

Deaf Family Issues: CODAS and Identity

[Français](#)

By Thomas H. Bull*, M.Div., M.A., CSC, CI, CT
Gallaudet University

Abstract

The question "Am I hearing or am I deaf?" often creates an identity conflict for hearing children raised in a bilingual and bicultural family where one or both parents are D/deaf. One's personal and cultural identity is an important developmental milestone, and the life experiences of these hearing children have an effect on family dynamics. Codas (hearing children of Deaf adults) may feel conflicted, marginalized, alone, or different growing up hearing in the Deaf World. Unfortunately, understanding and embracing this difference often does not occur until adulthood when one finds community with others "like me." This presentation illustrates the conflict and explores the power of the shared story and group identity to bring a positive and triumphant resolution. Parents who are deaf also benefit from professional and community resources and peer support in the effort to help their hearing children deal with the "hearing world/Deaf World" difference earlier in life. A number of organizational, educational, and print resources are suggested.

Some Acronyms

I am hearing and my parents were deaf. People like me used to be called HCDPs, or Hearing Children with Deaf Parents, until the organization CODA (Children of Deaf Adults, Inc.) was founded in 1983. With the growth of CODA into an international organization, and with the lyric simplicity of the acronym, today more of us identify as codas, whether we have one or two deaf parents. Just as it is an individual decision to call oneself deaf or hard-of-hearing, likewise it is an individual decision to call oneself a coda. There is no assumption or implication here that either parent is necessarily culturally or profoundly deaf, or uses American Sign Language. There are a number of CODA chapters in the United States and similar groups have formed in Australia, England, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, the Netherlands and elsewhere.

There is a trend for deaf parents to gather to satisfy their needs for mutual support and to provide social activities for their young hearing children, otherwise known as kodas (kids of Deaf adults). These KODA parent groups have formed in Montgomery County, Maryland, Seattle, Washington, Long Island, New York and elsewhere. A few agencies recognize the needs of these parents and their hearing children and are

beginning to provide much needed services. The acronym "koda" is more and more now being used to describe young hearing children who have one or two deaf parents.

I will share some stories with you. In fact, over half of this presentation is on videotape. I will share some of my own story and the video clips will illustrate common experiences of codas and deaf parents. As we say, "A picture is worth a thousand words." The personal life stories of others can have a profound impact on us personally, and be inspiring and empowering.

My Deaf Culture Introduction

One significant difference between hearing culture and Deaf Culture is the "greeting" or "introduction" ritual. When Deaf people meet, they introduce themselves in a way that is different from hearing people. The Deaf Culture introduction includes the exchange of names and some of the following: a) where you went to school (state residential school or mainstream educational program); b) if you are married, who your spouse is and how you met and if you have hearing or Deaf children; c) what Deaf community organizations you belong to; and d) the people you know within the community. Because the Deaf World is so small, you attempt to discover mutual friends and acquaintances and you may have known some of these mutual acquaintances for many, many years. In the Deaf World, people want to know your affiliations within the community. (Lane, Hoffmeister & Bahan, p. 5)

If you are a person who is hearing in this ritual, the Deaf individual will want to know how your connection to the Deaf World came about. They want to know if you have a Deaf relative and then you discuss mutual friends and acquaintances. If you do not have Deaf relatives or acquaintances, they want to know how you became interested in the Deaf World, how you learned American Sign Language and who your ASL instructors were, and so on. Deaf people want to know your story as it relates to the Deaf World and they want to hear all the details, as we say, from A to Z. This helps to develop trust and acceptance within the community.

In an effort to develop rapport with the reader, let me now give you my Deaf Culture introduction. I am hearing and my mother and father were deaf. My father was born in Nebraska in 1903, and my mother was born in Missouri in 1904. If you are familiar with the novel by Joanne Greenberg, *In This Sign* (1970), it's about a deaf couple, Janice and Abel Ryder, who were born in 1900 and raised their two hearing children during the depression and second World War. If you saw the 1985 Hallmark Hall of Fame movie, *Love is Never Silent*, which was based on Greenberg's novel, then you have a good sense of the life and times of my parents and the Deaf experience from that era.

My father was born deaf from unknown causes and attended the Kansas School for the Deaf in Olathe because it was closer to his hometown than the Nebraska school. When he was 10 years old, my grandparents moved to the San Joaquin Valley in California, and he attended the California School for the Deaf in Berkeley. My dad learned the shoe-repair trade, excelled in sports, and in 1922, he became the second Deaf person in the United States to achieve the rank of Eagle Scout. The school only provided up to an eighth grade education at the time, so he "mainstreamed" back to his rural, hometown public high school where he played football and completed two more years of education. He went on to manage his own shoe repair

shop in his small hometown for 18 years. After their marriage and my sister came along, the family moved to the Bay Area prior to World War II where factory jobs were plentiful, and my dad became a member of the United Auto Workers union.

My mother was born hearing and became deaf from a series of illnesses contracted between the age of 24 and 36 months. Her speech was neither very intelligible nor completely grammatical, but because she had some speech capability, her family placed her in oral educational programs. In the meantime, her family also moved to California where she eventually entered the California School for the Deaf at the age of 15, an apparent "oral failure." I assume that her educational potential was wasted over these years of oral schooling because she was functionally illiterate. It was difficult for her to understand the meaning of newspaper articles, she held a pen awkwardly, and she never drove an automobile. As far as I know, deafness is not hereditary in my family.

