14 | New Ways to Be Deaf in Nicaragua: Changes in Language, Personhood, and Community

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Annie,
[I] spent an hour and a half today with a 43-year-old Deaf man. . . . It seems he attended a school for 'sordomudos' in the 1960s; the director's name was Berrios. It was oralist pedagogy with finger spelling. . . . The school was on Calle 14 Septiembre, one of Managua's old east-west streets. THE SCHOOL HAD 32 BOYS & 17 GIRLS IN IT. I'm going back to videotape him. . . .

—Richard

<div align="right">

Excerpt of an e-mail message from
Managua, November 10, 1995.

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When I asked him if he kept in touch with his schoolmates after leaving school, he was very clear that none of them had kept in touch with each other after leaving school. Apparently, even when they were still attending the school, none of them did much with each other after school hours; they all seemed to just go home. And there were no references of any deaf adults. He said that he didn't meet up with any of his old schoolmates until he bumped into them at the ANS-NIC center many [10 or 15] years later. It seems that the best chance so far of finding a pre-existing Deaf community has petered out again.

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From notes of videotaped interviews,
November 22 and 27, 1995.

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The book you are reading presents just a few of the many possible ways of being Deaf.[1] Until recently, being deaf in Nicaragua usually offered an existence isolated from other deaf people. Before 1978, there was no established Deaf community in Nicaragua; older deaf people had no ways to pass down the wisdom of deaf experience or to tell stories of the old days. There was no shared sign language.

Today, little more than 20 years later, the new sign language currently used by the growing Nicaraguan Deaf community is drawing the attention of linguists and anthropologists around the world. Accounts of this change have been broadcast on prime-time television in both Great Britain and the United States. Deaf Nicaraguans now have a national association with branches in several cities throughout their country. What happened? And what can this unusual case teach us?

What happened was this: New school programs drew deaf people together, creating an environment where a new sign language could form. In Nicaragua, a Deaf community has grown, and just as a child grows through adolescence into adulthood, this community also has encountered landmark events and developmental stages, many that might have been expected and many that were not. Most children develop where an existing language is readily available to them. And new communities develop where an existing language is already available, too. But 20 years ago, deaf children in Nicaragua were isolated from any existing sign language. Without the ability to hear, young deaf Nicaraguans could not acquire spoken Spanish without great difficulty and effort. In order to satisfy their unmet social needs, these deaf Nicaraguans produced their own new language. There is no record of another case like this anywhere in the world, at any time. This unique case provides clues that help us understand the ways that languages and communities change over time, revealing complex interactions between development at both individual and group levels. Paradoxically, the uniqueness of this case reveals human processes that are normally unnoticed but are possibly universal.

As an anthropologist, I find one development in this case especially compelling. The identification and recognition of the new Nicaraguan sign language, Idioma de Señas de Nicaragua (ISN) as, language has shifted deaf individuals from a category of limited personhood associated with limited cognitive and linguistic potential to one of a linguistic minority—although a particularly problematic one.[2] That is, they are no longer simply relegated to being handicapped dependents but, instead, have the opportunity to be treated as individuals who are capable of acting for themselves and one another. This change, more than any other, demonstrates that ideologies of personhood are significant and operate at many levels simultaneously. The systems of ideas that define what it means to be deaf and what options society allows for such individuals have been challenged and are changing.

Furthermore, Deaf Nicaraguans now use their new language as a central cultural form, as both means and medium of social relations. But when deaf Nicaraguans are acknowledged as having the capacity to acquire language, several more issues then demand attention, including social identification and responsibility; issues of standardized language use; Deaf identities in local, national, and international spheres of interaction; and the still-contested potential for deaf Nicaraguans to achieve "full" personhood attainable by other Nicaraguan adults.

This case shows that descriptions that include the interplay between individual development and other social processes (including group formation) can provide useful explanations of social phenomena. Language change and group identity developments are affected by events that involve individuals as they develop and act within larger social systems. The main point of this chapter is that individuals by themselves should not be seen as the sources of linguistic and social change. Rather, it is the acting and developing of individuals—within a developing social system—that are bringing about new or changing forms at all levels.

I have written elsewhere (Senghas, Kegl, and Senghas 1994; R. J. Senghas 1997) on the history of the Nicaraguan Deaf community and the stages of its development. Here, I present highlights of the interrelatedness of individual development, especially child language acquisition, and the development of the new Nicaraguan sign language as part of more complex social phenomena. Most theories of community development do not account sufficiently for the effects of individual development, and most explanations of individual development do not address issues of community development. Keep in mind that the childhood process of learning a first language is the cultivation of cognitive processes that later become the means by which individuals and communities interact. Thus, categories and structures that make language possible have significant social effects. Similarly, socialization is the cultivation of effective actions and responses of individuals as they interact in their community. For example, teaching children who may say what to whom and how significantly affects the patterns of language use in a community. Clearly, a unified model of social development and change is needed.

IDEOLOGIES OF PERSONHOOD

For this chapter, I focus on one particular set of categories and structures that operates at both individual and social levels. These categories and structures taken together form systems of ideas that allow society to identify and treat individuals as particular types of persons. I refer to these systems as "ideologies of personhood." I choose to focus on them because we see these ideologies in both the structure of language itself and in expressed ideas about language (talk about talk).

The term *ideologies of personhood* is based on an anthropological definition of the term *person*. In conversational American English, seven individuals might be referred to as seven people. But if one of these individuals were a pharaoh who was considered a god-king, two of these individuals were free adults, another a bonded slave, and the remaining three were children, then we could sensibly refer to this collection as having four kinds of persons. Each category could be seen to have significantly different characteristics, including specifically what each is considered responsible for, capable of doing, or allowed to do. This kind of thinking is actually quite common and affects our daily actions. Consider that, in the United States, a person cannot sue a child. However, U.S. law does allow a person to sue the child's parents because parents are considered responsible for their children's actions. Personhood, then, involves the relationship of an individual to other individuals or groups or of an individual to events—real or potential.

These ideologies operate simultaneously at many levels. They range from the levels of linguistic grammar that are normally unconscious to levels of group and community interaction that are frequently political and often quite conscious. These levels are typically studied by different sorts of researchers: linguistic processes are studied by linguists and psycholinguists; social and cultural processes, by sociologists and anthropologists. But an interdisciplinary approach that combines these usually separate perspectives provides a more coherent and complete view. Such an approach is adopted here, allowing for a study of ideologies of personhood that reveals complex interactions often overlooked.

