

Chapter 6

Origins of Deaf Education: From Alphabets to America

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NOTE: The decision to use lowercase d or uppercase D in d/Deaf is highly socially negotiable, and the origins of d/D have taken on a political context (Woodward & Horejes, 2016). For this chapter, the designation of d or D is not the main focus, and the lowercase d in “deaf” will be used to denote an all-encompassing population immersed in deaf education.

Introduction

A significant majority (92%) of deaf children are born to hearing parents. Of the remaining deaf children, 5% have at least one deaf parent, and 3% have two deaf parents (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004). For many hearing individuals, their ideological notion of normalcy involves being able to hear and speak; thus, hearing parents have usually favored oral languages in the home and community, which presents a challenging linguistic environment for deaf infants if communication is not accessible (Clark et al., 2015; Horejes, 2009;



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Horejes & Heuer, 2013). Therefore, it is imperative for educators and professionals working with deaf children to consider the implications of language and culture (or what we refer to as *languaculture*) and how this impacts the construction of a deaf person’s experience and identity.

Historically, educational institutions for deaf children have provided an environment where deaf children can acquire not only a valuable education but also an accessible, culturally

accommodative language (Hall, 2002; Horejes, 2012; Lane, 1999; Little & Houston, 2003; Stacks, 1989). In this way, deaf schools are responsible for not only being academic institutions but also cultural and linguistic incubators for languacultures (Horejes, 2012). Languaculture here

emphasizes the “inextricable relationship between language and culture in which a specific language will shape and influence culture—language and culture cannot be separated” (Horejes, 2012, p. 4).

Deprivation of these accessible cultural and linguistic environments can have adverse effects on academic achievement between deaf students and their hearing peers. For example, while scholars have noted that there is a gap between deaf and hearing students in areas such as language, cognition, and learning (English & Church, 1999; Marschark, Convertino, & Larock, 2006; Marschark & Spencer, 2010; Traxler, 2000), additional studies have demonstrated that educational success is directly linked to appropriate academic and linguistic accommodations in classroom environments (Bowe, 2003; La Bue, 1995, p. 166; Swanson, 2007).

With this framework in mind, the following chapter provides an essential overview of the birth of deaf education in Europe to contemporary deaf education in the U.S. A foundational understanding of deaf education illuminates its historical significance and implications with the spirit to unlock critical knowledge that may serve to strengthen deaf education at large. This chapter provides such a history that (Horejes, 2012):

- 1 Examines what it means to be a deaf student in today’s society.
- 2 Examines how constructions of deaf education have impacted deaf students in terms of language and culture.
- 3 Examines how schools construct meanings and human values by means of languaculture to shape what a successful deaf student ought to look like.
- 4 Offers possible strategies for our scholars to develop positive constructions of what it means to be a deaf student in our society.

As with any population and their history, first a study on paradigms and privilege is foremost.

Paradigms, Piety, & Privilege

Paradigms

Within deaf education there are two primary paradigms—or views—that determine how professionals approach education:

Sign-based paradigms.

Spoken language or oral-based paradigms.

Mertens (2015) argues that it is vital for people to critically examine individual and collective paradigms in order to continue to improve our ways of life. The implication of individual and collective philosophical beliefs influences the construct of “appropriate” avenues for a deaf child’s education (Horejes, 2012).

The two paradigms (sign-based and spoken language-based) are keenly relevant to our understanding of today’s current educational climate for deaf children. The paradigms have been fundamental ideologies that influence how people have approached deaf education throughout history—in turn shaping deaf languaculture and the construct of what it means to be deaf. Thus, it is essential to keep these paradigms in mind when examining the history of deaf education. At the same time, it is imperative to examine avenues to transcend these polarizing either/or paradigms when it comes to cultural and linguistic choices within deaf education (Horejes & O’Brien, 2016).

Piety & Privilege

In the early days of deaf education in Europe, religious clergy had a powerful role in formalizing deaf education. Accounts of isolated incidents of deaf boys being sent to monasteries to be educated, or noble families employing educators for a season to conduct private tutoring happened throughout Europe well before 1789 (Kennedy, 2015). Though not all deaf people in the 16th century were afforded an education, there were a select few who did—typically deaf male decedents of nobility or from wealthy backgrounds. An education of this type was rare and atypical—given that deaf pupils not only had to come from a privileged background, but that they also had to have someone who took interest in accommodating their learning.

By the 17th century, educated deaf people became a phenomenon—gaining the attention and curiosity of political and religious leaders across Western Europe. Don Luis de Velasco—an educated deaf Spanish nobleman—received speech training from a Spanish priest. Kenelm Digby—a British man accompanying the Prince of Wales on a trip to Spain

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in 1623—met Velasco and was overwhelmed to encounter a “flawlessly” articulate deaf individual (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). It was not only oral deaf people that amazed hearing people but also deaf people who primarily communicated using sign language. For instance, Jean Massieu—an educated deaf Frenchman who communicated in sign language—was a gifted student who brought his instructor fame and prestige. Later he became the first deaf teacher at the institution for the deaf in Paris, was a published author, and later a director of two deaf schools (Kennedy, 2015).

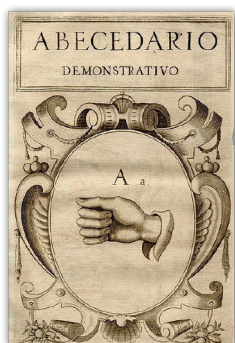
Success stories like the ones above helped to construct oral-based and signed-based paradigms and pedagogies. Thus, deaf individuals like Massieu and Velasco shaped the Western world’s understanding of effective and ideal ways of educating deaf people.

