

COLLEGIATE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS: A
CASE STUDY

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Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
May, 2021

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I want to say my heart-felt thanks to my advisor, Dr. Lucy E. Bailey. I wanted to give up many times during this season of my life, but it was the encouragement and belief from you that kept me going. Thank you for helping me to look up instead of out, for helping me transform, and walking with me. I will look back and remember our work together fondly.

I would also like to thank my committee members. Dr. Guoping Zhao, thank you for the years of education, or rather, enlightenment. I will always be grateful for your lectures and insight (especially over *The Matrix*). Dr. John Kinder, I have known you for almost the entirety of my educational career and you have profoundly shaped the way I think. You once told me that “doing research is like taking a spoon full of dirt and throwing it on top of the mountain of past research.” Thank you for helping me with all my past spoons full of dirt and preparing me for all the future ones. Dr. Chad Depperschmidt, thank you for embracing my project while also helping me through a particular rough patch of my educational journey. You helped me find my place and reminded me of my worth. Thank you for your kindness.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the sign language interpreters. The participants reflected the very best the field has to offer. To all the interpreters I have worked with in my career, thank you. “Justice is a practice, not an end.”- Eddie S. Glaude Jr.

A special thank you goes out to my friend Cameron. Without your help, love, and support, I would not have finished this dissertation. I will forever be *crepeful* for you. Also, to my two best friends, David and Tara. Your love and support look and feel like home.

My mother and father are the strongest people I know. They exemplify what it means to work hard and without them, I would never have made it *to* or *through* college. My mother-in-law and father-in-law are incredible people that fiercely support me; I love you both deeply. To my siblings, Mandy, Jackie, and A.J. I think you know how important each of you are, but if I have never said it before, thank you for being everything I needed you to be for me. You all are my heroes. My nieces and nephews, you all are lights of joy in my life. I am so proud of each of you.

A special note of love goes to my nephew Brody and his mother Jackie, both of whom were diagnosed with cancer while I was writing my dissertation. “When everyone you thought you knew, deserts your fight, I’ll go with you.”

Landon. I love you and I like you. Marrying you was the most momentous act of my life, and it turns out to be the best one. I will stay with you, until the very end. Always.

Finally, to Allen. My littlest love. This dissertation is for you, my son. Being your mother is a dream come true. Your smile and laughter remind me of how life should be lived. In the small moments that make up our most precious memories. Thank you.

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Date of Degree: MAY 2021

Title of Study: COLLEGIATE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRERS: A CASE STUDY

Major Field: EDUCATION

Abstract: Research about the sign language interpreting field has noted that burnout and attrition of interpreters is a serious issue of the profession. There is also a lack of research about interpreters who work in medical, legal, and educational fields. One gap is the unique work of higher education interpreters. The varied contexts, the complexity of the language, and diverse subject areas they must interpret make university interpreting challenging. Previous literature focusing on interpreters and burnout suggests individual traits of an interpreter or lack of support may cause turnover. There is a need for more research on interpreters' experiences in context. This qualitative case study focused on understanding and theorizing the experiences of 7 ASL interpreters who work at a dominant hearing public university. Methods included interviews, a focus group, and document and artifact analysis, including an arts-based collaging exercise. Data analysis included both inductive analysis and the Job Demands-Resources model as theoretical framework. Findings suggest an overall lack of awareness of interpreters' and D/deaf student's needs; structure and roles that shape their work; embodied demands; challenges in the diversity of student needs; stretched resources; and the sense of meaningful work that shape the case. There are broader structural and cultural components of the university which shapes interpreter's experiences. This study offers insights into interpreters' perceptions of their work and processes in one environment that can lead to burnout. It has varied implications for equity for D/deaf students, theorizing gendered professions that engage in care work, and the continued power of ableism in work and educational environments that necessitate redress. It amplifies knowledge for hearing students, staff, and faculty.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Study

The profession of sign language interpreting officially began after a 1964 Ball State Teachers College meeting, in which attendees established the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) to professionalize the field (Mindness, 2014). Before the Ball State meeting, sign language interpreters consisted primarily of trusted family members and friends of D/deaf people who were fluent in sign language (Mindness, 2014; Witter-Merithew, 1999). With the move toward professionalization of the interpreting field that occurred in 1960s, many challenges arose with the use of sign language interpreters. Perhaps most significantly, the professionalization of the field meant relationships between the D/deaf and hearing interpreting communities altered how the two communities interacted with and viewed each other.

With the professionalization of the field, the hearing interpreters now had the majority of the power in choosing the next generation of interpreters, a power once held primarily by the D/deaf community and their loved ones (Holcomb & Smith, 2018; Mindness, 2014). Tensions between the hearing and the D/deaf communities grew since 1960s alongside the development of the interpreting field and are still present today. Highlighting these tensions, the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) selected “Restoring the Deaf community’s confidence in the sign language interpreting profession by strengthening [the Deaf community’s] partnership with the interpreters” as their top priority for the Vision 2020 Conference

(National Association of the Deaf, 2019). In response to this statement, I began asking questions about the relationship between the D/deaf community and the interpreters. How do D/deaf people view the interpreting field? How do they understand the labor involved in interpreting and the demands of the job? I also wondered about interpreters. How do interpreters experience their profession? How do they experience their relationships with D/deaf people, including D/deaf students? There is substantial scholarly research focused on D/deaf people's perception of interpreters, both within and outside of the university. Instead, the current study focuses on interpreter's perceptions of themselves as workers, colleagues, and allies of the D/deaf community within a university context.

In the Vision 2020 priorities, D/deaf leaders identified their lack of confidence in interpreters as a major problem in the interpreting field. With the shortage of studies that provide insights into the meaning and experience of being a sign language interpreter, however, it is unlikely that scholars, practitioners, and those receiving interpreting services have a comprehensive understanding of interpreters' work-related experiences (Powell, 2013; Zenizo, 2013). Thus, ongoing efforts to address the problem identified in Vision 2020 would likely benefit from studies that highlight interpreters' perspectives in different contexts.

Strengthening the relationship between the D/deaf and interpreting communities requires mutual understanding of the other's perspectives. Interpreters and hearing scholars have benefitted greatly from the many studies that highlight perspectives of D/deaf people who receive interpreting services. D/deaf people who are not interpreters may also benefit from studies that provide a more comprehensive understanding of the perceptions and demands placed on interpreters. The variety of assignments, ranges of complexity, and diverse users of both English and ASL create a demanding work environment for interpreters to navigate. With these factors in mind, the current study I conducted offers insights into the formal (training classes) and informal (on the job training) structural conditions of creating interpreters and the demands draw attention to larger concerns in the

profession. The current study, therefore, is designed to provide greater understanding of the specific experiences of sign language interpreters at a public university and how they experience and navigate their work environments. The study has implications for understanding interpreters' experiences in context. It points to the ways ableism (the prioritizing of people seen to be able-bodied) structures the university environment, the dismissal of interpreters as professionals in a gendered profession, and the cultural and structural push/pull factors that shape interpreters' relationship to this caring profession. Cumulatively, these factors have implications for the education of D/deaf students.

Holcomb's and Smith's (2018) recent publication, *Deaf Eyes on Interpreting*, provides many critical essays, research findings, and accounts of the lived experiences of D/deaf people who use sign language interpreters' services in both their professional and private life. In general, this book provided a platform for the D/deaf community to open a dialogue about the various disconnects between hearing interpreters and the D/deaf community with "the hope of elevating the interpreting experience for everyone involved" (Holcomb & Smith, 2018, p. 1). The book includes various D/deaf people's perspectives on the disconnects between the D/deaf and hearing interpreting communities. Yet, more information is needed about interpreters' perspectives about these disconnects to aid with understanding of and relationship between the two communities. With this research project, I gathered interpreters' accounts of their lived experiences and interactions with the members of the D/deaf community to try to understand their daily work.

In *Deaf Eyes on Interpreting* (2018), many authors discuss their struggles of gaining access to educational institutions and their successes or failures working with educational interpreters. After the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) and the most recent amendment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004), the D/deaf community has gained greater access to higher education. For instance, higher education institutions that accept federal aid must comply with the law which includes providing sign language interpreters. However, with high turnover rates in the profession, keeping skilled and experienced interpreters or replacing seasoned interpreters after

they retire continues to pose significant challenges (Bower, 2015; Dean & Pollard, 2001; Holmes, 2018; Schwenke, et al., 2014). Research is needed about the experiences of interpreters currently working in the field to understand the contours of their daily work in varied contexts and to prepare the next generation of interpreters. If scholars in ASL interpreting field know more about how interpreters experience their work, we may be able to use that knowledge to improve practice. This information may also inform changes in the ASL interpreting profession as well.

Not only is the United States facing a shortage of sign language interpreters (Ball, 2017; Carmel, 2001; Cogen & Cokely, 2015; Dean & Pollard 2001; McLaughlin, 2010; Powell, 2013), but various countries are also calling attention to the insufficient number of interpreters available to serve D/deaf people (Meulder & Haualand, 2019; Sign Language Interpreting Service, 2017). Sign language interpreting historians note the “critical shortage of interpreters, which has been apparent since 1964” (Ball, 2017, p.115). Since the 1960s, conferences have been held periodically to attempt to address the shortage and attrition of interpreters. The first identification of a need to recruit and train interpreters occurred after the passage of Federal Laws such as the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1954 and the Higher Education Act of 1968. In 1964, the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare committee released the Babbidge Report about the status of the education for D/deaf students (Ball, 2017). Since the 1960s, interpreting associations knew they needed to focus on recruitment and training of interpreters. The conferences held by the interpreting profession called attention to attrition rates and the need for continued educational advancements. Despite all of this work establishing training programs, advancing curriculum, and laws requiring access for D/deaf people, the interpreter shortage continues to this day. Hence, as Ball (2017) states, conducting research on interpreters is important. It is “crucial...to study the patterns of the past...to resolve this critical shortage of qualified interpreters” (p. 123).

Often research on interpreters involves using surveys to collect data at interpreting conferences or through mass emails from professional organizations and social networking sites for

interpreters (Dean & Pollard, 2001; Schwenke, 2012). There are also studies that follow-up on students graduating from training programs and the route their professional work took them (Bower, 2015). The responding interpreters in the previous studies are from different interpreting and educational backgrounds as well as different geographic locations.

While there is literature describing the experience D/deaf people have with interpreters (Convertino, et al., 2009; Holmes, 2018; Rowley, 2018), researchers have noted a lack of information about the experiences of interpreters on the job (Powell, 2013; Schwenke, 2012). The current study will focus on the experiences of interpreters working at a large, research-oriented higher education institution. The contribution of this study can go toward bridging gaps between the communities, advancing professional knowledge of sign language interpreting, and progressing the practice of educating future interpreters for this specific field.

Problem Statement

There is a significant shortage of sign language interpreters in the United States, which leads to numerous difficulties filling the requests for accommodation services to the D/deaf and hard of hearing population. In addition, there is limited research focused on how interpreters experience their labor. By understanding interpreters' experiences on the job, job engagement, burnout, methods for coping, and their needs for succeeding in the work environment, appropriate changes in interpreting practice and training pedagogy can address issues interpreters are facing in the field.

Further, there is a lack of research about interpreters working in specific environments, such as higher education. With the increased numbers of D/deaf students attending college, the need for more interpreters able to handle the unique work environment at the collegiate level is high. Factors impacting interpreters include high turnover rates and continued tensions between the interpreting and D/deaf communities. Previous research studies conducted about collegiate sign language interpreters focused on accuracy of interpreting work (Delisle, et al., 2005; Pirone, Henner, & Hall, 2018),

experiences of the D/deaf individuals who utilize interpreting services (Convertino, et al., 2009; Holmes, 2018; Marschark, et al., 2005), or burnout of interpreters in the field in general (Qin, et al., 2008). Further burnout research over Video Relay Service providers (Bower, 2015; Wessling & Shaw, 2014), mental health (Knodel, 2018), and K-12 interpreters (Dean & Pollard, 2010) exist, however, there is a lack of research over interpreters at higher education institutions. This is an important area of study given that education is both a place in which interpreters work, one place in which interpreters learn their skills, and a vital space for D/deaf students to learn.

Purpose Statement

This research seeks to address this current gap of literature on interpreters lived experiences in their profession in the context of one university environment. The purpose of this inquiry is to address a gap in the literature over a specific population of interpreters working in a higher education institution and how they perceive their work at their institution. The study also seeks to gain an understanding of their experiences working, their perceptions of their roles as interpreters, and the type of workplace environments that helps them succeed or merits improvement. Situated in the field of social foundations, my work highlights context-specific factors that shape interpreters' experiences.

Research Questions

1. How do participants describe their working experiences and perceptions of interpreting at a public university?
2. What are interpreters' perceptions of the institutional culture and contextual factors?
3. What insights into culture and context do interpreters' experiences reveal?

Epistemology and Theoretical Perspective

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and what it means to know. Epistemology also addresses assumptions of the nature of knowledge, its possibilities, and potential biases (Hamlyn, 1995, p. 242). Epistemology encompasses the “way of looking at the world and making sense of it” (Maynard, 1994, p. 10; in Crotty, 1998, p. 8). The epistemology will provide the “philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). An embedded epistemology supports different theoretical perspectives that will heavily determine the way researchers will design their studies.

This study proceeds within the epistemology of constructionism and the theoretical perspective of interpretivism (Crotty, 1998). Constructionism is an epistemological stance that views knowledge and meaning as forming through the interaction between human subjects and their objects of study (Crotty, 1998). Through constructionism, meaning only “comes into existence in and out of our engagement with realities in our world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). Constructionism does not assume there is one objective truth waiting for discovery, but there are multiple, meaningful realities that humans take an active role in creating (Crotty, 1998). Knowledge will, therefore, change depending upon time, place, and culture. Constructionism is the epistemology that informs the theoretical perspective of interpretivism.

Theoretical perspectives are the philosophical stances of an inquiry that provides justification, criteria boundaries, and logic for a methodology (Crotty, 1998). Once a theoretical perspective grounds a research design, all the decisions researchers make about the research will fall in line with the theoretical and epistemological assumptions. Interpretivism is a theoretical perspective that looks for “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social lifeworld” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). Meaning interpretation comes from the researcher in dialogue with others, as, in this view, reality is co-constructed. Through interpretivism, the assumption is that the researcher can attempt to understand and can, therefore, explain human and social reality. I use interpretivism to guide this

study on sign language interpreters' experiences on the job in one institution. I detail the epistemological and theoretical groundwork in Chapter 3.

Theoretical Framework: Job Demands-Resources Model/Theory

I began this project with the Job Demands-Resource theory as the theoretical framework and as the project unfolded with a new advisor, it became clear that with a Social Foundations' lens, the theory would not accommodate all the findings nor the context and culture of the case. As analysis proceeded, the case produced insights that transcended the Job Demands-Resources theory (JDR) that were important to highlight. In addition to JDR, we used inductive analysis to shed light on the context and added an additional research question that better reflected a holistic and Social Foundations lens. Moving with the needs of a given study, what Patton (2015) terms 'emergent flexible design,' often results in new questions, data, and analysis. The emergence of the additional points in my study surfaced insights about the organizational context and culture. These included the forces of ableism and the gendered nature of the interpreting, which I address in Chapter 6.

Scholarship has applied the Demand-Control Schema (Dean & Pollard, 2001) framework for analyzing the interpreting field and researchers have identified interpreting as a high-risk profession with work environments conducive to burnout and turnover. The Job Demands-Resources (JDR) model from Bakker and Demerouti (2007) outlines the demands of a job that require sustained effort or skills that are correlated with certain "physiological and psychological costs" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 312). The JDR model also defines job resources as aspects of a job that offset the demands of a job by allowing space for the worker to advance skill, achieve their goals, and gain support within their work environments (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In a qualitative study, participants can add to the model by providing their experiences and knowledge of the demands and resources of working in a particular field. The theoretical framework of this study, JDR theory,

framed some of the gathering of data, analysis, and presentation of demands and resources available to the case's participant's sign language interpreters.

Social Foundations Research

Though it employs theoretical constructs developed in other academic disciplines, this project is ultimately grounded in the conceptual and research practices of social foundations of education. The Jobs-Demands Resources model analyzes experiences without incorporating the historical, social, and cultural significance of a particular area of employment which shape its lived dimensions. The Social Foundations lens is oriented to educational practices in social and historical contexts, which added additional layers of meaning and enhanced findings beyond the JDR model.

In previous studies, the JDR model has used quantitative research tools, such as surveys and statistical analyses, to collect and make sense of data. The developers behind the model call for additional research using qualitative interviews (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007 p. 312). However, with the switch of methods also comes a change in methodology and, in many cases, epistemology. I drew upon the theoretical framework provided by JDR theory and then applied insights from Social Foundations disciplines of anthropology, sociology, and history of education. I also used the additional interpretive tools from inductive analysis to bring out the structural and cultural aspects of the case. In contrast to the objectivist and postpositivist assumptions that guide much quantitative research, the present study is grounded and justified by constructionist epistemological assumptions and an interpretivist theoretical perspective more commonly found in qualitative and social foundations-oriented studies.

The interdisciplinary nature of social foundations takes a more holistic approach to research of education. While the subjects of this research are neither students nor teachers, their educational experiences and their roles in the educational access of others are the reasons I chose the interpreters as central to this project. Using tools from the field of sociology is one way the project incorporated

aspects of social foundations research. I situated the findings in the social contexts of education and research. I also used methods such as participant observations, interviewing, document/artifact analysis to understand institutional, social, and educational context for the study.

Providing historical context to the study adds depth and meaning to the interpretation of the data. Additional document analysis, historiographical analysis, etc., to study the historical context for ASL interpreting as a profession, special education legal history, and the history of interpreting in the United States. The historic contextual aspect of the literature review and overall analysis of the profession provides depth to the study and helps with understanding the interpreter's experiences. For instance, the age of the field, who traditionally enters the field, and the educational and social laws influencing the supply and demand of interpreters help establish the reader in the environment of the interpreting profession. Without drawing the background of interpreters and D/deaf educational history into the analysis of the data, then meaningful interpretations from the participants may not produce informed or useful research.