It's uncanny how many aspects of Janice and Abel Ryder's family life are similar to my own family story. They lived in New York City and had two hearing children, Margaret and Bradley, who were six years apart and the family communicated in American Sign Language. My parents also communicated at home in ASL. My sister was 6 years old when I was born, and during her early years, the family lived with my hearing grandmother in California farm country. Bradley Ryder was four years old when he climbed out onto a fire escape in their brownstone walk-up and fell to his death. Margaret was ten years old and interpreted for her parents as they selected a coffin and dealt with the funeral director. My paternal grandmother was hit and killed by a driver in a pick-up truck as she crossed a rural highway at dusk. I was 12 years old and helped my parents select the casket and communicate with mortuary personnel. Both Abel Ryder and my father were blue-collar workers, both retired after 25 years, and both received a yellow-gold watch upon retirement. Like Janice, who worked for many years as a seamstress in a factory, my mother also labored as a piecework seamstress for Goodwill Industries.

To continue the comparisons, Margaret Ryder married and had a son who, as a young adult, became involved with the Civil Rights Movement and went to Selma, Alabama. He had seen enough oppression and discrimination in the case of his Deaf grandparents over the years. I was a student at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California, preparing for a ministry in the United Methodist Church when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called for volunteers. In response, I boarded a bus with 41 other seminary students from the Bay Area and went south. I marched from Selma to Montgomery out of my concern for and commitment to social justice. Having Deaf parents was definitely a factor as well. (Remember, when I was growing up there was no legislation like the Americans with Disabilities Act, there were no certified sign language interpreters, no TTYs, and no captioning of television programs or movies.) I marvel that Greenberg could write such an insightful depiction of Deaf parents and family life given her limited experiences because her husband was a vocational rehabilitation counselor with the deaf.

When CODA was founded in November 1983, I subscribed to the international newsletter and then attended the first national conference in California in 1986. I edited proceedings for the first five conferences and have attended every annual international conference since. I helped establish one of our

earliest chapters in the Washington, DC-Metropolitan Area and have compiled and published *On the Edge of Deaf Culture: Hearing Children/Deaf Parents Annotated Bibliography* in 1998. As a result of these experiences, I am now steeped in my coda heritage. Even my personalized license plates declare I am a coda. However, for my entire childhood and many of my adult years, this was an identity that was foreign to me. I have spent a lot of my adult years playing catch-up with my bicultural identity.

One

As long as mountains are standing on earth,

As long as the rivers flow into the sea, these stories shall be told and retold.

The Ramavana

Let me attempt now to paint a picture of the cross-cultural dilemma that Deaf children raised in a hearing family experience. How we perceive ourselves can be summarized in the word identity. The basic question of identity is "Who am I?" This is an extremely complex subject. Identity formation and change are ongoing processes for hearing and Deaf people alike. Although our perception of the world is constantly undergoing change, some aspects of identity are formed very early on and are all-pervasive. As we mature and encounter the vicissitudes of life (education, the world of work, marriage and family life, parenting, grandparenting, aging, etc.), our identities also evolve. Even so, it is possible for people to remain confused or uncertain about their identity for many years, even into their 30s and 40s.

A number of writers have looked at the issue of identity within the Deaf community from several different perspectives. Uncertainty, confusion, doubt, and ambiguity about one's identity seem to be common themes. Statistics indicate that approximately 90% of Deaf children in the United States are born into homes where the parents are hearing. The cultural tension and difference in these families are familiar to many in the Deaf World. A hard-of-hearing person may be conflicted about whether they are deaf or hard-of-hearing. For example, in a *Deaf Life* magazine article, Heather Whitestone, Miss America in 1995 was quoted saying, "I feel caught in the middle." Another hard-of-hearing person felt this way: "I am a square individual in a round community." A late-deafened person likened her situation to that of being an immigrant caught between two cultures. Deaf members of ethnic groups may also recognize the diversity of their identities where the challenge is to blend or integrate.

In the Deaf World stories of the "lost deaf" are legion. One common scenario is the mainstreamed deaf student who is lonely, has no Deaf peers, does not know American Sign Language, is not exposed to the richness of Deaf Heritage, and does not have Deaf role models in school. When the young person finally arrives at a school for the deaf, attends his or her first Deaf Club meeting, or pursues a degree in an educational setting with a large program for the deaf (California State University, Northridge, the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, or Gallaudet University), a whole new world opens up to them. When they learn American Sign Language, get involved in Deaf community organizations and develop the sense that "these are my people," they feel at home. The ambiguities of identity undergo changes that are sometimes dramatic.

A videotape titled *ASL Pah: Deaf Student's Perspectives on their Language* illustrates this experience. Here we see how serious the identity issue was for a woman named Cheryl. While it may be argued that not all Deaf young people feel so unsure, in my experience it's fairly common. It was not until high school when Cheryl began to develop a sense of community, of positive self-esteem, where she became a culturally-identified Deaf person. She became strong and confident through knowing herself as a member of a community of people who are all like her: deaf.

