

## THIRD CULTURE: MAKING IT WORK

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### Introduction

This paper is offered to third culture — the community of Deaf and Hearing people who are involved in some way with each other. The goal of the paper is to examine the interactions of this group from the perspectives of intra-cultural communication, cross-cultural communication, and cross-cultural mediation. The paper will focus on that group of Deaf and Hearing people who call themselves interpreters and carry on the art of cross-cultural mediation.

First, I was 'Hearing-taught.' My mother felt the greatest gift one could impart to a child was the gift of language. To her, one's abilities with language directly reflected one's abilities with communication. She taught me to love and to place great value on language and to recognize with pride the eloquence of the English language.

Next, I was 'Deaf-taught.' I entered the community under the protective wings of Deaf people. My love for language was boosted exponentially when I had the privilege of learning American Sign Language. Soon, however, Deaf people became the reason for my continued involvement with the deaf community. Deaf people taught me their language. They taught me to love, respect, and cherish ASL and the people who use it. The care given to me by my Deaf friends and clients has created in me deep love and respect for them.

After eleven years of providing interpreting services to thousands of people in hundreds of situations, and after receiving an Associate of Arts degree in Interpretation and a Bachelor's degree in Communication, I have seen and heard a myriad of problems that directly relate to communication. I am convinced that a great majority of these problems stem from problems of cross-cultural communication and that the Deaf and Hearing people working within our field have the obligation and responsibility to lead the way toward resolution of these problems. Recognizing and attempting to solve communication problems will serve to lead us toward a more solid achievement of our mutually defined goal — equal access for Deaf/deaf people to all communication.

The content of this paper is borne out of my own interaction within the Deaf Community, a community which has provided me with personal growth beyond any I ever expected to attain. I offer this paper as a written account of my thoughts, research, and suggestions. I hope that it will inform, as well as stimulate thought, discussion, and feedback.

### A history of the interpreting community

Through historical examination, we can trace the beginning of the field of sign language interpretation. This permits us to understand how current definitions, roles,

and expectations surrounding sign language interpretation have come to be what they are. Comparing and understanding circumstances of training and the "supply-and-demand" flow of interpreters from early times to the present may help us understand, accept, and improve our situation. Additionally, we will be better prepared for the future.

Native Interpreters Prior to the founding of RID, most people providing sign language interpreting services between Deaf and Hearing people were the Hearing children of Deaf adults (CODA's) who acquired American Sign Language (ASL) as their native language. Hearing children born to Deaf adults were (and continue to be) reared in an environment where exposure to the American Deaf culture and the American Hearing culture frequently results in the development of a bi-cultural/bilingual person. These CODA's provided almost all of the interpreting services of the time, were not viewed as a group of professionals, and received little in the way of support from people outside the scope of Deaf culture. Lou Fant recalls that interpreters of forty years ago received their training from the "watch-and-do school" and their "certification" was the approval of an esteemed peer, teacher, or family friend who had endured his or her own "baptism-by-fire" entry into the field at some previous time (Fant 1986).

According to the testimony of many native interpreters, there seems to be a set of unwritten rules for a system that governs interpreting procedures in Deaf families and from which the present profession of sign language interpretation developed.

