate this world, parents have as their guides numerous professionals: medical doctors, audiologists, speech therapists, educators, and mental health workers. Because of the frequent contact parents of deaf and hard of hearing children have with support service providers, it is critical to remain aware of how parents perceive such services, and the professionals who provide them.

In a multi-phase study funded by the Gallaudet Priority Research Grant Fund, Dr. Donna Mertens of Gallaudet’s Department of Educational Foundations and Research, Dr. Marilyn Sass-Lehrer of the Department of Education, and graduate student Kim Scott-Olson have sought to explore parents’ experiences with deafness-related service providers. To accomplish this goal, they surveyed over 400 parents from over 125 educational programs for deaf and hard of hearing children across the country, asking about the type and extent of services received as parents of a deaf or hard of hearing child, and satisfaction or dissatisfaction with such services. The parents’ responses comprised the first phase of this study.

The results of this first phase indicated that, on the whole, parents are satisfied with the services they have received. However, some interesting differences emerged which may have important implications for the delivery of services to families with deaf or hard of hearing children. It was found that parents who were least satisfied with services were also those parents whose children were at highest risk for behavior problems: parents of color, parents with less education, and parents whose children were diagnosed with hearing loss later in their development. In addition, parents of hard of hearing children often received confirmation of their child’s hearing loss much later than parents with profoundly deaf

See Parents’ Experiences on page 5

Powrie V. Doctor Chair of Deaf Studies

The Powrie V. Doctor Chair of Deaf Studies was established in 1972 in recognition of the contributions of Powrie Vaux Doctor, a distinguished member of Gallaudet's faculty for 43 years who was also editor of the *American Annals of the Deaf* from 1948 to 1968. Recipients of the Doctor Chair appointment are persons whose research has already contributed much and shows promise of contributing more to knowledge about deaf people and to deaf people's general welfare.

Anne Quartararo

Dr. Anne Quartararo, a professor of history at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, is an authority on deaf culture and deaf education in nineteenth century France. During her 1998-1999 appointment as Powrie V. Doctor Chair, she devoted most of her time to working on a book manuscript (still in progress) entitled, *Discovering the Signs: Social Images of the French Deaf Community in Nineteenth-Century France*.



Anne Quartararo

Quartararo, who has studied French social history and the French educational system of the nineteenth century in great detail, is attempting in her manuscript to analyze the French deaf community in the context of larger historical developments of that period.

Although *Discovering the Signs* focuses on the experiences of the French deaf community in the nineteenth century, it will also inform today's American community about the rich heritage of deaf people in the western tradition. "This cultural history has been largely obscured over time," Quartararo says, "though the historical documents are very rich." By studying the social images of the French deaf community, historians can better understand the price of national integration for a minority that considered itself French, but was also very attached to its own distinct cultural identity.

Jan Branson and Donald Miller

The 1999-2000 recipients of the Powrie V. Doctor Chair were Dr. Jan Branson and Dr. Donald Miller, both from Melbourne, Australia. Branson is a professor of education in the Graduate School of Education and director of the National Institute for Deaf Studies and Sign Language Research (NIDS) at La Trobe University. Miller is associate professor and head of anthropology in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at Monash University. He is also associate director of NIDS.



Jan Branson

While at Gallaudet, Branson and Miller studied historical links among the deaf communities and systems of deaf education in America, Britain, and Australia. Part of the study will result in a biography of the British educator Charles Baker, whose extensive collection of deafness-related books was acquired by Gallaudet's first president, Edward Miner Gallaudet (EMG), after Baker's death in 1874. During previous visits to the United States, Branson and Miller studied the Baker Collection in the Gallaudet University archives, as well as related volumes in Washington, D.C.'s Volta Bureau.



Donald Miller

During their time at Gallaudet, Branson and Miller benefited from interaction with Gallaudet faculty and staff pursuing research in sign language, deaf studies, and deaf history. They compared notes with Gallaudet researchers on data collection and analytical processes used in ethnographic studies of sign language use, and they presented findings from their own ethnographic study of the use of sign language among deaf and hearing natives of the island of Bali in Indonesia. Branson and Miller hope to develop formal links between Gallaudet and La Trobe University for the promotion of joint academic activities and the exchange of faculty, staff, and students.