Two

Tell someone a fact and you reach their minds; give them a story and you touch their souls.

Hasidic Proverb

A similar cultural disparity and lostness may confront the hearing child born into a deaf-parented household and raised in the Deaf World. Statistics indicate that 88-92% of the children born to deaf parent(s) in the United States are hearing. They often wonder, "Am I hearing or am I deaf?" In my extensive experience, identity issues best illustrate the cultural conflict that codas experience, but not all codas experience this to the same degree. The parallels between experiences of codas and Deaf children born into hearing households are extremely interesting. Cultural identity is clearly an important developmental milestone for Deaf persons and codas as well. Codas may feel conflicted, marginalized, and alone growing up hearing in the Deaf World. This is similar to a Deaf child growing up in a hearing family's world.

In his book, *Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism* (1982), Francois Grosjean describes some of the traits of spoken language bilingual and bicultural individuals. One major characteristic is the experience of marginality. He uses the following adjectives to describe their identity experience: friendless, confused, lonely, alone, ambivalent, isolated, branded, different, not affiliated, lost, odd and disconnected. Codas also tend to feel they are neither fish nor fowl. Here are a few phrases that describe their similar experiences: caught in between, the only one, on the edge, a bridge and not sure who I am. One coda said, "I felt like I visited two homes but had no place for myself." Another coda realized her difference when, at the age of six, her Deaf cousins were taken to the state school for the deaf to live, leaving her behind. Of course you know you are different when people ask, "How did you learn to talk?"

This same question was asked as long ago as 1904. In a letter to the editor of *The Silent Worker*, E. Florence Long, the wife of J. Schuyler Long of Council Bluffs, Iowa, and the mother of several hearing children, praises the paper's series of photographs of "typical children of deaf parents." She goes on to say,

Now, if more deaf parents would send pictures of their little ones that are of school age to your paper, there would be enough to collect together in book form which they could buy and distribute to such hearing acquaintances as ask the fool question, "Can your baby hear?" "How can it ever hear or speak when you cannot?" etc. Such a little book might be a good thing in public libraries where hearing people could read it and disabuse their minds of the popular fallacy that intermarriage of the deaf resulted in either deaf or idiotic

The stigma society places on deaf people inevitably rubs off onto their hearing children. In 1996, Charlotte Abrams published her autobiography, *The Silents*. Imagine how confusing it is for a hearing child in a Deaf family to be identified as "one of the silents." In her autobiography, Doris Isbell Crowe (1993) describes how she grew up with Deaf parents in Cave Springs, Georgia. Her father was known in town as "Dummy" and she was identified simply as "Dummy's little girl." Unthinking hearing grandparents occasionally cast the burden onto their young hearing grandchildren to "tell" and "explain to" and otherwise "take care of" their Deaf parents. As a result, kodos know they are different early-on.

Of course my sister and I knew we were different. When the telephone was installed in our home, I was 9 and she was 15 years old. We spent the entire day calling all of our hearing friends. I knew I was different in high school when, in conversations with friends, I gave rapt visual attention and maintained eye contact, however my hearing friends didn't. The thought that went through my mind was, "What's wrong with me?" They didn't look at me in the same way that I looked at them. Nathie Marbury describes her hearing daughter's need for eye contact in this humorous video clip titled *Deaf Culture Lecture: Cultural Differences* (1996).

It is painful to experience cultural conflict and not understand what is going on. I thought I was alone in the need for eye contact. I wish someone had explained to me that part of internalized Deaf Culture when I was young. It was not until 1987, when I attended the convention of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf in St. Paul, Minnesota, during a plenary presentation by the late Marie Jean Philip, that I finally understood what was going on. Philip explained that one aspect of Deaf Culture is the need to maintain eye contact. Hearing people typically avoid sustained eye contact. It is considered rude to "stare." I had an epiphany. That one bit of information helped me begin to understand that negative message from high school, "What's wrong with me?" and turn it around.

I have also benefited from insights gleaned from the writings of other codas. For example, when Lou Ann Walker's book *A Loss for Words* (1986) was published, some of my experiences as a koda began to make a lot more sense. To my knowledge, this is the very first widely distributed autobiographical coda story. In this television program, *Deaf Mosaic: A Bridge Between*, Walker explains her reasons for writing the book.

Walker felt very protective of her parents and wanted to make sure they were comfortable with the personal disclosures in the book. A common concern of codas is the question, "What will people think of my Deaf parents if I say something negative about them?" Since 1986, 14 other autobiographical accounts have been published and the excellent research by coda Paul Preston, *Mother Father Deaf: Living between Sound and Silence* (1994), has been well received. The life experiences shared in these and other books should be helpful to codas and Deaf parents alike.

As an eight-year-old child, Walker thought her parents could hear and were spies. I also had my suspicions that my parents really could hear, but I kept that all to myself. As a child, I tested my parents. There were times when I clapped my hands or made a loud noise and my mother turned around. Other times, she didn't respond. Of course, I was doing what

apparently many other young codas have done: I was dealing with an idealized fantasy that my parents could hear and were, therefore, like my friends' parents. I suppose my hope was that they were not deaf. But I thought I was alone in feeling this way. I thought I was alone in doing what I had done. Walker's story helped to normalize my experience and as a result, I no longer felt alone or weird in that regard.