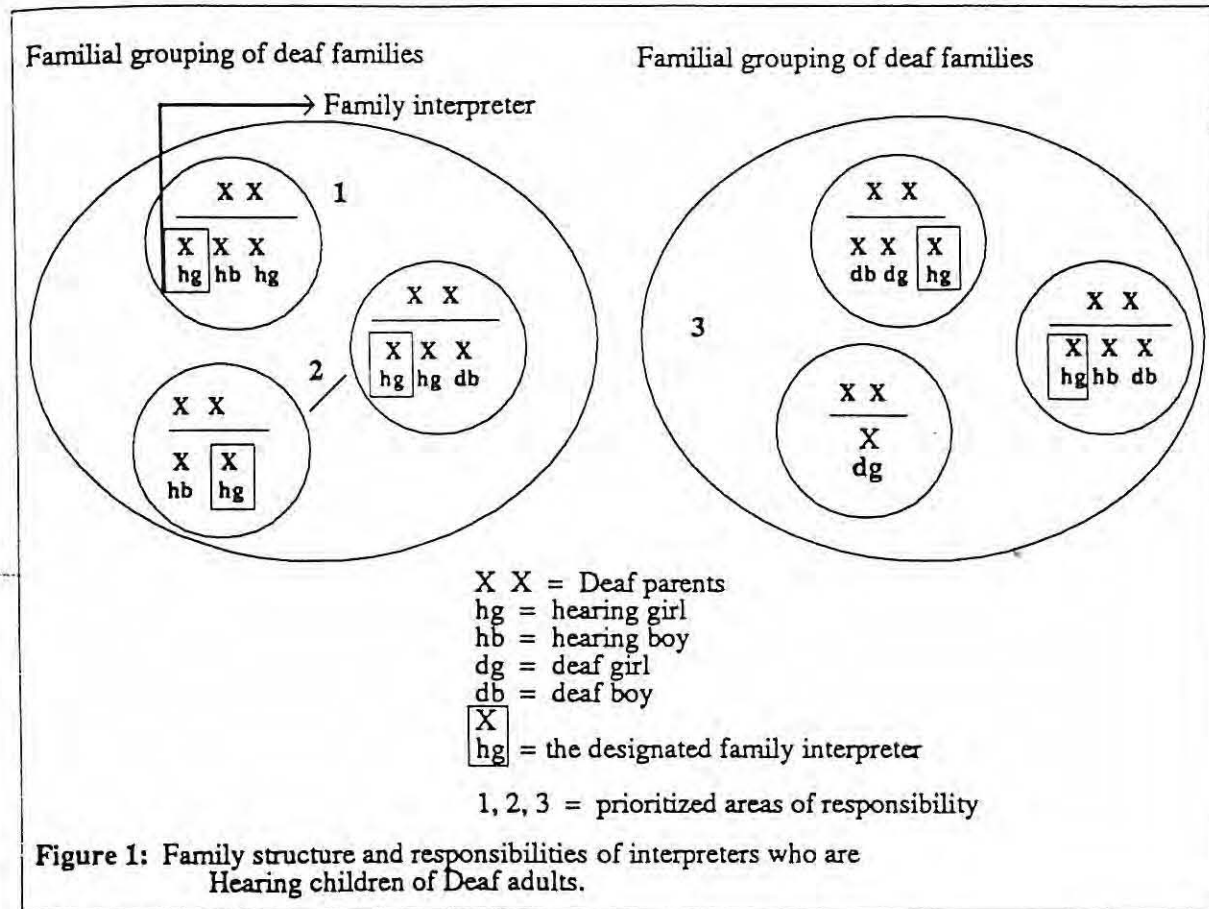
The method that Deaf people structured for meeting interpreting needs efficiently is an excellent example of a cultural system that has been unconsciously derived and unconsciously manifested. Within this structure, the task of interpreting was expected, accepted, and understood as a duty performed by CODA's. Based on culturally transmitted instruction, observation, guidance, and intrinsic aptitudes,

these individuals have (and continue to) mediated linguistic and cultural information between their parents, siblings, friends of the family, and the Hearing world in general. Along with a sense of obligation to provide interpreting services, many CODA interpreters have deep-seated feelings of pride and a sense of loyalty connected with their role as a family interpreter. Knowledge and feelings generated from this cultural experience seem to be the basis from which Deaf people have learned to define and qualify someone as an "interpreter."

This system for procuring interpreting services appears to have been and continues to be traditionally used by many Deaf families and is usually kept within a single family or a specific grouping of families. [See Figure 1.] In families headed by Deaf parents with Hearing offspring, there seems to be a tendency for the first-born female child to assume the duties and responsibilities of the "family interpreter," regardless of her absolute birth order position. Primary interpreting duties focus on the needs of the immediate family and take place in a variety of situations no different from those experienced by any working interpreter today. Secondary interpreting duties focus on provision of services for other families similarly structured and within the scope of the "inner circle" of family friends. The most remote interpreting responsibilities focus on provision of interpreting services for similarly structured families outside the scope of this inner circle.

A system of interpreter "borrowing" has evolved among these families, where the core issue is "cultural trust," rather than on any degree of "professionalism" as commonly defined by most Hearing people. When borrowing a family interpreter is not possible, only highly trusted others will be used for such situations.

It seems that this informally defined but efficient structure set for Deaf consumers the definition and perception of the sign language interpreter. Within this system there are far fewer complications related



to cross-cultural communication, because those interpreters providing the service are both bi-cultural and bilingual. The accuracy of interpretation, however, often cannot be monitored or evaluated with any degree of certainty.