Deaf Education in Europe: The Early Years

Spain’s Influence: Manualizing the Alphabet

Some of the earliest accounts of deaf education come from Iberia in Spain during the late 16th century and early 17th century (Lane & Phillip, 1984; Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). Fray Melchor de Yebra—a hearing Benedictine monk during the 16th century—was the first Spaniard to publish an illustration of a manual method of communicating, essentially a fingerspelling chart (see *Figure 1*; Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). This chart was seminal in influencing many of the one-handed fingerspelling methods in Europe and North America.

Figure 1 The Standardized, One-Handed Manual Alphabet That Yebra Illustrated



The manual alphabet was similar to the one employed by other Benedictine monks who took up a vow of silence (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). This does not imply that manual sign language or fingerspelling was invented by hearing monks. However, religious clergy helped to document and preserve aspects of social life that were already in practice. Yebra argued that this method of communication was beneficial for both people who could hear typically and those who were deaf in order to take confessions via fingerspelling. This manual alphabet was not only important for people accessing communication in religious social life, but it also became a seminal tool in the formal education of deaf people.

Other scholars, such as Pedro Ponce de Leon—a Spanish civil servant—and Juan Pablo Bonet—a Benedictine monk—published one of the first books of signs (Fischer & Lane, 1993; Kennedy, 2015, p. xvi; Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). Leon and Bonet also tutored deaf children of various noble Spanish families. Bonet went on to publish one of the earliest volumes on deaf education titled *Simplification of the Letters of the Alphabet and Method of Teaching Deaf-Mutes to Speak*. Bonet used Yebra’s alphabetical chart as a means to teach deaf children to speak, read, and write Spanish in order to successfully integrate into society. Bonet stated that “deaf mutes are not really so, as far as speaking and reasoning are concerned, but are simply deaf and capable of learning any language or science” (as cited in Kennedy, 2015, p. 15).

The Spanish Benedictine monks were catalysts in helping preserve a visual-manual form of communication used by deaf and hearing people well before the 16th century. However, as Spain’s instructional approach was disseminated to the Western world, it was quickly “appropriated by foreigners even as it had ceased to be practiced in Spain” (Fischer & Lane, 1993, p. 54). Regardless of the pedagogical paradigm foreigners believed in, they built upon Spanish Benedictine texts and tools in order to educate their deaf students.

The Spanish Benedictine monks were catalysts in helping preserve a visual-manual form of communication used by deaf and hearing people well before the 16th century.

Though Spain played an important role in documenting a manual alphabet, the Spaniards are not credited with being the founders of formalizing deaf education as a governmental institution. The Spanish pedagogy was mainly tutorial and limited to a few privileged students, and the alphabet was employed as a means to develop spoken language (Fischer & Lane, 1993). Ironically, it took Spain almost two centuries to establish the first state-subsidized school. Spain's Benedictine Monks' work germinated into a deaf school by 1805 using an "appropriated" paradigm and pedagogy from France (Fischer & Lane, 1993).

France's Influence: The First Deaf Institute

Building on the framework of the Benedictine work, a French clergyman, Abbé Charles-Michel de l'Épée, and his successor, Abbé Roch-Ambrose-Cucurron Sicard, became two of the most prominent hearing figures in the history of signed-based pedagogy in deaf education. They became powerful influences on the formalization and pedagogy of education for deaf pupils. Thus, France is credited as the first nation in the West to institutionalize deaf education.

Abbé Charles-Michel de l'Épée (1712-1789)—the son of a royal architect—rejected a magistracy career to pursue a pious life instead (Kennedy, 2015). In 1760, the Abbé established the National Institution for Deaf-Mutes on rue Moulins in Paris. He used his inheritance to support the school and his students (a total of about 60 deaf boys and girls). Contrary to l'Épée's Spanish predecessors, who favored an oral-based paradigm for deaf education, the French school employed a signed-based paradigm and taught deaf people collectively as opposed to tutorially. Abbé l'Épée would hold public demonstrations that depicted his students being instructed in sign. This helped to raise support for the school and spread the signed-based pedagogical approach. Additionally, other clergymen and individuals came to l'Épée to learn the science of "methodical signs" in order to teach other deaf students in France and beyond (Kennedy, 2015).

The Abbé l'Épée's approach to deaf education gained national and

international recognition. The Abbé's approach was unique on a few accounts:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | He employed a signed-based paradigm. |
| 2 | He educated both deaf boys and girls regardless of economic or privileged circumstance. |
| 3 | He used his wealth to invest in collective rather than tutorial education. |
| 4 | He publically shared his pedagogical approach and taught others the art of manual instruction. |

Abbé Roch-Ambrose-Cucurron Sicard (1742-1822) grew up in Le Fousseret—a village in the Languedoc region of southern France (Kennedy, 2015). At 28 years of age, the archbishop of Toulouse ordained Sicard as a priest and assigned him to a cathedral in Bordeaux. Sicard's archbishop, Champion de Cicé, had seen Abbé de l'Épée's deaf school and decided to found one in his diocese and have Sicard direct it. In 1785, Sicard went to Paris for one year to learn the "methodical signs" from Epée. After Sicard received his training, he returned to the South and became the director of the deaf school in Bordeaux, which was founded on February 20, 1786.