Research at Gallaudet is available free of charge. Address inquiries to *Research at Gallaudet*, Gallaudet Research Institute, Gallaudet University, 800 Florida Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002-3660. Phone: (202) 651-5995 (V/TTY). Contributing to this issue were Robert Clover Johnson, Editor; Sara C. Gerhold, 1999-2000 Walter Ross Fellowship recipient; and Silvestro Menzano, 1998-1999 Walter Ross Fellowship recipient. Special thanks are due to Drs. Laura Blackburn, Carol Erting, and Donna Mertens for their advice concerning articles in this issue. Thanks are also due to Deborah Holderness for the digital photo of Laura Blackburn sent via e-mail from Illinois, to Todd Byrd, editor of Gallaudet's *On the Green*, for the photo of Dr. Anne Quartararo, to Drs. Donald Miller and Jan Branson who sent digital images of themselves via e-mail from Melbourne, Australia, and to Dr. Daniela Janakova for the photo of herself.

Thomas E. Allen, Dean
The Graduate School and Research
Robert Clover Johnson
Senior Research Editor

Copyright © January 2000
Gallaudet Research Institute
Gallaudet University, Washington, D.C.

Visiting Scholars

Daniela Janakova



Daniela Janakova

Dr. Daniela Janakova, director of the Language Resource Center and a member of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic, was a Visiting Fulbright Scholar at Gallaudet during the fall semester of 1999.

In 1998, a program called “Teaching English to Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students” was started at Charles University. The establishment of this program reflected a growing recognition of the importance of familiarity with English, even among deaf students in countries where English is not the national language. Since no institution in the Czech Republic has previous experience teaching English to deaf students, Janakova was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to spend four months studying methods of teaching English used at Gallaudet.

Janakova found her stay at Gallaudet to be “truly fruitful.” She observed many classes and, with the recommendations of various advisors here, was able to collect textbooks, videos, and computer programs that will help her teach deaf students in Prague.

Maria Suarez

Dr. Maria Suarez, a professor in the developmental psychology department of La Laguna University, in the Canary Islands (provinces of Spain), recently visited Gallaudet University for three months as a Visiting Scholar. Her dissertation and research are focused on the social-cognitive development of deaf children, and during her stay at Gallaudet, she encountered a range of perspectives on deaf children’s development and education. Suarez participated in an international internship program that enabled her to visit various deaf education programs in the U.S. and to work with several Gallaudet faculty members, gathering information for her own research and articles. She also attended the First World Mental Health and Deafness Conference and the Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research Conference, both of which were held at Gallaudet University.

Her exposure to deaf culture, and how “deaf people can live, work, and feel pride in themselves, doing all that they wish” in America has inspired her to return to her homeland and work to improve conditions for deaf children in the Canary Islands. Suarez has written that she will try to bring new insights to her colleagues, showing them “through my hands all that I have seen, felt and lived at Gallaudet and in the United States.”

Gallaudet University is an equal opportunity employer and educational institution. Programs and services offered by Gallaudet University receive substantial financial support from the U.S. Department of Education.

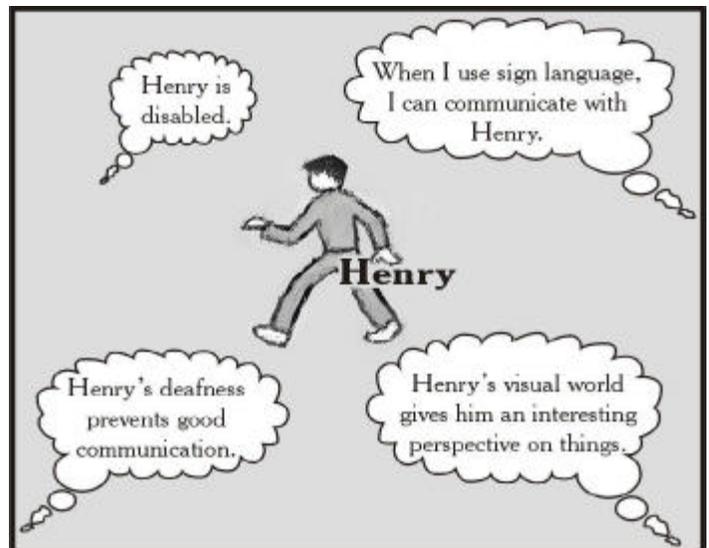
Cultural Tension, *Continued from page one*

and how are their perspectives demonstrated in their actions?” Blackburn decided that the best way to answer these questions would be to study one family, using an ethnographic approach in which the researcher participates, observes, and analyzes the attitudes and behavior of various members of a group then strives to synthesize these perspectives into a general theory. This is accomplished through long periods of direct, but non-directive, participation in the day-to-day lives of the researcher’s subjects, combined with equally important periods away from the subjects, sorting through and analyzing the collected data.