Methodology

My own ethnographic research is part of a larger, long-term effort to document the emergence of ISN and its linguistic community.[3] Using qualitative and primarily descriptive methods of participant-observation, I build on the quantitative linguistic and psycholinguistic work of others. My field methods include directed interviews, observations of physical environments, and living as a resident in Managua for periods as long as a year. My own trips began in 1993. The longest stay was from early 1995 through early 1996, and my most recent follow-up visit was in June 1999. During these trips, I developed social relations and engaged with local residents in daily activities and special events, including rituals and celebrations. For this chapter, I draw on my field notes and observations of social phenomena among deaf and hearing Nicaraguans as well as the content of interviews (rather than their form). I also consider field experiences, including incidental experiences and experiences reported by fellow researchers of the Nicaraguan sign language resulting from structured interviews as parts of psycholinguistic research. In sum, my method here is to document social processes involving deaf people in Nicaragua and to identify connections between social and linguistic phenomena.

The majority of my fieldwork has been conducted in the greater Managua area, although I made frequent trips to areas outside of this capital city, including visits northwest to León, east to Matagalpa, southeast to Masaya and Granada, and south to several cities and towns in the department of Carazo. In addition, I traveled several times to the Caribbean coast to observe and assist at a pilot educational program for deaf *costeños* (residents of the Caribbean coast) being established in Bluefields. If rates of deafness in Nicaragua are at all similar to those around the world,[4] the deaf population in the greater Managua area probably numbers in the thousands, although official Nicaraguan census figures do not tally deaf residents.[5] Figures provided by the Ministry of Education (MED) do indicate, however, that, in 1995, approximately 500 deaf children were officially enrolled in special education programs throughout Nicaragua.[6] My field observations centered around but were not exclusive to those deaf Nicaraguans who attended special education programs (mostly children) or those beyond school age who were relatively active in the National Association of Deaf People of Nicaragua (Asociación Nacional de Sordos de Nicaragua, ANSNIC). I also studied some families and neighbors of these deaf people and consciously observed other hearing people I encountered in the normal course of living and working in Nicaragua. Although I am a hearing, native English speaker, I learned and used ISN

when interacting with Deaf Nicaraguans and used Spanish when dealing with hearing Nicaraguans.

Background History and Social Context

I now would like to focus on the larger sociohistorical context of this case. By the time the Swedish parliament recognized Swedish Sign Language in 1981 as the first and natural language for Swedish Deaf people (Wallin 1994, 318; chapter 4 of this volume), almost halfway around the world, the still unrecognized Nicaraguan sign language was in its early formative stages. This new language emerged during major social and political changes of the Sandinista Revolutionary Period of Nicaraguan history, a time well documented by Hazel Smith (1993). Many of these changes would affect the social environment of most Nicaraguan children, including those who were deaf.

Prior to 1978, public education was not generally available to many Nicaraguans. Special education programs were even more inaccessible and were limited in size; the few that included deaf students were nonresidential day programs based on oralist pedagogy.[7] The earliest deaf education programs date back only to the 1940s, and the largest had only one or two dozen students at a time. Some programs tutored as few as one to three students.[8] When deaf children left these programs, they rarely maintained contact with fellow deaf students. The 43-year-old man mentioned in this chapter's epigraph is one example. According to former students and teachers, some gestures and signs were used in these environments. In the classrooms, certain signs and gestures (including fingerspelling systems) were used to support spoken language as part of an oralist pedagogy. Teachers and parents did not consider these signs and gestures as actual language but, instead, as merely *mimicas* (mime). Outside the classrooms, particularly among the students, some signs and gestures were used in social interaction.

Former students of the Berrios school in Managua, which was founded in 1946 and closed in the 1970s, have shown me signs they used in their childhood. These signs and the signed alphabet used by those students, who are now mostly in their thirties, are noticeably different from those currently used among the Nicaraguan deaf population and seem similar in quality to homesigns used by deaf individuals who are not part of linguistic communities of deaf signers (see Jill Morford 1996 for a review of the literature on homesign systems). The former students had little contact with one another once they left their special education programs, at least until they rediscovered one another as they became involved in the Deaf community during the 1980s and 1990s.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education and the Social Security and Welfare system (INSSBI) established special education and vocational training programs that brought many deaf students together. The largest of these programs was the Centro de Educación Especial Managua (CEEM), based in Barrio San Judas, Managua. Hope Somoza, wife of then-President Anastasio Somoza Debayle, inaugurated this special education center the year before the Somoza government finally fell to the Sandinista revolutionaries in 1979. Shortly after the overthrow, as part of the general literacy and educational program of the revolutionary Sandinista government, a vocational program for older students (that is, post–sixth grade) was also established in another barrio of

Managua called Villa Libertad.[9] For most of the deaf students brought into the special education system, CEEM was their first experience being together with many other deaf people. Formerly, most deaf Nicaraguan children remained in or near their hearing families' households and, throughout their lives, had only limited contact with other deaf people.[10]

Before the 1980s, most of the social life of deaf Nicaraguans revolved around family and neighborhood relationships, and undoubtedly, they developed home-sign systems to communicate with their families and neighbors. Evidence so far, which includes videotaped conversations made in the mid-1980s and interviews of deaf adults and older special education teachers, suggests that no commonly shared sign language system existed in Managua until recently.

Many researchers I have talked to have been skeptical of the idea that no Deaf community existed in a place as large as the city of Managua. How can we be so sure that a community didn't exist that we have simply overlooked? Weren't all the required factors for Deaf community emergence that Jerome Schein (1992) identified present in Managua?[11] Nevertheless, the social circumstances in Nicaragua seemed to have prevented any such community formation. The stigma associated with having a deaf person in one's family may have caused people to isolate their deaf children from others outside their own family or immediate neighbors (R. J. Senghas 1997; Polich 1998). Another possible obstructing effect on any potentially emerging or even existing Deaf community in Managua may have been the major earthquakes of 1931 and 1972, which both caused considerable casualties and relocation, and disrupted communication and social relations for years.

My own extended fieldwork, combined with the very thorough work of Polich (1998), makes me confident that no coherent Deaf community existed in Nicaragua before the late 1970s. Every time I located older deaf people who grew up before the 1980s, they always indicated that social interaction with other deaf people had been a very rare event. Only after generally available special programs for deaf students were developed and only after significant numbers of deaf students attended these programs (as many as 180 at one time in the central school in Managua in the mid-1980s and early 1990s) did an identifiable Deaf community begin to emerge.