Sicard was outspoken, and his political-religious views almost cost him his life several times. Yet the French leadership supported and subsidized deaf education and considered Sicard an invaluable educator of the institution. Kennedy (2015) described Sicard as a chameleon and that he was neither a "saint nor an apostate, neither a genius nor a charlatan. Rather, he was a priest whose political acumen . . . and whose talents as a grammarian of the new sciences of signs not only saved his skin but also brought him great fame" (p. xvi).

Prior to the death of Abbé de l'Épée, Abbé Masse was selected to succeed as the director of the deaf school in Paris. Since the Parisian school was not regularly funded by endowments, the educational institution was in a deplorable and unsustainable state. Also

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Epée did not have many remarkable students that could really demonstrate the positive impact of this education. Soon after Epée's funeral, the school was in jeopardy of perishing with him (Kennedy, 2015).

Around the same time, Sicard published a critical memoir of Epée's pedagogy, which he argued was a mechanical and dictated approach that produced copyists rather than critically conscious students (Lane & Philip, 1984). Sicard argued that deaf education was *terra incognita* (uncharted territory) and proposed moving beyond Epée's pedagogy towards linguistic consciousness. Moreover, Sicard suggested a public competition to determine who should succeed Epée based on whose skills had a greater educational impact on deaf students. Masse disagreed with this public examination and contended that Epée's wishes for appointed successor should be respected.

The archbishop, Champion de Cicé, was responsible for ensuring that the school's legacy continued and agreed with Sicard that a public competitive examination of the pedagogy was the most appropriate way of choosing the successor. Some felt Cicé's approach was an act of ministerial despotism—exercising oppressive power—and that the competition was fixed in favor of Sicard, who stayed with Cicé during the time. Nevertheless, three of Epée's disciples participated in a public demonstration—Masse (the Abbe of Salvan of Riom), Père Claude Ignace (an Augustinian), and Sicard. The successor candidates were questioned on their plans, principles, and successes, and their students were examined on their academic aptitude in various subjects (i.e., grammar, arithmetic, history, geography, religion, and craftsmanship). Sicard won the contest with his academic prowess and his prize pupil, Jean Massieu. The competition jury praised Sicard that he “not only grasped the spirit and method of the Abbé Epée, but he has added some new developments and perfected the analysis on which his [Epée's] method is founded” (Kennedy, 2015, p 16).

In September 1789, after many petitions, King Louis certified that deaf education was “worthwhile for humanity” and appointed Sicard the *instituteur royal des sourds-mutes* (the royal instructor of deaf mutes). This recognition from the government not only was a prestigious title for Sicard, it also helped institutionalize the sign-based paradigm of deaf education. The Abbé Charles-Michel de l'Epée is considered this signed-based pedagogical movement's founder, but his pupil

Abbé Sicard is considered the movement's innovative continuator (Kennedy, 2015).

The main purpose of deaf education in France was to facilitate deaf children in becoming financially independent by learning a self-supporting trade. In addition to economic self-sufficiency, literacy was also increasingly important during this Enlightenment period of the 18th century. Deaf institutions were supported by aristocratic philanthropy and governmental subsidization. Though funds paid for student lodging, food, and tuition, parents or legal guardians were still responsible for whatever else the students needed. This helped ease some of the financial challenges faced by poor rural families with congenitally deaf children, but it did not solve all the institutions' problems. Sicard was a “bureaucratic beggar” (Kennedy, 2015, p. 38) and constantly petitioned the government's Minister of Interior for more funding to pay for much-needed resources, including beds, blankets, handkerchiefs, plates, napkins, and food. During the French Revolution (1789-1799), the deaf institution—like other schools at the time—struggled to receive sufficient materials and funding.

Students at the deaf school were typically 12 years or older, and it was rare if a younger child was enrolled. Capacity at the facility was limited by the 1800s with admission capped at 60 students, and parents or sponsors wrote petitions to request admission and scholarships for potential students. Students were more likely to receive scholarships or admittance if they were children of a deceased war veteran, victim of war, political affiliation, and/or notable family. Some families had more than one deaf child and petitioned for admittance based on their children's “handicap and the poverty of the family” (Kennedy, 2015, p. 38).

School was in session from October to March. Once students were admitted to the school, they were functionally isolated from society. For example, parents were discouraged from visiting the school or taking their children home. Rational thinking at the time suggested that deaf children needed to be totally immersed and secluded in order to acquire sign language. Additionally, it is possible that the

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family’s poverty status and the expense of travel could have been other factors affecting contact. Under the school’s administration, discipline was harshly administered. Occasionally students were expelled due to insubordination or poor intellect. Lessor disciplinary measures included a strict bread-water diet, isolation, and manual labor.

Students were placed in classes based upon their intellectual capacity and were required to master a specific trade. Every week, students were involved in promenades (leisurely walks). In addition, on the 13th of each month, students participated in public physical exercises.

The curriculum began with learning sign language, then grammar, and later metaphysics. In addition to outlining lessons and the schedule, the document also criticized the “mechanical” pedagogical approaches employed in Vienna and Paris and emphasized that “deaf-mutes will write their own ideas with the same exactitude as we do” (Kennedy, 2015, p. 5; Sicard, 1789). Sicard attempted to do this through a strong emphasis on metaphysics and analysis. Unlike modern boarding schools, the deaf residential school’s schedule had ample relaxation time (see *Table 1* for a typical sketched schedule outlined in Sicard’s curriculum; Kennedy, 2015, p. 40.) Sicard abhorred rote learning and insisted that students acquire language naturally and individually. Communication that happened during these recreational and meal periods was critical in students’ linguistic acquisition and cultural immersion.