This fairly closed and efficient system of Deaf people taking care of their own interpreting needs has been in place for decades. It has been administered exclusively by Deaf individuals and their "culturally Deaf" offspring. The system remained in effect until the demand for interpreting services severely outweighed the supply of people who could provide the service. Today, it is common to find interpreters who have entered the field without the benefit of this type of cultural background, but who aspire and strive to develop skills equivalent to those held by many CODA interpreters, particularly in the area of sign-to-voice interpreting.

Salient Growth During the 1950's and 1960's, levels of political awareness began to rise among the Deaf community, and increasing numbers of Deaf people began to request the services of sign language interpreters. Increased interaction and communication between the two cultural groups resulted in increased positive gains made by Deaf people for Deaf people. Professional attitudes began to improve and the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation began to offer improved services to Deaf individuals. Deaf people continued in their political activities and formed groups that advocated Deaf rights at state and national levels. Public recognition of Deaf culture began to emerge, as did the stark realization that the demand for qualified interpreters was much larger than the supply.

After twenty years of increased political activity, the need for organization and

support accommodating the need for interpreters was recognized; a workshop was held at Ball State Teachers College in 1964. Out of this meeting came the framework for what became the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

In 1965, Public Law 89-333 passed; this specifically authorized interpreting as a case service for Deaf clients in the vocational rehabilitation setting. This action again sharply increased the demand for sign language interpreters that could not be met by the existing supply. Because of this sharp rise in demand and severe lack of supply, Hearing adults who had never had any familial exposure to deafness, to ASL, or to the Deaf Community were placed in situations in which they had to learn ASL quickly and to become proficient in the interpreting process.

Interpreters without previous exposure to the culture of Deaf people Educational programs were established, in recognition of the need to supply interpreters at the rapid rate required. By 1982, almost 40 two-year (Associate of Arts) programs, six four-year (Bachelor of Arts) programs, and two Master of Arts degree programs in Sign Language Interpretation had been established (Siple 1982). This approach to the education of sign language interpreters was vastly different from the approach that had been previously applied to CODA's. Curriculae in most of these training programs focussed on necessary knowledge and skills, but were largely devoid of cultural information.

#### Cultural Influx — or an Invasion?

For the first time, the majority of students of interpreting were adults who had never experienced contact with deafness, ASL, or the culture of Deaf people. Out of necessity, the goals of these programs focussed sharply on two areas of study: acquisition of ASL, and skills development in the interpreting process.

From this new structure came a group of interpreters who were rarely fluent in ASL at the native level, often marginally

skilled in the interpreting process, and seriously lacking in knowledge of "Deaf ways." The interpreters of this generation were not at fault for their lack of cultural knowledge, since the curriculae of early programs rarely had time to address issues of Deaf culture as we understand it today. The closest cultural instruction was an explicit directive to 'associate with Deaf people.' Early teachers had to hope that the requisite cultural information would be learned through association.

Because of this influx of Hearing people, who began assuming interpreting responsibilities formerly assumed by CODA's, most of the system of rearing, training, using and referring interpreters and interpreting services was no longer under the exclusive dominion and control of culturally identified Deaf people. Deaf people found themselves needing to deal with a 'cultural influx' of well-meaning Hearing people, a situation altogether reminiscent of the situation they commonly experienced within the context of deaf education. Given the grim and oppressive history of Deaf people's experiences with that system, it is easy to see why this newly contrived means of obtaining and utilizing interpreting services was met with some degree of resistance, suspicion, and distrust.

Trust is something that must be built and earned, not 'installed.' Without adequate cultural information and preparation Hearing interpreters' behavior was based solely in their native culture, the axioms of which are frequently contrary to many Deaf cultural norms. This condition resulted in a conflict that did not and does not foster a 'trusting' relationship. I believe that some of the 'fallout' of this phenomenon are just now, after two decades of struggle and conflict, becoming apparent. The new system of recruiting, training, and evaluating interpreters has created the 'profession' of interpreting. A parallel field development seems to have been the creation of an 'us-against-them' attitude, which represents the antithesis of trust.

Many interpreters today seek to make interpreting their career, something that is done full-time and for pay. The pros and cons of having the availability of full time interpreters notwithstanding, it is easy to understand how the attitude of professionalism may be in direct conflict with the perception of the interpreter established so many years ago. The interpreter of yesteryear was often the only person available. As a CODA, whose activities were parentally controlled until a certain age, the interpreter learned to provide services for family and friends as a duty performed out of a sense of loyalty; it was rarely, if ever, a paid service. I believe that this is a root issue and offers partial explanation for some of the cross-cultural communication problems we face today.