Through the Signs of Literacy project, Blackburn studied the “Camillo” family (she has changed all names to protect her subjects’ privacy) for a 14-month period, living in the family’s home for ten of those months, observing, interacting, and conducting interviews. (Blackburn was invited to live with the family by “Sara Camillo,” the mother, who reportedly said during an interview, “If you *really* want to understand, come live with us!”) Family members included: Mark and Sara, hearing parents of Daniel (6 years old, hearing), Henry (4 years old, deaf), Madeline (2 years old, hearing), and the triplets Mary, Luke, and John (1 year old, hearing). The family was of Caucasian and Spanish ethnicity and used spoken English and sign language to communicate.

Henry, the deaf member of the Camillo family, was in the process of acquiring American Sign Language (ASL) from deaf peers and deaf adults through his school-related communication experiences. The hearing Camillos often signed in English word order while speaking, though using signs from ASL. Data were also collected from extended family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins), as well as from educators, mentors, and other professionals and deaf community members who

Continued on next page



Four ways hearing relatives might think of Henry. Blackburn advises not getting “stuck” in a negative point of view.

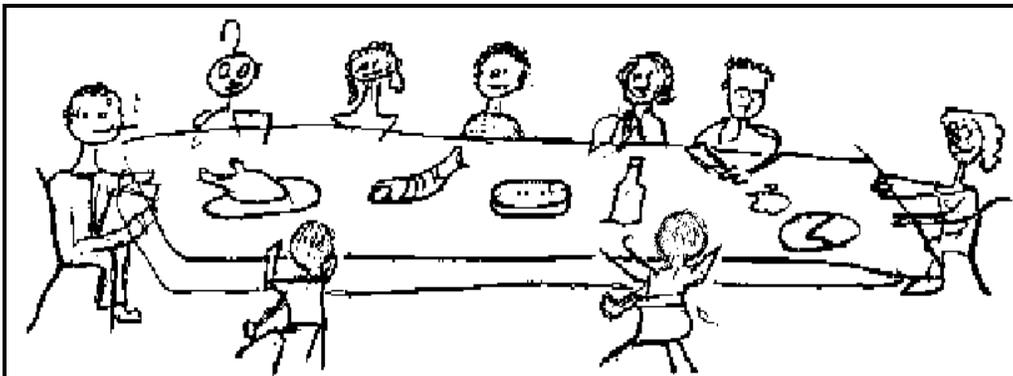
Cultural Tension, Continued

interacted with the family during the research period. Blackburn compiled data in the form of field notes, interview transcriptions, and videotapes. During periodic breaks, Blackburn color-coded her notes according to subjects or themes, identified boundaries separating chunks of her data into discrete episodes or stories, and searched for conceptual frameworks for understanding the experiences she had witnessed.

One episode illustrates that even though Henry's parents recognized the benefits to his linguistic and intellectual development of frequent contact with deaf adults, the involvement of members of the deaf community in the family's lives sometimes gave rise to strong ambivalent feelings. Blackburn describes this ambivalence as a manifestation of cultural tension between primarily auditory hearing and primarily visual deaf cultures. For example, when Sara was on bed rest in the hospital prior to the birth of her triplets, she discussed communication access for Henry with deaf individuals who visited her there. A deaf instructional assistant (Matt) at Henry's preschool offered to take Henry on an outing to relieve some of the pressure at home and to increase Henry's exposure to ASL. Although Sara could see that Matt's suggestion was a generous offer in light of her temporary circumstances, she also was aware that Matt believed it was important for deaf children to have adult deaf mentors. Her remarks indicate that she felt that Matt was taking advantage of her situation to encroach on her sovereignty as Henry's parent, stating that:

he wanted to... pull him away... because he is deaf, and Matt is deaf, and they could do their thing... Well, first of all, *we* can take our own children to the zoo, and to the park. I mean, *we* are our children's parents, *we* are their mentors. We don't need outside mentors! We will provide our children with what they need!