The new deaf education programs triggered a significant change for deaf Nicaraguans. During the 1980s, friendships that developed among deaf students at CEEM were maintained even after those students completed the sixth grade, the highest grade offered in the programs. Many of these students continued with vocational training at Villa Libertad, where they learned a variety of skills such as hairstyling and beauty care, carpentry and basic cabinetry, baking, and bicycle repair. As they entered their teens, deaf teenagers also began dating. According to Kegl's recollections (R. J. Senghas and Kegl 1994), one of the significant topics of conversation at Villa Libertad in the mid- to late-1980s concerned who was dating whom. Certain homes and one ice cream shop in particular became important gathering spots where people would gather to be with other people who were deaf.

In 1986, the Asociación Pro-Integración y Ayuda al Sordos (Association for the Integration of and Aid to the Deaf, APRIAS) was founded. This association was the first formal organization for deaf Nicaraguans. With assistance from Sveriges Dövas Riksförbund (the Swedish Federation of the Deaf, SDR), a house was

purchased in Managua that became a center for Deaf activities. In 1994, APRIAS officially adopted the new name Asociación Nacional de Sordos de Nicaragua (ANSNIC) to reflect that the organization was an entirely Deaf organization, run by and for Deaf members.[12] It also clarified the organization's intended role as the primary political and social organization for deaf Nicaraguans at national and international levels.

The Development of Deaf Individuals and a Deaf Community in Nicaragua

Over the past 20 years, the language, culture, and identity associated with deaf people in Nicaragua has changed significantly from both hearing and Deaf perspectives. We can see changes in terms of individual development: Nicaraguan children who are deaf now acquire a language at an early age, which allows them to develop normal linguistic capacities. We can also see changes at the group level: A new community has emerged and continues to develop, and the language that this community uses has also changed and expanded. Furthermore, the development of the Nicaraguan Deaf community is clearly affected by the changes in the development of its individuals, on the one hand, and the development of social relations at the global level, on the other hand. If we do not recognize these various levels of development as interrelated, we fail to properly understand the development at any given level.

However, we must remember that not all deaf Nicaraguans are equally involved in the emerging linguistic community of ISN signers, nor are all deaf Nicaraguans identified with the developing social community. Interconnectedness must not be conflated with homogeneity, uniformity, or universality. We may seek the universal in the particular, but we must not lose the particular when we abstract the universal.

Childhood Language Acquisition, Grammar, and Community-Level Effects

If we examine the language acquisition of individuals, we can see that individual development can introduce changes at the community level. Childhood language acquisition is one of the most thoroughly studied aspects of human development. Psycholinguists have seen the emergence of the new sign language in Nicaragua as a unique opportunity to analyze how children's built-in ability to learn their first language may also contribute to the creation of new languages.

This case appears to be the first time that a new language, whether spoken or signed, has been documented firsthand by scientific observers during its early phases of emergence. With other languages, including ASL and several other signed languages, the early histories have been difficult to reconstruct, often resulting in competing theories rather than any clear consensus (see Kegl and McWhorter 1997; see also the topic of monogenesis in pidgin and creole studies as discussed by John Holm 1988, 44–52). In the Nicaraguan case, however, we have direct evidence of linguistic forms and historical records. The first language cohorts are still alive and active within their community, and they are still relatively young.[13]

New languages and their formation are the central topics of linguists who study pidgin and creole languages (see Holm 1988, 1989). Pidgins and creoles are languages that emerge when speakers of different languages come in contact with one another. Pidgins are spoken by people who use another language as their first language (or mother tongue); creoles are languages that have been acquired by children as their first or primary language. These languages have specific patterns that have been studied by creolists as they describe how human languages develop the structure we call grammar. Many creole theories identify social, historical, and other environmental factors in language development; others highlight innate, or "universal," factors.

Derek Bickerton (1984) proposed a theory of creolization based on the psycholinguistic theories of Noam Chomsky (see 1986). Chomsky's notion of Universal Grammar, that is, innate human predispositions to learn languages with certain kinds of grammatical structures, suggested to Bickerton that new languages would form quickly. If children were predisposed to learn certain patterns, they would quickly introduce regularity to newly emerging languages such as creoles that might not already show clearly established grammatical patterns. Therefore, Bickerton claimed, a new grammar should form within just a generation or two. He coined the term *abrupt creolization*, in contrast to more conventional ideas of languages creolizing over longer spans of time, to emphasize the rapidity of this process.

Kegl (Kegl and Iwata 1989; Kegl and McWhorter 1997) has focused on the Nicaraguan sign language case as a demonstration of abrupt creolization. The relatively rapid formation of this new sign language rather than a development that spans generations is consistent with Bickerton's projection that creoles should form rapidly if children have linguistic predispositions consistent with a Universal Grammar paradigm. Once Kegl identified the new sign language, other researchers also began studying the language.

Ann Senghas (1995; Senghas et al. 1997) has conducted quantitative analyses of the language use of deaf Nicaraguans. She identifies some new forms that have been emerging in the Nicaraguan case and identifies who introduces these forms. Her findings suggest that signers entering the signing community at a younger age are more likely to acquire complex linguistic forms and that the new sign language has indeed become measurably richer over the last two decades. An unusual result of these two factors is that the most proficient signers in this particular community are its youngest and newest members. How did she identify these changes?

Her first study (Senghas 1995) involves 25 participants classified according to two criteria: age at entry into the deaf signing community and historical time of entry into that community. Age at entry is classified into three subcategories: young, medium, and old. Time of entry is classified into two subcategories: before and after 1983. She examines the grammatical complexity of the participants' signing by determining the proportion of verbs that support at least two arguments (a subject and an object) and the number of inflections per verb (temporal information or links with other sentence elements such as agreement between verb and object). The results of her study show that those participants who were exposed to Nicaraguan signing at a young age can indicate more arguments with their verbs than signers who were first exposed to the language when they were

older. The results also indicate that young and medium age-of-entry groups of signers use twice as many inflections per verb and that this difference is even greater in the signers who entered the signing community after 1983. A similar pattern holds for verbal inflections that specifically indicate agreement.

Ann Senghas's later study (Senghas et al. 1997) focuses on eight Nicaraguan signers, all of whom entered the signing community before the age of six years. Four signers entered the signing community before 1985 and four after. The study examines grammatical structures in the participants' language by analyzing the order of words used and possible verbal agreement as indicated by direction of movement. Although spoken languages often use word endings to indicate, for example, the subjects and objects in a sentence, signed languages often use space and movement to indicate these relationships. Again, Senghas presents evidence suggesting a change in the sign language toward more grammatically complex forms and that such grammatical complexity is introduced by children in a linguistically impoverished environment during the acquisition of their first language.