If each side of the cross-cultural communication 'gap' perceives the role of the interpreter and "control" of interpreters from such diverse, culturally specific mind sets, it is no wonder we are experiencing problems of mis-understanding, non-understanding and mis-trust! If we could come to some agreed-upon definitions of roles and responsibilities and the component elements required of a professional interpreter, we would more rapidly advance the goals of third culture. Both Deaf and Hearing leaders should work toward such definitions and, acting as change agents, communicate and disseminate such descriptions. A good place to begin might be at the heart of the matter.

### Culture

Culture is an intriguing concept. It is the deposit of knowledge, experiences, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, timing, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects. Culture is the form or pattern for living. It affects us in a deterministic manner from conception to death — and even after death in terms of funeral rites. Culture and communication are inseparable because culture dictates who talks with whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds; it also helps to determine how people encode and de-

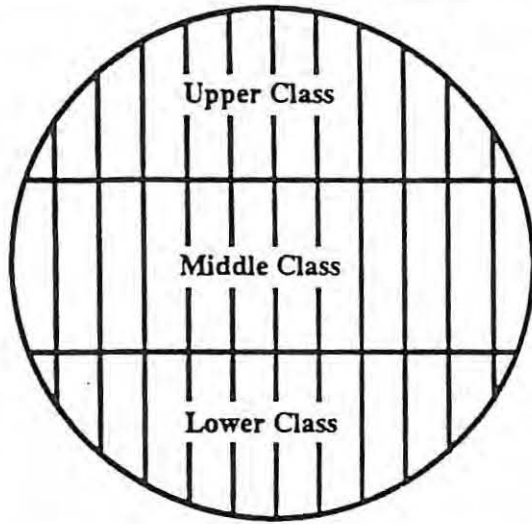
code messages, the meanings, and the conditions and circumstances that define which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted. Our entire repertoire of communicative behaviors depends largely on the culture in which we have been raised. The learning of culture is insidious and unconscious and tends to be manifested unconsciously during daily life.

Any attempt to understand the people of any culture as they understand themselves, must begin with a clear, cognitive and internalized understanding of the concept of culture. The concept of culture has been debated and taught within the Deaf Community. Commonly, in interpreter education programs, the only cultural course offered is a 'Deaf Culture' class that is viewed as core curriculum in most programs, regardless of the scope of the program. The concepts of cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural mediation are rarely addressed as communication processes. There is little curriculum available for the training of: culture as a general concept; culturally specific information about Deaf and Hearing cultures; and cross-cultural communication. Despite our presumably heightened level of cultural consciousness, problems of cross-cultural communication permeate our field; they affect the quality of relationships between Deaf and Hearing people, and in turn affect the quality of interpreting services.

Types of cultural communication Three basic forms of communication are examined in this paper: intra-cultural, cross-cultural, and cross-cultural mediation.

Intra-cultural communication [Figure 2] occurs between two or more principals from within the same culture, sharing the same language that has been naturally acquired. Principals personally mediate the messages they send and receive.

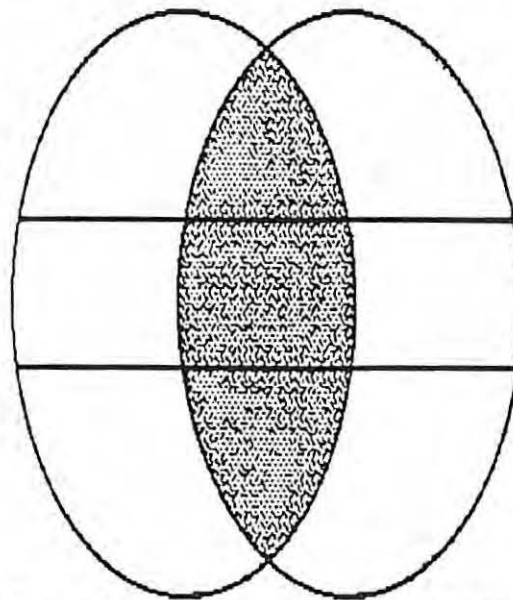
Cross-cultural communication is communication that occurs between two or more principals who hail from different cultural backgrounds [Figure 3]. Although each principal has a native



Communication that occurs between two or more principals hailing from the same culture, sharing the same language. Each principal personally mediates messages sent and received. Different cells represent different sub-cultural groups.