Blackburn understood this reaction as an indication that in spite of good intentions, cultural boundaries had been crossed; an offer that was presented as a positive gesture from the perspective of the deaf community was viewed as insulting from Sara's perspective as a hearing parent.



Sketch by a relative of the Camillo family dining with a guest.

The Camillos' commitment to providing a bilingual/bicultural family environment for Henry's benefit was too strong for such episodes of cultural tension to interrupt their ongoing involvement with the deaf community. Many episodes described in Blackburn's dissertation demonstrate that the family's openness to a partnership with deaf people resulted in rewarding learning opportunities for the entire family, even though there were frequent instances of cultural tension during these ex-changes. More often than not, this tension was relieved as a result of basic good will among all involved—good will that led to persistence in striving to resolve differences.

Dinnertime, a frequent focus of ethnographic studies, provided an excellent daily forum for such cross-cultural exchanges of information. In one episode, Henry's deaf adult reading mentor (Justin) had joined the family for dinner, as had a nine-year-old deaf school friend of Henry's called Peter. When Henry's father (Mark) asked someone to pass the ketchup, he used the Camillo family's KETCHUP home sign (the palm of the right hand pounding the S-shaped fist of the left as one might pound a ketchup bottle), whereupon "Peter's eyes popped open in surprise. Peter chastised Mark, telling him not to use that sign for ketchup because it was considered 'bad' language" (p. 145). Revealingly, Justin did not understand Peter's reaction until Peter explained that the same sign was used among some of his friends at school to mean SEX. Blackburn continues:

Justin rolled his eyes and suggested that the students had probably made the sign up to use among themselves at the residential school. He suggested that Peter wasn't aware that sometimes "home signs" used in an environment with one meaning might have alternative meanings in another environment.

We all spent a few minutes discussing the Camillo's sign for KETCHUP. Mark asked Justin, *Well, what should we use?* Sara commented, *Don't tell me I have to fingerspell it!* Justin suggested using a sign that looks like a classifier with a C handshape shaking the ketchup out of the bottle. I suggested that I had seen KETCHUP signed by shaking a K up and down in the air. Sara and Justin both said, *That's a Signed English sign*, meaning my suggestion was

unacceptable. The discussion came to a close when Sara stated that they would continue to use their family's sign for KETCHUP but would avoid using it around Peter.

This episode demonstrates the educational value of cross-cultural, deaf/hearing exchanges. Within the course of a dinner discussion the Camillo family was able to learn about the deaf community's rules concerning home signs because a deaf adult was present to add a deaf cultural perspective to Peter's less sophisticated reaction to the Camillo family's KETCHUP sign. Justin and Sara's rejection of the initialized sign suggested by Blackburn shows that Sara had already learned from deaf adults that use of a Signed English sign is often considered unacceptable when an ASL sign is an option.

A sequence Blackburn calls "The Camillo Dilemma" focuses on a recurrent form of cultural tension that, for a while, seemed insoluble to Sara. Having learned that maintaining eye gaze during communication is a critical aspect of effective communication and etiquette in deaf culture, where all communication is visual, Sara did not know what to do when, during a discussion with Henry, her hearing children spoke, cried, or otherwise presented auditory signals that a hearing parent would normally attend to. Exacerbating the problem was the fact that Henry seemed hurt when Sara looked away while he tried to communicate with her, then would sign "Never mind!" when Sara returned her eye gaze and begged him to continue. Sara became so concerned that Blackburn videotaped her as she explained the problem in hopes that a group of deaf adults Blackburn was working with might help her find a solution. When Blackburn played this videotape for Sara and Mark many months later, asking if the dilemma had been resolved and, if so, how, the Camillos said the problem had "disappeared" as a result of adjustments made by everyone in the family. Sara and Mark had informed their hearing children that sometimes they might delay their responses long enough to finish an exchange with Henry. At the same time, Henry seemed gradually to realize that Sara and Mark were affected by auditory signals from his siblings and that attending to them was necessary, even if an interruption seemed abrupt and was disappointing. As the children adapted to the complexity of attention-getting competition in a mixed hearing/deaf household, the stress on Sara and Mark was eased and the situation was essentially resolved.