An outstanding documentary highlighting the experiences of seven Australian adult codas was produced in 1992. In the United States among the CODA community there is a general consensus that *Passport without a Country* is an eloquent depiction of the coda experience. The segment, "A Search for Identity," is especially moving. Again, recognizing that perhaps not all codas experience the deaf/hearing polarity as poignantly as portrayed here, the sense that one feels alienated from one's native land, even though the passport is in your hand, is a vivid metaphor to describe the inner cultural and identity conflicts that kodas/codas can struggle with.

The last illustration comes from a time when I considered a career move and participated in a two-day vocational counseling program. One of the test instruments I completed was the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test. The psychologist was familiar with the Deaf community, was aware my parents were deaf and realized that English was my second language. He explained that there were bilingual (ESL) norms for the Stanford-Binet and proceeded to interpret the test results using those ESL norms. It was the first time in my life that any professional or anyone else had considered me a bilingual person. I was 48 years old.

Three

Telling our stories may be the most human thing we do. By telling stories we remember our past, invent our present, and envision our future. Then, by sharing those stories with others, we overcome loneliness, discover compassion and create community with kindred souls.

Sam Keen, philosopher, theologian, and poet

Now, let me describe a way for codas to resolve the question of identity. My journey toward wholeness included an understanding that I am bilingual and bicultural and a coda. This is my identity, but this was not always the case. I worked at Gallaudet University as a teacher at the Kendall Demonstration Elementary School for the Deaf for 17 years before I attended my first CODA conference. When I returned to work and stepped onto the campus again, I knew something was different. Kendall Green was the same but I was different. Over the years I had consciously sought out other HCDPs but I didn't have a community. At CODA, I finally found that community. At CODA, I started a journey toward understanding myself as a coda, something between deaf and hearing, a third possibility. I found the coda world.

Group identity, the sense that I am not alone, the sense that there are others like me, is a very personal but liberating and positive experience. In March of 1988, one of the speakers at the Deaf President Now rally in Washington, DC, told me that when he looked down Maryland Avenue at the several thousands of students and members of the deaf community and supporters marching from the university to the Capitol, he felt a sense that "These are my people." Until the formation of CODA in 1983, there was no hook for me to hang my sense of

group identity onto. Until my first CODA conference in 1986, I had never met another self-identified coda. There were no opportunities to gather under this banner or this cultural identity. Cultural identity without community is impossible.

Today, it's unthinkable that people who are deaf should embrace a deaf identity in isolation without the opportunity to gather together. Yet, in the early days of CODA, there were fears and anxieties within us that put a cloud over our meeting. Many of us grew up feeling so protective of our parents that there is a sense of betrayal in meeting and sharing "family secrets." As Sheila Jacobs, an early strong and staunch pioneer within CODA, said at our first conference in 1986,

Codas have come out of the woodwork. We are beginning to talk to one another, reflect on our personal and collective experiences. I can remember my own negative response upon discovering that such an organization existed. My initial reaction was "What nerve! What for?" (Bull, Rutherford & Jacobs, pp. 1-2)

Thankfully after so many years of meeting together, we've gotten over that. The second source of resistance to developing a CODA community came from our Deaf family members and the Deaf community. They were suspicious. One of the myths that codas have had to overcome is the notion that we gather together for the purpose of "stabbing our parents in the back" or badmouthing our family. Bonnie Kraft, another early dynamic and ardent supporter of CODA, tells a story about when her mother asked, "Why are you so involved with CODA? Was I a bad mother?"

The explanation Bonnie gives in the video *Tomorrow Dad will Still be Deaf and Other Stories* (1996) is that "CODA is my Deaf Club." That is true. We meet together because we are alike and have so much in common, just as people who are deaf gather at the Deaf Club or attend other community activities to share their lives because they are the same. As codas, we gather to share community with those who are like us. The clearest parallel is a Deaf student who finally finds a community of Deaf friends and feels, for the first time, at home. Recall the first video clip about Cheryl's experience. One way for a coda to resolve the inner debate "Am I hearing, or am I deaf?" is to become part of a community and nurture that cultural identity.

With the support of coda friends, Sherry Hicks wrote an autobiographical, one-woman performance piece in which she vividly describes the struggle between her Deaf and hearing inner selves or parts. She found resolution by understanding herself as a coda. *The Phoenix* (1993) is a testimony to the clarity and strength she found at CODA. Her creative endeavors are a testament to the power of community (*Sherry: The Music Sign Language Video* – 1994).

We are, all of us, on a journey seeking healing and wholeness. For codas, the cultural conflict and identity struggles can be resolved. I can point to any number of personal stories of codas who, regardless of age, gender or nationality, experienced a highly significant personal breakthrough when they "found themselves" anew at CODA. The experience of "coming home" and "my people" are an echo of the experiences people have when they finally find community in the Deaf World. For hearing children of deaf parents who do not feel fully connected to the hearing world, who do not feel totally a part of the Deaf World, there is a third place where they can be 100% connected, integrated and at home: at

Four

Stories are our protectors, like our immune system, defending against attacks of debilitating alienation they are the connective tissue between culture and nature, self and other, life and death, that sew the worlds together, and in telling, the soul quickens and comes alive.