Figure 2: Intra-cultural Communication

language, it is common to find people communicating in a form that is expedient, including ASL, English, and various "pidginized" forms of language. Additionally, sets of behavioral rules are created, so as to permit increased communication between these people. It is this type of communication that is for me the most fascinating, appears to be the most complex, and commonly renders the greatest challenge. It is in this communication environment that interpreters spend a great deal of time, an environment that can be described and defined as the 'deaf community': "...a group of people who live in a particular location, share the common goals of its members, and in various ways, work toward achieving those goals. A deaf community may include persons who are not themselves Deaf (...'culturally Deaf' individuals), but actually support the goals of the community and work with Deaf people to achieve them" (Padden 1980). Interactions of this type, for adult learners, are considered cross-cultural



The shaded area represents communication occurring between two or more principals hailing from distinct cultural groups. In this model, the native languages of each of the principals differs but each principal personally mediates messages sent and received.

Figure 3: Cross-cultural Communication

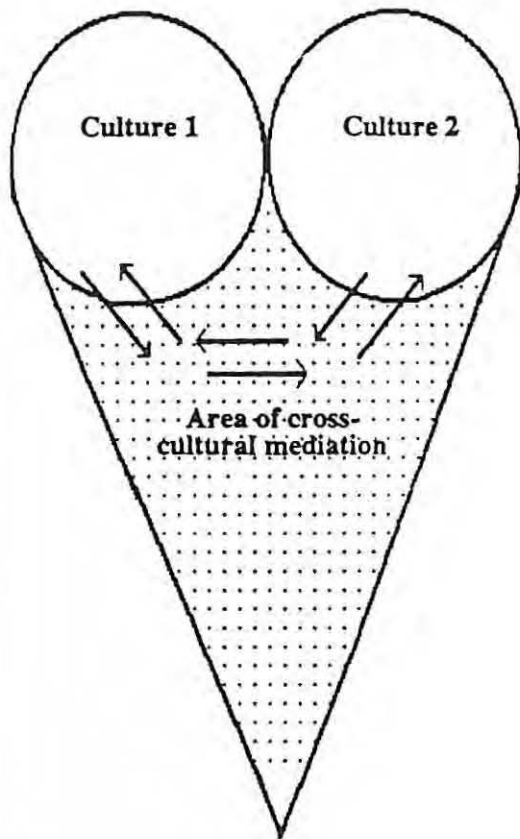
communication and are part of a process that is the precursor to another type of cross-cultural communication, cross-cultural mediation.

Cross-cultural mediation is a communication process that occurs when a message between two or more principals who hail from distinct cultures is mediated by a third party interpreter [Figure 4]. The interpreter intercepts the message issued by the sender and decodes it, applies linguistic and cultural information appropriate to the target culture, encodes the transmitted material into a new form and sends the "new" message to the receiving principal. During this process, there is little or no interaction between the communication principals, except for any non-verbal communication that is available visually.

Interpreters claim to mediate cross-cultural communication, and we accept the notion that culture is the foundation of communication. We would therefore be

well-advised to study carefully each component that contributes to the definition of the whole of culture, and to internalize them. We should remain alert to the fact that we rarely enjoy the benefits of unconscious acquisition and manifestation. We

must be conscious of the process of acquisition, knowledgeable about the concepts that are acquired, and even more conscious of the many ways that culture manifests itself in groups of Hearing and Deaf people.



A three-way communication process involving two principal communicators and a third communicator acting in the capacity of an interpreter. In this model, there is no actual interaction (except for non-verbal cues sent and received visually) occurring between the principal communicators. Communication from one principal is intercepted by the interpreter, where it is mediated by applying salient linguistic and cultural information, after which the message, in its new form, is sent to the receiving principal for whom the message was intended.

Figure 4: Cross-cultural Mediation

**Ethnography** Germane to the the task of cross-cultural mediation is understanding the cultural information of communicating groups from an ethnographic point of view. Ethnography shifts the focus of understanding from the perspective of the interpreter as an outsider, to the discovery of the Deaf insider's point of view: "Ethnography is not merely an objective description of people and their behavior from the observer's viewpoint. It is a systematic attempt to discover the knowledge a group of people have learned and are using to organize their behavior. Instead of asking, 'What do I see these people doing?,' we must ask, 'What do these people see themselves doing?'" (Spradley and McCurdy 1972).