Henry's difficulty making sense of sound and Sara's difficulty making sense of a world without sound gave rise to other examples of deaf/hearing cultural tension. During the course of Blackburn's research, Sara expressed frustration at not knowing how to teach Henry the sounds that cows and other animals make, and this led to a discussion with Henry's reading mentor, Justin, about how deaf individuals learn about and understand sound. Sara's priority that Henry learn about animal sounds clearly reflected her perspective as a hearing person who perceived the world from both a visual and an auditory perspective;

she sincerely felt that Henry was "missing out" on important experience beyond the usual realm of concern: speech. Justin, however, pointed out that Henry's status as a child who was deaf from birth meant that his primary orientation to the world would always be visual, not auditory. Although this concept was understood intellectually by Henry's family, the reality of his basically visual orientation became clearest in such episodes as the one in which the rest of the family heard a train in the distance. Henry signed that he "heard" the train too, but when pressed to describe the sound, he signed TRAIN HEAR ENVISION BLUE. After an inward struggle, Sara began to accept the fact that her deaf son truly lived in a primarily visual world.

The aim of Blackburn's research was to examine the various worldviews held by hearing and deaf members of a mixed hearing/deaf family in an effort to better understand how they develop their knowledge and understanding of deafness, both among themselves and with others. Not surprisingly, she found that different family members formed different attitudes toward deafness, depending on their age, family role, and experience interacting with deaf individuals. (For example, Henry's younger sister Madeline, who was born into a signing environment, was more consistent about signing in Henry's presence than Daniel, who was two years older than Henry.) The omnipresence of cultural tension and cross-cultural misunderstanding observed by Blackburn leads her to recommend that information about the existence and nature of these tensions, as well as about strategies for resolving them, be made more widely available to hearing parents and other family members with deaf children. As Blackburn states in the conclusion of her dissertation, educators and service providers must find answers to two critical questions: (1) when should hearing family members be told about cross-cultural tensions? and (2) how should they be taught effective strategies for working through cultural tensions and toward cross-cultural understanding?

Parents' Experiences, Continued from page one

children, resulting in greater overall frustration, more frequent behavior problems, and less satisfaction with services and with professionals. This dissatisfaction often related to professionals having dismissed parental concerns because the child could speak and merely seemed stubborn, rebellious, or uncooperative:

"I just wish that the doctors were more familiar with deafness. Even otolaryngologists in our area are the very people who looked me in the face and said, 'It's not a hearing problem. Look, I can look right at her and talk,

The second phase of the study involved telephone interviews with 40 randomly selected parents from the

Continued on next page

Parents' Experiences, Continued from page 5

same sample. These parents were asked about the period when hearing loss was suspected, then diagnosed, and about their child's subsequent educational, language, and socio-emotional development. Qualitative analysis of these results indicate that poor relationships with professionals and poor developmental outcomes were associated with delayed diagnosis, which underscores the need for early identification and intervention:

"Everybody said he could hear and he really could because it was only a high frequency loss. Apparently he got very good at lip reading in those developmental years, because he responded and because they said he could only not hear 25% of the sounds. So I guess that's why it eluded us for years. But he had damaged his self-esteem so much because the kids would say, 'How come he talks funny? How come he talks like a baby?' and he had that all the time. What happened is, he stopped talking and there would be days at pre-school where he would go through the whole day without saying a word to a single person. In pre-school, it was a combination [of problems]: he didn't want to talk and his self-esteem was low. He was easily intimidated and there was a long period of time where he would wet his pants every single day because he didn't want to ask the teacher when he wanted to go to the bathroom. We had a lot of these

Further, parents emphasized the need for both information and support from professionals in the field of deafness. When information is lacking or confusing, or when support is not forthcoming, parents often become frustrated or disheartened, which may exacerbate, or be exacerbated by, their child's behavior problems. The results of this second phase have been published as a chapter in the book, *The Deaf Child in the Family and at School*, edited by Patricia Spencer, Carol Erting, and Mark Marschark. (See ad on page 8.) The third and final phase of this study will focus on particular groups which have been underrepresented in the literature on parental coping with a child's hearing loss: parents of color, parents of children with cochlear implants, and deaf parents. The data for this final phase have been collected but not yet analyzed, and the authors report that they are currently pursuing a book contract that would encompass all three phases of this study in one volume.