Table 1
A Typical School Day

Time	Activity
8:00 - 10:00 a.m.	Writing and Drawing Lessons
	Recreation
11:00 - 12:00 p.m.	A Lesson and Lunch
	Recreation
3:00 p.m.	Manual Labor
	A Lesson Review
5:00 p.m.	Arithmetic Lesson
7:00 p.m.	Dinner
8:30 p.m.	Bed

Germany’s Influence: Oral Pedagogy

Samuel Heinicke (1727-1790)—born in Nautschütz, Germany, to a wealthy farmer—is considered one of the founders of the oral paradigm and oral pedagogy. Heinicke was intensely fond of books and languages—though he only received a village school education. When he enlisted in the army in 1750, he was able to pursue his academic inclinations (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2006). Heinicke learned and taught Latin and French as a tutor for officers’ children. Heinicke was influenced by a publication titled *Surdus loquens* (1692) or “The Talking Deaf” that was written by Johann Konrad Amman (1694)—a Swiss physician who taught a deaf person to communicate orally. In 1754, Heinicke tutored his first deaf pupil and eventually pioneered a career in deaf education. In 1778, Heinicke established an oral-based school for the deaf in Leipzig, Germany.

Heinicke was one of the first to argue that speech was linked to a higher mental process, and communicating orally was necessary for abstract thought (Lane, 2011; Lane & Philip, 1984). He also supported the idea of the integration of the deaf into mainstream education and society.

Another German educator, Johann Graseser, also experimented with establishing deaf classes in general education schools during the 1820s. Friedrich Moritz Hill, who studied with the Swiss teacher Pestalozzi developed a natural method of oral instruction and trained many teachers in this method in Germany. His approach spread to Amsterdam and Italy (Benderly, 1980).

Heinicke (founder of oral-based pedagogy) and Epée (founder of a signed-based pedagogy) defended their respective positions on pedagogy methods through publications and letters (Lane, 2011; Lane & Philip, 1984). Other professionals, including deaf individuals such as Sabourex De Fotenay and Pierre Desloges, also participated in these debates. Thus, an academic war as to which pedagogy was superior began to take root (Lane, 2011).

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The British Influence: The Secretive Braidwood Family

Other educators used oral pedagogical and combined pedagogical approaches. For instance, Thomas Braidwood used oral methods beginning in 1760 in Edinburgh, Scotland. In 1783, he moved his school to London and two of his nephews began working with him. Eventually the family established and administered four private schools in Britain. A few years later, one of Thomas Braidwood's grandsons would attempt to start an oral school in the U.S. In efforts to have a competitive edge in the field of deaf education, the Braidwood family members and employees kept their pedagogical methods of teaching secret from those wanting to learn (BSL Zone, n.d.). Although the school is known for using an oral pedagogy, the Braidwood Academy used a "combined system," including British Sign Language, which is distinctly different from the sign language codified in France.

The Milan Congress

Since the onset of deaf education, there have been heated pedagogical debates as to what the appropriate method of schooling should be. By the late 1800s, the sign pedagogy came into question, and favor for an oral (speech and speechreading) pedagogy rapidly gained ground in academic discourse among European and American educators and medical professionals. These debates as to appropriate methodological choices were not new. In 1779, Pierre Desloges—one of the first known deaf individuals to ever publish a defense for sign language—wrote a short book in response to oral pedagogy proselytized by Abbé Deschamps—a disciple of Jacob Pereire (one of the founders of oralism and the teacher of Sabourex De Fontenay, a deaf Parisian).

Desloges writes . . .

"I, no less than the Abbé Deschamps, hold speech in great veneration and am mindful of its benefits for the deaf. For that very reason, I take exception to his condemnation and proscription of sign language, for I am persuaded that it is the surest and most natural means for leading the deaf to an understanding of languages, nature having given them this language to substitute for other languages of which they are deprived... I cannot understand how a language like sign language—the richest in expressions, the most energetic, the most incalculably advantageous in its universal intelligibility—is still so neglected and that only the deaf speak it (as it were). This, I confess, one of those irrationality of the human mind that I cannot explain" (Lane & Philip, 1984, p. 35, 45-46).

Desloges argued that though speech and speechreading had their place, a sign-based pedagogy was the most appropriate method of instructing deaf people. These arguments for the best pedagogical approach continued into the 1800s. For instance, in 1868, an American educator of the deaf reasoned that educators should not "make rash innovations" in deaf education by employing oral pedagogies, instead building upon the historical success of sign-based pedagogy (Horejes, 2012; Peet, 1868, p. 171).

In September of 1880, the Pereire Society—an oralist organization (Lane, 1999)—hosted the second International Congress on the Education of the Deaf in Milan, Italy (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). The Pereire Society put out an open invitation to stakeholders involved in deaf education around the Western world. The assembly included 164 deaf education delegates (163 hearing, 1 deaf) from across Europe and the U.S. The congress dogmatically contended an oral pedagogy/paradigm was superior to that of a signed pedagogy/paradigm and promoted the global implementation of oral methods in deaf education (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). Nearly all (158) of the delegates voted in support of the oral pedagogy and to ban the use of signed methods in schools. Yet six delegates, including the one deaf delegate in attendance, voted against the congressional motion. The people who voted against this decision included a British representative and the five American representatives: I. L. Peet, C. A. Stoddard, Edward M. Gallaudet, Thomas Gallaudet, and J. Denison (Horejes, 2012; Lane, 1999). The overwhelming vote of the Milan Congress resulted in a shift away from using sign language and signed pedagogical methods in deaf education in favor of an oral-based linguistic pedagogy. The congress of delegates' decision fostered a hegemonic languaculture in deaf education and continues to shape today's educational climate.