If the Nicaraguan signing community has indeed been as linguistically isolated as claimed by researchers so far, the studies just summarized demonstrate that deaf Nicaraguan children have indeed contributed to the structure of their newly forming language. Because language itself is a cultural form, deaf Nicaraguan children have provided one source of new cultural forms as a side effect of their individual, linguistic development.

Consider other effects of individual language development on the development of the community at large. The emerging grammatical complexity of ISN allows for finer distinctions in the ways that sentence elements relate to one another. If a language's grammar facilitates the association of subjects, verbs, and objects, and especially any causative relationships among these, it would stand to reason that notions of capability would develop. Ideologies of personhood are involved. Instead of people spending a great deal of time during a conversation clarifying who was involved and what seems to have happened, they could quickly focus the conversation on the implications of that event. For example, the question of who might deserve credit or blame (if anyone) for an event could be more easily "said" and discussed.

The establishment of conventional forms and constraints of language raises issues that are familiar to anthropologists who have considered habitual uses of speech patterns and how they relate to habitual ways of thinking within communities (see also Lucy 1994, 1995; Hoijer 1995; Whorf 1995). If conventionalized ways of indicating relationships become established, then inevitably, other ways of conceiving the relationships become more infrequent and, possibly, become more marked because of their less frequent use.

Another way that individual language development can have a significant effect on the community involves literacy. Children acquiring a language have the possibility of becoming literate. The ability of using written language then facilitates the creation of social or political organizations, recording events for later consideration, and communicating with others over distances and spans of time. The legal status of ANSNIC, the Nicaraguan Deaf Association, would be impossible without written legal documents. The more control Deaf people have over the use of written language in such documents means the greater control Deaf people

have over their organization's structure and processes. Literacy also allows greater participation with media forms that Benedict Anderson (1991) cites as key to national identities.

Furthermore, literacy would allow an individual to pursue higher education or to participate in professions that depend on literacy. The roles in society that would open to deaf individuals would change significantly. Public attitudes about deafness would be affected, and over time, deafness might not be considered a major impediment to intellectual development.

SOCIOCULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS AND INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL EFFECTS

Let us now consider how community and society levels of development can have significant effects on individual development. I stated in my introduction that ideologies of personhood also involve ideas about language and its use. For instance, even if a person is capable of using language, whether or not that use is recognized by society can have as much impact on the individual's life as actually having the capacity itself. Imagine that an infant says something that sounds exactly like an obscenity. Do we laugh, politely ignore it, or discipline the infant? As we look at the Nicaraguan case, we should ask this question: What significant effects do changes in ideas about language have on the development of individuals?

The anthropologist Grace Harris considers language as the critical, universal characteristic that marks a "normal" human being (1989, 601–2). Nicaraguan history bears out Harris's assertion that society must attribute the capacity for language to an individual before that individual will be considered a normal human person. Once Nicaraguans recognized that deaf children had the capacity for language, attitudes and policies changed significantly. The Ministry of Education now separates deaf children into classes specifically for deaf students; before, dyslexic and mildly retarded hearing children had often been mixed in with deaf students in special education classes. Also, by 1993, the ministry officially adopted sign language as a medium of instruction whereas, previously, it had been considered simply *mimicas* and discouraged in favor of oralist pedagogy.[14] Although, formerly, Nicaraguans had seen deaf children as "eternally dependent" (Polich 1996, 1998) and, therefore, had often kept them in relative isolation, in 1995, I heard Nicaraguan families describe their deaf children as *normal y inteligente* (normal and intelligent). A Managuan taxi driver used both these terms in a conversation with me when he expressed concern that his child was not going to get the education that he rightly deserved.

Nicaraguan legal recognition of deaf people quite clearly reflects its roots in the legal history of Spain. A distinction has long been made between those who can speak but are deaf *ex accidente* and those who are deaf and have never been able to speak. Speaking has been considered the litmus test for linguistic competence; if a deaf individual can speak intelligibly, then legal personhood may be acknowledged. The second category of individuals, who have often been referred to in Spanish as *sordomudo* (deaf-mute), have typically been denied legal personhood. As Susan Plann (1997) sets the context for her history of deaf education in Spain from 1550 through 1835, she traces the legal status of deaf people even further back. She notes King Alfonso X's denial in the 13th century of deaf peo-

ple's right to bear witness, make a will, or inherit a feudal estate, even though he did allow deaf people to marry if they could signal consent (Plann 1997, 18). Later exceptions, including deaf individuals being admitted into the Roman Catholic priesthood, usually highlighted literacy as a demonstration of the individual's linguistic competence.

In contemporary practice, Deaf Nicaraguans themselves make a distinction between deaf individuals who can use language and those who cannot, even if these distinctions are not made in academic terms. One day while I was spending time at ANSNIC's center in Managua, I learned a sign that Deaf Nicaraguans use to identify someone who cannot sign, which they gloss as NO-SABE ("doesn't know" or "know-nothing").[15] NO-SABES are welcomed at ANSNIC but are given limited roles in activities. When I was first spending time at ANSNIC, certain members made sure that I understood when I was conversing with NO-SABES, apparently in an effort to clarify why I might be having trouble communicating (that is, that our communication problems might be due to the NO-SABE's limited capacities, rather than my own limited competence in ISN).

NO-SABES either (a) do not use (sign) language yet, even if they seem to have normal mental functions or (b) do not seem capable of acquiring language, even after long exposure. The first category includes children and usually young adults who have not yet been exposed to sign language at the time they first encounter the Deaf community. As these individuals begin showing competence in sign language, they are re-categorized and are no longer considered to be NO-SABES. The second category, those who seem unable to acquire language, includes those individuals who are mentally retarded or have other cognitive disabilities. Some adults who were not exposed to language during their critical period of language acquisition in childhood are permanently limited in their language capacity, sometimes extremely so (see Newport 1990).

Deaf Nicaraguans hold very similar ideologies of personhood to those held by hearing Nicaraguans, especially with respect to the role of language in determining personhood. Although Deaf Nicaraguans recognize ISN as a language and although some hearing Nicaraguans still do not, Deaf and hearing Nicaraguans alike see the capacity for language as a prerequisite for being treated as an accountable adult. Both consider proper language use and even literacy as marks of intelligence and responsibility. But what counts as proper language use is sometimes open for debate. In 1993, I witnessed one argument in a region south of Managua. A Deaf man who had been attending sign language seminars at APRIAS chastised a Deaf woman for using an older, "ugly" sign for a bank rather than the "new" one approved by the APRIAS seminar organizers. The woman indicated that, as far as she was concerned, the older signs were perfectly fine and that it did not matter what the folks from Managua had to say about it. The issue of using proper signs remains an important topic at ANSNIC today and is one motivating factor behind continuing the dictionary project there.