As Mertens has stated, the importance of this study of parents' perceptions regarding their experiences with professionals lies not so much with the statistics, but with "the depth of feeling behind the numbers, which underscores the need to get this information out to professionals." Parents expressed anger and resentment

toward professionals who dismissed their initial concerns that their child might have a hearing loss:

"I still felt a sense that he should have been responding to his name and he wouldn't turn his head when somebody called him. So I took him to the pediatrician, and he said, 'No, there's nothing wrong with him, you're just a worried mom, this is your first child and you know you're paranoid'... So, it took six months to finally make the doctors do a test on him. I was not pleased that it took that long, and basically to have them tell me it was

Parents also expressed confusion regarding communication and educational options and sometimes a great deal of guilt, wondering if they might have done something to cause or worsen their child's deafness:

"My biggest thing was I felt guilty because I had been punishing her for not responding, but [I didn't know

It is the authors' hope that professionals will read these parents' stories and, in turn, obtain a clearer picture of their experiences.

Mertens has also indicated that one important goal of this study is to "provide parents with the opportunity to give voice to their concerns for the professional community." She asserts that listening to parents' stories about their interactions with professionals will provide those same professionals with insights into how best to work with and serve parents. Most professionals, she argues, do not have the time to talk with parents one-on-one about parents' experiences, so it is critical that the results of this study be made available.

She and her fellow researchers hope that the results of this study may contribute to professionals' knowledge and may help inform and educate professionals-in-training about parental experiences, in order to help increase sensitivity to their needs as parents of deaf and hard of hearing children. Ultimately, allowing parents to provide advice and feedback

See Parents' Experiences on page 8



Thank You!

for helping improve our mailing list! If you notice errors in your address label or would like to add an address to our list, please either write us at the address on page 2,

send an e-mail to gri.offices@gallaudet.edu, or use our website: <http://gri.gallaudet.edu/mailing.html>. Expect a Spring Issue!

William C. Stokoe and the Study of Signed Languages Conference

By Sara C. Gerhold, 1999-2000 Walter Ross Fellow

A national conference in celebration of the 80th birthday of Dr. William C. Stokoe, Gallaudet Professor Emeritus, and originator of the scientific study of American Sign Language (ASL), was held at the Gallaudet University Kellogg Conference Center on October 15-17, 1999. The "William C. Stokoe and the Study of Signed Languages Conference" drew over 285 participants, some from as far away as Denmark, Italy, Scotland, and Sweden.



William C. Stokoe

The two-and-a-half day conference included formal presentations, exhibits on the history and current status of sign language research at Gallaudet, and panel discussions featuring reminiscences by Stokoe's former colleagues. Presentations were grouped within symposia addressing such broad topics as the impact of sign language research on the deaf community and on the education of deaf students, sign language research and the study of language acquisition, and the origin and evolution of language.

In addition to honoring Stokoe, the conference also honored those who worked with him to accomplish so much for deaf people worldwide. More than forty years ago, Stokoe and a handful of collaborators at Gallaudet began the research that would lead to broad international recognition of the signed languages of deaf people as distinct from yet equal in status to the spoken languages of hearing people. As Gallaudet's President I. King Jordan pointed out in his keynote address, this recognition has had an enormously positive impact on the struggles of deaf people everywhere for better access to education, information, and other basic human rights.

Highlights of the conference included lectures on scholarly topics that have long been of interest to Stokoe. Dr. Scott Liddell, author of *American Sign Language Syntax* and director of Gallaudet's Linguistics Program, generated much discussion and debate with his presentation on the large role he believes gesture plays in sign language discourse. Dr. Ted Supalla, director of the Sign Language Research Center at the University of Rochester, discussed the process whereby signs tend to change over time and the results of research into the historical origins of specific signs.

Dr. Roger Fouts, co-director of the Chimpanzee and Human Communication Institute, presented many arguments supporting Stokoe's view that spoken language evolved from gestures. Dr. Adam Kendon, an authority on gesture and communication conduct, said that although

there were many attempts at sign language research in the 18th and 19th centuries, such research vanished from 1900 until Stokoe pioneered the linguistic study of sign language in the late 1950s. Dr. Sherman Wilcox, author of many books and articles about American Sign Language, said that although Stokoe is best known for his discovery that signing is a true human language, his later concept of "semantic phonology" is the sort of "happy marriage of simplicity and power that scientists recognize as elegance."