For the anthropological aspect of the study, I am immersed and imbedded in a university culture, and in D/deaf culture, and have first-hand experience as an ASL interpreter working at the collegiate level. With my understanding and insider perspective of interpreters' experiences and D/deaf culture, I approached the research with participant observation techniques and immersion to understand both cultural components of the research setting.

Overview of the Study Conclusion

The profession of sign language interpreting does not exist in a vacuum. Neither are the educational institutions where ASL interpreters work separated from the social and cultural contexts in which they are situated. Complex issues of power, oppression, gender, race, and class play into accessibility, who becomes an interpreter, perceptions of the field, and interactions between the D/deaf and hearing communities. A social foundations study can advance knowledge in the field of

sign language interpreting because of the research approach of social foundations allows for different perspectives brings to light different meanings of issues under study. Understanding the holistic experience of the higher education interpreters may start the discourse into changing policy, fostering a healthy work environment, and the creation of a more accessible environment. Interpreters are crucial to the educational team and experience of a D/deaf student. The research is important because interpreters are critical in creating the bridge between communities. Yet their roles, training, experiences, structural and cultural work environments, and the overall processes are often not understood by those who utilize them (D/deaf and hearing consumers) and those who employ them (i.e., the university). The research community also has much to learn from these unique, context-specific experiences.

Overview of Methodology

This study used a qualitative case study methodology to gather data from a single phenomenon or case. The case in this study focuses on the interpreters who worked or had worked within one sign language interpreting program at a national research institution. Case study methodology allows for the in-depth focus of a case to get a holistic and real-world perspective over a phenomenon (Stake, 1995 Yin, 2018). The phenomenon of this case are the interpreters that worked for a specific public university. The program consists of independent contract interpreters that fulfill interpreting requests made through the student accommodations office in the university context. Together, the program works to provide interpreters for classes or events, educate professors on specific accommodations of D/deaf student's needs, and provide other resources to make the classroom environment accessible for D/deaf students at the university. The research investigated the interpreters' experiences at the university in their line of work by conducting interviews, document analysis, and focus groups interviews.

Significance of Study

The current inquiry offers insights into sign language interpreters experiences in an educational and work setting that consists of majority hearing people and a minority of D/deaf students who rarely understand the demands of their professional roles or the needs of the students they serve. Interpreters face numerous challenges in this role. The study has varied significance. Significantly, it provides a detailed look at the process of burnout happening in one context in the interpreting field. Through the lens of interpreters, the program and context reflect an ableist mindset resulting in a lack of awareness, outright dismissals of the interpreters' expertise, and few resources to support their work or D/deaf students. Further, it offers insights into the push/pull factors in a caring profession. Data reflects the role of structure and culture that shape the interpreters' experiences, The study provides insight into reasons why interpreters leave the field, which may help inform future policy or curriculum in interpreting training programs and continuing professional practices. The literature notes that burnout is a common problem with sign language interpreters, and once out in the field, there is a need for more research as to what is making interpreters turn away from the profession. While this study's findings could potentially help practitioners formulate solutions to problems in the field, its immediate purpose is to contribute to a better understanding of college interpreters' perspectives and professional experiences in one educational setting.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher was to gather and interpret the experiences, details, and meanings constructed through the atmosphere of university interpreting in the chosen case setting. As a researcher, I took steps to ensure ethical treatment of participants to enhance the epistemological quality, trustworthiness, and credibility of the study. I have experience interpreting at the collegiate level. This experience offers a unique perspective as researcher. The assumptions I hold as the researcher developed from my years of experience as an interpreter. I know what it is like to feel my head pulse, eyes dry out, and back/wrist/elbow aching from the many hours of work I physically and

mentally give. I chose a theoretical framework that holds assumptions about the work environment and therefore I also hold related assumptions about the field of sign language interpreting.

During the study, my role mattered because I was able to share stories, probe for further detail, and easily explore my participants' perspectives because I have also worked in similar role. Although I assumed their experiences would differ from mine, I also recognized there were areas of overlap. My role as an insider to interpreter work was essential to designing and carrying out this study. I describe how my positionality related to my study in Chapter 3.

Definition of Terms

- American Sign Language (ASL) – is a manual sign language that consists of “handshapes, movements, and other grammatical features combined to form signs and sentences” (Valli, p. 15, 2011). ASL is an independent language with its own syntax, structure, and many other formal elements of a rule-governed living language (Sacks, 2000).
- Burnout – a syndrome developed from “the prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job.” Burnout expresses itself in “three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficiency” at work (Maslach, 1982; Maslach et al., 2001, p. 397).
- Cochlear Implants - Surgically “implanted electronic hearing device” which is designed to produce useful hearing sensations to a person with severe to profound nerve deafness” (U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2018, para. 1). The devices make “hearing sensations to a person with severe to profound nerve deafness by electrically stimulating nerves inside the inner ear” (U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2018, para. 1).
- Deaf community (Intentional capitalization of the letter “D”) - A term representing the community aspect of Deaf Americans and represents the group as a “linguistic and cultural

entity” (Sacks, 2000, p. xi). American Deaf culture “centers on the on the use of ASL and identification and unity with other people who are Deaf” and the Deaf community has a “set of learned behaviors of a group of people who are deaf and who have their own language (ASL), values, rules, and traditions” (Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, 2021, para. 6).

- D/deaf – The use of the term D/deaf is intentional as a means to represent the diverse identities of members within the community. The “D/deaf” term emphasizes the intersectionality of D/deaf members and how they identify with the “Deaf” community and/or with other communities, like the Black, Native American, Asian, or LGBTQ(IA+) communities to name a few (Garcia-Fernandez, 2014; Leigh, 2012).
- Hearing aids – Small devices that when placed in the ear can “improve hearing... by amplifying sounds” (Mayo Clinic, 2020, para. 3). Most hearing aids are digital and powered by batteries (Mayo Clinic, 2020).
- Job Demands-Resources Theory (JDR) – Theory that every job environment has specific demands and resources that may have “its own specific risk factors associated with job stress” and the interaction of job demands and resources “play a role in the development of job strain and motivation” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 312-313).
- Oralism - Oralism is a general communication method used by D/deaf people, which consist of reading lips and voicing (Sacks, 2000).
- Pidgin Signed English (PSE or transliterating) - is a contact point and a mode of communication where ASL and English meet. The method consists of producing ASL signs in English word order while simultaneously mouthing the English words (Valli, 2011).

- Signed English (SE/SEE) - Signed English is defined here as a coded system of representing the spoken form of English (Sacks, 2000).
- Sign language interpreter – Language mediator who “conveys the content and affect of the communication transmitted using the language most easily understood by the persons involved” (Interpreter Certification and Resource Center, 2019).
- QAST – The Quality Assurance Screening Test taken by interpreters at the state level to assess their signing (ASL and PSE) and voicing (from sign language to English) skills. The exam includes an ethical interview/exam to evaluate for ethical practice (Interpreter Certification and Resource Center, 2019).

Chapter I Summary

The shortage of sign language interpreters across the United States is a serious equity issue for those using or hiring interpreters to provide access to members of the Deaf community. The gap between graduation and work readiness of interpreters and the drop off of interpreters still in the field after only a few years of work suggests the need for more understanding of these interpreters to address issues at the interpreting training institutions and professional organization levels (Cogen & Cokely, 2015; Walker & Shaw, 2011). Research is available about specific settings of interpreting, but only a few studies look at higher education interpreters and their experiences. As D/deaf students have more access to language as children and become bilingual and bicultural, they are well equipped to attend mainstream colleges around the United States. The interpreters working for current and future students, as well as other hearing members at those institutions as I will show in this study, need to also be equipped with the skills and knowledge of interpreting in the collegiate terrain.

The following qualitative study is a case study over interpreters working at a higher education institution. Through case study inquiry, the goal of the study was to get an in-depth perspective of what it is like to translate at the university across multiple disciplines and for multiple students with

different linguistic needs. The study's goal was to add multiple contexts to aid in understanding the experiences of interpreters at this case. The importance of the study comes from a close examination of some of the factors in one educational setting that provides insights for considering the threat of turnover and burnout. The study gives insight into the context of a structural and cultural entity that shapes an interpreter's experience working.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The interpreters in this investigation work in an environment that is highly interactional with their colleagues, the D/deaf students they serve, and the community of college faculty and staff. The environment is also a setting of complex power dynamics along with cultural and social exchange as students, faculty, and staff from different parts of the country and world attend the university. To contextualize the interpreter's experience, a review of the literature constructs a picture of the research about the D/deaf community, interpreters, and how both navigate the collegiate realm. The goal of a literature review is to build a conceptual framework of the literature and explain how the new "research plans go beyond existing findings and theories and may suggest important areas to pursue" (Glesne, 2016, p. 34).

The main entry point to the literature came through my personal experiences as a sign language interpreter working in academic and community settings. Interpreters often deal with a unique circumstance every time they start an interpreting assignment because no two D/deaf people, their background, or language styles are alike. Often styles of signing can be so diverse that even the most qualified interpreter with the highest certification level may have to turn down a job because of their inability to communicate effectively. Why is this? More importantly, why is it essential for interpreters and the hearing community to understand more about how sign language, D/deaf people, their upbringing, cultural affiliations, and exposure to language are all

connected to educational attainment? Greater understanding of these issues would likely help to enhance educational opportunities and attainment for D/deaf people.

Social Foundations of Sign Language Interpreting

Historical Factors

Since the establishment of the Registry of the Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) in 1964, affiliate local and state chapters developed to support the new profession. RID has state chapters in 48 states and chapters in Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia (Affiliate Chapters, 2020). The national and state chapters of RID serve as a platform for interpreters to “explore the evolving nature of the interpreting process and [the interpreter’s] role as practitioners (Witter-Merithew, 1999, p.1). The interpreting profession did not develop context free. It is important to take into account the history of sign language development in the United States, changing societal views on disabilities, laws, educational methods, and D/deaf culture in order to understand where interpreters fit into the story. I will discuss the history of sign language and interpreting in the United States in the remainder of the chapter.

Social Factors

How society views sign language interpreters evolved with the roles an interpreter will take and also how society views D/deaf people, D/deaf education, and sign language. Ableism, which is the “stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and social oppression toward people with disabilities” also shapes how society views the D/deaf community (Bogart & Dunn, 2019, p. 651). Scholars often discuss the two opposing views on deafness as the pathological views versus the cultural views of D/deaf people (Baynton, et al., 2007; Desgeorges, 2016; Lane, 1992; Padden & Humphries, 2005; Sacks, 2000). Pathological views of deafness frames D/deaf people in the medical view that sees deafness as a medical diagnosis identifying a physical disability. The

cultural view of deafness sees D/deaf people as a social and linguistic minority (Bauman, 2002; Witter-Merithew, 1999).

D/deaf culture

The view that D/deaf people have their own culture centers around the common bond of deafness, the use of sign language to communicate, and as a group share experiences which brings them together (Padden & Humphries, 1988). The majority of D/deaf people often enter the community and culture at a later point in their lives because they are born into all hearing families. However, some D/deaf people who may have D/deaf family members may be immersed in the D/deaf community since birth (Leigh, et al., 2018). According to Holcomb (2012) when D/deaf people embrace their deafness as a part of their identity and fully engage in the culture, they have an “adamant belief that being deaf is not in itself a disabling condition, but rather a ‘handicap’ imposed by society because of communication and attitudinal barriers” (p. 3).

The D/deaf community in the United States skyrocketed after the first school for the D/deaf opened in 1817 in Hartford, Connecticut (Lane, 1989; Sayers, 2017). The school developed a system of signs that created what is now known as American Sign Language (ASL) using a combination of hand gestures and facial/body language (Lane, 1989). The development of the language meant that the creation of a culture, identity, and community alongside ASL. Graduates of the first school spread their language and culture throughout the United States as they became teachers at various D/deaf schools opening during the 1800s (Baynton, et al., 2007).

However, those outside of the D/deaf community did not see ASL as a formal language. At this time, there were no formal interpreters or interpreting profession. Those who would act as interpreters usually consisted of family or friends (Ball, 2017). The first recorded interpreter in a formal setting was for Laurent Clerc when his colleague from the American School for the Deaf, Henry Hudson, interpreted for Clerc when he gave a presentation in front of President Monroe

and Congress in 1818 (Ball, 2017, p. 115). However, throughout the 1800s, society perceived “sign languages as a primitive communication system limited to iconographic representations” (Bauman, 2002, p. 2). Around the 1880s, this perception of D/deaf people in their language grew menacing as the eugenics movement in the United States set forth ideas of race purification. Examples of this belief toward D/deaf people and deafness in society lie in the work of Alexander Graham Bell and his advocacy to end the use of sign language in the classroom and replacing ASL with oralism. Bell also believed in banning marriages between D/deaf people because their “offspring” create a “deaf variety of the human race” which is a “great calamity to the world” (Bell, 1884). This reflects a kind of ableism and eugenics common to the history of dis/ability.

The shift to using oralism, which is the use of lipreading and speech to communicate rather than the use of ASL, gained momentum during the 1860s and 1870s (Baynton, et al., 2007). In the year of 1880, the International Congress on the Education of the Deaf in Milan, Italy brought together 164 educators of the D/deaf to decide if learning through a spoken method over sign language is the best route for the future of the D/deaf education (Leigh, et al., 2018; Van Cleve, 1993). Most of the delegates of the congress were from oralist countries, France and Italy, and all of the delegates were hearing except for one of D/deaf delegate from the United States (Leigh, et al., 2018). All five of the representatives from the United States from the D/deaf schools and one British representative voted against the forced curriculum change to oralism (Baynton, et al., 2007; Gallaudet, 1881; Sayers, 2017). The resolution to teach D/deaf people to practice oralism passed overwhelmingly, signaling to the D/deaf community around the United States that the tides were changing in how society viewed and accepted D/deaf people.

An article published in 1880 London *Times* about the results of the conference and “reassured people that society was indeed progressing...[and] learning how to overcome the problems of disabilities” (Van Cleve & Crouch, p. 110, 1989). The switch to oralism reflects the attitude that the hearing society viewed the D/deaf community, summarized by one historian as

an attempt to “restore the humanity to deaf people” (Bender, 1960, p. 132). Due to the spread of oralism, D/deaf people started to lose their place in society as they were fired from their jobs as teachers of the D/deaf and other professional fields (Edwards, 2012)

Even with the rejection from the hearing society, the D/deaf community resisted assimilation. By forming the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) in 1880, a rise in D/deaf leadership, D/deaf clubs, and organizations set goals of keeping ASL alive and maintaining positive cultural views on D/deafness (Burch, 2004). The primary goal for the NAD’s establishment was to fight the “discriminatory social forces affecting the lives of deaf people, including but not limited to education, language choice, employment, and politics” (Leigh, 2009).

It was not until the 1960s and 1970s that linguistic scholars and anthropologists studied ASL and D/deaf people as a legitimate language and culture (Witter-Merithew, 1999). In 1960, the first scholars at Gallaudet University identified ASL as a true living language with its own syntax, structure, and rules (Stokoe, et al., 1976; Stokoe, 2005). By 1976, Stokoe, Casterline and Cronenberg wrote the first dictionary for ASL based on the linguistic components of ASL first written about in Stokoe’s 1960 work (Stokoe, et al., 1976). The formation of societal views on ASL prior to the publication of the ASL dictionary and linguistic studies shows in the manner of how even D/deaf people were reacting to the notion of ASL being its own independent, living language. Historian Jane Maher (1996) notes how the work of Stokoe and his colleagues were mocked by both the hearing scholars and D/deaf community. Stokoe and his faculty eventually opened linguistic labs to continue the study of ASL, which spread in popularity and helped shift the views of ASL as a language by both the hearing and D/deaf communities (Leigh, et al., 2018). The changing attitudes of the language had ripple effects for the education of D/deaf children, laws involving D/deaf people and their rights, and the D/deaf community gaining more power.

Today, the medical/pathological views of deafness still exist, albeit in different forms. With the evolution of technology and wider access to technological advances in assistive technology, now more than ever D/deaf people have access to mainstream society. Nonmedical technology like video phones, video relay interpreters, signing apps on smart phones, closed and opening captioning on television and movies, and instant messaging have all increased the interaction between hearing and the D/deaf people. Additional advancement in alert systems for alarm clocks, baby monitors, doorbells, security cameras, emergency weather and health broadcast announcements, and greater access to content in ASL rather than English have all been innovative technology that ease communication (Cook & Polgar; 2014; NAD Emergency, 2015). There are also technological advances with medical purposes such as hearing aids and cochlear implants. Hearing aids are removeable, external devices that amplify sounds through a microphone, speaker, and amplifier that can either fit in the ear canal or setup in the middle of the ear (Knoors & Marschark, 2014; Scheetz, 2012). Hearing aids now come in digital options that can pair with devices using Bluetooth technology (Scheetz, 2012). However, the effectiveness of the hearing aids ties to the amount of residual hearing that person has.

Cochlear implants are another type of hearing device, but doctors must surgically implant them into the cochlea/inner ear to link directly to the auditory nerve (Leigh, et al., 2018). The sounds are not amplified but rather converted to electrical impulses to the auditory nerve and then to the brain. The outside device connects to a magnet that is under the skin behind the ear and a person can choose to either have both ears have the implants or just one (Leigh, et al., 2018; Marschark & Knoors, 2014). Something the generally hearing public do not understand is that not all D/deaf or hard of hearing people qualify to receive a cochlear implant. Certain criteria must be met, such as an intact auditory nerve and have sensorineural hearing loss, before a person is considered as an eligible candidate (Cochlear, 2020).

The controversy with cochlear implant surgery in the D/deaf community connects to the societal views of deafness that pathologize dis/abilities and reflect ableism. These ideas sparked the oralism movement, the Milan Conference, and the attitudes held by people such as Alexander Graham Bell who did not want ASL to flourish and D/deaf people to become like hearing people in society. To erase hearing diversity is a form of ableism. The deeper roots in the controversy occur at the cultural and linguistic level for the D/deaf community.