ANSNIC is so concerned with language issues that it has made significant efforts specifically addressing language. To increase the legitimacy of ISN, ANSNIC has produced an ISN/Spanish dictionary (1997) and continues to work on a second volume. ANSNIC also provides language classes for parents and other family members of deaf Nicaraguans and emphasizes that, if more hearing people

would learn sign language, more opportunities would be available to Nicaraguans who are deaf.

ANSNIC officers are also keenly aware that literacy is crucial to the socioeconomic security of deaf adults. Deaf adults who cannot read or write are often the first workers considered for layoffs when businesses are short on funds, which is a frequent condition in Nicaragua. Similarly, if deaf adults cannot read or write, they have a harder time determining whether the compensation they receive for their work is typical or fair. Because literacy is seen as such an important element of linguistic competence, sign language classes at ANSNIC are actually a combination of lessons in ISN and written Spanish.

The point about literacy as an element in ideologies of personhood bears further attention. As the cumulative effect from several factors, deaf Nicaraguan adults have unintentionally been prevented from becoming teachers in public deaf education programs. Deaf students attending special education programs have not developed sufficient reading and writing skills to enable them to advance through high school and university.[16] At the same time, few hearing special education teachers have developed a sufficient competence in ISN to teach in it, in part, because lower pay, a higher workload, and inadequate training all contribute toward a high turnover within the teaching staff. As a result, Deaf students receive a limited education at best. For the most part, they have been allowed neither to develop literacy nor to receive the content of other disciplines such as history or science whose teaching pedagogies assume literacy. Because Deaf adults are prevented from completing secondary- and university-level schooling, they are unable to earn teaching credentials, and so, they are not allowed to teach, even though they are the ones most capable of communicating with deaf children. The situation remains a vicious circle.

The future holds hope, however. In 1999, I saw some signing Deaf adults serving as teachers' aides in classrooms at CEEM. This kind of opportunity may provide the opening necessary to advance the education of deaf children and prepare them to succeed at higher levels than before. With their greater experience and more developed skills, these Deaf adults are more likely to understand what the hearing teachers are trying to teach. They can then use their own fluency in sign language to explain the concepts in ways that the children find more understandable. The Deaf adults also provide models to the children, both linguistically and socially.

The changing expectations of Deaf adults and of parents for their deaf children, as well as the shift in deaf pedagogy to include sign language as a central component have all fostered new learning opportunities. These opportunities include school programs and the ANSNIC center where deaf children may interact with other children and adults, which thereby create relatively normal situations in which language acquisition may occur. The point should be clear by now that changes at the social level have had radical effects on the development of individual deaf children.

BEING NICARAGUAN: DEAF ISOLATION OR INTEGRATION?

An outsider to the Nicaraguan Deaf community, whether Deaf or hearing, cannot help but notice how Nicaraguan its members are, as seen especially in what

clothes they choose to wear, their goals and aspirations, what and who they talk about, and how they talk about them. My observations of Deaf Managuans, in particular, repeatedly highlight Deaf Nicaraguans as culturally competent actors drawing upon typical Managuan paradigms as they live and participate in Managuan society (R. J. Senghas 1997). I stress this point to counter an inadvertent side effect of the psycholinguistic literature addressing the Nicaraguan case, especially some of the popular accounts based on them. Several accounts conflate linguistic isolation with social and cultural isolation. Noam Chomsky, for example, described the situation during an interview with the BBC:

> The Nicaraguan case appears to be a very rich example, the richest yet known, of a natural experiment in which a language-like system, maybe an actual human language, was developed on the basis of *no external input as far as we know*, and that's intriguing. (Chomsky 1997, emphasis added)

Chomsky's characterization seems extreme. It is clear that facial and other gestures of hearing Nicaraguans have been incorporated as part of the grammatical structure of the new sign language. The nose-wrinkle that hearing Nicaraguans often make when they have a question has been adopted into ISN, not unlike the lowered eyebrows used in ASL to mark questions such as who, what, when, where, and why. Deaf Nicaraguans have interacted with hearing Nicaraguans, Deaf foreigners, and foreign researchers, and consequently, normal language contact effects now occur, including the borrowing of signs from foreign signed languages. (These borrowed signs are often modified to better fit the "rules" of ISN.) Still, language socialization and other related linguistic studies that highlight sociocultural context (such as pragmatics) hover at the margins of "formal" linguistics and remain underrepresented in linguistic research, so far. (No doubt, in part, because of the difficulty and complexity of such studies.)

For the most part, however, the Nicaraguan Deaf community has indeed been one of the most linguistically isolated new linguistic communities ever documented. For psycholinguists, a key aspect of this case is that the first cohort of deaf signers had no adults or older peers around to act as fluent models of a natural sign language. As a result, the deaf children filled this vacuum with their own signing, which quickly became structured with its own grammar. Consistent with the priorities of their discipline, the psycholinguistic researchers' emphasis has been on language acquisition and language change.[17]

Proper socialization, however, is closely intertwined with language acquisition. Ochs (1988) and Schieffelin (1990) have shown that, as part of childhood language acquisition, children learn about the different kinds of persons in their respective societies, including the kind of language use such persons can sensibly employ. In some communities, young children are encouraged to stand up for themselves and directly challenge others who might take their toys or food. Other communities teach them that children must go seek an authority figure to mediate such a conflict, that it is improper for a child to directly confront a social "superior," even if the offender is another child. Even social space affects language choice and can determine which linguistic forms are used to say "here" or "there" (see Hanks 1990).

Although deaf Nicaraguans may have experienced a fair amount of linguistic

isolation, they are not culturally isolated. Certainly, not having easy access to spoken Spanish has a noticeable effect on their experiences, but by looking at day-to-day situations and actions involving deaf Managuans, we can see that they use and understand much of the cultural forms of Managuan life. These deaf people are like most people throughout the world: They learn to observe and participate in their encompassing societies. They may develop their own particular perspectives, but they are certainly socially involved.

Seemingly mundane observations emphasize this point. Most Deaf Managuans dress and act much like most other Managuans, especially those from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. In fact, their dress usually goes unnoticed. Divisions of labor among Deaf Managuans follow the same gender patterns seen in the general Managuan society. Deaf men seek work outside the home; deaf women tend to fulfill domestic duties. Deaf Managuans understand kinship. They know what brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents are, and they know who most of their own relatives are, even if they do not live with them. Deaf people grow up living in the very same houses with their hearing families and constantly interact with them. They go to the same churches, hang out in the same streets, and participate in weddings and funerals with their families. Deaf Nicaraguans are now marrying and having their own children. The explanations Deaf Managuans give me about Managuan social life and practices are also quite consistent with those I observe among hearing Managuans.