Joan Halifax (1993), The Fruitful Darkness

Parents who are deaf, who take advantage of professional and community resources, as well as peer support, are in a better position to help their hearing children deal with their bicultural experiences. My coda identity came together for me in midlife, but it doesn't have to continue to be that way for others. My goal here is for the Deaf community and those parents of hearing children to become more engaged with the needs of their hearing children for community and cultural identity. Deaf parents can help their young hearing children find their identity early on. It's wonderful to see young kodas get parental and community support for their bicultural identity. Deaf parents can enhance their children's self-esteem by passing along their knowledge of ASL, cultural norms, values, rules for behavior, traditions, and Deaf community heritage. Deaf parents can tell their children they are special because they are bilingual and bicultural. Deaf parents can ensure their children have a koda community and meet adult codas, just as people say Deaf children who have hearing parents need to have adult Deaf role models. Deaf parents are in the best position to show their hearing children that they are part of a worldwide community of codas who are proud to contribute positively to the community as well as to the Deaf World.

Hearing parents have many opportunities to participate in parenting classes. Deaf parents also need to have access to these same opportunities to enhance their parenting skills. An excellent parent education program in ASL was developed in 1992 and is called *Parenting Skills: Bringing Together Two Worlds*. This course is a package of two 90-minute videotapes with an eight-lesson Facilitators Guide. The video is a compilation of experiences of 19 Deaf parents who have hearing children. Eight group sessions cover these issues: parental expectations, communication, interpreting, discipline, values, self-esteem and the teen years. The design is for a Deaf parent facilitator to receive training to lead the discussions and cover the topics. Parents are encouraged to be supportive of one another and to realize the uniqueness of their bilingual and bicultural children. When parents feel comfortable enough to express their thoughts and feelings, they are in a better position to learn from each other and to understand their hearing children and advocate appropriately on their behalf.

Another way parents who are deaf can share their joys and frustrations and learn and support each other is to form a KODA group. In 1992 deaf parents in Maryland saw a need for their koda children to develop friendships with other kodas. They organized themselves, planned fun activities for the children and had time to discuss their concerns as parents. Their annual picnics grew to over 150 participants for several years. A Deaf Mosaic film crew attended one of those picnics and produced this program: *Deaf Mosaic: KODA, a National Organization for Kids of Deaf Adults* (1993).

The deaf community through the National Association of the

Deaf has provided deaf youth leadership summer camp programs (YLC) since 1969. Camp experiences just for koda began in Australia in 1993. That was a joint effort between the Australian CODA and Deaf communities. Their most recent session was held in Victoria in January 2004. In the United States, Camp Mark 7, in upper state New York, has provided sessions for koda children and youth ages 9-16 since 1997. The numbers have grown from 16 to 110 koda over two sessions. A most important aspect of the camp is the quality and diversity of the counselors: they are outstanding adult koda, some from other countries. Some are counselors in training who have attended the camp over the years. Adult koda and members of the deaf community share the same concern for the next generation: ours is expressed in our support of Koda Camp, theirs is expressed through support of YLC.

I've learned a great deal from the writings of other koda and I believe that parents who are deaf are hungry for information. There is a great need for parents who are deaf to share their stories of parenting hearing children. I can count on one hand the number of articles written by American Deaf parents about family life. I encourage Deaf parents to share their experiences in raising hearing children. There is also a need for storybooks for children that portray family life where parents are deaf with hearing children. To my knowledge, there are none.

Parenting is tough but also has its moments of hilarity and fun. Humor is an outstanding way for families to help their children resolve the conflict between deaf and hearing. I have two stories told by deaf mothers to share with you. Nathalie Marbury tells about shopping with her two daughters in *Deaf Culture Lecture: Tools for a Cross-Cultural Adventure* (1996). Elinor Kraft in *Live at SMI: Elinor Kraft* (1994) shares a delightful story from a Canadian mother of six children, two of whom are hearing. Sharing these anecdotes can bring Deaf parents together in a unique way. Storytelling, humor and laughter are the indispensable threads that also weave together our International CODA conferences. We are the children of a storytelling people held together by an oral tradition.

Through this presentation I've tried to show that identity confusion and conflict for koda/coda can be ameliorated in the following five ways: 1) acquiring information through reading autobiographies and other resources; 2) developing individual and group identities intentionally; 3) forming support groups for parents and providing a variety of camping and other activities for hearing children; 4) using humor to enhance the bond of parents; and 5) increasing opportunities for parent education and developing information resources. All of these efforts can help hearing children born into families where one or both parents are Deaf move toward the development of a firm and positive cultural identity.

In closing, let me share an e-mail from a Deaf mother. Here she talks about her hearing (koda) daughter: "A few weeks ago, my daughter and I were having a conversation. I had just found out that I was pregnant and my daughter was asking me why it happened and all sorts of 5-year-old questions. I am not a religious person, but I thought talking about God would help her put things in perspective. I said 'You know, I'm deaf and God chose for me to be deaf, same thing with your Daddy.' Then I said, 'God chose for you to be hearing and your [3-year-old] brother to be hearing.' She said, 'No! I am not hearing. I am hearing and deaf.' Stunned, I asked her, 'Who told you this?' She said, 'God told me.' She said this with a little sweet smile."