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Deaf Education in the U.S.

Early Accounts of Deaf Education

In the U.S., not much is known about deaf education and deaf history before the 1800s, although it is clear that both deaf and hearing people used sign language. In fact, sign language was used in many parts of North America (Davis, 2010; Davis & McKay-Cody 2010). Accounts indicate that sign language was employed as a *lingua franca* (or contact language) in order to facilitate cross-cultural communication among at least 40 indigenous nations—all of which spoke different languages. Sign language in North America was a vehicle for cross-cultural communication and access—benefiting both deaf and hearing people alike.

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private tutors. Records indicate that this type of education was quite rare, and little is known about the benefit or impact of these deaf children's education overseas. Of the notable colonists that could afford to send their children overseas, they went to England's Braidwood Academy—a private school that employed an oral pedagogy. Notable colonists include Major Thomas Bolling's three congenitally deaf children, who were a part of a wealthy Virginian family with a history of congenital deafness, and Francis Green's son, whose father was an affluent Bostonian (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). Yet others, like the nephew of President James Monroe, were sent to Paris (Marschark & Spencer, 2010).

In the Massachusetts' town of Scituate, there were a high proportion of colonists who

were congenitally deaf, and the community had a more accepting view on communicating in sign language (Marschark & Spencer, 2011). Folks from this community settled on Martha's Vineyard, and due to intermarriage, the population of deaf people increased. Everyone—both hearing people and deaf people—benefited from using signs to communicate; thus creating a community that was accessible for auditory differences. Little is known about how this community approached education, though a formal compulsory education was not yet federally mandated.

Meanwhile, other families hired tutors to teach their deaf children. John Harrower—a Scottish merchant from Shetland Island—was one of the first people hired to teach a deaf pupil in an American colony in May 1774. Harrower was essentially an indentured servant who was contracted to serve as a schoolmaster for 4 years as compensation for his voyage to the New World.

Colonel Daingerfield purchased Harrower's contract and installed the Scotsman as the teacher on his plantation at Belvidera near Fredericksburg, Virginia. Though Harrower was hired to teach Daingerfield's children, he was also permitted to teach some of the neighboring children as a way of earning additional income during his contract.

Samuel Edge—a southern colonist of Virginia and of modest means—sent his deaf son John to be taught by Harrower. According to Harrower's diary, Edge paid him 10 shillings per quarter to tutor his 14-year-old son (twice the rate Harrower charged for his hearing pupils). We are able to see the impact of John's education in a letter Harrower writes to his wife (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989):

Harrower writes . . .

"I have as yet only ten scholars. One of which is both Deaf and Dumb... He has now five months with me and I have brought him tolerably well and understand it so far, that he can write mostly for anything he wants and understands the value of every figure and can work single addition a little."

Though this is one of the first accounts of a deaf colonist being educated, Harrower noted that John was only his student for about 6 months, and little is known about his education or life thereafter. Apparently it was difficult for John's father to afford the private tutoring required to subsidize his son's education.

Inability to afford deaf education not only marginalized less affluent families, but the cost of education was also difficult for more affluent families, such as the Bollings. Due to the strained political relationship between the U.S. and England and the Bolling family's financial situation, sending the second generation of deaf children to the Braidwood Academy was not feasible (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). However, history demonstrates that the Braidwood Academy and the Bolling family would cross paths again.

In 1812, John Braidwood—the grandson of the founder of Braidwood Academy—arrived in the U.S. in February and intended to establish a school for the deaf. Braidwood came from a prominent family and had administered the Academy from 1810-1812. Described as being “ambitious” yet “plagued by personal problems” (i.e., gambling and drinking), Braidwood immigrated to the U.S. in efforts to make a fortune selling his brand of deaf education as his family had done in England (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). Upon arrival on the East Coast, Mason Fitch Cogswell (a prominent physician and father of Alice Cogswell) and William Bolling reached out to Braidwood respectively to inquire about opportunities for deaf education. Initially Braidwood declined both the colonists' offers and set out on his own. However, Braidwood ultimately failed in his individual attempts to establish a school.

From 1812 to 1815, Braidwood tutored the deaf children of the Bolling family on their plantation. By March of 1815, Braidwood established a school for five deaf boys (William Albert Bolling, George Lee Turberville, John Hancock, John Scott, and Marcus Flournoy) in the Bolling family mansion. However, the school was quickly closed in the fall of 1816 upon the disappearance of Braidwood, who had relapsed into his old habits.

The Bollings tried to help Braidwood again in 1817 and attempted to establish another school for the deaf

in Manchester, Virginia. Braidwood was to live with a minister and teach him the pedagogy of deaf education. However, by the middle of 1818, Braidwood was back on the streets, ending another failed attempt at formalizing deaf education in Virginia.

For the most part, during the colonial era, colonists pursued individual attempts to educate their deaf children. Yet nearly a quarter of a century before a deaf school was established in the U.S., the American

Philosophical Society published a report on deaf education (Marschark & Spencer, 2011). William Thornton—the head of the U.S. Patent Office—wrote this treatise on teaching deaf children to speak and acquire language. Marschark and Spencer (2010) contend that Thornton was one of the first people in the U.S. to provide a salient perspective on deaf education. The document examined the phonological basis for reading, the importance of vocabulary development, and the various ways to communicate with deaf people, including speech, fingerspelling, and signs. Documents like Thornton's, along with European publications and parent advocates of their children's education, helped to promote the understanding that deaf children can indeed receive an education through various pedagogies (oral or signed), which helped lay the groundwork that needed to establish a sustainable educational institution.