Legal Context

Still the D/deaf community persisted through the attempts of cultural and linguistic colonization. After the Milan conference, D/deaf people were excluded from educational involvement for generations. Multiple barriers including discrimination in hiring practices, poor access to education in both primary and post-secondary schools, and lack of adequate preparation and accessibility to state qualifying exams effectively kept D/deaf people from playing a more active role in the education field (Leigh, et al., 2018; Smith & Andrews, 2015).

Through political involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and the passing of laws such as the ADA, the resurgence of ASL in the classroom, D/deaf involvement in curriculum decisions, and an overall empowerment of the D/deaf community to demand equal access. One major event for D/deaf people and their community's political activism centers around the 1988 Deaf President Now Movement. D/deaf students, faculty, and alumni gathered at Gallaudet University to demand representation and leadership of their university to be a D/deaf person rather than traditionally placing a hearing person as the president (Christiansen & Barnartt, 2003). Many D/deaf candidates were qualified to take on the position, but the Board of Trustees selected Dr. Elisabeth Zinser to be the next president of Gallaudet University in 1988 (Christiansen & Barnartt, 2003). Dr. Zinser did not know sign language and had never met a Deaf person until she arrived on campus. In response, the Gallaudet student, staff, faculty, and alumni community

protested the decision in what some call the Civil Rights Movement of the D/deaf (Shapiro, 1994). Dr. Zinser resigned, and the board chose Dr. I. King Jordan to become the first D/deaf president of Gallaudet.

The movement steamrolled to the national level as many D/deaf people and Deaf organizations came out to support with other Disability Activist with the inclusion of D/deaf people into the American's with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Shapiro, 1994). The Deaf President Now movement helped build momentum of passing the ADA. Lex Frieden from the National Council on the Handicapped noted that without having the D/deaf community involved in rallying behind the ADA, then "it would not have happened without Gallaudet raising people's consciousness" (Shapiro, 1994, p. 75).

With the changing societal views of people with disabilities, the passing of laws to protect the rights of people with disabilities start to have implications for both those with disabilities and those who serve them. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (later renamed and reauthorized to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act IDEA 2004), No Child Left Behind (2000) later replaced by Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), and the American's with Disabilities Act (1990) were major educational and societal laws mandating more accessibility for those with disabilities.

In Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 outlines how students with disabilities access educational services and resources. The act also bans discrimination on the basis of ability/disability and that students cannot be "excluded from" or "denied the benefits" from any program or activity "which receives federal financial assistance" (34 C.F.R § 104.4 (a)). It is in Section 504 where the verbiage of Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that is guaranteed to all students identified with having a disability. The act also defines what a disability is and who can qualify to receive accommodations, ensures "modifications and accommodations"

for students, and also allows students to have “nondiscriminatory access to an educational program” (Raimondo, 2010, p. 38). Due to the wording of Section 504, accommodations are also required to be given at higher education facilities who receive governmental funding, such as Pell Grants or Federal student loans. The act also provided funding for interpreting training programs.

The American’s with Disabilities Act passed in 1990 does not solely focus on educational access but rather general access to society. The ADA makes discrimination of people with disabilities illegal and mandates equal opportunity in “employment, State and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation” (American’s with Disabilities Act, 1990). The law encompasses all public institutions regardless of federal funding. Provisions under the law include equal communication access for D/deaf people through the provision of captions and sign language interpreters.

Another educationally focused law is the Individual with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) that was first passed in 1975 and congress reauthorizing it in 2004. IDEA continues the FAPE requirements of Section 504 and “emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living” (IDEA 20 U.S.C. 1400). A few additions to the educational process for students with disabilities under the IDEA are that schools will form an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) with measurable goals, provision of all accommodations in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), and legal rights to the parents and student to due process if the IEP is not followed or unmet (IDEA 20 U.S.C. 1400). Unlike previous special education laws, the IDEA comes with a financial package given to states and public schools. What this means for D/deaf education and interpreters is that there is finally a law that comes with assistance in paying for sign language interpreters working in the public schools to provide equal access.

Before IDEA, Section 504 had loopholes in the law that still allowed for discriminatory practices against students with disabilities. In mainstream schools, these practices for D/deaf students would include denial of interpreters, the segregation of students with “normal cognitive abilities” into special education classrooms, or possibly being denied access to public schools all of which some scholars argue has led to the “underachievement” of D/deaf students that “has not been successfully reversed even today” (Seaver, 2014, para. 3). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Every Student Succeeds Act set the precedent that all educatable students, regardless of ability status or placement in school, should have the same expectations educationally as nondisabled students (Leigh, et al., 2018; Raimondo, 2013). With the passage of IDEA, schools are required to provide services to all students that may need accommodations to access their education.

Interpreting Training Programs

The additional laws meant there was a sudden spike in demands for interpreters. Interpreting training programs started developing across the U.S. Before interpreter educational programs existed, the D/deaf community held more power to decide who would become interpreters, their skill level, and which jobs interpreters could or could not handle (Cokely & Witter-Merithew, 2015). However, that power now lies in the testing and certification agencies that are mostly managed by hearing interpreters.

The first interpreting training program on record began in 1948 at the Central Bible Institute in Springfield, Missouri (Fant, 1990). In 1964, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare conducted a report on the status of D/deaf education. The report became known as the Babbidge Report and concluded that only two post-secondary programs, Gallaudet University and Riverside City College, supports the educational needs of the D/deaf (Babbidge, 1965). Another important recommendation from the Babbidge Report was for the government to

supply more financial backing to improve access to post-secondary education institution (Babbidge, 1965).

With the passing of federal laws like the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA in 1990, the Federal Government began to supply funds and grant money toward developing more interpreter education programs across the country. The funding dramatically shifts the field from volunteer-based interpreters who held other jobs to graduate from interpreting training programs. Starting in 1965, the government provided funding to the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and the Registry of the Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), both of which worked under the same entity at the time (Cokely & Witter-Merithew, 2015).

The first installment of funds came from a Rehabilitation Services Administrations (RSA) grant in 1965 and again in 1975 to help create the National Interpreter Training Consortium (NITC) (Cokely & Witter-Merithew, 2015). The RSA grants continued to support interpreters as a 1978 grant established 10 regional training programs and in 1979 RSA funds supported the NAD's creation of interpreter certification exams (Cokely & Witter-Merithew, 2015). Various funds throughout the years supports the RID and NAD's redevelopment of the interpreting exams and the creation of the Conference of Interpreter Trainers. With the funds, an accreditation project developed to aid the interpreting training programs. By 1979, developers had created 31 interpreting training programs and by 2014, had established 147 interpreting training programs from 23 certificate programs, 114 associate, 31 baccalaureate, 5 master's, and 1 doctorate (Cokely & Witter-Merithew, 2015, n.p.). From the original grant in 1965 to 2015, the government funded over "thirty million dollars to interpreter education" (Cokely & Witter-Merithew, 2015, n.p.).

The social views of ASL, D/deaf people, and interpreters as professionals helped fuel the development of interpreting training programs. The design of the curriculum took on the new

perspective of “the nature of interpreting as a cognitive and linguistic process between two *languages* and cultures” (Roy & Napier, 2015, p. 5). Formal curriculum, training methods, interpreting concepts, and plans for further development of the profession first began at the Ball State meeting in 1964. Not only did this signal the official start of interpreting with the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), but it also helped spur support for higher education opportunities for D/deaf people. Meeting the call for a vocational school accessible to D/deaf people, Hettie Shumway rallied support to establish the National Institute for the Deaf at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). With government funding and the help of Shumway, the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) began in 1965 (Lauritsen, 1975). Soon after the NTID’s establishment, it became the second college in the U.S. to offer an interpreter training program, with colleges in Seattle, New Orleans, and Minnesota following (Lauritsen, 1975). The need for having more trained interpreters available rose at the same time that opportunities began to open educationally for D/deaf people.

Throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, the Conference of Interpreter Trainers further developed the field by creating accreditation standards and support for training programs in regard to curriculum, materials, and grant funding (Carlson & Witter-Merithew, 1979). By the 1990s, research about the interpreting process, development for field specific interpreting, and an implementation of a code of ethics for interpreters. National annual conferences are now held to continue the advancement of the field. The Collegiate Commission on Interpreter Education established in 2006 and became the official interpreting education accrediting body that still operates today.

With the growth for trained interpreters, federally funded programs, and a group of interpreters ready to unite, the education for sign language interpreters skyrocketed. With the formal curriculum in place and programs providing interpreters for D/deaf people in the educational, legal, and medical realms, and in everyday events, the need to develop training

institutions around the United States grew. Leaders in the field guided not only the curriculum but also how professional interpreters approached their roles as language facilitators.

Evolving Roles of Interpreters

Before the establishment of interpreting as a profession, those who interpreted for D/deaf people were viewed as “care-takers” of the D/deaf whose sole purpose is to “bring deaf people into an understanding of society” (Witter-Merithew, 1999, p. 2). The volunteer interpreters, mostly family or friends of the D/deaf person, took on a role known as the Benevolent Caretaker who often took control of the situation, made decisions for the D/deaf person, and had an overall paternalistic outlook on interpreting and the D/deaf community. Smith and Witter-Merithew (1991) recall this long period of interpreting approach actually prolonged the oppression of D/deaf people because of the enormous power differences between the D/deaf person and the hearing person who maintained control of their access to communication.

After RID was established in 1964, the role of the interpreter evolved from the Benevolent Caretaker to interpreters trying to be more professional, which meant they acted more like “machines” or “conduits” (Witter-Merithew, 1999, p. 2). The Conduit role interpreters adopted during this period reflects the profession trying to distance themselves from the Benevolent Caretaker role. The Interpreter as Conduit role from the late 1960s and into the mid-1970s the only approach was to “transmit information in an unobtrusive manner” (Witter-Merithew, 1999, p. 2). However, the Conduit role took on a social influence, as well. Not only were interpreters trying to build best practices of the field based on ethics and professionalism, but the linguistic production the Interpreters as Conduits reflected D/deaf education language use of the time.

During the late 1960s and the 1970s, the Signed English method spread throughout the D/deaf schools and interpreters adopted the system of communication, too (Witter-Merithew,

1999). Sign English is a visual representation of English through signs and the syntax follows English order (Sacks, 2000). The problem with Signed English and teaching or communicating with the system is that Signed English is not a full language based on concepts like ASL (Sacks, 2000). Interpreters in the non-educational setting were encouraged to also sign using the English-based system (Witter-Merithew, 1999). Ultimately, interpreters were solely interpreting the words from one language to the other, devoid of any cultural meaning and the expectation of D/deaf people to function as hearing people fluent in English and hearing culture (Witter-Merithew, 1999). At this time in D/deaf history, the expectation for D/deaf people was to assimilate to the hearing world, learn English, and be able to negotiate the hearing society by using English (Lane, 1984).

The lack of effective and successful communication from the Conduit interpreters created a damaging relationship between hearing interpreters and the D/deaf community. During the 1970s, interpreters began to reevaluate their roles and the influence they posed on the communication between their consumers. The Interpreter as Facilitator came about as a result of practicing interpreters realizing the need to work with the D/deaf and hearing consumers to have effective communication (Witter-Merithew, 1999). The change in roles brought about new practices of the field that included the D/deaf person on the decision-making process and more control of their environment and use of an interpreter. For instance, the interpreter would arrive early to an assignment and work with the D/deaf person collaboratively to arrange the setting or suggest specific vocabulary needed for the upcoming appointment.

By the 1980s, new partnerships between D/deaf consumers and hearing interpreters meant a new development of approaching interpreting. The Bilingual-Bicultural approach to interpreting where the “interpreter is seen as a mediator of language and culture” (Witter-Merithew, 1999, p. 4). Up until this time, interpreters were more focused translating English to sign language in English order and completely devoid of culture. When the cultural and linguistic

aspects of interpreting became common practice, interpreters adjusted to the language preferences of D/deaf people (ASL or transliterations/English) and aimed to interpret the intent of the message. In this approach, the interpreter takes on a more active role in preparation to ensure effective communication (Witter-Merithew, 1999).

The Ally Model is the newest role interpreters can adopt as they collaborate more with the D/deaf community. The primary difference between Bilingual-Bicultural model and the Ally is a philosophical level as the “interpreter makes a conscious effort to recognize power imbalances and strives to create greater balance in power” (Witter-Merithew, 1999, p. 4). The recognition of D/deaf oppression is key to the Ally role; however, interpreters also must recognize when they are the ones perpetuating oppression by taking on jobs for which they are not qualified or by not having “self-awareness, linguistic, cultural, and interpreting competence” (Witter-Merithew, 1999, p. 5; Baker-Shenk, 1986). From the roles of the paternalistic Caretakers to the empowering Allies, the field of interpreting is still developing as interpreters work with the ever changing linguistic, social, cultural, demographic, and political atmosphere of the day.

The Interpreting Profession

Sign language interpreters work in multiple settings including educational, professional, video relay, medical, and legal. Depending on the region where interpreters practice, there may be certain laws that mandate which type of certification or skill level an interpreter needs to work in specific settings. For instance, state laws regulate the skill level required for an interpreter working in the K-12 classroom for most states (Regulations for Interpreters, 2020). Other specialized fields holding separate credentials include legal and medical interpreting.

Interpreters can work through an agency, as a free-lance interpreter, or a contacted/staff interpreter (Hire an Interpreter, 2020). The differences among the three typical employment options pertain to the processes through which interpreters gain assignments. If an interpreter

works as an independent contractor, she may sign contracts for extended employment at a single location. Often universities will employ a mix of contract interpreters and staff/full-time interpreters. K-12 interpreters hold a staff position at the schools they work within.

The salaries of interpreters vary widely by state and can change because of the different certification and experience levels of individual interpreters. The state where the current study takes place, for example, reports a median pay of \$54,000 a year (“Interpreter Salary”, n.d.). The national average is around \$60,000 salary with the range being at the lower end of \$27,500 to the higher end of \$110,000 (“Interpreter Salary”, n.d.). It is difficult to collect data on the average amount of pay for sign language interpreters in the United States since the majority of interpreters are independent contractors. The state’s Department of Rehabilitation Services pay scale has the Nationally Certified interpreters as having a pay of \$35 an hour. If the interpreter has a full-time job with two weeks paid vacation, the income of that interpreter would approximately \$70,000 (State Department of Rehabilitation Services, 2019). A lower-level certified interpreter, such as a level 3 who can interpret in the K-12 setting will make, according to the pay scale set by DRS, is approximately \$40,000 (State Department of Rehabilitation Services, 2019). This pay scale does not take into account that interpreters can negotiate a different pay scale, possibly work overtime, or follow a different pay structure (9 month or 12 month). Independent contractors will have a variety of income sources because the pay and hours depend on the availability of jobs. Also, different interpreting agencies may require their interpreters charge different rates for their services.

Interpreter Demographics

The majority of active professional interpreters are white females (Bontempo, et al., 2014; Litosseliti & Leadbeater, 2013; MacDougall, 2012; McCartney, 2016). The Registry of the Deaf (RID) is a national membership organization made up of interpreters who hold national

interpreting credentials. Interpreters can also solely hold state credentials and never gain national certification level. According to the RID's recent statistics, 87% of members are Euro American/White and 86% of members are female (Annual Report, 2019).

The demographics highlight important dynamics of the profession. White females dominate the field. The limited diversity of interpreters has an effect on how D/deaf people are represented. Often, the interpreters will not have the same cultural upbringing, nor will they be of the same sex as the D/deaf person receiving the interpreting services. Interpreters are often educated by white females, making a significant linguistic influence in the language D/deaf children in public schools receive (Williams, et al., 2016). In addition, the history of D/deaf communication reveals varied differences in ASL, such as Black ASL, Native American Sign Language, and Mexican Sign Language, in addition to unique signing within home environment (Woodall-Greene, 2019). The interpreter may not be able to fully represent the D/deaf person because of the additional cultural barriers. Calls from scholars who point out the lack of diversity in the interpreting field point to the need for recruitment targeting diverse interpreters into interpreting educational programs to fill this need (Cogen & Cokely, 2015).

Interpreter Educational Requirements

Interpreting training programs exist throughout the United States at all higher educational levels from technical schools to the university. Since 2012, interpreters wanting to take the highest certification exam, the National Interpreting, must first obtain a bachelor's degree (of any kind) before they are allowed to sit for the exam (National Interpreter Certification, 2020). The region in which this study takes place has several educational institutions that can train sign language interpreters. Both institutions only grant associates degrees and are only two-year programs. Currently, residents within this region who want to complete their bachelor's degree in

sign language interpretation will need to complete their education in a neighboring state or take online courses from an out-of-state institution.

The D/deaf Community and Culture

The D/deaf community is a unique group of people who use ASL as their native language (Padden & Humphries, 2005). The diagnosis of deafness is not the only common bond the members have with one another in the D/deaf community. The daily issues D/deaf people face and the solutions they create to navigate a less than accommodating hearing world creates D/deaf culture (Mindness, 2014). Just like other groups with common characteristics, backgrounds, and experiences, the D/deaf seek out the members of their own D/deaf community for emotional support, social interaction, and community bonding (Padden & Humphries, 2005, p. 36).

D/deaf culture is like other cultures because its members share “learned behaviors” such as language, values, and traditions (Padden & Humphries, 2005, p. 16). Rather than reflecting a pathologizing or medicalized view of deafness, the culturally D/deaf members see themselves as linguistic and cultural minority (Leigh, et al., 2018). While hearing people interact with and are sometimes part of the D/deaf community, they do not have the main characteristic that bonds the members together. Deafness is central to the community and the culture.

Scholars write about “deaf” people, with the lower-case letter “d”, as “individuals that tend to rely on auditory assistance devices, prefer to use spoken languages, and tend to socialize more often with hearing people than with deaf people” (Leigh, et al., 2018, p. 5). For this paper, I use the term D/deaf rather than solely capital letter “D” for representing the “D” community. The point of using this term is to encompass people who are deaf and share similar experiences but may have varying degrees of cultural membership (Garcia-Fernandez, 2014).

The Region Under Study

The case study occurs in a public university. The state's K-12 educational system consistently falls in the bottom half and bottom 10 of educational rankings out of all 50 states (Schlomach, 2019). The state is on the lowest end of the amount of spending per pupil in K-12 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Majority of schools are public mainstream institutions and a few options for charter and private schools are available for parents. As is common nationally as well, the state has granted a large amount of emergency certifications for teachers in the past few years to deal with a teacher shortage for the nearly 700,000 students throughout the state. (State Department of Education, 2020).