This mother goes on to say, "It was the most beautiful thing that happened. It really said something to me about her identity; that she has been exploring it herself and this is obviously how she feels. I think it's wonderful." Well, I think it's wonderful, too. I will only add the hope that this mother and all parents will tell her daughter and children early-on, "Yes, you are hearing and deaf *and* you are also a koda."

REFERENCES: CODA AUTOBIOGRAPHIES (* paperback)

* **Abrams, C. (1996).** The silents. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

* **Allan, J. (2002).** Because I love you: The silent shadow of child sexual abuse. Charlottesville, VA: Virginia Foundation for the Humanities Press. (<http://www.timetospeak.com>)

* **Barash, H. L., and Barash-Dicker, E. (1991).** Our father Abe: The story of a deaf shoe repairman. Madison, WI: Abar Press.

Chism, S. C. (2002). A search for identity: The unfolding of an unknown past. Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris Corporation. (available from <http://www.xlibris.com>)

* **Clark, G. (2000).** Sounds from silence: Graeme Clark and the Bionic Ear story. St. Leonards, NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

* **Corfmat, P. (1990).** "Please Sign Here": The world of the deaf. Worthing, West Sussex, England: Churchman Publishing Limited.

Crowe, D. I. (1993). Dummy's little girl. New York: Carlton Press, Inc. (Out of print)

Davis, L. J. (2000). My sense of silence: Memoirs of a childhood with deafness. Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

* **Enos-Perez, J. (1985).** A sign of love. Glenn, CA: Janet Enos Perez.

Hicks, S. L. (1993). Phoenix The: A one act play, an autobiographic life work in progress. Unpublished B.A. Thesis, Performance Art and Humanities, New College, San Francisco, California.

Miller-Hall, M (1994). Deaf, dumb and BLACK: An account of an actual life of a family. New York: Carlton Press Corp. (Out of print)

* **Sidransky, R. (1990).** In silence: Growing up hearing in a deaf world. New York: St. Martin's Press. (Out of print)

* **Slocombe, A. (1996).** My parents' voice. Surrey, England: A. Slocombe.

* **Vivo, P. (1991/1996).** Turn right at the next corner. Granville, OH: Trudy Knox Publisher.

* **Walker, L. A. (1986).** A loss for words: The story of deafness in a family. New York: Harper and Row.

* **Worzel-Miller, L. (2000).** The best of both worlds (a-not-

so-silent life). San Jose, CA: Writers Club Press.

OTHER BOOKS (+ fiction * paperback)

* **Arana, M. (2001).** American Chica: Two worlds, one childhood. New York: Random House, Inc.

* **Bull, T. H. (1998).** On the edge of deaf culture: Hearing children/deaf parents annotated bibliography. Alexandria, VA: Deaf Family Research Press. Write DFR Press, P.O. Box 8417, Alexandria, VA 22306-8417.

Davis, L. J. (Ed.). (1999). Shall I say a kiss?: The courtship letters of a deaf couple 1936-1938. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

+ **Ferris, J. (2001).** Of sound mind. NY: Farrar Straus Giroux. (children's story: 8th grade reading level)

+ **Glickfeld, C. L. (1989).** Useful gifts: Stories by Carole L. Glickfeld. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press.

* **Goff Paris, D. & Kay Wood, S. (Eds.). (2002).** Step into the circle: The heartbeat of American Indian, Alaska Native, and First Nations Deaf communities. Salem, OR: AGO Publications.

+ * **Greenberg, J. (1970).** In this sign. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

* **Grosjean, F. (1982).** Life with two languages: An introduction to bilingualism. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

+ * **Jeffers, A. (1995/1998).** Safe as houses. London: Gay Men's Press.

Lane, H., Hoffmeister, R., & Bahan, B. (1996). A Journey into the DEAF-WORLD. San Diego: DawnSignPress.

* **Pollock, D. C. & VanReken, R. E. (1999/2001).** Third culture kids: The experience of growing up among worlds. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

* **Preston, P. M. (1994).** Mother father deaf: Living between sound and silence. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Uhlberg, M. (2003). The printer. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishers. (Children's book for 4-8 year olds, by a coda, beautifully illustrated)

OTHER REFERENCED AND RELATED ARTICLES

Andrews, G. (1995, July). Heather Whitestone: An exclusive interview. Deaf Life, 8(1), 19-21.

Bull, T. H., Rutherford, S. D., & Jacobs, S. (Eds.). (1994). Celebration and exploration of our heritage. Proceedings of the first National CODA Conference, Fremont, California. August 8-10, 1986. (Rev. ed.). Santa Barbara, CA: Children of Deaf Adults, Inc.

Carroll, C. (1989, January). Born hearing and trying not to hate it: Sheila Palmer didn't know it for the first 7 years of her life, but she was born hearing. The World Around You, 11 (4), 8-9, 15. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University, Pre-College

Programs.

Filer, R. D. & Filer, P. A. (2000, Winter). Practical Considerations for Counselors Working with Hearing Children of Deaf Parents. Journal of Counseling and Development, 78 (1), 38-43.

Gannon, J. R. & Gannon, R. L. (1990, Fall). Between two worlds: Deaf children of hearing parents grow up in a bicultural environment. Gallaudet Today, 21 (1), 12-16.