Dr. Benjamin Bahan, chair of Gallaudet's deaf studies department, described how sign language research enabled deaf people to overcome feelings of shame common among deaf people earlier in the 20th century and to feel pride in their distinct language and culture. Bahan used his own deaf family of origin as a case in point.

Dr. Britta Hansen, director of the Centre for Sign Language and Sign Supported Communication in Copenhagen, Denmark, discussed the role Stokoe's research played in the development of Denmark's bilingual programs for deaf children. Dr. Carol J. Erting, a professor of education at Gallaudet whose career was greatly influenced by Stokoe's work, described ongoing research concerning young deaf children's acquisition of American Sign Language and English in homes and preschool classrooms in which bilingual approaches are facilitated.

Canadian Dr. Laura Ann Petitto discussed her work using PET brain-imaging techniques which showed that aspects of signed and spoken language processing in the modern human brain use the identical brain tissue. Petitto suggested that this evidence may help support Stokoe's contention that visual-gestural language preceded and laid the groundwork for auditory-vocal language.

There were several opportunities for Stokoe's former colleagues to share memories of working in his Linguistics Research Laboratory. Carl Croneberg, a native of Sweden and a Gallaudet alumnus, who co-edited with Stokoe and Dorothy Sueoka *The Dictionary of American Sign Language on Linguistic Principles* (Gallaudet University Press, 1965) reflected on times spent working with Stokoe as they developed the first basic notation system for analyzing American Sign Language. Dr. Carol Padden, chair of the Department of Communication at the University of California, San Diego, recalled that Stokoe did not hesitate to invite her to work in his lab when she was only 19 years old and had little more than confidence and enthusiasm as credentials. Deaf playwright Gil Eastman reminisced about how—as a Gallaudet undergraduate—he was at first doubtful about Stokoe's work, then later came to embrace both the man and his vision.

Other presenters included Drs. Douglas Baynton, John Bonvillian, Frank Wilson, Glenn Anderson, Harlan Lane, Ceil Lucas (through Melanie Metzger), and Virginia Volterra.

According to President Jordan, "The weekend was a time for learning, for remembering, for renewing old friendships, and for looking ahead to a bright future."

Parents' Experiences, Continued from page 6

to professionals will, it is hoped, make for better professionals. When asked about what advice they would give professionals, parents' responses were both poignant and telling:

"Nobody ever asked me [for my advice] before... I didn't like being petted on the head and given sort of pat, rote answers to problems and issues that I was dealing with... You got the impression that social workers and people in the business sort of refer to parents as in the third person, as though I was sort of child-like, like my child was. If I had just been given credit for being a reasonably intelligent person who was interested in being involved and aggressive in helping my child, I would've appreciated that. I also would've appreciated as many facts as were available. Because a lot of times, when you have a child who is very ill, or has an uncertain future, the medical profession is hesitant to just tell you what they're thinking, and so you worry about things you don't even have to worry about because no one will say, 'I think this is happening, or I think that's happening.' Those are the two things that probably made me most uncomfortable over the process."

Editor's Note: This article is based on a chapter from the book advertised in the next column.



The Deaf Child in The Family and at School: Essays in Honor of Kathryn P. Meadow-Orlans.

Edited by Patricia E. Spencer, Carol J. Erting, and Marc Marschark

This 336-page book presents 16 chapters by many imminent researchers and interventionists, all of whom address the development of deaf and hard of hearing children in the context of family and school. A variety of disciplines and perspectives are represented, and such a multifaceted approach is necessary to capture the complexity of factors affecting development of these children in their diverse environments. Consistent with current theory and educational practice, the book focuses most strongly on the interaction of family and child, the strengths and needs of deaf and hard of hearing children, and the role of educational and other interventionists in supporting family and child growth. The authors have been influenced by the seminal work of Kathryn P. Meadow-Orlans, whose work for many decades has applied a multidisciplinary approach to understanding deaf children's development. Available hardbound (\$69.95) or in paperback (\$34.50). To order, call 1-800-926-6579, or check publishers' website at www.erlbaum.com. Orders may be sent to Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Order Dept., 10 Industrial Ave., Mahwah, NJ, 07430-2262.

The Gallaudet Research Institute
Gallaudet University
800 Florida Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002-3660

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Washington, D.C.
Permit No. 9452