For the 2018-2019 school year, over 8% of the students in the state were classified at English Language Learners and 16.5% of students are registered as Special Education Students. The state also has a graduation rate of 82.6%. As of 2015, the National Association for College Admission Counseling and the American School Counselor Association report stated a recommendation of 250 students to 1 counselor ratio; however, this state has a 435-to-1 ratio of students-to-counselors. The State Department of Education (2020) indicates that 60% of all students eligible for free and reduced lunches. Approximately 15% of students have parents "who are or have been incarcerated" (State Department of Education, 2020, n.p.).

The state has a high rural population (USDA-ERS). In 2017 dollars, the median household income was just under \$50,000 for those who live in urban areas and \$38,000 for residents living in rural areas of the state (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019; Rural Health Information Hub, 2019). The U.S. Census Bureau data from 2018 states that 74.2% of the state's population is white and another 26% consists of Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaskan Native and African American people. The party with the most registered voters at 47% is Republican and the state is known for voting Red in most elections (Voter Registration, 2019). The state's religious composition is majority Christian at 79% and less than 2% being from non-Christian faiths (Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu) (Pew Research Center, 2019).

D/deaf students have options for the type of educational environment they can attend for their K-12 careers. The students can attend public schools, private schools, or the state school for the D/deaf. The state where the study occurs has a school for the D/deaf and public schools that provide D/deaf education programs in the larger cities. The D/deaf programs in public schools can look like a D/deaf teacher or hearing teacher in a separate room where D/deaf students attend most of their subjects in school. If the student wants to attend mainstream courses and they are able to be successful in those classrooms, a sign language interpreter will be placed in the classroom for the D/deaf student to access the class. There are also mainstream settings in which the D/deaf student will only have access to a K-12 interpreter and not a D/deaf education program/teacher.

The School for the D/deaf is another choice for D/deaf students. The school for the D/deaf is a boarding school where D/deaf students will attend classes with their peers, they will be surrounded by their D/deaf peers at all times, and often are taught, coached, and counseled by D/deaf adults. The location of the D/deaf school in the state under study is in a rural area in the far southern portion of the state. The distance from home can discourage parents from enrolling their children in the boarding school. While the school is reported as being in the bottom 50% in the state in math and reading proficiency (Public School Review, 2020), it is still one of the only resources for D/deaf children to be around their peers and other D/deaf adults.

The statistics and rankings previously mentioned are in comparison with other schools in the state who may or may not primarily serve a special education population of students. When comparing the state's D/deaf school with other D/deaf schools, the numbers tell a bit of different story. For instance, the school is ranked in the top 10 for D/deaf individuals graduating from high school with 85.3% (Garberoglio, et al., 2018). The state is also ranked 6th in the nation in D/deaf individuals obtaining a bachelor's degree (Garberoglio, et al., 2018). However, with employment after graduation, the state is not as highly ranked at 18th at 52.1% (Garberoglio, et al., 2018).

The University Context of the Case

The case study takes place at a public university. The student population is over 20,000 students. The university has a services office that provide accommodations for physical disabilities (like hearing loss/deafness) and cognitive disabilities (learning disabilities). Services for the D/deaf and hard of hearing students include options for sign language interpreters, note takers, extended testing time, preferential seating, and access to course material/notes from professors to name a few. The students have an initial intake meeting where they can pick from services they qualify for; this also means they can deny certain series. Students can also have multiple disabilities that may qualify them for additional services.

Once the student requests services and completes the intake, the student disability office will send accommodation letters to all professors on the student's schedule. For D/deaf students, an additional document is attached to the email to inform university professors about the use of sign language interpreters in the classroom and best practices for interacting with the interpreters. Again, the student has the right to request that the office not send letters out to their professors.

For interpreters working in the university, there is an Interpreting Handbook that interpreters and the coordinator of disability services follow. The guidelines in the handbook describe the expected behaviors of college level interpreters, how to charge for services rendered, and how to make reports to the interpreting coordinator.

Due to the fluctuating nature of the number of D/deaf students who attend the university, most interpreters working for the university are independent contractors. The interpreter submits a time worked invoice to the coordinator and will be paid per invoice. The interpreters are given a schedule at the beginning of the year with the class information of the D/deaf students to whom they are assigned. Additional hours may be assigned if extra-curricular activities occur such as tutoring appointments, university events, or attending professors' office hours. The coordinator

will contact the individual interpreters and assign them to the hours after the D/deaf students make the request. Often the request occurs through email by filling out an interpreter request form and sending it to the Student Accessibility Services office. Knowing the process of receiving interpreting services at this university is important for understanding the environment in which the interpreters work and the implications for their role.

D/deaf Students and Access to Education

D/deaf and hard of hearing students who request educational accommodations can receive services that include preferential seating, access to note takers and sign language interpreters. Even with accommodations, D/deaf and hard of hearing communities experience many challenges. For example, a D/deaf student's language needs, which are heavily influenced by their linguistic backgrounds, can either help or hinder their access to an interpreter. This issue surfaced in interpreters' experiences in my study (see Chapter 5).

Language Fluency and Needs

Each D/deaf student who arrives on campus has a different level of fluency in both sign language and English. In general, language deprivation in the D/deaf community stems from a variety of decisions on the part of parents, doctors, and educators, and from the societal stigma of deafness in an ableist culture. Only around 10% of D/deaf children are exposed to sign language from birth with the other 90% experiencing some level of language delay because they are "linguistically isolated" from their primary caregivers who are not successfully communicating with them (Desselle, 1994; Ramirez, et al., 2013, p. 392). Language delays can cause social (Henderson & Hendershott, 1991), emotional, and cognitive delays (Cogen & Cokely, 2015; Vaccari & Marschark, 1997) as the linguistic delay spills over to affect other areas of development in D/deaf people (Hoffman, et al., 2015).

Researchers continuously study language development issues in the D/deaf children and argue that these children are suffering from cognitive stunts in growth due to their delay in acquiring a native language (Meadow, 2005; Tomaszewski, 2008), weak language skills that disrupt reading comprehension (Lederberg, et al., 2014, p. 439), and the lack of qualified interpreters in schools (Cogen & Cokely, 2015).

Reading success is so important to academic achievement that language deprivation research of D/deaf children often focuses on improving reading instruction (Lederberg et al., 2014; Mayberry & Eichen, 1991; Ramirez et al., 2013). D/deaf children not acquiring a native language during the critical early period, from birth to 5 years (Humphries, et al., 2016), are at risk of lifelong disadvantages and setbacks (Lederberg et al., 2014; Lieberman & Mayberry 2013; Mayberry & Eichen, 1991; Meadows, 2005; Newport, 1990). When a D/deaf child arrives at school, it may be the first time they are receiving access to a full, visual language, providing that they have regular access to an interpreter. The interpreter may not be needed if the D/deaf student attends a state-sponsored school for the D/deaf. However, when the student attends a public or private school, the sign language interpreter might be the only person who can directly communicate with them while they are at school. However, if they return home to families who do not know sign language, which is the case for the majority of D/deaf students, such environments significantly impede their access to meaningful communication (Meyers & Bartee, 1992; Ramirez et al., 2013). The consensus in the scholarly literature in this area is that homes where parents are not fluent in sign language set the stage for language deprivation (Lederberg et al., 2014; Meyers & Bartee, 1992; Ramirez et al., 2013).

Assistive Technology Use in Education

Another important component of D/deaf education is the use of assistive technology for D/deaf students as a means to provide accommodations. Cochlear Implants are a type of hearing

device that work by transforming sounds into “electrical impulses delivered to the cochlear nerve” (Humphries et al., 2016, p. 513). After placement surgery, the D/deaf child will undergo intensive speech therapy and training to understand what sounds mean (Humphries et al., 2016, p. 513). Humphries et al. (2016), argue that “medical professionals must acknowledge the reality that cochlear implants do not replace normal hearing” (pg. 513). As doctors discuss CIs as an option to parents, they must present additional information about CI’s not guaranteeing language acquisition to ensure parents can make informed decisions about the procedure (Cogen & Cokely, 2015; Humphries et al., 2016;). For instance, having a cochlear implant does not make a D/deaf person hearing, but schools may identify such children as hearing and therefore will deny the request for sign language interpreting services (Cogen & Cokely, 2015). There is a spectrum of hearing loss, and CIs may benefit some users. However, when the perspective of CIs being “cure” for deafness that “fixes” the problem (Humphries et al., 2016), D/deaf or hard of hearing people may not receive necessary accommodations for success. For some dis/ability advocates, this type of “cure” reflects an ableist culture.

Because cochlear implants provide such varied results for D/deaf children, it is difficult to gauge the success of acquiring a language. The amount of language a D/deaf person understands also varies making it difficult to provide the appropriate type of intervention they need to be successful in acquiring a language (Humphries et al., 2016). External and removable hearing aids that amplify sounds provide a non-surgical option for the D/deaf person seeking technological hearing devices (Humphries et al., 2016).

D/deaf community advocates argue that, in addition to technological services, doctors ought to provide more information to parents about language acquisition (comprehension and command of a full native language) versus speech acquisition (ability to produce verbalized language), sign language, parents signing at home, oralism, bilingualism in D/deaf children, and D/deaf culture (Humphries et al., 2016). Other advocates suggest that “all children, with and

without cochlear implants, should be taught sign language” because, without it, no amount of rehabilitation efforts will produce the degree of “language sophistication” needed for academic achievement after the critical period of acquiring a language lapse (Napoli et al., 2015, pp. 170-171). High-quality language skills will not develop without access to a language, and the control of a language will directly influence a D/deaf person’s access to education and future employment options.

The D/deaf college student may have any one of the previously discussed experiences in their K-12 education or language environments at home. What this means for the college sign language interpreter is that each D/deaf student may have their own unique language needs, which, in turn, suggest the most appropriate services for the interpreters to provide.

Sign Language Interpreters in Education

K-12 Interpreters

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) is one of the principal laws governing the education of students with disabilities and their access to public education (IDEA; P.L. 108-446). IDEA states that its purpose is to ensure all students with disabilities have a “free and appropriate public education (FAPE)” in the “least restrictive environment” (LRE) which is designed to meet the students’ needs for “further education, employment, and independent living” (20USC §1400, 2004). A common problem for families with D/deaf children is their insufficient access to resources available for D/deaf people. They therefore will lack advocacy skills needed to initiate intervention services, appropriate educational accommodations, knowledge about quality interpreters, or laws that specifically protect educational rights of students with disabilities (Cogen & Cokely, 2015).

Resources available to schools leads to decisions of hiring under-qualified interpreters as the positions have low qualifications and low pay. Hiring under-qualified interpreters contribute

to “low literacy rates,” poor academic/literacy performance, and poor fluency in a language (Cogen & Cokely, 2015, p. 9; Rowley, 2018; Tomaszewski, 2008). D/deaf children may already face fluency issues before entering school and under-qualified interpreters add to their problem academically, linguistically, and socially as the interpreter may not yet be fluent enough to handle interactions between students and teachers (Brizendine, 2018; Cogen & Cokely, 2015; Convertino, et al., 2009). The role of the interpreter in the K-12 setting becomes more of a language model and not just a language facilitator like in scenarios with fluent sign language users (Schick, et al., 2005).

Contributing to the issue of interpreters being under-qualified for K-12 work is the growing population of D/deaf students with multiple disabilities. These students are known as “Deaf Plus,” because they have multiple disabilities in need of accommodation (Cogen & Cokely, 2015). Without appropriate training, it can be a severe challenge for the interpreter to provide communication access for the “Deaf Plus” student. Since D/deaf students in the K-12 setting have linguistic needs coupled with needs for other services to access education, mainstream interpreting is considered a “high-risk” area of interpreting that ought to be “undertaken only by the most fluent and experienced practitioners” (Cogen & Cokely, 2015, p. 9). State and federal guidelines are inadequate for describing and enforcing the employment of quality sign language interpreters. Hiring an under-qualified sign language interpreter barricades the D/deaf student access to their education guaranteed to them in IDEA (Cogen & Cokely, 2015, p. 9; Schick et al., 2005).

Institutions that train interpreters are not producing ASL fluent signers in the short two years students attend the interpreting training program (Schick et al., 2005). The gap from graduation from the training programs to the workforce continues to widen (Cogen & Cokely, p. 2). When it comes to D/deaf students entering into the schools without the previous acquisition of a language, and their interpreters cannot fully model language, the student will continue to

struggle to learn any language, whether it be sign language or English, at an average rate (Newport, 1990).

Higher Education Experiences for D/deaf Students and Interpreters

Successful completion of college for D/deaf students include elements of their past educational experiences, linguistic fluency, familial support, and the quality of interpreting services received at the college level (Convertino et al., 2009; Lang, 2002). While attending college, especially one where majority of the students are hearing, the D/deaf students success depends on the amount which the D/deaf student feels connected to social life, able to access interpreter services to extracurricular activities, and ability to participate during in-class discussions (Convertino, et al., 2009; Holmes, 2018; Lang, 2002). Much of the collegiate access is highly reliant on the skills/abilities of the sign language interpreter (Marschark, et al., 2005). The college environment, as my study shows, requires a range of skills and knowledge of the wide array of courses and topics.

With more D/deaf individuals seeking advanced study or professional positions that require higher education, the areas of study at college or the workplace of the D/deaf people become more “highly technical and nuanced discourse” (Cogen & Cokley, 2015, p. 1). D/deaf students and professionals experience delays in translation which causes frustrations and feelings of isolation from the class (Schick et al., 2005). While laws mandate access to interpreters, currently there are no laws deciding the necessary level of qualification interpreters should attain before working at the college level.

When an interpreter is involved in the communicative flow between D/deaf and hearing people, they can either add to or detract from understanding and perception (Cokely, 1983; Feyne, 2013; Pirone, et al., 2018). This means that the interpreter has a responsibility to have high proficiency in both English and sign language to keep up with the academic and professional

worlds that D/deaf people are now entering (Pirone et al., 2018). Since formal training is usually not available in advanced academic settings, only experience, it is challenging to find interpreters with the ability to have the “linguistic range to serve effectively in such situations” (Cogen & Cokely, 2015, p. 11). Language capabilities are a constant factor of a D/deaf person’s ability to access or move throughout societal institutions. With the failure rate of D/deaf students in higher education at “about 70 percent”, there is still much work to be done for quality access to higher education intuitions for D/deaf students (Pirone et al., 2018, p. 45).

Burnout Research

Background of Burnout Research

The concept of job burnout developed in a grassroots manner in the 1970s as workers began to describe their workplace experiences (Maslach et al., 2001). In 1974, Herbert Freudenberger wrote about burnout, fatigue, and cynicism of workers and sought to identify the types of workers who may be more susceptible to burnout. In his observations, Freudenberger (1974) suggested the following symptoms of burnout occur, certain personality traits are more vulnerable, and how individuals respond to stress all link to create burnout conditions. Freudenberger’s work inspired additional research with varied occupations, including Maslach’s (1976) work on workplace emotions and the importance of professionals in high demand and stress fields having coping strategies to prevent burnout.

The first phase of inquiry over burnout focused on the human services and health care fields. Left unchecked, Freudenberger and Maslach found that exhaustion led to workers feeling detached, callous, and responding to clients in “dehumanized ways” (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 400). The emotional demands of the interviewees left them with wanting to protect themselves by providing only “detached concern” for clients to distance themselves so they could “continue functioning effectively on the job” (Maslach, et al., 2001 p. 400). Maslach et al. (2001) recalls in

her later work the need for contextual analysis of burnout as a phenomenon because the time in which burnout research emerged occurred at around the same time as the push in the 1970s for the professionalization of the service sector.

The research findings in the 1970s were mostly qualitative using interviews and observations as data collection tools. During the 1980s, the shift to models of burnout caused a change to survey research (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 401). Maslach and Jackson (1981) created the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to measure workplace experience of burnout. New inventories developed to measure specific occupational fields in the 1990s and by the early 2000s. Theoretical expansions of burnout include models of person-job fit and research gearing toward job engagement, the opposite of job burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

Definition and Research

Maslach et al. (2001) define job burnout as “the prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job” and further defines burnout by “three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficiency” (p. 397). The developed model places the individual’s experience of stress in its social context and the perceptions of the individual toward themselves and others (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Exhaustion is further described as the feeling “stress,” “overextended,” and “depleted of one’s emotional and physical resources” (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 399). The criteria for cynicism are the negative and detached responses to the workplace environment (Bakker & Costa, 2014). The last component of burnout, inefficiency, is characterized as the feelings of incompetence, lack of fulfilling achievement, and feelings of low productivity and inability to cope (Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) identifies the three dimensions of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, et al., 1996). Many new models developed from the MBI to adjust to work fields and target populations of employees. The original MBI emerged from the

burnout amongst the caregiving occupations (health/medical care and other human services fields). The General Survey, known as the MBI-GS, was created by Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996) to be more occupational neutral.

The theory of burnout research is that “certain factors (both situational and individual) cause people to experience burnout, and once burnout occurs, it causes certain outcomes (both situational and individual)” (Maslach & Leiter, 2016, p. 105). Identifying occupational risk factors include workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values (Maslach & Leiter, 2016, p. 105). When burnout does not occur in the workplace, it means that people experience engagement in their occupation. On a spectrum, burnout and commitment are on two opposing ends and what places an individual on the spectrum is their contextual experience of the risk factors identified that lead to burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016, pp 104-105).

Studies evaluating the experiences of burnout have suggested reasons that burnout develops in a work environment and individual people. Burnout manifests within occupations having high job demands with the low provision of job resources and within individuals who have characteristics that “predispose them to cope the wrong way with job demands” (Alarcon, 2011; Bakker & Costa, 2014, p. 112). Some high-risk occupations include schoolteachers (Cherniss, 2016), working parents (Ray & Miller, 1994; Robinson, et al., 2016), medical field employees (Leiter, et al., 1998), athletic coaches (Price & Weiss, 2000) and athletes (Smith, 1986).