Halifax, J. (1993). The fruitful darkness: Reconnecting with the body of the Earth. New York: Harper Collins.

Harvey, M. A. (1985, July/August). Between two worlds: One psychologist's view of the hard of hearing person's experience. Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, 6 (4), 4-5.

Heather Whitestone: An exclusive interview. (1995, July). Deaf Life, 8 (1), pp. 19-21. (Cover title is "Miss America: 'I feel caught in the middle.'")

Jacobs, S. (1990, February). I-N-T-R-O-D-U-C-I-N-G Coda Talk column. CODA Connection, 9 (2), 9.

Long, E. F. (1905, February). Letter to the Editor. The Silent Worker, 17(5), 76.

Markowicz, H. (2002, Winter). A kindred response to a new annotated bibliography about CODAs (book review essay: *On the Edge of Deaf Culture: Hearing Children/Deaf Parents* by Thomas Bull). Sign Language Studies, 2 (2), 212-216.

Moyers, B. (1991). *The World of Ideas: Interview with Sam Keen*. Public Broadcasting System.

Prickett, D. (2000, Fall). The CODA connection: Do your parents know Braille? Gallaudet Today, 31 (1), 26-35.

Shultz-Myers, S., Myers, R. R. & Marcus, A. L. (1999). Hearing children of deaf parents: Issues and interventions within a bicultural context. In I. W. Leigh (Ed.), Psychotherapy with deaf clients from diverse groups (pp. 121-148). Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Singleton, J. (2002, Summer). Hearing children of deaf parents bridging two languages and two cultures. CSD Spectrum, 2 (2), 26-28.

Singleton, J. L., & Tittle, M. D. (Summer, 2000). Deaf parents and their hearing children. Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, 5 (3), 221-236.

Walter, V. (1990, Fall). The ties that bind: Hearing children and deaf parents talk about being a family. Gallaudet Today, 21 (1), 2-16.

Younkin, L. (1990, January/February). Between two worlds: Welcomed by neither Black nor deaf people, deaf Blacks can find themselves in a virtual no-man's land. The Disability Rag, 11 (1), pp. 30-33.

VIDEOTAPES

***ASL pah! Deaf student's perspectives on their language.* (1992).** 65 minutes. Color. VHS. Producers, Clayton Valli, Ceil Lucas, Esme Farb and Paul Kulick; director Dennis Cokely. (With an accompanying booklet) Burtonsville, MD: Sign

Deaf Culture lecture: Cultural differences. (1994). 35 minutes. Color. VHS. Sound. CC. (Tape No. 8i) In American Sign Language with voice-over by Bonnie Sherwood. Salem, OR: Sign Enhancers, Inc.

Deaf Culture lecture: Shared wisdom for families. (1996). 45 minutes. Color. VHS. Sound. CC. (Tape No. 8L) In American Sign Language with voice-over by Janet Maxwell. Salem, OR: Sign Enhancers, Inc.

Deaf Culture lecture: Tools for a cross-cultural adventure. (1996). 45 minutes. Color. VHS. CC. (Tape No. 8k) In American Sign Language with voice-over by Janet Maxwell. Salem, OR: Sign Enhancers, Inc.

Deaf Mosaic: A bridge between. Program No. 212. (1987, February). 28 minutes. Color. Signed, sound and open captioned. Produced by Tony Hornick and Annjoy Marcus. Hornick interviews Lou Ann Walker, author of A loss for words. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University, Department of Television, Film and Photography.

Deaf Mosaic: KODA, a national organization for Kids of Deaf Adults. Program No. 908. (1993, December). 28 minutes. Color. VHS. Signed, sound and open captioned. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University, Department of Television, Film and Photography.

Live at SMI (video No. 256): Elinor Kraft. (1994). 90 minutes. Color. VHS. Burtonsville, MD: Sign Media Inc.

Love is never silent. (1985, December 1). 90 Minutes. Color. (Based on the 1970 novel In this sign by Joanne Greenberg, this Emmy Award winning Hallmark Hall of Fame production aired on NBC Television, December 9, 1985)

Passport without a country. (1992/1993). Color. 47 minutes. VHS. Sound. Open captions. Produced by Cameron Davie at Griffith University and Queensland University of Technology, Queensland, Australia. Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities.

Sherry: The music sign language video. (1994). 29 minutes. Color. VHS. Sound. CC. Berkeley, CA: UNI-QUE Productions.

Tomorrow Dad will still be deaf and other stories. (1997). 90 minutes. Color. Sound. CC. VHS. In American Sign Language with voice-over by Bonnie Kraft. San Diego, CA: DawnSignPress.

ARTICLES BY DEAF PARENTS

Bergmann, R. (1994, April). Parent guidance of Deaf parents with deaf children: We need deaf parent counselors. WFD News, No. 1, 28-29. (World Federation of the Deaf publication)

Burdett, J. (1997, October 17). The joys and challenges of living in two different worlds: Deaf parents' first experience with a hearing child. Cal News, 112 (3), 6-7. {Publication of the California School for the Deaf, Fremont}

Finton, L. (1996). Living in a bilingual-bicultural family. In I. Parasnis (Ed.), Cultural and language diversity and the Deaf

experience (pp. 258-271). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Galloway, G. (1990, Fall). Raising hearing kids: A deaf mother remembers the joys and trials of parenthood. Gallaudet Today, 21 (1), 6-7.