The First Deaf Institution in the U.S.

As compulsory public education became more common for all children in the U.S., including marginalized children (girls, indigenous children, Black children, and deaf children), education became an important vehicle of national and economic development. Specialized schools were established to provide primary and even sometimes secondary education to most children.

In Hartford, Connecticut, in April 15, 1817, Laurent Clerc—a deaf professor of the Paris Institute—and Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet—a U.S. clergyman—worked together to establish a deaf school.

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The Connecticut Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons (now known as the American School for the Deaf—or ASD) educated both boys and girls, mostly of European decent, and was the first state-funded residential deaf institution in North America. The school used a sign-based pedagogy, which included fingerspelling and written English. In order to understand today's deaf educational system, it is important to examine how ASD came into fruition.

Although Clerc and Gallaudet are credited with establishing the school, another prominent U.S. citizen played a critical role in institutionalizing deaf education in North America. Mason Fitch Cogswell—a medical physician and graduate of Yale—was the father of Alice Cogswell—a young girl who became deaf at age 2 due to

contracting meningitis. Alice became one of the first educated deaf women of European descent in America. Dr. Cogswell was keenly interested in starting a school for the deaf in Connecticut. As a prominent man in New England, he tenaciously worked to create a political and economic network that laid the foundation needed for founding a deaf institution. Cogswell came into contact with Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet—a chronically ill and devout evangelical Christian—who took an interest in Alice and the larger cause of deaf education. Cogswell worked with ministers like Gallaudet to determine how many deaf children were in Connecticut. A 3-year census (1812 to 1815) reported there were 84 deaf people—more than enough to merit the establishment of a formal state-subsidized institution.

Though Cogswell was critical in securing the necessary political and financial support for founding a sustainable educational institution, Thomas Gallaudet was also a critical member in the story. The oldest child of 12 children, Gallaudet was a devout Christian and successful academic. In 1805, Gallaudet graduated first

in his class from Yale University at 17 years old. After completing graduate school, he continued his studies at Andover Theological Seminary (1812-1814) and was ordained as a congregational minister (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). Gallaudet's poor health prevented him from being a full-time minister, but he filled his time by getting involved with Cogswell's cause for deaf education and attempted to provide basic education for Alice Cogswell. By 1815, Cogswell's network of stakeholders had raised enough funds to send a representative to Europe to learn how the Europeans approached deaf education. Cogswell encouraged Gallaudet to take the journey, and Gallaudet agreed (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989, p. 33).

Gallaudet went to Britain to study the methods used in the Braidwood Academy—the private oral deaf institution. The Braidwood Academy was highly secretive of their pedagogical approach—intending to profit from the institutionalization of deaf education—and imposed severe limitations on what Gallaudet could observe. The Academy stipulated that Gallaudet could be an apprentice but required he stay for several years and keep the methods secret. Frustrated, Gallaudet was quickly at odds with the Academy and their approach (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989).

Meanwhile, Abbé Sicard—the superintendent of the Royal Institution for the Deaf in France—was visiting Britain with a few of his prize students (Jean Massieu, Laurent Clerc, and Armand Goddard) to conduct a demonstrative lecture on deaf education. Gallaudet had read some of Sicard's work and attended one of the exhibitions, which demonstrated the sign-based pedagogy employed in France. During the interactive portion of the lecture, Gallaudet asked the students, “What is education?” Clerc responded by writing on the chalkboard (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989, p. 35):

Clerc writes . . .

“Education is care, which is taken to cultivate the minds of youth, to elevate their hearts and to give them the knowledge of the science, and the art that is necessary to teach them to conduct well in the world.”

Gallaudet was overwhelmed by the positive impact of Jean Massieu and Laurent Clerc's education. Sicard invited Gallaudet to visit and learn the methods

employed at the Paris deaf institute in order to bring this approach to North America. Gallaudet began studying the sign methods in Paris, but soon after he arrived, he was running out of funds and was facing culture shock in the Catholic metropolis, which made him eager to return home.

In May of 1816, Laurent Clerc volunteered to go with Gallaudet to North America (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). By June 13, 1816, a 3-year contract was drafted in order to protect Clerc from exploitation. The contract described not only the salary Clerc would receive, but also subjects he was expected to teach—namely grammar, language, math, geography, history, and religion (Bible studies). Also Clerc was required to support Gallaudet with public demonstrations of sign-based deaf education and not support or aid competitors in establishing a deaf school in America.

Four days after the contract was signed, the two men embarked on a 6-week journey to North America. During the voyage, Clerc and Gallaudet taught each other sign language and English. Upon arriving in the U.S., Gallaudet and Clerc conducted public demonstrations to drum up support for deaf education and the use of the signed pedagogy. One time they were even involved in lobbying to encumber the establishment of a potential rival school for the deaf in New York. Though the New York school eventually opened in May of 1818, Gallaudet and Clerc were able to officially open the Connecticut school a year earlier in April 15, 1817.