Burnout can develop and persist for many years (Bakker & Costa, 2014) and can have an impact on social behaviors, mental health, and personal well-being (Schonfeld & Bianchi, 2016). As of May 2019, the World Health Organization recognizes on their International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11, QD85) handbook that burnout is a medical ailment (ICD-11, QD85). Since the WHO’s addition of job burnout as a medical condition with severe mental and physical health

threats, conducting further investigation into fields of high turnovers, such as sign language interpreting, can yield greater understanding in curtailing the effects on workers and their respected professions.

Research about Interpreters and Burnout

The threat of burnout is severe in the sign language interpreting profession. The problem of burnout threatens the pool of skilled interpreters as the draining of many hours of training, developed skills, and crucial knowledge leaves with the experienced interpreters (Cogen & Cokely, 2015; Dean & Pollard, 2005). Burnout affects the supply of skilled interpreters causing an insufficient number of trained interpreters to replace those who have left and puts pressure on recruitment to satisfy demand (Dean & Pollard, 2001; Schwenke, 2015). Lack of understanding the full scope of reasons interpreters are exiting the profession has prompted studies focusing on stress, individual qualities, burnout, and other factors influencing interpreters' success like mentoring. Some of these variables are discussed below.

Environment

Poor working conditions leading to role conflict and role overload were environmental factors that can lead to burnout (Dean & Pollard, 2001; Humphrey, 2015; McCartney, 2006). The amount of control or decisions an interpreter can make within the particular environment may help buffer burnout (Schwenke, 2012). There has been research conducted trying to compare the stress of specific interpreting environments. McCartney (2006) examined environmental stressors from educational (K-12 and higher education) and community work. The educational environmental stressors for K-12 found role strain issues and expectations of interpreters to act more as paraprofessionals that “take care of the deaf student” rather than language interpreters (McCartney, 2006, p 87).

Interpreters will face challenges after graduation as they work without guidance that can contribute to their exit from the profession entirely. Interpreters having support from peers, mentoring, or supervision were identified resources that help with navigating the profession (Schwenke, 2012). Researchers in the field continually point to high turnover rates as reasons for lack of interpreters rather than lack of recruitment rates (Cogen & Cokely, 2015; Dean & Pollard, 2001; Schwenke, 2015). Although studying burnout was not the focus of my research, its an important aspect of interpreters' experiences that shapes the field and my study.

Individual Traits

Previous research over interpreters predict psychological factors that could indicate interpreter performance and success in the field. These individual traits include flexibility, self-discipline, good attention span, stamina, emotional skills, interpersonal skills, reliability, empathy, confidence, tenacity, and resilience (Anderson, 2011; Bontempo, et al., 2014; Frishberg, 1990; McCartney, 2017; Neumann Solow, 2000). Scholars have also examined personality to determine aptitude for interpreters (Bontempo, et al., 2014). Also, Schwenke (2015) finds those sign language interpreters who possess varying degrees of perfectionism qualities play a role in the interpreter's ability to cope with stress and the risk of burnout.

Research about why interpreters enter the field and their motivation to stay involves social justice roles (McCartney, 2017). Other reasons why interpreters may enter the field include "familial reasons, intellectual seasons, societal/social justice reasons, and monetary reasons" (McCartney, 2017, p. 89). However, the social justice aspects of the job (i.e., educating and advocating) can actually lead to "burnout" and "compassion fatigue" (McCartney, 2017, p. 84).

Physical and Mental Occupational Stress

The job of a sign language interpreter can be highly stressful and therefore lead to "fatigue, injury, and burnout" (Bower, 2013; Schwenke, 2015, p. 2). Research about interpreters

include such topics as the stress on interpreters' bodies (Qin, et al., 2008), the development of musculoskeletal disorders (Delisle, et al., 2005), and negative impacts on physical (body pain, fatigue, headaches, dry eyes) and psychological (poor mood, memory, and adjustment) health (Crezee, et al., 2015). These factors have been found in the literature as to what can lead to burnout in interpreters.

Another area of study has been vicarious trauma and ways to combat its lasting effects in the context of interpreting (Anderson, 2011; Dean & Pollard, 2001; Watson, 1987). Vicarious trauma is defined as the continued exposure to distressing material or clients that can have permanent transformation of a worker (Darroch & Dempsey, 2016). In a review of the literature by Darroch and Dempsey (2016), studies about transference dynamics and vicarious trauma were found in interpreters who work in strenuous settings such as mental health, forensic mental health, legal, public services, and with populations such as refugees, trauma survivors. The emotional challenges of distressing content affected the interpreter's overall well-being and their feelings of burnout (Darroch & Dempsey, 2016).

Burnout

Dean and Pollard (2001) developed burnout models for the sign language interpreting field called the Demand-Control Schema (DC-S) to provide interpreters a method for enhancing their self-reflection on working conditions and ability to cope with stress. Dean and Pollard (2001) found in previous literature about stress and the sign language field that related to interpreters reporting "inadequate training for the realities of the working world and frustration with the lack of professional support available after graduation" (p. 3). The "role strain" experience interpreters undergo arises from factors such as working conditions, consumer's understanding of the interpreter's role, and emotional toll of the involvement in private lives

inevitable in interpreting assignments. The most commonly cited is the real or perceived inadequacies of one's skills (Dean & Pollard, 2001, pp. 3-4).

The Demand Control Schema for Interpreting Work (DC-S) lays out a “context-based, dynamic interplay between job *demands* and interpreters' *control* resources” (Dean & Pollard, 2011). The DC-S is a pedagogy change for interpreting education focusing more on the realities of the field and strategies to combat burnout and exiting the profession. The types of demand sources interpreters face in the area include linguistic, environmental, interpersonal, and intrapersonal; if these job demands are too excessive and interpreters are not sufficient in coping, burnout is likely to occur (Dean & Pollard, 2001; Demerouti, et al., 2001; Schwenke, 2012).

As previously stated, characteristics in individuals and work environments identified as contributing to burnout include perfectionism, lack of control or resources, conflicting values with the workplace culture, work overload, and enthusiasm to maintain constant high work standards (Schwenke, 2015). The literature studying burnout notes that high risk occupations include schoolteachers (Cherniss, 2016), working parents (Ray & Miller, 1994; Robinson, et al., 2016), medical field employees (Leiter, et al., 1998), athletic coaches (Price & Weiss, 2000) and athletes (Smith, 1986).

High-risk professions and the characteristics of the people working within the field have plenty of supporting research, but one missing element about these professions and their workers has to do with the physical demands for job performance. Miliann Kang (2010) conceptualizes body labor through an intersectional approach to “study gender, migration, race relations, and the emotional and embodied dimensions of service work” (p. 3). Through Kang's theoretical lens, she examines high-risk jobs and employees who experience burnout as an analytic tool of embodiment (body labor) and intersectionality to connect how race, gender, class, and other positionalities can factor into burnout. Kang (2010) also questions “why and how these particular

intersections are visible or hidden in performances of body labor” (p. 18). Connections between body labor and burnout can be a future research direction for sign language interpreters and their experiences working in environments with high mental and physical demands. My study adds to work over burnout through contributing insights to cultural and structural processes in one environment that may fuel burnout.

Job Demands-Resources Research

The Job Demands-Resources theory has not been applied to sign language interpreters. There has been one study that focused on sign language interpreting training educators and the Job Demands-Resources theory (Webb & Napier, 2015). Work related research about employee well-being, satisfaction of work, and burnout are topics covered in many field-specific related research. The three dominant theories include the Demand-Control theory from Karasek (1979) and the effort-reward imbalance model by Siegrist (1996). The two theories led to the development of the Job Demands-Resources (JDR) model which I used as part of my theoretical framework in this case study.

Studying the health of the worker is not a new avenue for scholarship. Many studies have revealed job demands that create environments of high pressure, “emotional demands, and role ambiguity” leads to bodily health issues such as “sleeping problems, exhaustion, and impaired health” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007 p. 309; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). Resources that a job provides (support, feedback, and autonomy) help establish an environment of growth, learning, work engagement, and commitment to the organization (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001; Salanova et al., 2005; Taris & Feij, 2004). Scholarship production in the area of human resource management and employee burnout either stem from or further develop the conceptual models of Karasek’s (1979) Demand-Control Model (DCM) and Siegrist’s (1996) Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI).

Job Demands-Resources Theory

A third model from Bakker and Demerouti (2007) called the Jobs Demands-Resources theory, incorporates diverse aspects and characteristics of a person's job that are both negative and positive indicators influencing the well-being of an employee. The idea of the JDR model is its applicability to occupational settings and sift through and identify factors as job demands and job resources (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). The definition of job demands according to the Job Demands-Resources model are the "physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort or skills and are therefore associated with certain physiological and or psychological costs" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007 p. 312). Bakker and Demerouti (2007) define job resources as the "physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job" which include processes in place to "achieving work goals", actively reducing job demands with "physiological and psychological costs", and foster the individual to grow, learn, and develop as a person (p. 312).

Dual and Interacting Paths

The central assumption about the JDR model is that "job strain develops – irrespective of the type of job or occupation – when (certain) job demands are high and when (certain) job resources are limited." (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 323). Baker and Demerouti (2007) also define work engagement as happening when "job resources are high (also in the face of high job demands)" (p. 323). This means that strain can develop if the demands of a job are not met with the appropriate resources to overcome such demands. When resources are available to foster employee growth and help manage workplace demands, then workplace motivation is more likely to occur. The interaction of demands and resources in the JDR theory help to identify environmental factors of a job that potentially create "affect important organizational outcomes" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 316).

In their review of the literature using the JDR model for conducting research, Bakker and Demerouti (2007), two of the original contributors to the model, piece together the different occupations under study and the validity of the model. However, the authors call for qualitative research conducting explorative interviews to further add to the model. The use of qualitative inquiry contributes to valuable perspectives to the JDR model because gaining insight into participants' experiences generates knowledge about "unexpected, organization-specific job demands and job resources that will be overlooked by highly standardized approaches" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 323).

One study about sign language interpreter educators' experiences incorporated the JDR model to evaluate the "balance (or lack thereof) between job demands and resources" (Webb & Napier, 2015, p. 23). Webb and Napier's research found demands such as institutional expectations, external community expectations, higher education constrains, personal demands, and workload demands. On the other side of the JDR model and resources, Webb and Napier found 10 themes identified during the inquiry for critical resources needed of the educators to succeed. One example includes human resources that directly aid in the support and functioning of interpreting training programs. In the discussion of the study, Webb and Napier (2015) highlight that many interpreting educators experienced "high levels of exhaustion and stress, as well as burnout" a similar finding to other high demands and low resourced jobs (p. 47).

The study by Webb and Napier (2015) structured interview questions in such a way to address factors that influence their teaching abilities, students learning, the types of demands they experience, and resources they are provided. This study is important and contributes not only methodologically but conceptually as the findings bring up important accounts of motivation to serve the D/deaf community, fear of being unable to produce interpreters ready for the work force, and that "understanding sign language interpreters' overall well-being is critical to a better

understanding of why students continue to graduate without the minimal requirement of skills needed to practice” (p. 47).

Chapter II Summary

After reviewing the literature about the interpreting experience, it is clear that available research points to the need for conducting additional research at site specific assignments. This type of context-specific focus is aligned with social foundations’ interest in examining educational processes in context. Some interpreter work does exist that focuses on mental health interpreting, VRS interpreting, K-12 interpreting, and individual traits needed to succeed in the interpreting field (Bontempo, 2014; Bower, 2015; Dean & Pollard, 2010; Knodel, 2018; Qin, et al., 2008; Wessling & Shaw, 2014). Providing more context to the history of D/deaf people in the United States, their educational experiences, and the roles interpreters play in accessing education provides a layout for increasing understanding of the complexity of the interpreting field.

The issues concerning D/deaf education are complex and multifaceted. Insufficient access to highly qualified sign language interpreters is one of the many problems D/deaf students face when obtaining their education. The lack of interpreters leads to the inability to fulfill interpreting request or interpreters may exit the field of interpreting before they have advanced their skills to effectively communicate. The profession is aware of a gap between graduating interpreting training students and those in the workforce. The gap is primarily caused from interpreters exiting the field and issues with preparing and training interpreters for real-world assignments. As I discuss below, these issues manifest in my case study. Because federal laws are in place requiring schools to accommodate D/deaf students’ educational needs, especially the need for accessing appropriate interpreting services, researchers and practitioners need to understand how to best prepare and retain highly qualified professional interpreters. While the practical problems are important to address, the aim of this study is to produce knowledge about

sign language interpreter's experiences without prescribing policy directives or providing solutions. While oppression and injustice are important factors, I did not exclusively address those issues, but instead focus on participants' emic perspectives.

Interpreters leaving the field pose a serious threat to the development of skilled interpreters (Cogen & Cokely, 2015). In recent years, scholars are studying the field of sign language interpreters (Anderson, 2011; Bontempo, et al., 2014; Crezee, et al., 2015; Dean & Pollard, 2001; Delisle, et al., 2005; Demerouti, et al., 2001; Frishberg, 1990; McCartney, 2017; Neumann Solow, 2000; Qin, et al., 2008; Schwenke, et al., 2014 Watson, 1987). My case study extends this work. Using inductive analysis and some aspects of the Job Demands-Resources (JDR) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), the current study analyzed findings from my study of interpreter experiences in one collegiate level environment. In what follows, I synthesize lived experiences to identify the demands they negotiate, the resources available in their context, and subsequently the strains and motivations, of their jobs.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The primary purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the lived experiences of sign language interpreters working in a public university. Yin (2017) defines case study research as a mode of social science research that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth in its real-world context” (p. 226). Case studies offer appropriate tools for in-depth inquiries into units of analysis around which the researcher sets strict parameters. The bounded unit under study, the interpreters working in the services program, provided holistic, real-world perspectives about the phenomena, such as the professional experiences of sign-language interpreters in higher education.

Defining the case within its “context,” “field,” and “focus of inquiry” was the first step in designing the case study’s boundaries (Patton, 2015, p. 259). The reason this case is the focus of the inquiry is due to the number of interpreters needed to work at the university, which is around six to eight full and part time interpreters, and because of the number of D/deaf students who attend the university (10 to 15 on average per semester who require interpreting services). Other higher education institutions in the region employ a comparatively high number of interpreters at their institutions. One institution in the state employed two full time interpreters and 24 part-time interpreters for 20 D/deaf and hard of hearing students at the time this study was conducted. (R. Zimmerman, personal communication,

November 13, 2019). Another college in the state has 6 D/deaf and hard of hearing students with two staff interpreters, It is not clear whether these students need interpreters, cartographers to transcribe lectures, notetakers, preferential seating, or other accommodations. Several institutions offer two-year degree programs that do not confer bachelor's degrees.

Depending on the theoretical perspective, the case study methodology has different orientations and assumptions guiding the design of the study. Interpretivism is the theoretical perspective that guided this study (Crotty, 1998). The case study design focused on what Patton (2015) calls an “empirical unit (individuals, families, organizations)” rather than a “theoretical unit (resilience, excellence, living with HIV)” (p. 259). Using case study as a method of inquiry means the researcher places a “boundary around some phenomenon of interest,” and clearly identifying the boundary is critically important because it binds the case “by time and place” while also setting the focus of the inquiry (Patton, 2015, p. 259). The unit of analysis for the current study is the interpreters working at the services program at one public university. The study occurred in the fall 2019 and spring 2020 semesters at the university where multiple D/deaf students attended classes, tutoring sessions, and extra-curricular events requiring sign language interpreting services.

The case study methodology allowed for studying the interpreters working for the program holistically to understand the meaning interpreters make of their work environment. Case study methodology aligns with the theoretical perspective of interpretivism because it enables the researcher to gather data on participants' meaning making. Case study guided by the boundaries set through an interpretivist lens illuminated constructs of meaning from the gathered data. The epistemology of constructionism informs interpretivism and, as such, also guided this particular application of case study methodology. Constructionism views meaning as being made between subjects and objects in a given context; therefore, it suggests that no human construction should be considered the single, ultimate truth, but there are many possible reasonable

interpretations of any given phenomenon. Thus, the study sought to understand and derive insights from multiple, meaningful interpretations of the lived experiences of the participants.

Setting of the Case

The research setting is at a hearing university that provides on average six to eight sign language interpreters to 10 to 15 D/deaf students. The services program history spans many years of providing interpreters, which means that D/deaf students consistently attend the university. The number of employed interpreters varies from year to year depending on the number of D/deaf students enrolled in course work and the number of accessible interpreters in the surrounding area who have the skill set to interpret at the collegiate level. The research commenced at the end of fall 2019 semester and the beginning of the spring 2020 semester. The time frame was best for data collection because sign language interpreters were actively working on campus for D/deaf and hard of hearing students enrolled at the college full-time.

Procedures

Participant Sampling

The study used purposeful sampling to identify and recruit participants. Purposeful sampling is a method of sampling that targets “information-rich” cases that by their nature “illuminates the inquiry question being investigated” (Patton, 2015, p. 264). The goal for purposeful sampling is not to make statistical generalizations beyond the boundaries of the case but rather to contribute to an “in-depth understanding” about the issue under study (Patton, 2015, p. 264). Utilizing the time-location sampling technique described by Patton (2015) as the initial sampling procedure required interviewing or observing everyone working presently as sign language interpreters at the university. Utilizing the emergent theory sampling as the second sampling technique allowed for sampling and interviewing other key informants to the case of the

interpreting services program. The group of interpreters were the central informants' whose experiences are the primary focus of the case and I used methods of "in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information-rich [data] in context" (Patton, 2015, p. 259).

Recruitment Procedures

Recruiting participants for the research sample consisted of approaching all qualified potential participants at the research site. After initial contact via phone, I met with potential participants to discuss informed consent, the researcher's responsibility to protect participants from harm, and the study's privacy and confidentiality procedures (See Appendix A). Once I was able to secure the active interpreter's consent to participate in the study, I used the snowball sampling technique and obtained information about former interpreters who used to work for the university. From both of these sampling techniques, I was able to have seven participants. This number is aligned with Stake's (1995) recommendations for case study.

