Communicating with deaf children: Exploring the experiences of hearing parents

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Community-Based Counselling Psychology
November 2008
I declare that this research project is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

Signature       Date

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Gillian Finchilescu for her guidance and continued support throughout this process.

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable support provided by my family and in particular my mother.

I would also like to say thank you to Craig for supporting me so consistently throughout this year.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank all those who participated in my research by agreeing to be interviewed.
ABSTRACT

This study examines the experiences of hearing parents of deaf children and the process by which they come to choose a primary communication mode to use with their deaf children. Among the many obstacles that parents face in connection with their deaf child’s diagnosis of deafness, communication considerations appear most prominent, with choice of communication modality often emphasised. Participants in this study were hearing parents whose children attended St. Vincent School for the Deaf in Melrose, Johannesburg. Seven participants were interviewed using a semi-structured approach. Interviews were transcribed and then analysed using thematic content analysis. Data analysis yielded three main themes with various sub-themes falling underneath these. The first theme identified was ‘Diagnosis of Deafness’ under which fell ‘Reaction of Parents to Diagnosis’ and ‘Information Provided by Professionals Consulted’. The second theme identified was ‘Mode of Communication’ which subsumed three sub-themes, namely; ‘Primary Mode of Communication used’, ‘Important Referent’s Views on Preferred Mode of Communication’ and ‘Lack of Communication’. The third theme identified was ‘Stigma’. Under the theme ‘stigma’ fell two sub-themes, namely; ‘Treatment by Hearing Children’ and ‘Perceptions of Deaf People’. Conclusions and implications of these themes for service provision are discussed.
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