Increasing Numbers of Schools

During the early 1800s, more schools for the deaf opened across North America; thus ushering in a golden era of deaf education (Lane & Philip, 1984). Deaf children completed primary schools that employed a signed-based pedagogy as the vehicle for instructing students in the curriculum. In 1837, the sisters of St. Joseph came from France and established the first school for the deaf west of the Mississippi in St. Louis, Missouri. Some places in the U.S. (Hartford and New York) and Europe (Paris) established secondary schools in order to allow academically inclined deaf students an avenue to continue their education and become teachers of the deaf themselves (Lane & Philip, 1984). Later in 1864, Edward M. Gallaudet—Thomas Gallaudet's son—established a tertiary institute of higher education for the deaf now known as Gallaudet University.

By 1843—or 26 years after ASD was founded—six other states had also founded and established residential, state-subsidized deaf institutions that employed a signed-based pedagogy. These included New York in 1818, Pennsylvania in 1820, Kentucky in 1823, Ohio in 1827, Virginia in 1838, and Indiana in 1843 (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). By midcentury, nearly half of the teachers of the deaf in North American schools were also deaf (Lane & Philip, 1984). Deaf students trained at ASD and prominent hearing parents of deaf students were instrumental in establishing and sustaining deaf institutions.

It is important to note that the majority of students were of European descent, though states like New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio did have small populations of Black deaf students (McCaskill et al., 2011). Segregated schools were common throughout the 1800s, with schools or educational departments for Black deaf students slowly being established after the Civil War. This segregation created an environment that led to the cultivation of Black American Sign Language (Black ASL)—a unique and distinct dialect of ASL that represents the languaculture and roots of the Black deaf community (McCaskill et al., 2011). As schools across the country integrated following the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on *Brown v. Board of Education*, Black deaf students faced adversity. Consequently, many Black deaf students continued to experience segregation on some campuses, as they were relegated to separate departments or classrooms that were remedial or vocational in nature.

Oral Schools in the U.S.

Horace Mann—an education reformer—and Samuel Gridley Howe—the head of the Perkins Institution for blind students in Boston, which also educated deafblind students—visited the German oral schools in 1843. They returned convinced that oral education would produce better results. ASD experimented with some speech teaching in the 1850s but resisted pressure to change its approach (Benderly, 1980).

During the early 1800s, more schools for the deaf opened across North America; thus ushering in a golden era of deaf education.

The first schools for the deaf using an oral pedagogy began in the U.S. in 1867. In New York City, an institution currently known as the Lexington School opened to provide oral education to wealthy and poor children. At about the same time in Massachusetts, a 5-year-old girl—Mabel Hubbard—lost her hearing. Her father wanted his daughter to continue speaking, and in 1867, the Clarke School for the Deaf opened with Mable Hubbard as one of its first students. These schools served as models for a number of other programs using an oral pedagogy, including the Horace Mann School in Boston, that were founded over the next 150 years.

Alexander Graham Bell was another individual who played a key role in the establishment of oral deaf education in the U.S. His mother was deaf and used spoken language and fingerspelling, and his father was a well-known teacher of the deaf in Scotland and Canada. He used an approach he developed called “visible speech.”

Alexander Graham Bell also became a teacher of the deaf using the same method at the Horace Mann School and Clarke School for the Deaf. He tutored both Mabel Hubbard and Helen Keller, and he married Mabel Hubbard. While working as a teacher, Bell invented the telephone. He earned the Volta Award for the invention, and with the prize money, he established the Volta Bureau in Washington, DC, in 1887 to support the dissemination of information about the deaf. This organization was the precursor to the Alexander Graham Bell Association, which continues the mission of advancing listening and spoken language (LSL) for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH; see the AG Bell website).

Sign v. Oral Pedagogies & Paradigms Wars Continued

In the late 19th century, disagreements between Edward Miner Gallaudet—son of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet—and Alexander Graham Bell increased the tension between the two approaches to deaf education. Bell’s opposition to manual schools and deaf teachers and Gallaudet’s opposition to oral education led to

professional conflicts related to teacher preparation and professional organizations for teachers. Bell, like many scientists in the early 1900s, was part of the eugenics movement, which viewed deaf people as “unfit” and a “defective race” (Lane & Philip, 1984). By the turn of the century, it was rare to see an educator who was deaf teaching deaf students and people using sign language (Lane, 2011; Lane & Philip, 1984). Hearing teachers who taught spoken English as a leading pedagogical method for deaf students increased, while teachers who were deaf declined within the overall teaching profession from 42.5% in 1870 to 14.5% in 1917. However, these numbers would rise slowly, where in 2008, 22% of the teachers were deaf (Horejes, 2012).

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Public Law & Its Influence in Today’s Deaf Education

Up until 1975, deaf students were mainly educated at residential schools for the deaf or in day schools that had deaf programs. Since then, special education in the U.S. has expanded, and as a result, deaf students have increasingly been mainstreamed into public education with hearing children (Marschark & Spencer, 2010). A few key laws have particularly shaped deaf education and the languaculture. In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act—Public Law 94-142—led to the creation of specialized education for students with disabilities (Lane, 2011; Seaver, 2014). This seminal law in special education laid the groundwork for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, which aimed at ensuring that all children with disabilities, including deaf children, have access to a free and

appropriate public education that “emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living” (IDEA 20 USC 1400 d, 1).

IDEA, along with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, strongly impacted deaf education (Horejes, 2013). It gave deaf students the option to receive accommodations at a school in their community and stay with their families rather than commute to the residential state schools. However, many school districts were and still are unprepared to support the academic

and social success of deaf students, as there is “not widespread understanding of educational implications of deafness, even among special educators” (Office of Special Education Programs, 1992).