The informed consent page includes further information about the study in terms of the design and the amount of time that was needed from the participant. The meeting and informed consent documents emphasized that participation is voluntary, and if at any time the participant wants to withdraw from the study, they may do so. There was no pressure on the participants to join the study. I described the study and its purpose in order for the participants to understand their potential roles within it. After I collected the participants signatures, I stored them on a password protected and encrypted file. I explained to participants that the study could provide personal fulfillment or a better understanding on behalf of the participants. Some participants may have seen the study as an opportunity to contribute to finding a more just and equitable system to serve all, which may also lead them to feel central to the path forward to improvement.

Participants: The Interpreters

The interpreters employed by the university are aligned with the typical demographics of sign language interpreters. All of the women are white with the exception of one who claims both white and Native American heritage. During their time interpreting for the university, five of the seven interpreters were attending classes at some point. Also, at some point during their interpreting career, four out of the seven women were married and raising or taking care of their families. Five of the seven interpreters fell between the ages of 20 and 30 with the other two interpreters falling in the 40 to 50 age range. While none of the interpreters have degrees in sign language interpreting, six out of the seven have bachelor's degrees and of those six, two have master's degrees. One interpreter has a minor in sign language interpreting that she received from a different institution. This means that only one interpreter out of the seven had formal training in sign language interpreting.

Three of the interpreters have family members who are D/deaf and have had experience with the D/deaf community and sign language for a portion or most of their lives. Two of the three interpreters with D/deaf family members claim ASL as their native language. Of the remaining interpreters, two were exposed to the D/deaf community and sign language prior to taking ASL classes at the university level and the remaining two interpreters did not meet a D/deaf person or learn sign language until they came to the university.

Relationship to Participants

I have worked full-time as a sign language interpreter at the university level. I have also attended school while working. I can connect to the interpreter's experiences because I can relate to their position as I have held a similar role as a contract interpreter. Because the study is a qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the primary instrument in the data collection, analysis, and construction of knowledge (Patton, 2015). Because of the insular and connected nature of my professional field, I have a long work and personal history with each participant. My positionality

as researcher, colleague, and insider to the D/deaf community has implications for my study. I share common understanding of the contours of the daily work the interpreters perform in their profession. I have similarly grappled with the politics, policies, demands, and joys of working as a university interpreter. My relationship with my participants and my role as researcher means I must consider the ethics of my inquiry, the quality of research, and the trustworthiness for what I report.

Methods/Data Sources

With case study methodology, it is common for researchers to use multiple data collection methods to “allow for in-depth examination of a complex singularity, often a person or program, in its natural setting” (Pearson, et al., 2015, p. 1). The flexibility of such data collection methods has been noted by other scholars (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p 554; Pearson, et. al., 2015) who recognize that using multiple data sources increases its depth, and in turn, its credibility (Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2017). The flexible methods of data collection include, but are not limited to, “documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts” (Yin, 2017, p. 171). In addition, other means of data collection can include “films, photographs, and videotapes; projective techniques and psychological tests; proxemics; kinesics; ‘street’ ethnography; and life histories” (Yin, 2017, p. 171; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The case study is focused on depth and detail; integrating multiple data sources is a means “reaching a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied” (Baxter & Jack, 2015, p 554).

The qualitative methods of data collection in this study included interviews with individual interpreters (seven total), a focus group interview using collaging as a technique of “generating new knowledge” (Chilton & Scotti, 2014, p 164), document analysis of institutional documents from the university and the State Department of Rehabilitative Services, and artifacts.

I designed this study to provide a holistic understanding of the participants who worked in the program as the primary units for analysis. After receiving Institutional Review Board approval (IRB) (see Appendix A), I began recruiting my participants and collecting my data. I describe each of the methods below.

Interviews

I decided to conduct *individual* interviews because they allow researchers to “enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 2015, p 426). Researchers often use interviews in qualitative research to collect “detailed accounts of participants’ thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and knowledge pertaining to a given phenomenon” (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008, p 229). As a data source, interviews give inner perspectives of participants (Patton, 2015) and allow researchers to obtain data that observations of people cannot provide.

The interview protocol consisted of semi structured questions (see Appendix B). The interviews modeled narrative inquiry interviewing techniques where the researcher seeks to gain an understanding of the “life experiences as narrated by those who live them” (Patton, 2015, p. 434). Due to the nature of interpreting work, the stories the interpreters told often pertained to sensitive content about themselves, past assignments, and consumers served. I met with each participant in a private location where both of us would feel comfortable. These locations included private rooms in a library, a quiet coffee shop, inside one of the interpreter’s church, and an office. Six out of the seven individual interviews occurred in person. One interview happened over FaceTime since the participant lived in a different state. In total, I conducted seven individual interviews for a total of about 13 hours during a two-month period. Each interview lasted approximately one to two hours. I audio recorded and transcribed all interviews. During the interviews I took notes and after interviews I wrote analytic memos. During the transcribing process, I also wrote analytic memos to help me analyze data and identify and connect themes. I

provided participants the opportunity for member-checking to ensure accuracy and provide a space for participants to clarify any parts of their interview responses. Only one participant responded to add in a thought she had about one of her stories and provide a personal journal entry she wrote while interpreting.

The more interviews I conducted, I was able to learn from the previous interviews and adjust accordingly. For instance, I learned about disclosing my purpose for taking notes and asking more probing follow up questions after listening to the recordings of previous interviews. Some of the participants were distracted by my lack of eye contact if I was taking notes. In D/deaf culture and while using ASL, it is critical to maintain eye contact to ensure that successful communication is occurring. I noticed that once I broke eye contact to look down and take notes, this action would often cause the participant to stop speaking. I tried to explain the purpose of taking notes on a couple of interviews, but I still had issues with participants feeling they must wait until I had their attention before they continued. I finally decided to minimize my practice of taking notes in person and would only write notes over topics I wanted to revisit or any type of nonverbal cues that caught my attention. For the nonverbal cues, I would write what I saw and the time at which they occurred in the interview. For instance, one participant used the sign name of a person rather than disclose that person's name on the recording. I noted the sign and saw the time on the recording as a reminder of the pause or silence on the tape.

Since I am also a sign language interpreter, I found that the participants started to skip over details of their experiences because I had experienced similar situations. Instead of allowing this dismissal, I asked them to explain the details anyway. This is a step I was very thankful that I took because I wanted to get their perspectives on our profession and the mechanisms they used to be successful, not something that we assumed we understood in a similar way. It turns out, their words and descriptions helped guide to other questions and topics which helped illuminate more patterns and connections to other interpreters.

I tried to interfere with as few verbal and non-manual cues as possible. In my experiences with interviewing and the literature I have read, I have learned that interruptions can steer the conversation away from where the discussion may naturally go. I did give feedback to participants to let them know I was following or that I understood their comments, but I tried my best to stay out of the story so they could convey their experiences. The focus group interview had its own unique challenges and adjustments, which I discuss below.

Focus Groups and Collaging



Figure A. “Agent of Change”

I decided to conduct focus group interviews to fulfill the study’s goal of using multiple data sources to help understand the phenomenon. Focus groups provide “interactional data” as participants engage in discussion with one another “to increase the depth of the inquiry” (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008, p 229). When members of a group interact with one another such as commenting, questioning, or remembering an experience that seems similar to theirs, these interactions can provide additional “layers of data” not available in the individual interviews

(Lambert & Loisel, 2008, p 229). The focus groups also allow different types of information than other data sources provide. The interactional data from the focus group echoed the individual interviews and also added another rich layer of description of the interpreting environment at the university. The interpreters often work in teams; this means that two interpreters will be on the assignment and will trade after 15 or 20 minutes of interpreting work depending on the content of the assignment. The focus group was able to center all their questions and answers toward teaming experiences of the interpreters.

I set the parameters of the focus group to consist only of the active interpreters working on campus at the time of the interview. I invited four participants, but only three were able to come to the focus group. Since I scheduled the individual interviews first, I was able to ask all the interpreters at the end of their interviews if they would be willing to participate in the focus group interview. The focus group occurred in a room with a large table so the collaging activity (see Figure A—collage above) could take place there (see focus group protocol in appendix C). A striking difference between the focus group and individual conversation was the flow of the interview. In the focus group, I hardly had to ask questions or encourage conversation. The participants were able to maintain the conversation and follow avenues of thought that they felt were necessary. It was refreshing to see them take control in sharing their individual and group perspectives on interpreting, their work settings, and being professionals in the field.

On the day of the collage focus group, I provided snacks and refreshments. I also provided magazines, cardstock papers, scissors, and glue for the collaging exercise. The interview segment lasted for almost two hours and the collaging exercise and concluding discussion lasted around an hour. The focus group participants used spoken English during the interview, but the interpreters would occasionally use a sign to convey or emphasize a point they were trying to make. In my experience, interpreters who get together and discuss their work, at some point in time, will eventually use signing. Like code switching in spoken language, conveying some

concepts is easier through ASL than through English. However, for the most part, this particular interview was held in English with the ASL signs as a support when needed. The use of collaging in qualitative inquiry is an arts-based practice that can provide a way of “systemically identifying reoccurring themes and, in the process, gives form to ideas, intuitions, feelings, and insights that may escape rational thought processes” (Chilton & Scotti, 2014, p 164; Jongeward, 2009). As Chilton and Scotti (2014) point out, arts-based research methods have a way of “generating new knowledge” and “are especially effective for evoking and communicating social and emotional aspects of life” (p. 164).

At the end of the focus group interview, after a short break, we (the participants and I) started the collaging project. The goal of the collaging was to create an environment where the participants could participate equally while using something other than vocal dialogue to express themselves. The ASL field is a visual and overtly embodied field. By collaging, my intent was to provide an avenue for honest, unfiltered communication and expression of interpreters’ feelings toward their work. Based on personal experience, and the importance of visuals to ASL work, artistically representing what interpreting labor looks like helped me to comprehend and further analyze the work I perform. By intentionally trying to create and then explain an artist piece or journal entry, the participants explained their stories and experience in a different way because they are using a different medium to communicate.

To initiate the collage process, I verbally posed the question “What does it feel like to be an interpreter?”. We passed the magazines back and forth around the big table for about 45 minutes. In the beginning, the conversation was brief as the participants focused on searching through the magazines for images that appealed to them. After some time, conversation started, and once in a while the topic would focus on work or asking for advice on handling scenarios with D/deaf and hearing community members. The last 15 minutes we discussed our collages (see Figure A, C, D, and E). The collages produced a nonverbal representation of what it is like to be

an interpreter. The collages also served as a reflective process for the participants as they had to conceptualize and create meaning from the material.

Photographs of the collages are labeled Figure A, C, D, and E. The content of the collages consisted of a mix of pictures and words with some collages reflecting heavier use of words and phrases than others. Collage phrases include “you forget everything”, “I’m proud to be an interpreter”, and “Flexibility”. The images include waterfalls, outlines of heads, coffee, and a tissue box, to name a few. During the collaging process, the participants were able to work in silence and would engage in conversation sparingly. The participants’ actions reflected deep concentration and appeared to take the task seriously. When conversation occurred, it ranged from discussions about interpreting to everyday life. I also participated in the collaging exercise. It was peaceful to sit in that room with the interpreters and see them wrestle with the prompt and try to create their answers. At the end, when we discussed our collages, some responses were emotional, some were serious and matter of fact, some were reflective of their life work. The discussion reflected both laughter and tears.

With the collaging process and data, I learned something new from each of the participants that extended the individual interviews. Together, I learned that they were teaching the lessons they learned along the journey of becoming interpreters. The interpreting experience goes hand in hand with the lessons the interpreters were taught to cope with and be successful in this field. The women recognized important skills, like “thinking ahead” and “make eye contact”. They all conveyed the challenges of the work and coping with the demands of the body, environment, and culture. They included the need for resources such as energy or coffee or breaks recharge. They discussed how interpreters need to focus and attend to appearance. They included their motivation to stay in the field.

The process of collaging underscored that interpreters are internally experiencing their work and space on many levels. They fall back on their ethics to help guide them and learn from others to help keep them going. The interpreters are well aware of the difficulty of their tasks and the resulting toll on their body and mind. The tactics are there to survive and triumph in the field, but other factors outweigh their reasons for staying. Two of the three participants quit the field by the end of the semester when the study occurred.

Documents/Artifacts

Documents and artifacts served as additional data sources for the study. The artifacts and documents, drawn from naturalistic conditions, provide context and serve as sources of data. Documents are “any written or recorded materials not prepared for the purpose of the research or at the request of the inquirer” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 275). Examples of documents include public records, publications, reports, and program records. The formal documents I collected included the Code of Professional Conduct from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, from both the national and state level, the State QAST Ethical Standards and Levels of Limitations. The collection provided context to readers unfamiliar to the type of training the interpreters receive in their formal educational spaces, professional development, and how applying these principles play out in the work environment.

Documents can also consist of more personal records of the event such as diaries, private letters or emails, pictures, recordings, etc. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Collection of informal documents included participants’ diary entries and artifacts made during or before the study. Artifacts differ from documents because they are the “things that people make and keep for their own use that can provide insights into how they live and what they value and believe” (Norum, 2008, p. 25). Documents were checked for their credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1981), authenticity,

representativeness, and meaning (Fitzgerald, 2012). Multiple data sources are essential to providing a sense of the case in context.

COVID Alterations

The original design of the research sought to incorporate observations of the interpreters working at the university and have quick follow up discussions about interpreting or their thoughts after completing an assignment. The goal for observational data was “to describe in-depth and detail” and be naturalistic (as opposed to experimental, or laboratory-based), as they are taking place in the field (Patton, 2015, p. 332). The intention was to conduct the observations after the initial interviews so the participants could extend their interview comments or perhaps recall other points they could add about their work. I also intended to use observations to triangulate data sources to determine whether emerging themes are, in fact, empirically warranted. I also intended the observations as opportunities to collect lingering thoughts or experiences of the interpreters as well as to explore other contextual aspects of the case.

However, the study was stopped before I could conduct observations. I completed the interviews in early Spring of 2020 and scheduled all observations after the university’s spring break. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic conditions that emerged on the international landscape in early 2020, the university never returned to in person classes and only a few interpreters worked interpreting a couple of online classes. Since I could not complete all my observations of the study’s active interpreters, I decided to not incorporate observations. This is a limitation in my case study as conventional case study (Stake, 1995) relies heavily on observations to understand the context in depth and detail.

Enhancing Ethics and Research Quality

Designing the inquiry to pursue trustworthiness involves having credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981). Ways to improve credibility include selecting and designing an inquiry based on well-established research methods (Shenton, 2004). Other methods of increasing credibility included triangulation, researcher reflective commentary throughout inquiry, member checks of all data, and thick description of the phenomena in the case (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). The use of “overlapping methods”, such as using interviews and focus groups in one inquiry, increases credibility and dependability the study (Shenton, 2004, p. 71). Most importantly, confirmability of study occurs when the researcher ensures all steps necessary during the research and in the findings as the “result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher” (Shenton, 2004, p. 72).

Denzin (1978) describes components of triangulation for studies using multiple data sources. Using multiple data sources such as interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis was essential to the research because it was tied to helping holistically understand the case in depth and detail. This is a key component involved in increasing the validity of the study. Each data source collection has its limitations, and a way of reducing weakness or limitations to a data source is through the combination of multiple data collection procedures (Patton, 2015, p. 390). Multiple sources are brought together in this case study because “no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective of the program” (Patton, 2015, p. 290) Triangulating the data also lets us learn from integrating the data to provide critical information to understanding what is happening holistically at the site of the case study.

I considered my role as both researcher and professional interpreter in a specialized field carefully throughout the inquiry. Interpreters often know each other to varying degrees and work closely together or cross paths more briefly in interpreter assignments. Given the particularity of our skills, the interpreting community may know each other through their education, training,

conferences, and teaming situations. Gathering multiple data sources, member checking data, asking for reviews of the methodology and findings to check for rigor are some of the main steps I took to enhance the studies ethics, trustworthiness, and credibility. The constructionist epistemology and interpretivist theoretical perspective guide the framework of the design. Through the lens of this theoretical perspective, I approach the construction of knowledge through investigating how people interact and make meaning of their world (Crotty, 1998). The final product of the research inquiry is a descriptive depiction of the experiences of the sign language interpreters working for the services office at the university. Glesne (2016) reminds researchers to use theories to “illuminate” that theories can also “conceal” (p. 35). While I followed the framework of the study, I was as open and inclusive as possible to alternative explanations and stories that challenge the original framework.

Positionality

My role as an interpreter shaped my design of the study, data collection, and analysis because I knew the paucity of research on interpreters’ experiences and requests for more research. I lived that research from my perspective, and I believed seeking perspectives of other interpreters in higher education was vital for this important area of study. In addition, the case study methodology allowed me to move beyond individual experiences to focus on a holistic perspective to help situate the details of the environment the interpreters navigated. Since my role was a researcher and participant, during the data collection the interpreters were able to, in my perspective, provide details about their experiences without fear of repercussion because of our years of building trust and rapport.

Since I have membership to the group under study, I have what is called the “insider role status” (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 58). As Dwyer and Buckle (2009) explain, the insider status “frequently allows researchers more rapid and more complete acceptance by their participants”

(p. 58). There are “cost and benefits” to having either the insider or outsider positionality of a research study (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 57). The insiders position offers membership acceptance with the study’s participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009), However, as Adler and Adler (1987) caution, there can also be an issue with role conflict. However, Dwyer and Buckle (2009) present a different perspective on positionality that is not complete insider or outsider, rather it is the “insider-outsider” with the hyphen representing the space in between where qualitative researchers are not “true outsiders” or “complete insiders” because of our roles as researchers and what we epistemically and theoretically pursue in research (p. 61). In my study, because I researched a group in which I am a member, I am not completely like the members because I am researching and theoretically analyzing our shared member status, but I am not the outsider either because I am a qualitative researcher and therefore do not “retreat to a distant researcher role” (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 61). I occupy the space between.