As cross-cultural mediators, we are well-advised to have similar, if not additional, understanding of our native culture prior to attempting to understand those of other groups. It is only after we understand where we stand in relation to our universe and to each other, that we can understand the complexities involved when people of distinct cultures come together for the purpose of communication.

**Ethnocentrism** Ethnocentrism is a belief in the inherent superiority of one's own group or culture, against which all other cultural groups are measured. This belief may be accompanied by feelings of contempt or pity and causes one to 'look down' on anyone who does not belong and who comes from a different cultural group.

No matter how carefully we monitor ourselves, ethnocentrism finds its way into and acts its way out in every culture, including the Deaf and Hearing cultures. The potentially grating, negative effects arising out of ethnocentric control can be observed when Deaf people discuss their

feelings toward Hearing people or deaf education. Ethnocentrism is unfortunately alive and well, kicking up its ugly heels within third culture; the results are becoming profoundly evident: Deaf people are angry; Hearing people are angry; valuable community workers are 'burning out.' On a regular basis, a significant number of interpreters leave the field in search of other careers. This places the bulk of interpreting hours in the hands of less-qualified, sometimes unqualified 'next-in-line' people. This repetitive pattern becomes a nightmarish tragedy, especially considering the current thrust toward mainstream education where most academic information comes through the hands of an interpreter.

Ethnocentrism in Action Recently, a politically active Deaf individual applied for a position as an interpreter coordinator in a community agency located in a metropolitan area. Initial reactions to this news focussed on two reasons why this person could not fulfill the responsibilities of the job: since the job required extensive telephone work and the person was Deaf a full-time interpreter would have to be hired; second, the person lacked the cross-cultural communication skills necessary to achieve effective communication with Hearing agents, who are the most common paying requestors of interpreting services. I wonder how much of this reaction was based in fact, and how much in an ethnocentric fear over loss of control. The latter interpretation is particularly appealing since the applicant is considered to be fairly militant and is clearly not a member of the American Hearing culture.

Sometimes we attribute the concept of culture to be something that only belongs to groups of people different from ourselves. For example, one night during a sign-to-voice interpreting class, the following scenario unfolded: after watching a videotaped story, beautifully signed in ASL by a Deaf man, the interpreting students prepared to discuss aspects of his tale as they related it to Deaf culture.

On a whim, I asked the students to invert the exercise and describe aspects of this story as they might have been told by a Hearing person, then relate those observations to their own culture. Although it is difficult for almost any of us to describe our own culture, I was amazed when these advanced students, all of whom had completed an "Introduction to Deaf Culture" course, could neither describe nor define any aspect of the story as it might relate to their own culture. Trying to stimulate thought and dialogue about this, I re-structured the assignment back into its original form, asking them to relate cultural elements of the tale to Deaf culture. Hands went up and students initiated dialogue appropriate to the task. It appeared that the students were functioning out of rote, verbatim definitions of cultural concepts gleaned from their Deaf Culture course. It occurred to me that without the experience of cross-cultural communication, these students had learned to define the word 'culture,' but had not internalized it. How then, could they begin to understand their own world view in relation to that of another cultural group?

World View One's world view deals with one's culture's orientation toward such philosophical issues as god/goddess, humanity, nature, and the universe. Our world view helps us locate our place and rank in the universe, while our social organizations (concepts of family, school, communication processes, language, and patterns of thought) help us locate our place and rank relative to each other. When people of similar world views communicate, they have a fairly good chance of achieving understanding. When people who hold widely disparate world views attempt to communicate, the chances for achieving understanding are diminished. We all find it difficult not to assume that everyone else views things the same way we do.

Our experiences in life give rise to different world views. One example of such a world view formation is offered by Rotter (1966), who has proposed a



concept of 'Internal-External Dimension,' two world views based on past experience, derived from the social learning framework.

People who perceive their world from a concept of internal control perceive themselves as having personal control over decisions and conditions that influence their lives. Others perceive the world from a view of external control; they perceive themselves as having little personal control over decisions or conditions that influence their lives. It seems easier to develop a view of the world consistent with that of external control when one has experienced living in 'residential' or 'institutional' situations. People with that experience have had to deal with a 'systems approach' to life and are accustomed to the 'system' (or dorm counselor or social security administration) making decisions over which an individual has little control. These forces are seen as impersonal, and a great deal is left to chance and luck.