Most aspirations of Deaf Nicaraguans are typical of Nicaraguans in general. At times, these aspirations reflect both the desires to acquire traits or possessions attainable by most hearing adult Nicaraguans and explicit understandings that language has an important role in attaining those goals. For example, Deaf Nicaraguans have lobbied the National Assembly so the civil code might be changed to allow deaf Nicaraguans to hold titled property. Currently, deaf adults may vote in national elections, but the civil code allows them neither to own houses or cars nor to sign contracts as a person with the legal standing of a typical adult. These restrictions are holdovers from the legal history discussed previously. Many Deaf adults have told me that, until they could be legally recognized as the head of a household, they would always be relegated to a second-class status.

At many levels, multiple sociocultural processes such as language socialization and political movements operate concurrently and are constantly affecting one another. Much of local cultural knowledge is learned through other channels besides just language. For this reason, Nicaraguans who are deaf still become socialized in ways consistent with the surrounding cultural forms. The issues of language, however, do limit their options within their local society.

BEING DEAF IN NICARAGUA

Some of the identity issues for Deaf Nicaraguans are specific to being deaf and are relevant primarily in a local frame of reference. Many of these issues involve language, both directly and indirectly. At times, members of the Nicaraguan Deaf community use language or other cultural forms to mark themselves in contrast to the encompassing hearing society. At other times, members even identify themselves as distinct from other subgroups within the Deaf community itself (for example, groups involved in APRIAS/ANSNIC or the special schools). In some

instances, I have observed community members distinguishing themselves from other deaf Nicaraguans who are not seen as part of their Deaf community. These patterns are familiar and have been associated with the maintenance of ethnic groups and boundaries as discussed by Fredrik Barth (1969), among others.

Previously, I have documented that, at ANSNIC's center in Managua, Deaf Nicaraguans have established a Deaf place apart from the dominant hearing society (R. J. Senghas 1997). Like Deaf clubs in other parts of the world, sign language is the preferred medium of communication at ANSNIC, and an act of excluding Deaf people by not using sign language can produce immediate and heated censure (R. J. Senghas 1997, 7–10). A growing number of ANSNIC affiliate organizations are being established throughout Nicaragua, and opening day celebrations for each of these affiliates emphasize that these new centers are Deaf places. Speeches given by ANSNIC national and local affiliate officers during these ceremonies invariably mention that each new center is another special place where deaf people can come together freely and use sign language. A point frequently made is that, in these Deaf centers, deaf people are not "disabled" (*descapacitados*).

Opening celebrations for these affiliates include activities and performances that have become common at Deaf fiestas. A body of traditional stories, skits, and dances has emerged to become a central element in Deaf social life in Nicaragua. Some of these performances include deaf characters, others include humor that highlights deafness, and others are simply presented in mime or sign language in ways particularly appreciated by Deaf audiences (for example, Peréz Castellón 1995). One popular skit involves two signers, one standing behind the other. The person in front hides both arms behind his or her back while the person hiding behind reaches around the person in front to provide the arms for signing. The trick is to carefully coordinate the hand and arm movements with the facial gestures and body movement, as if the two people were really just one. Deaf people laugh at the errors sometimes produced (especially when a hand squashes the front person's face or inadvertently tickles the front person), but they also delight in particularly complicated utterances that are performed flawlessly. Certain Deaf individuals have become well known for their acts, and their performances are in demand at Deaf fiestas.

In addition to providing a social environment for Deaf people, ANSNIC and its affiliate organizations are pushing for political and legal changes that affect deaf people in particular. Recall, for example, that the Deaf association has helped coordinate appeals to the National Assembly to change the legal status of deaf Nicaraguan adults, especially with regard to contracts and property rights. ANSNIC often allies itself with other organizations to increase political pressure for change or to heighten awareness of Deaf people and their opinions among the hearing society.

Another organization in Nicaragua that also deals with deafness is Los Pipitos (The Little Darlings), an organization of parents with children of various disabilities. Los Pipitos has an oralist orientation, does audiological screening of children, and directs them toward speech pathologists and other professionals but away from ANSNIC. Los Pipitos officials and staff members are often professionally trained and certified, so they claim a professional competence unattained by current ANSNIC members or officers. I have found that parents of deaf children who have received assistance from Los Pipitos often are never informed that ANSNIC exists, even if the children show no promise of acquiring spoken lan-

guage through traditional oralist methods. In 1995, I met one mother of a deaf 10-year-old who had been fitted with two hearing aids. The child still showed no indication of any hearing, and his language skills were extremely limited. Though we met just a few blocks from ANSNIC's center, the mother had never heard of ANSNIC.

Indeed, it is important to realize that not all deaf Nicaraguans are even aware of ANSNIC's existence let alone choose to identify with or reject it. I have also heard members of ANSNIC and Los Pipitos speak suspiciously of one another's organizations. ANSNIC members emphasize that they are autonomous, and therefore, as Deaf individuals speaking for themselves, they are a more authentic voice for the needs and opinions of deaf Nicaraguans than Los Pipitos. They also point out that, because Los Pipitos deals with many different types of disabilities and medical conditions, the organization often does not place a priority on deaf issues. But to their credit, I have seen both organizations participate together in public events in efforts to raise public awareness of the need for more resources for deaf individuals.

Certainly, it is important to recognize that not all deaf Nicaraguans who sign and even consider themselves part of Deaf social networks are necessarily aligned with ANSNIC or its members. Some deaf individuals consciously stay away from ANSNIC for political or personal reasons. Others find that work or domestic obligations prevent them from participating in ANSNIC activities, so they become peripheral to the ANSNIC community. Many of these individuals are mothers of young children. At times, some deaf individuals are discouraged from participating in ANSNIC events or visiting the ANSNIC center by ANSNIC officers or members. Individuals with drinking problems or people who have been violent or disruptive are sometimes excluded. Some deaf individuals have indicated that they have been excluded for seemingly political reasons. Those not welcomed at ANSNIC have sometimes been referred to as *malcriados* (spoiled or ill-mannered). Individuals who consort with *malcriados* risk being labeled as such themselves.