Because of my role and my past experience in the profession I have been analyzing, I chose to expand on the research of the Job Demands-Resources model. If I have the data and run it through a specific model, will I only find what I am looking for? Will I only see what this model will give me? I felt that as a researcher I could have the awareness of sifting through data and using the model as a guide to find patterns. I found myself drawn into the stories and connected to each participant and the matters they were trying to portray. They wanted their stories to matter, and I used my perceptions as a researcher and participant of the field I was studying to sift the data to explicitly draw attention to what makes this field so hard and so great.

Ethical Considerations

From the outset of the study, I took precautions to ensure confidentiality, protect the participants, make sure they were fully aware of their rights, and ask for their consent to participate in the study. Before participants decide whether to join the study, I gave full disclosure

of the researcher's role. I invited the participants to ask any questions and discuss any potential concerns. I clearly stated to the participants before they consented to the study my employment status and level of experience in interpreting in hopes to build trust with them and reemphasize the confidentiality and voluntary nature of their prospective participation in the study.

All participants used pseudonyms in the study, and I withheld all identifying information in the final manuscript. Aligned with case study, I focused on integrating information across participants to focus on understanding the interpreters within the program holistically from participants' perspectives. This choice is also aligned ethically with preserving interpreters' anonymity in communicating perspectives that include personal information and critiques of institutional culture, policies, or practices. As noted previously, the research design incorporated member-checks of transcriptions to ensure the participants had the opportunity to clarify their responses or remove any information that does not accurately represent the meanings they wish to convey in the study.

Potential threats to the study's trustworthiness included the perceived relationships among the researcher and participants in working in a specialized relational and small field of labor. It is possible that the relationship strengthened and enhanced trustworthiness of the data (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). One reason my relationship might have enhanced trustworthiness is the comfort level the participants had with the researcher. I am one of them. I know their experiences first-hand. I understand their descriptions and the terminology they use. However, it is also possible that participants' familiarity had some limiting influence on their responses to interview questions. For instance, discussions of interpreting experiences involved students, staff, and other stakeholders who might be familiar to others in the study. Both the Quality Assurance Screening Test and Registry of the Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) holds sign language interpreters to high ethical standards, and one standard is confidentiality. Normally, when the interpreters need to discuss real-life situations about assignments to be reflexive and obtain feedback, interpreters

approach the discussion with the utmost respect and confidentiality. I maintained that confidentiality by not mentioning nor using specific names of students, professors, or staff members in my study.

The study modeled the principles interpreters use when they share information. When interpreters speak about consumers (both hearing and D/deaf) says “the D/deaf student” or “the hearing professor” in order to protect the confidentiality and provide minimal information to set the context to situate the other interpreter for productive dialogue. The study used similar methods of discussing sensitive information as a good faith step to ensure ethics. One approach for handling the focus group and confidentiality was to emphasize the goal of the research, keep the participants on track with the goal topics, and take into consideration that they may not feel comfortable participating.

Ethical issues did arise with the protection of the identity of the participants. Once the participants obtain the full document, they may be able to guess which participant/student was the topic of the theme/discussion. At this point, the I sought advice from fellow researchers and my advisor on how to approach the situation.

Analysis

Analytic Techniques

I used inductive analysis, coding, and theoretical lens of Job Demands-Resources to draw connections among and understandings of interpreters’ experiences working at the university. The analytic approach for the findings combines both content analysis and case study analysis. Using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the coding process began by developing concepts derived from the data through the process of simultaneously coding and

analyzing. The first phase of coding followed the open coding method described by Strauss and Corbin (2008) where the researcher compares data and keeps identifying/analyzing themes.

I first used the technique of transcription by listening to the recordings of all interviews and transcribed them myself. While transcribing, I hand wrote and typed additional notes about each interview. I did not wait long after each interview (1-2 weeks) to do the transcription. I did this so I could add observations I made, the feelings I had, and the notes I made during the interviews. At the completion of each transcription, I listened to the interview in full and made analytic memos about each interview to help start my coding and analysis. Thematic coding analysis is the “searching for themes and patterns” and was the first run of coding for segregating data into categories (Glesne, 2016, p. 184). The overall goal of thematic coding is to arrive at a “more nuanced understanding of some social phenomenon” (Glesne, 2016, p. 184). In this case study, the social phenomenon is the work of sign language interpreting at the case study site of the university. Through thematic coding, I gained an understanding of the interpreters’ perceptions of the social phenomenon under study. During the process of coding, I used a theoretical frame to elicit themes and categories. I then exceeded the bounds of the theoretical framework in my interpretation because more themes were coming to my attention than the original framework allows.

During the first reading of the data, the creation of the coding categories or classification system led to the indexing of the data. After multiple readings for both thematic and theoretical coding, the process of divergence and convergence coding occurred. Convergence coding is the step of figuring out where codes fit together (Patton, 2015, p. 554). Convergence coding looks for recurring patterns. Divergent coding also occurred in order to extend and bridge themes and possibly reveal new themes (Patton, 2015). Divergence coding also plays key role in finding the “deviant cases” that do not fit with already identified themes and patterns.

Immersion in the data allows for “identifying, organizing, and categorizing the content” and through case study analysis, the organization of the data “coherently tells the story of the case” of the purposefully sampled participants (Patton, 2015, p. 551). Through constant comparative coding, thematic coding, and theoretical coding the categories and subcategories of the data was compiled for analysis.

Validity/Quality Techniques that Align with Study

The validity or construct validity is the accuracy of the case, “reflecting the concepts being studied” (Yin, 2017, p. 227). The study sought to understand the lived experiences of sign language interpreters working at the collegiate level. The design of the study contains a theoretical lens of the Job Demands-Resources theory; investigating the occurrence of the phenomena outlined in the theory at the specific site. Since the findings of the data reflect concepts sought after from the beginning design phase, the study has validity in the sense that the case reflects the concepts of job demands and job resources.

The study sought triangulation of data sources by incorporating multiple methods of collecting data. Interviewing, observations, and focus group interviewing are all part of the types of qualitative data collection tools often used in research to achieve triangulation. Achieving a holistic view of the experience of interpreting at the university by researching with multiple potential data sets allows for many different parts to come together to construct the story of the case. Lastly, the participants and fellow researchers were given the opportunity to review the design of the study which helps to validate the study.

Limitations/Delimitations

The delimitations of a study include setting “research boundaries” that contains disclosing what the research is not addressing (Glesne, 2016, p. 213). Delimitations are the

decisions the researcher makes in the inquiry design. The delimitations can include “possibly relevant literature” that is not included, excluded informants, or “reasonably expected research methods” that are not being used in the study (Glesne, 2016, p. 213). The current study did not address all aspects of people involved with the interpreting process/experience. For instance, this research only includes perspectives from hearing interpreters who work at the university, and there are not any insights from D/deaf sign language interpreters nor research included in the literature review.

Additionally, the study does not include the perspectives of the D/deaf students attending the university. The D/deaf students could have provided valuable insights about their experiences with interpreters and their observations of how interpreters appear to handle the demands of interpreting and the resources provided to them. The hearing professionals who utilize interpreting services at the university are also not included in the scope of this study. In order to maintain an in-depth focus on the interpreting experiences and how the interpreting services run, the population did not include either professors or other personnel on campus who also interact with interpreters in an indirect way. Recruiting D/deaf students as participants could enhance the quality of future studies of interpreting programs at institutions of higher education.

The limitations of a study include factors that limit the research but “were beyond your control or perceived only in hindsight” (Glesne, 2016, p. 214). One notable limitation of the study is the timing of when the study occurred. During the Spring Semester of 2020, the world experienced a pandemic caused by a coronavirus. The infectious disease called COVID-19 spread around the United States in the Spring 2020 semester, during the middle of when this study was set to occur. All in person interviews were completed in early February, majority of formal documents, and a significant portion of informal documents and artifacts were able to be collected. However, few observations were completed because the university where the setting of this research was taking place closed and transitioned all of its classes to an online format.

Practically all interpreting assignments, which were scheduled to be observed, were canceled along with the transition. Continued data collection had to either transition to online formats or cease altogether per the sponsoring Institutional Review Board.

Chapter III Summary

In this case study methodology, the boundaries of the case are defined by criteria of setting like time, place, and focus of inquiry. Since the case study is driven epistemologically by constructionism, the goal of the study was to gather meaningful interpretations of the participants lived experiences. The study used purposeful sampling techniques. The data sources for the case consisted of interviews, focus group interviews, observations, formal policy/procedures documents, and informal documents. Due to the specialized nature of the field and the sensitivity of work experiences, I took extra care to enhance the ethics and quality of the research.

Some delimitations of the study are those who are not participants who could provide valuable insight to the interpreting services. Since the focus is solely on interpreters and their experiences, it is not within the scope of this study to seek the other potentially enlightening perspectives on the process. Future research can incorporate the other perspectives (D/deaf students, professors, staff members of the university) to further understand the holistic system and experience of working with or utilizing services from sign language interpreters.

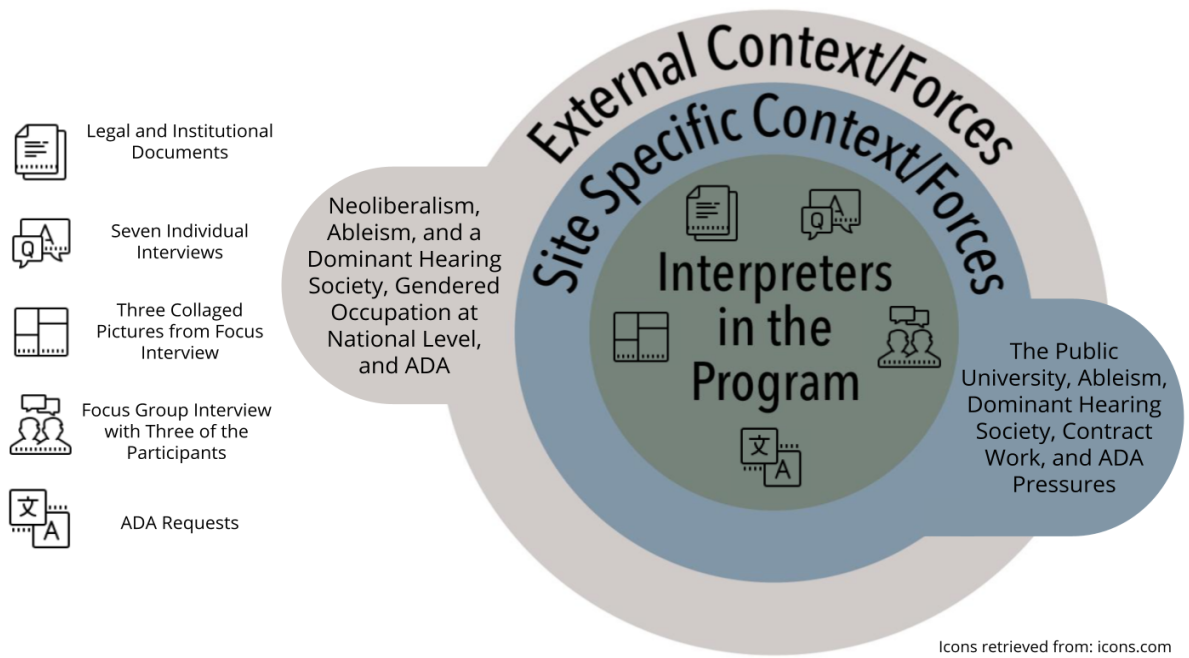


Figure B. Visualizing the Study

CHAPTER IV

INTERLUDE

Collegiate Interpreting

Drawing from each individual participant's responses as well as my own experiences, I constructed the following vignette to provide an understanding of the day-to-day experiences of interpreters at the university. The narrative draws from data directly from my experiences as an interpreter as well as data from the study. While drawing from many interviews and anecdotes, I chose to use the first-person perspective in this vignette to represent the collective experience of interpreters. I grappled with how to represent the collective voice. The idea occurred to me that using the first-person perspective made the most sense and reflected how the interpreters originally told their stories. I heavily draw from interviews, but I also incorporate the focus group's collages. At the end of this vignette, the collages that narrators created are attached.

Wednesday

Depending on the day, I arrive at work in enough time before my 8:30 or 9:00 am class so I can mentally and physically prepare myself for the day ahead. I search for my earbuds. The music helps me to focus throughout the day and provides a mental escape, a moment to myself. The music soothes me. I clutch my coffee and bag as I walk to my first class.

With music softly humming in my ears to help clear my mind, I reach into my bag to grab my heating pad to wrap around my arms. I also see the giant tube of Icy Hot cream, pain medication, eyedrops, my lunch, some snacks, my notebook for feedback, books, and my phone

charger. Some days I actually carry another black shirt with me in case I need to change. Sometimes I interpret labs that have an assortment of chemicals, ink, animal byproducts, and rock dust that I just prefer to change instead of smell like a barn animal who got into a chemical supply closet. If I forget the pain medication or heating wrap, I can only stretch to help me work out my soreness and warm up my muscles for the long day ahead. The music warms up my brain, the heating pad warms my muscles, and the coffee warms up my soul. All are needed to get through this day.

I drink my coffee.

I am breathing deeply to enjoy the brisk air. Soon I feel the heat of the chemicals from the Icy Hot on my arm that are trying to soothe and relax parts of my body that my entire job relies on. Wrist and elbows make most of the complaints throughout the day. The rival bother tends to be The Forearms.

I arrive early intentionally. I want to take the time to use the restroom and wash my hands of any lingering pain cream that may be on them. I also need the extra time to start on the end-less quest to locate my "Interpreter's Chair" which even though says is just for me, The Interpreter, it has a tendency to travel into different locations that makes me think that chair is not just used by me. Ah, it is right where it needs to be! I do not have many breaks in the morning, so I enjoy my coffee and my music as I set up my workspace. I set down my bag, place my coffee and water within arm's reach, and wait until the D/deaf student arrives. When the student walks in, I neatly tuck away my earbuds.

The class begins. The class ends. The next starts.

Back-to-back. All day.

Some days I am done just before 5:00 pm but other days, I am on campus for 12 hours or more. Depending on the day or the schedule, I may not have many breaks throughout the day. Some days I might have 1-to-2-hour breaks where others the only break I get is on my way from one class to the next. This is where the music helps. Songs fill my ears as I make my way to the next class. My routine is to put in the headphones as soon as I'm sure the student doesn't need me. I march on to the next class. Music brings me hope as my ears and mind are allowed to absorb rather than process, my arms allowed to lightly sway and relax instead of constantly move to produce meaning.

Even though my schedule is crazy now, I know that it may change at the end of the semester. Everything has to be flexible. I may work more hours or less. That's what happens when you work as an independent contractor. You may never know how much your income may change at any moment. The change in schedule, scenery, and space is also one of the best parts of the job. I also look forward to when students need me to attend a meeting with their club, office hours, or they want to attend a school play. It gives me extra hours, yes. But it also gives me a chance to see or do something different. Something I haven't done just yet. I don't even mind working on the weekends. I get the extra hours at overtime rate to make up for what I may lose during the week. The weekends seem to provide the most adventure, too.

I look at my schedule, trying to memorize the packed day I have. This is the third, no... fourth change to the schedule and we just started the second week of school. I look at the new classes and rub my temple. I am not sure how I will be able to brace myself for this. I know to expect the shuffle. The students change their schedule and supervisors switch interpreters into those classes. This is always a challenge to me. I stare again at the schedule as I realize I am walking the wrong direction to class. Now I will have to wait to eat my granola bar until the next class when I am walking across campus. I am reminded by the professor in my next class that my

upcoming weekend will be dedicated to interpreting a field trip. I write the reminder in my phone and tell myself to try to squeeze in time to call a babysitter on my way to the next class.

I finally arrive to the next class. I finally have a team—not just me. It is 1:30 pm and I have already interpreted 4 classes. This is one of those classes that both the topic and the professor are a challenge. My head is pounding already, so having to advocate and maneuver around this professor is not what I want to deal with. Thankfully, my team takes the lead to make sure we have access to the course materials and the videos are all captioned. I hear her respond to the professor's request that "No, we can't just interpret the movie or video, no matter if it is 5 minutes or 45 minutes long". I wonder if this professor received the accommodations letter? I am not sure. Maybe this is why the professors are always confused and do not know who to talk to besides us, the ones in their classroom. Regardless, the terms in this PhD level Science course this late in the afternoon are almost too much to handle, but the team makes all of this bearable. I look to her for help and she is right there. My other set of eyes, hands, head... without this team it would be impossible to take a breath in this class.

Finally, it's over! The first part of my day is done and now I get a lunch break. My team comes with me. My body relaxes as it is the first time all day that I get to communicate using English. I get the low down on her day. She explains some issues she is having with a student and then on top of that the professor is being extremely accommodating with a very agitated student. She also tells me about issues she is having with our supervisor. Again. This struggle is constant with all of us. Even though our supervisor is also an interpreter, she is far removed from the needs of the other interpreters. My team was trying to ask for time off to go to a doctor's appointment. She was told no because no substitutes could be found. The appointment was one month away. Now she has to reschedule. Again.

With the little time left on my break, I pull out my journal. I need to know about signs that I was able to jot down from earlier classes. We look online, but sometimes that doesn't turn out a good result. Instead, I really rely on other interpreters. We share our past experiences and connections to help sort out the signs and concepts that I tried to produce earlier in the day when I did not have a team. One concept and the surrounding explanation stumps her, and she jokingly remarks "This wasn't in those 25 books I read". We move on to discuss an ethical situation that came up in one of her morning classes. The professor pulled her aside to ask personal questions about the D/deaf student while the D/deaf student was not there. It was as if the professor thought she was also the D/deaf student's mother and psychiatrist. She quickly had to explain the role of the interpreter and allude to the inappropriate nature of that question. I had one for her as well. Earlier that morning, I had a group of students saying random animal signs so they could watch me sign them and then copy every sign that I made. Both incidents were equally annoying.

It's time. Time for the next class. Time to put my game face on.