Within the dominant majority, often people perceive themselves to have a great degree of internal control. The concept of 'dominant majority' does not necessarily imply dominance by way of numbers alone. 'Dominance' is identified with that group of people holding the greatest amount of power in any given society. In the U.S., that group is commonly identified as WASP's (White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant); for the purposes of our discussion, I would add: Hearing, male, and heterosexual. Since the traits of those possessing a world view of internal control are seen as the most desirable, people who hold the external control world view, e.g. women, minorities, and the lower class, are seen as having less desirable attributes. (It is interesting to note that both Deaf people and women — as minority groups — tend to fit into this category of those external control, and that the field of interpreting is heavily dominated by women.)

While the dominant majority may view certain attributes held within minority

groups as less desirable, those same attributes may be viewed as highly desirable within the minority group. "Problems in communication arise when one group, claiming superiority of its ways over that of another group, forcefully attempts to place its views in place and on top of the views held by another group. Hostility, anger, and resistance, subtle or overt, are common responses to forced and unwanted change" (Sue 1981).

Using this example of "internal" versus "external" control, it becomes easy to see that interpreters, if they are unaware of the world view they and the target group hold, may be unaware of much cultural information. If we are to function as effective cross-cultural communicators and as mediators of cross-cultural communication, it is logical that the first step in our educational process must involve locating ourselves with respect to our native culture, the culture in which we were raised. It is essential that each of us within third culture, whether we interpret or not; understand the beliefs, values and attitudes each group holds, and that these are all culturally derived. Only then, after locating ourselves as to world view, can we understand the facility required of us in developing the skills of trans-cultural accommodation — the chameleon effect — in order to be an effective cross-cultural mediator.

Perception and paradigm: Modification of the interpreter It is imperative for our field, for the individuals assuming leadership roles within the field, and for the consumers of our services, that we as a discipline begin to acknowledge and incorporate cross-cultural knowledge and issues in our educational programs and in our lives as working interpreters. In our discipline the majority are Hearing-enculturated interpreters; we must begin to see ourselves and the field in a different light. Since culture overlays every aspect of every person's life, we must begin to recognize and respond to the need to see language acquisition and skills development to be sub-tasks that each fit into the larger concept of culture.

The Interpreter as a Cross-Cultural Mediator The sign language interpreter as cultural mediator provides a model that is offered in response to the cultural uprising of Deaf people and their stated desire to be heard, understood, and defined by their own standards (ethnographically). This model considers and includes linguistic, cultural, environmental, and humanistic factors absent in previous models. It recognizes the interpreter's responsibility to mediate the cultural and linguistic complexities of cross-cultural communication, while retaining the greatest degree of integrity.

Although this is now the preferred model, it has its problems. Implicit in this model is the assumption that three major qualification should prevail. In order of importance, they are listed below:

- fluency in ASL
- cross-cultural communication skills
- skills in the cognitive and linguistic process of interpreting.

Our field has serious problems in each of the three qualification areas. These areas of deficiency are experienced by both native and non-native interpreters and are current areas of manifest concern.

It is widely accepted that the classroom is not the optimal environment for the acquisition of language or for experiencing any degree of enculturation into a target culture. In fact, limited involvement with in any target culture decreases the degree to which true fluency in any non-native language and achievement of cultural understanding is possible. The current prevailing hostilities within the Deaf Community toward the interpreting community, however, promote a generalized fear of interaction that effectively prevents the interaction necessary for required knowledge and subsequent skills development. Since these hostilities seem to result from problems of cross-cultural communication, perhaps it is time to take a more ethnographic approach toward the teaching and learning of cultural information and skills.

Discovery of the Cultural Self or "I Didn't Know I Was Lost" After a great deal of thought, it seems both possible and plausible to me that, though the students in the above-mentioned interpreting skills class were quick to offer a rote definition of Deaf culture, they did not understand the concept of culture. They could not apply cultural principles learned in the Deaf culture class to their own Hearing culture. Such a skill is crucial if they are to avoid making ethnocentric judgments consciously and unconsciously. I wonder whether this indicates that most of the Hearing students in the class did not perceive themselves to be of or possessing a culture? Perhaps they view culture as something belonging only to Deaf people and other exotic groups. Such a view is similar to the perceptions of culture by most people of any group. Are the roots of this phenomenon seeded in a general lack of awareness or in one's ethnocentric perception of culture?