Another challenge for public schools is that for many districts, there is not a “critical mass” of deaf students, making staffing and programming difficult to justify the establishment of institutions specializing in deaf education. Thus, in the absence of qualified staff and appropriate services, many deaf students have been placed in general special education classrooms and/or mainstreamed without academic support (e.g., qualified interpreters, trained teachers, note-takers, etc.), which has impeded deaf students’ academic success (Livingston, 1997; Ramsey, 1997). As a result, academic expectations for deaf students have been encumbered by a trend of underachievement (Seaver, 2014).

In the 1990s, a number of special education advocates pushed for “inclusion for all” students in general education classrooms—regardless of their unique learning needs—in the least-restrictive environment (LRE). Though the IDEA intended to integrate students with disabilities within public education, some argue the act has functionally fostered isolation and low expectations (Seaver, 2014). By 1992, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) published a policy guideline that tried to articulate special considerations for the LRE as related to deaf learners. The document emphasized several factors, including the presence of professionals with expertise in deafness and deaf education when advising the placement of the child in the school setting and accommodating the child’s communication needs. How IDEA and this policy document are interpreted continues a centuries-old argument of what is the most appropriate method for educating a deaf person (Horejes & Lauderdale, 2007).

The policy guidance on deaf students states . . .

“Any setting, including a regular classroom, that prevents a child who is deaf from receiving an appropriate education that meets his or her needs, including communication needs, is not the LRE [least-restrictive environment] for that child. . . Any setting which does not meet the communication and related needs of a child who is deaf, and therefore does not allow for the provision of FAPE [free appropriate public education], cannot be considered the LRE for that child.”

Depending on one’s paradigm, this document could be interpreted in different ways. The policy guidance was created by a deaf education initiative project taskforce of professionals that represented various stakeholders in deaf education (including professionals, advocates, educators, and community representatives).

On the backdrop of this policy, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) published the *Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students’ Educational Service Guidelines* (1994) for the National Association of State Directors of Education (NASDE). This document included a wide range of paradigms of language and communication methods (i.e., speech, sign, cued speech, etc.) and has become a key resource on deaf education.

The deaf education policy guidelines published by OSERS influenced America’s understanding of the importance of communication accommodations for deaf students. From IDEA’s reauthorization in 1997 to the current 2004 reauthorization, the document consistently reinforces the need to consider the individual communication needs of deaf learners.

The deaf education policy guidelines state . . .

“The IEP [Individualized Education Plan] team shall . . . in the case of the child who is deaf or hard of hearing, consider the child’s language and communication needs, opportunities for direct communications with peers and professional personnel in the child’s language and communication mode, academic level, and full range of needs, including opportunities for direct instruction in the child’s language and communication mode.”

Conclusion

According to Lane (2011, p. 11), “Deaf people have suffered poor education, as influential figures have made sweeping generalization about communication,

In the 1990s, a number of special education advocates pushed for “inclusion for all” students in general education classrooms—regardless of their unique learning needs—in the LRE.

language, and learning.” Yet the impact of primary and secondary school’s deaf pedagogy and laws (e.g., PL 94-142, IDEA) in the U.S. has resulted in more students than ever matriculating to postsecondary school. Lane (2011) notes that though more students are able to attend post-secondary institutions with ADA accommodations, only 1 out of 4 deaf college students completes their degree. Many factors (i.e., lack of resources, contextual factors, time of language acquisition, type of educational institution, quality and training of teachers/professionals) have intersected to create a watered-down pedagogy that has encumbered the academic success of many (not all) deaf students starting from pre-k to postsecondary education.

The field of deaf education and its stakeholders continue to face numerous challenges when providing high-quality education for deaf students, and in many facets, these challenges have become stagnated with no strong positive strategies to break through these challenges. In 1964, Congress commissioned what is now known as the Babbidge Report (originally titled “Education of the Deaf”) for the secretary of the Health, Education, and Welfare Department by the Advisory Committee on the Education of the Deaf. In the Babbidge Report, Dr. Babbidge (former president of the University of Connecticut) and his advisees stated (Babbidge, 1965, p. xvii):

Dr. Babbidge and his advisees stated . . .

“[T]here is no reason to believe that we have reached the limit of human potential in educating the deaf. The longer we delay in supporting substantial, well-planned programs of research into more effective ways of teaching language . . . the more we waste the potential talents and skills of those maturing young people whose only difference is that they cannot hear.”

Thus, the time is now to engage in positive praxis within deaf education. Equally critical is to have a strong sense of the history of deaf education as the adage warns that if we do not learn from history, we are destined to repeat it. As with the Babbidge Report, we have reached a point when the time is now to engage in research with a critical lens in order to improve deaf educational pedagogy and support the academic success for all deaf learners.

This critical lens also includes the need to have increased deaf epistemology and research conducted by deaf people, along with more teachers in deaf education who are deaf themselves (Cawthon & Garberoglio, 2016; Horejes & Graham, 2016). In addition, people within the field of deaf education are strongly encouraged to move beyond the binary paradigm wars of oral versus sign pedagogies to providing a dynamic pedagogy that accommodates the uniqueness of the deaf experience and the particular needs of individual deaf learners. A pedagogy like this could provide a curriculum that develops the whole person and provides limitless possibilities.

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Photo courtesy of NCHAM

Resources

- Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, <http://www3.gallaudet.edu/clerc-center.html>
- Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act, <http://idea.ed.gov/>
- The Bill of Rights for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children, <https://www.nad.org/resources/education/bill-of-rights-for-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing-children/>

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