Jaech, T. A. (1981). The Jaech family: >From dad with love...deaf kids. The Deaf American, 34 (3), 5-7.

Johnson, R. L. (1968). Unique problems encountered in raising deaf and hearing children: Views of deaf parents of hearing children. (2 pages - source unidentified).

Kahlil, L. (1988, Winter). Phobia. The Deaf American, 38 (1), 19-20.

Paris, V. (2001, Spring). Wall of sound: Silence, music, and raising an abled child. Brain, Child: The Magazine for Thinking Mothers, 2 (2), 12-13.

Pelarski, J., Poorbaugh, J., & Hines, J. (1973). Tell it like it is. In National Conference on Program Development for and with Deaf People (Ed.), Proceedings of National Conference on Program Development for and with Deaf People, Washington, D.C., October 9-12, 1973 (pp. 19-21). Washington, DC: Gallaudet College, Public Service Programs.

Sheridan, M. (1995). A mother's gift. In M. D. Garretson (Ed.), Deafness, life and culture II: A Deaf American monograph, 45 (pp. 107-109). Silver Spring, MD: National Association of the Deaf.

Stone-Harris, R. (1983). Deaf parents' perceptions of family life with deaf and/or hearing children. In G. D. Tyler (ed.), Rehabilitation and human services: Critical issues for the eighties, proceedings of the 1980 conference of the American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association, Cincinnati, 1980, Readings in deafness: Monograph No. 6 (pp. 5-9). Silver Spring, MD: American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association.

Watson, T. (1991). A deaf parent's view. In National Council for Social Workers with Deaf People Training Committee (Ed.), Special needs or special breed? Hearing children of deaf adults (pp. 10-11). London, England: NCSWDP.

Williams, J. S. (1976, Spring). Bilingual experiences of a deaf child. Sign Language Studies, 10, 37-41.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES/MATERIALS FOR DEAF PARENTS

Neubacher, M. (1987). Pathways for parenting, parents guide: (1) Our baby is hearing (24 pages); (2) Our child - two worlds (40 pages); (3) Adolescence to grown-up (28 pages). Illustrated by Steve Schudlich. Detroit, MI: Lutheran Social Services of Michigan.

Parenting: Bringing two worlds together [Videotapes]. (1992). 180 minutes. Color. VHS. ASL. Fairfax, VA: Parenting Advisory Council, Inc. {Kit includes videotapes and manual} <http://www.pacfamily.org/>

Parenting skills: Bringing together two worlds, one home, two cultures [Manual]. (1992). 206 pages. Fairfax, VA: Parenting Advisory Council, Inc {Kit includes videotapes and

manual} <http://www.pacfamily.org/>

Pathways for parenting video: A video program for deaf parents with hearing children. (1987). 66 minutes. Three videocassettes. Part 1: Our baby is hearing, 18 minutes; Part 2: Our child goes to school, 20 minutes; Part 3: From teenager to adult, 30 minutes. Color. Signed. Open captioned. Produced by Linda Tebelman. Detroit, MI: Lutheran Social Services of Michigan.

Tebelman, L. (1989a). Pathways for parenting video: facilitator's guide. Detroit, MI: Lutheran Social Services of Michigan. (146 pages)

Tebelman, L. (1989b). Pathways for parenting video: parent's guide. Detroit, MI: Lutheran Social Services of Michigan. (102 pages)

INTERNET RESOURCES

Camp Mark 7: KODA Camp information:

<http://www.campmark7.org>

CODA International. P.O. Box 30715, Santa Barbara, California 93130-0715 Adult hearing children of deaf parents organization. <http://www.coda-international.org>

Deaf Parents and their Hearing Children Information Packet (26 pages) at <http://www.coda-international.org/> (Click on "All About" then "Info Packet." This is designed for parents to give to school personnel and other professionals who deal with their hearing children.)

Gallaudet University Library "Pathfinders" for further research are available at <http://library.gallaudet.edu/dr/guid-dpohc.html> & <http://library.gallaudet.edu/dr/guid-hcodp.html>

KODA: Kids of Deaf Adults. Montgomery County, Maryland:

<http://fawfamily.com/index2.htm>

National CODA Outreach Contact:

thomas.bull@gallaudet.edu

Parenting Advisory Council, Inc, P.O. Box 2624, Fairfax, VA 22031 <http://www.pacfamily.org/> or send an email to info@pacfamily.org

Biographical Background:

Thomas Bull has a long involvement with Children of Deaf Adults, an international educational support organization for the hearing children of deaf parents. He has been nationally certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf since 1972 and has an M.A. in education of the deaf from Gallaudet University where he is presently on the staff of the Gallaudet Interpreting Service. He is the author of the highly praised reference work, *On the Edge of Deaf Culture: Hearing Children/Deaf Parents Annotated Bibliography*. He has presented on coda-related issues at regional, national and international conferences and is editing an anthology of short stories, poetry and other writings by codas, deaf parents and their koda children. He has been designated National CODA Outreach contact and is a consultant to the World Federation of the Deaf on coda issues. He can be reached at

[return to top](#) 