#### Developing Cross-Cultural Communication and Cross-Cultural Mediation Skills

For effective cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural mediation skills development, educators must create a safe environment for learning. We need to begin to learn about, understand, and respect each other's perception of and feelings toward individual and collective places in the world.

Group similarity permits the sharing of world views to a large extent. Yet, many Deaf people have said that one does not need to be deaf to understand; rather, "attitude" is the most important thing. Attitudinal similarity seems to be even more salient than group similarity for effective cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural mediation. Additionally, this concept would explain why some Hearing interpreters having no familial or cultural connection to Deaf people experience greater success in achieving trusting relationships with Deaf people.

### Where Do We Go From Here?

We cannot teach common sense; we can only help it wake up. In order to enhance credibility and attractiveness as it relates to cross-cultural communication, I offer the following guidelines:

1. Have a sincere desire to communicate. This sounds easy but it requires humility, a willingness to risk, to learn, to share, and to continue dialogue even in the face of hard times.
2. Define consistent goals. It is essential that we keep high levels of understanding and realize that we are all agreed on the basic issues. For example, a common goal among Deaf and Hearing people involved in third culture is a valid and reliable interpreter evaluation. Standardization will increase assurance that persons claiming to be interpreters of American Sign Language do have the knowledge and skills to provide services safely and efficiently. Implicit in the goal is the notion that when expertise and trustworthiness are secured, challenges are minimized and communication is maximized.
3. Become aware of your own value system and biases. Realize how they may affect members of the other group. Try to avoid ethnocentric prejudice, unwarranted labeling. We must continually monitor ourselves through continued dialogue, consultation, supervision, and education.
4. Understand the socio-political system in the United States with respect to culturally different people. Attempt to achieve some understanding of the impact and pervasiveness of oppression (racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.). Try to understand the role that racism plays in the development of identity and world views. Attempt to identify with those culturally different people working within our field, both Deaf and Hearing. As stated above, the greatest percentage of working interpreters are women who, like Deaf people, been oppressed since the beginning of time — culturally, educationally, sociologically, and economically.
5. Become comfortable with the differences between ourselves and members of other cultural group in terms of race and beliefs. Try not to judge differences. Our humanity is the common underlying factor (Sue 1981).
6. Become sensitive to circumstances. Particular circumstances may cause different individuals within the same social group to react dynamically according to their personal cultural and/or psychological experiences.
7. Have a willingness to remain open-minded, flexible, and to keep the "good of the field" in the forefront at all times. Recognize the degree of impact on the numbers of people possible vis-à-vis our actions individually and as groups.

### Conclusion

In a nutshell, there seem to be three major areas that hinder the formation of good cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural mediation relationships. The primary cause for a lack of relational formation is the language barrier: lack of fluency in American Sign Language, accompanied by a lack of cultural understanding, can be a serious deterrent to the development of trusting relationships. A second source of conflict is a lack of knowledge of class-bound values which may exist between interpreter and Deaf person. A third area of concern is a lack of knowledge about salient culture-bound values which are ethnocentrically used to judge normalcy.

In order to remedy these deficits, try to understand your relationship to yourself, your culture, and your world view. "Interpreters who hold a world view different from that of the client and who are unaware of the basis for the difference are most likely to impute negative traits to clients. What is needed is for sign language interpreters to become 'culturally aware,' to act on the basis of a critical analysis and understanding of

*Sherwood*

their own conditioning and the conditioning of their clients and the socio-political system of which they are both a part. Without this awareness, sign language interpreters may be engaging in cultural oppression" (Baker-Shenk, 1985).

The structure of society places more power to injure and damage in the hands of the majority culture; yet, injury and damage can come from both sides. I hope that no one in our third culture would consciously engage in cultural oppression. I believe that the degree of cultural conflict currently apparent throughout our community is born from a Deaf, culturally-structured interpreting system that is no longer the main source of interpreting services. It is easy to understand, particularly in light of the short amount of time that has passed since the passage of relevant legislation.

As one of those "new" people, I am faced daily with Deaf and Hearing people who are peers, advisors, colleagues, and clients; these people keep me involved in this field. It is my desire to continue to learn and to grow personally and professionally. I hope that all of us will continue to learn and grow together, for together there is nothing we cannot do.

[Editor's note: References and bibliography for the entire discussion on third culture begin on page 61.]