Within the Nicaraguan Deaf community, I have observed distinctions that indicate internal social categories. These distinctions include identification with ANSNIC specifically or identification with the Managuan community instead of communities from other regions of Nicaragua. The examples are not limited to the NO-SABE and *malcriado* categories mentioned above. Current ANSNIC officers have expressed their worry that, if Nicaraguans do not all use the same signs, confusion and disorder will result. Recall the argument over the proper sign for *bank*; that example was one manifestation of local identity issues played out through language use. ANSNIC officers have also indicated that, if foreign visitors do not see the Nicaraguans using a standardized vocabulary, they will assume that the Nicaraguan Deaf community is uneducated. These worries show that Deaf Nicaraguans see themselves as members of communities, sometimes at the local level and sometimes even at the national level.

GLOBAL FACTORS AND DEAF IDENTITY

As part of the international Deaf Pride or Deaf Way movement that emerged during the 1980s, we see communities from around the world taking pride in their own signed languages and community identities (Erting et al. 1994). In some

cases, there is a nationalist tinge to this pride, especially when local Deaf communities see themselves as resisting the linguistic imperialism of "foreign" languages. Those foreign languages are most frequently spoken languages but, sometimes, are even other sign languages such as American Sign Language. These issues are important in Nicaragua. Deaf Nicaraguans are proud of their language and see it as one characteristic that distinguishes them as civilized humans. Their language also distinguishes them from Deaf communities in the United States and Europe and from Deaf communities in neighboring Central American countries. The Nicaraguan national Deaf association and their dictionary of Nicaraguan Sign Language are both cultural forms that simultaneously unite Deaf Nicaraguans with Deaf communities around the world while also marking the Nicaraguans as distinct and autonomous. They are not simply Deaf; they are Deaf Nicaraguans.

However, foreign cultural influences can be seen when observing the Managuan Deaf community, especially if we focus our attention on ANSNIC. Certain examples from the Nicaraguan case support Ulf Hannerz's (1992) metaphor of a "global cultural flow," that is, the way cultural forms move all over the world as part of normal human interactions. The timing related to the development of this community is important to consider. APRIAS was originally organized in the mid- to late-1980s when the Deaf Way movement was drawing international attention.[18] Thus, one is not surprised to hear accounts from both hearing and Deaf Nicaraguans of a Deaf Swede named Anders Andersen who visited Nicaragua in 1990 and discussed Deaf identity, language, and community with APRIAS members. The Swedish Federation of the Deaf (SDR) provided funding to APRIAS to buy a house for a Deaf center and to pay salaries for its officers. Also, in 1994, one very central member of APRIAS was hosted by SDR in Sweden for nine or ten months.[19] During his visit, this member had considerable contact with Deaf people and organizations of Sweden. While there, he learned some Swedish Sign Language (a poster of the Swedish Sign Language alphabet hangs in his office) and was exposed to one of the most well-organized associations of Deaf people in the world.

Significant foreign influences include the fact that SDR has continued to assist Deaf Nicaraguans in establishing an autonomous Deaf community. Also, early special education programs brought deaf students to international athletic competitions in neighboring Central American countries. During these events, some deaf Nicaraguan athletes saw sign language in use. Over the past decade, representatives of ANSNIC have attended several international meetings of Central American Deaf associations. The Nicaraguan Sign Language Dictionary Project also reflects international influences: ANSNIC had copies of sign language dictionaries from several different countries and was documenting Nicaraguan sign language forms according to language paradigms familiar in other countries.[20]

More indirectly but perhaps as significant, the current legal and constitutional structure of the current Nicaraguan government is the result of historical international relations. The recent revolutionary period drew inspiration from sources around the globe, including both democratic and socialist governments. It is by and through the national Nicaraguan government that ANSNIC has its legal status as a recognized organization. ANSNIC must therefore follow the government's guidelines that assume certain paradigms of organization. These include

concepts of voting, accountability, and tax-exempt status.[21] ANSNIC has adopted certain structures, roles, and offices, and these certainly have social implications within the Deaf community. As one example, the layout of the ANSNIC facilities and the differential access to these facilities (for example, most people need permission to use or enter certain offices) marks certain individuals as being more influential. Also, a few individuals in particular, for example, the president and vice president of the organization, regularly represent the association in affairs external to ANSNIC.

Arguably, the most significant difference between the history of Deaf communities in the United States and Nicaragua is that no established sign language was acting as a major influence on the newly emerging Nicaraguan language. A second important difference is that the Nicaraguan Deaf community has emerged during an era of modern electronic telecommunications. Many communication devices today do not depend on voice or hearing and are, therefore, particularly useful for deaf people: consumer products such as fax machines, computers and e-mail, TTYs, and—most importantly—video cameras and video cassette recorders. I recall one deaf boy who was obsessed with Rambo; every time I saw him, he wanted to talk about Rambo. Sometimes he carried Rambo videotapes to school inside his shirt.

Modern technologies create amazing bridges between Deaf people and communities in far-flung regions of the globe. Often, a Deaf person in Managua can communicate more easily with a Deaf person in the United States or Sweden than with a Deaf person in another part of Nicaragua. We should not underestimate the importance of Deaf people being able to "write" in their native sign languages through videotaped letters or histories. Thus, the patterns of social interactions of the late–20th century add complexities and opportunities not seen during the formation of Deaf communities in the United States or Europe in previous centuries.

Because of the key role that APRIAS/ANSNIC has had in the development of the Nicaraguan Deaf community, significant influences on this organization will, in turn, clearly affect the community. These influences have included foreign sources, global movements such as the Deaf Way, and the international assistance provided by SDR. Individuals traveling internationally, including researchers studying the Nicaraguan case, also influenced the community. Finally, telecommunications and consumer electronics have global influences that reach quite literally into the homes of deaf Nicaraguans.

Concluding Comments

Psycholinguists have been and are continuing to demonstrate that this Nicaraguan case reveals innate and learned human capacities to generate new languages, given a certain social environment. Drawing on their work, we can see that unconscious but significant linguistic developments contribute to processes of social identity and agency. Therefore, we must continue anthropological efforts that search for universal aspects of human cognition and action, including symbolic and linguistic practices. But we must simultaneously consider the wide range of more general sociocultural processes involved in the interactions of hu-

mans, especially in a world where technology has radically transformed how and with whom we can communicate.

I hope I have successfully shown an approach that accounts for interplay between individual developmental and social factors, and have produced a useful description of the development of a community and its individual members. Language change and group identity development at all levels are affected by events that involve individuals as they develop and act within larger social systems. Language, culture, and identity are dependent on several innate and environmental factors, including individual developmental and larger sociocultural processes. Clearly, individuals by themselves should not be seen as the sources of linguistic and social change. Rather, the acting and developing of individuals—within developing social systems—are what bring about new or changing forms at all levels.

The case in Nicaragua is worth comparing with the history of deafness and sign languages in the United States or Europe. Each of these three regions has experienced disputes over deaf individuals' status in its society. In most debates, the role of language has been a central factor. In all three regions, wherever sign language has been recognized as "true" language, the potential personhood of deaf individuals has significantly changed. Yet the Nicaraguan case is unique because the sign language there is indeed new. A second unique characteristic of the Nicaraguan situation is that the oldest signers are just entering their early forties, and the more fluent signers are even younger. The oldest Nicaraguan signers did not have the same rich linguistic environment that is available to the young deaf children today. These older signing adults are exploring new roles and possibilities as they set the stage (and act as models) for their younger community members. In other countries, older signers can use language to hand down their experiences, effectively fulfilling positions as elders in their communities. Unlike the Nicaraguans, those older signers have been able to draw on a wide range of sources and traditions, many of them specific to their Deaf communities.

Ironically, the uniqueness of this case draws attention to characteristics that are nevertheless still shared. Interestingly, many of the very same ideological issues about language that affect other linguistic minorities—including those of both spoken and signed languages—have arisen in the Nicaraguan case. These issues include language standardization, the choice of language for schooling (whether the dominant spoken language or a minority language), language as a marker of identity, and language authority as a reflection of other social authority.

Let us now look ahead. To date, there is still no record of any other case where a new language has emerged that does not derive directly from one or more previously existing languages. Although the sociohistorical situation of the Nicaraguan case is different from North American and European historical patterns, it may be only one example of perhaps several similar cases in other regions of the globe—cases waiting to be documented. Any place where deaf people have historically been isolated from one another has the potential to repeat the pattern seen in Nicaragua. If new programs in such places begin bringing together many deaf children, an eye should be kept open for the creation of yet another new sign language.

It is unlikely that a similar case could occur involving spoken languages, however, because the linguistic isolation required would probably not be possible.

Yet, the findings from studies of situations involving signed language should not be considered irrelevant to those who study spoken languages and hearing people. The fact that these multiple levels of development, from individual to community levels, are all interrelated in the Nicaraguan case suggests that similar processes might be occurring elsewhere. Ideologies of personhood allow one area of focus that highlights such interrelationships, and these ideologies certainly occur in hearing situations, too. Societies' various expectations of linguistic competence, for instance, affect the lives of children everywhere. When we hold beliefs that define the "normal" process of language acquisition by children, such beliefs affect the roles and opportunities we allow these children during their development. If our schooling and parenting paradigms permit only a very narrow range of variation in children's developmental processes, larger numbers of children must then be socialized as "special" or "abnormal" cases, which has lasting effects on not only the individuals themselves but also the communities of which they are members.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. I follow the convention of using the uncapitalized term *deaf* to indicate the audiological characteristic of limited or no hearing and the capitalized term *Deaf* to indicate a cultural identity regardless of actual audiological capacity.

2. Although other names have been used by various researchers to identify Nicaraguan Sign Language, throughout this chapter, I use ISN, because it is the name that ANSNIC, the Nicaraguan National Deaf Association, has chosen in its recently published dictionary.

3. These researchers include Judy Kegl who first identified signing in Nicaragua as a language, Ann Senghas, Jill Morford, Marie Coppola, Laura Polich, Gayle Iwata, John McWhorter, Gary Morgan, among others. At times, several of these researchers have infor-

mally and formally worked together as part of the Nicaraguan Sign Language Project (NSLP). NSLP has since been incorporated and is now directed by Judy Kegl.

4.   I have no reason to suspect that these rates would be any lower in Nicaragua. If anything, they might be higher, whether attributable to the use of infection-fighting antibiotics that are known as ototoxins or to the lack of timely treatment of infections, which results in permanent damage (see Polich 1998).

5.   The population of greater Managua is estimated at three million, roughly three-fourths of the population of Nicaragua.

6.   The Ministry of Education has been merged with other ministries and is now referred to as the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports (*Ministerio de Educación, Cultura, y Deportes*, MECD).

7.   Before the late 1970s, there were some few small special education schools, most of which espoused basically oralist pedagogies. With one exception, there have been no residential schools for deaf children in Nicaragua. That one exception is a remote school that, at this point, does not seem to have had a significant role in the emergence of sign language or a Deaf community.

8.   The first special education school to receive governmental support was founded by Dr. Apolonio Berrios, who ran this school from 1946 until shortly before his death in 1974. It was closed when a larger school was opened in Barrio San Judas.

9.   The Villa Libertad school has since closed. It was operating during my field session of 1993 but was closed by my 1995 field session.

10.   In this respect, the lives of deaf Nicaraguans in past decades seem similar to the lives of deaf people on Providence Island as described by Washabaugh (1986).

11.   Polich (1998) questions the completeness of Schein's theory itself, indicating that Schein does not fully account for all necessary factors.

12.   Eventually, the officers of this organization received salaries. The organization received funding from a Swedish Deaf organization and also sold products made by members in its workshops.

13.   Previously, the literature addressing sign language emergence in Nicaragua has used the term *generation* to denote what I term a *cohort*.

14.   According to one education official, this policy was in part a response to the failure of the oralist policy to effectively promote literacy among its deaf students.

15.   Words written in small capitals are glosses for signs. Although a rough translation may thus be linked to the glossed sign, one must remember that glosses are shorthand and are not true translations; nor do they adequately show grammatical structure.

16.   Compounding this problem is the fact that ISN interpreters are still not generally available in Nicaragua.

17.   Ann Senghas's work (described above) demonstrates certain aspects of this very process quantitatively. It is important to emphasize, though, that Ann Senghas's position is that, without the proper social environment, these language capacities will not be activated. Innate capacities are never isolated from social factors; the two go hand in hand.

18.   During several years in the 1980s, the U.S. government imposed a trade embargo on Nicaragua. Although other Central American countries may have been directly influenced by the Deaf Way movement and its followers at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., Nicaraguan Deaf history may have taken a different trajectory because of the political and economic isolation from the United States. This possibility also may account for why the Swedish influence was so strong while influence from Gallaudet was significantly less so.

19.   A parent with a deaf son was also hosted for a shorter visit.

20.   Kegl, a North American psycholinguist, wrote its prologue (ANSNIC 1997, ix–xi)—yet another example of foreign influence, this time involving researchers.

21.   Ironically, according to the Nicaraguan Civil Code, deaf Nicaraguans are legally

prevented from holding titled property, but as a legally recognized organization, ANSNIC can hold property—even though all its members are deaf!

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