As we both walk toward our separate classes, the other interpreter gets a text saying her D/deaf student is not going to their class. That changes the schedule. She could just take the hour break; her day is as full as mine. Instead, she comes to team with me. I am thankful for her resolute support. I get to practice, have live feedback, and make greater connections to my work and the D/deaf students when I have that support of a team. They will be there for any mistake and every victory. I powerfully maneuverer new techniques I am learning, pushing my boundaries to see how I can render the concepts for a meaningful educative experience. The D/deaf student intently watches me, and I see comprehension on her face. Success! It's time to switch with my team. I relay the gargantuan finger spelled words when needed and marvel at her ability to create a visual landscape with this incredible language. I truly grow each time I see her hands move. It's times like these where I am proud to be an interpreter and I know I was meant to do this.

On to the next class. I say goodbye to my team.

I refill my water bottle. I think I need to drink more water. I make a mental note on when I can spare the time to run to the bathroom. I will have to check later. When I have a team, that is when I can drink a lot of water and I will have enough time to use the bathroom. I checked my watch and I have three extra minutes to use the bathroom! I linger at the sink when washing my hands. The hot water relaxes me, and I look at the mirror. I see the typical look I have grown accustomed to since I accepted this job. The body in the mirror is wearing black clothes to contrast with the white skin. No jewelry except the wedding ring and a watch. The bag on this body outwardly symbolizes the other life that weighs in on my shoulders. The graduate student life takes up the other half of my energy. The hot water streams to an uncomfortable temperature but serves its purpose of calming down the muscles that understand what is about to be asked of them. I move my spine until it pops, my knuckles crack, arms loosening up, breathing under control, and my mind clears up.

I think I have a massager. Did I buy that? Yes, I bought that. I haven't used it yet. Yeah, I need to do that. My neck is stiff. I'm starting to get tired.

When I am walking around campus, I like to look at other students sometimes. I feel for them, empathize with them, I was an undergraduate student in their shoes a few years before. I worked full-time then, too. I know what it is like to constantly worry about school and work. I started to think about it... almost all the other interpreters know this feeling. We went to school and interpreted at the same time. We know that bounce back and forth from our classes to their classes to our classes to theirs. We used our breaks and what little energy we had left to balance these extra demands of attending school and working.

Now it's time for my favorite class. It's not the content that makes it my favorite. It's the D/deaf student. He makes what I do a joy. He is pleasant to be around, teaches me new signs,

forgives my mistakes, and I can truly relax as I feel like I do not need to be perfect. I wish this wasn't a three-hour night class, though. The amount of energy spent today cannot be balanced out by the amount of coffee I was able to consume. One more round of the minty smell of the pain reliever cream and a visit to the bathroom to wash away the excess. With my earbuds in, I listen to one of the most relaxing songs I know. No words. I don't want to process more language than I have to at this point in my day. Rubbing my shoulder, I remember how little the KT tape the chiropractor gave me helped my muscles. I leave for class. I hope I miraculously get a brain boost.

The end of my day. It is 9:30 pm. At last, it's time to walk back to the car. I get to see my family. The 8 am Engineering class seems to be a distant memory now. My body and mind have lasted another day. I interpreted eight classes total, my worst day of the week. My brain feels fatigued and my arm is stinging from overuse. I feel the pulsing of my eyes, hunger, and the sear in the back of the head from using over 22 brain processes at once for hours. I consider asking my supervisor again for more support by hiring more interpreters to work on campus. As an experienced interpreter herself, she should know the stress our bodies and minds go through on a daily basis. I push the thought aside. The last time I asked, I was belittled and humiliated.

Almost to my car, I should start parking closer to where my last class of the day is instead of near my first class.

I was asked once how I balance school, work, and family. My eyes are dry and itchy as I think of this question while walking in the cool, calm night. I want to draw more boundaries, I worked only 20 hours one week and then the next I worked upwards of 60 hours. Back when I was an intern and novice interpreter, I never got this many hours. I was also a full-time student. Some of the interpreters are able to draw that line and say no to the supervisor for the overwhelming

number of hours they work. They can say no and put other aspects of their lives first. I need more time to myself and family. But I know that if I get more work life balance, I get less income.

My eyes aren't dry anymore.

But I've worked too hard to give up now.



Figure C. "I was meant to do it"

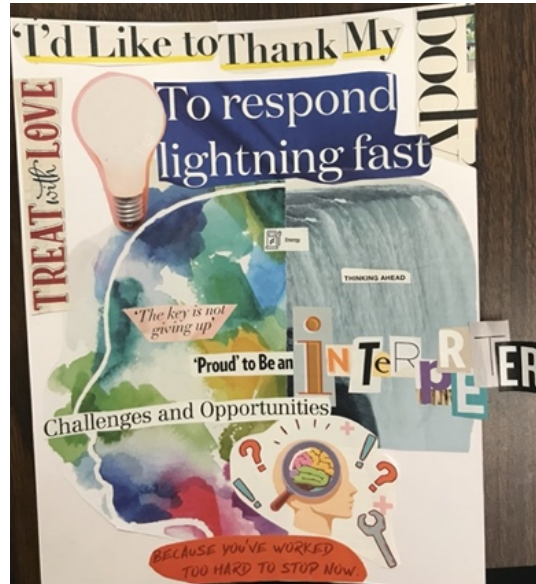


Figure D. "Proud to be an Interpreter"

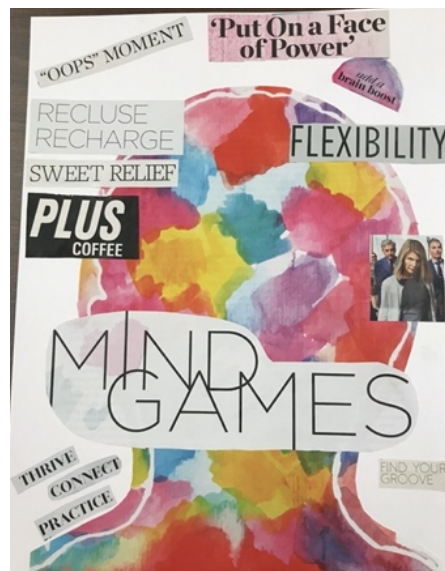


Figure E. "Thrive, Connect, Practice."

The interpreting body at work has to forget the other bodies it is, at least that is the case for the interpreters in the study. However, the lack of interpreters in the state who are willing to take on the task of university interpreting makes it clear this profession is taxing. Many do not see interpreters as skilled professionals that are critical in the creation and maintenance of conducting

language and access. Instead, people outside the profession view interpreters as a tool. Interpreters from the study feel misunderstood, unsupported, and their needs unmet. Without taking their experiences seriously, and other interpreters in various settings, there will be less professionals available. With more research into the interpreting body, practices can change to give more respect to the physical burden of transmitting one language to another.

By the completion of this project, two of the four active interpreters participating in the study quit interpreting. While they were full time interpreters during the interviewing process and their responses reflect that employment status, by the end of the semester, both had decided to move on from the field.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

Introduction

The current study aims to understand the sign language interpreters working at a specific program at a public university through their lived experiences as workers. Knowing more about the interpreters, their experiences in the field, and their stories about the factors that helped them succeed or led to attrition creates a more holistic picture of this type of work in this setting. Getting a glimpse of interpreting in this environment can advance research knowledge and reveal the importance of organizational structures for positioning interpreters as well as interpreters' support structures. I describe the setting, which is a dominant hearing environment, on page 58 of this document.

This chapter will present the findings of my case study. Through individual and focus group interviews, each of the seven individual interpreters provides information about the bounded case of their experiences as workers within the program. The interpreters' experiences reveal insights into both structural and cultural components of the case within the program and the institution. To provide context to the case, the major findings are presented holistically. I will discuss the overarching themes in the remainder of the chapter.

The findings of the case study are drawn from the data collected from the following research questions:

1. How do participants describe their working experiences and perceptions of interpreting at a public university?
2. What are interpreters' perceptions of the institutional culture and contextual factors?
3. What insights into culture and context do interpreters' experiences reveal?

My primary analytic approach was inductive analysis focused on understanding the case in depth and detail, as Stake (1995) describes is characteristic of case study research. I noted this in Chapter 3. In addition, another resource I used for making meaning is the Job Demands-Resources Theory. While this model is not the only frame that guided my analysis, it helped me flesh out how interpreters navigate their work environment using an existing model as a touchstone. The JDR model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) identifies that certain demands of a job relate to the “physiological and psychological costs” and means of balancing out those demands include resources and support given to employees for their work environments (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 312). Evidence of this framing appears in the sections below. Using the JDR model to identify demands and resources specific to the interpreters within the program, I then analyzed the strain and motivation the interpreters experienced.

Along with the model, I identified significant cultural and structural factors of the university environment that, when identified through interpreters' narratives, reveal broader implications about this case environment relevant to interpreters' work. Situating the findings in the field of Social Foundations, I teased out how the interpreting program's structure and culture played out in the interpreters' overall job experience. Along with those themes, I identified how ableism and interpreting as a gendered profession had implications on this case. I discuss the implications of these findings in Chapter VI.

Major Themes: The Case

Major themes from the data are presented by focusing on the case within its surrounding context. The focus is on understanding the case in-depth and detail best pictured as the center of three concentric circles. The outside ring is the external context and forces in which the case is situated and shape the case. These include mainstream social and cultural views of interpreting and disabilities and the characteristics of interpreting as a profession. If visualized as a concentric circle (see Figure B), the second layer, or ring, is the site-specific context and forces. This is the culture and context of the university in which the program is situated. The last and innermost circle are the interpreters within the program and the data they revealed through their experiences. The group of interpreters are the core focus of the analysis in this chapter. The setting of the case, as discussed in chapter 3 is a public university that serves a range of 10 to 25 D/deaf students over a few years (see page 58). The setting has been described and has context specific features. The university is also a healthy size university which plays into the number of D/deaf students and interpreters who are present on campus. These components reveal insights about cultural, social, structural, historical, and philosophical factors shaping the case. I will return to these factors in Chapter 6. Here I focus on 6 themes.

Case Findings

- 1) Little Understanding about ASL Interpreters' Work: The Hearing University Environment
- 2) Structure and Roles Shaping Interpreters' Work
- 3) Embodied Demands: Unique Nature of the Job
- 4) Challenge of Meeting the Diversity of D/deaf Students Needs
- 5) Culture of Focused but Stretched Resources
- 6) Vision and Change for Meaningful Work

Finding 1: Little Understanding about Interpreters' Work (and D/deaf Students) in the Hearing University Environment

“But in our situation at the university, we have a ton of consumers who have no idea what D/deaf people do or what interpreters do.” - (participant).

Interpreters serve D/deaf students within a dominant hearing environment in the United States and the university institution in which the program functions. This is the organizational structure and culture in which they work. Interpreters' interviews reflect their constant navigation between the hearing and D/deaf worlds. There are higher education institutions in the United States, such as Gallaudet University, with a majority of students, staff, and administration that are D/deaf. The university where the research took place serves a predominantly hearing population and reflects an orientation to ableism (Bogart & Dunn, 2019). An ableist structure and culture takes many forms. At the cultural level, it results in practices and mores oriented around bodies and needs that reflect dominant norms—those who are deemed or perceived as able-bodied. It also results in the steady dismissals of, and discrimination against, those who do not belong to the assumed ‘norm.’ The dominant norm in this case is a hearing majority. Structures in such an environment reflect the medical model of disability that sees disability as an individual's pathology or difference and the solution would be to “cure” the individuals of these abnormalities to reach the goal, normalization (Olkin & Pledger, 2003). Needs and services primarily oriented to serving an assumed able-bodied population.

As a result, there is little understanding of the nature of interpreters' work in serving the needs of D/deaf students. From the perspective of my interviews, the needs of interpreters and D/deaf students do not enter awareness or are dismissed entirely. Interpreters described common interactions with faculty, staff, and administration who were unaware of the needs of D/deaf students and those who work with them. These experiences provide contextual information about the case and interpreters' unwritten job expectations within this dominant hearing environment.

For interpreters, their job involves the professional interpreting work as well as the daily grind of teaching other hearing people about their field and the people they serve.

Environment in which Majority are Hearing and Minority are D/deaf

When most university community members are hearing, they do not think of the aural role of campus life or frequently interact with the minority D/deaf community. The participants point out how often both the interpreters and D/deaf students educate campus employees or students about their basic needs. For faculty and staff, it is neither automatic nor understood that D/deaf students' access to the class and effective learning depend on employees meeting particular learning conditions. Interpreters report misunderstanding, confusion, or active dismissal of their professional needs in working to serve the needs of D/deaf students.

Access and the Classroom.

As my interlude (Chapter IV) indicated, interpreters commonly hurried between buildings and encountered a range of different physical circumstances. They reported little time to situate themselves. Their accounts reflected little instructor awareness of the importance of interpreters' placement in the classroom or ensuring interpreters had accommodations at all. For example, one interpreter described how "the professor was just adamant that I was in the way." After explaining both the student's needs and her needs as a professional, the professor still resisted her placement in the room. Seeing interpreters and subsequently D/deaf students as a nuisance is one example of the small and pervasive acts of ableism in this context.

Placement in the room can also change depending on class activities that day and the needs of the student. In most settings, the interpreter works to facilitate communication between one hearing and one D/deaf person. However, in the university setting, the interpreter might facilitate language between many people at once as students engage in group work or participate in a large lecture. There could be one or multiple D/deaf students in a classroom. The interpreters also have the hearing consumer to serve, and, as one interpreter in this study commented, "the

hearing consumer isn't always just one person, it more often than not is an entire classroom of 20, 30, or even 100 hearing people". Yet, interpreters note that few faculty or staff are aware of this complexity.

They also commented on aspects of the built environment central to their work. Multiple interpreters mentioned the hardship of locating a chair for them to sit in and "make sure nobody moved them outside of the classroom." The designated chair is labeled as "Interpreter's Chair," but others commonly take the chairs or move them into different locations. When considering a built environment like that of a dominant hearing centric campus, those who have visual and hearing needs that differ from the norm may have unmet needs.

Further, a review of documents and interpreter data reveals little consistent or visible information about D/deaf students in this university context for faculty and staff to access. This likely shapes the context in which the program is situated, and the amount of extra 'teaching' and navigating work interpreters have to do. For example, a university website gives information on including D/deaf students in the classroom environment, best practices for speaking in class and speaking to D/deaf students. The website also gives instructions on how to offer captions to videos and lectures. It includes a segment with information about interpreters and appropriate ways to interact with interpreters. The website notes that "the interpreter is a tool... much like a pencil or a computer and will remain impartial."¹ Professors are instructed to speak directly to the D/deaf student while "ignoring the interpreter."

The office also provides official accommodation letters. The office tailors each letter to the D/deaf student's needs. If the student needs multiple accommodations, they will be stated in the letter. However, once the student is in the classroom, the experience will rely heavily on the professor's understanding of the needed accommodations stated in the letter.

The Under-informed Professor.

¹ This is a common description of interpreters on other websites, as well.

Accounts reveal interpreters' work to juggle this lack of information among hearing members of the university. For instance, the interpreters commonly needed to "teach" about the nature of student needs to faculty by explaining their accommodations. The interpreters also had to advocate for themselves, the students, and frequently direct faculty and staff to resources. For example, one interpreter remarked, "I was hoping that [the professors] would get educated by whatever mechanisms were supposed to be in place to tell them about how to use an interpreter and how not to use an interpreter. It's frustrating." These frustrations reflect a common pattern with issues in working with hearing professors.

The professor's lack of information and awareness of interpreters' work can put the interpreter in a predicament. One professor put an interpreter on the spot and made jokes at her expense. She stated: "I really found it frustrating that the professional in the room didn't seem to get that I was a professional." Some professors did not handle interpreters' presence in the classroom well and made assumptions about the interpreter's role in the educational access for D/deaf students. Like the previous comment, they would also assume that interpreters were not professionals performing a crucial university task. Other inappropriate comments about the D/deaf student's performance in class, the youth of the interpreters, and the interpreter's abilities were all highlighted as frustrating moments for the women.

There were some exceptions to professors' limited awareness of interpreters and D/deaf needs. Sometimes they served as resources to accessing content and creating an environment that fostered learning and equality for the D/deaf students and interpreters. One interpreter noted,

A good professor is one that's like "Yes! How can we work together as a team for me to both teach and you interpret for this D/deaf student?" And to have access to communication, have closed captions. They find a good place for me to set up.

Those professors will ask the interpreters how best to work with them and continuously check-in to see whether adjustments are necessary for their teaching style or materials used in class.

Professors' Course Materials and Pedagogy.

The inaccessibility of course materials shaped the interpreter's work and thus, the student's access. Professors allowed classroom conditions that were inaccessible for the D/deaf student because their resources were not inclusive. Interpreters reported the wide range of visual communications that the University does not adequately caption for D/deaf students. This includes videos for televisions set up in the student common areas on campus, video messages sent by upper administration, and video content in the classroom. Although laws require captioning, it is not the norm to turn on the captioning on televisions.

When discussing challenges about the interpreting environment, the first comment one interpreter made was that "an issue across so many boards, is the issue with closed captions." Almost every interpreter commented on issues with video captioning during class. They experienced either a lack of captioning or problems with the captions. Closed captioning "displays the audio portion of a television program as text on the TV screen," and the Federal Communications Commission requires that captioning be "accurate, synchronous, complete, and properly placed" (Closed Captioning on Television, 2021). Faculty who do not prepare the captions will ask interpreters to translate entire videos or films and assume that this is a reasonable request. If videos are captioned, there are professors who will not "proofread the captions," and the interpreter will have to interpret the video for accuracy.

Another challenging environment an interpreter faced was working in the dark. One professor expected interpreters to work in the dark or hold instructional information for the D/deaf student until the lights were turned on again.

There are certain accommodations a student needs, so one specific class with a student like they're moving around the room the whole time or they had to change the light levels so that they could see stuff, but a D/deaf student can't see me, the interpreter when the room is dark. So, we had to figure out what's a good balance. The professor just did not

want to even try. He's like, 'the lights are off. Good luck. You can interpret after the lights turn back on.'

In this narrative, the professor refused to consider creative solutions to the issue and asked the interpreters to retain the information until the lights were on again. Interpreting an entire lecture's worth of content in the few brief minutes the lights were on made it nearly impossible for the interpreters to provide D/deaf students to access information adequately.

A related aspect of the interpreters' experience is staff and faculty's common lack of knowledge of the university resources available for D/deaf students and the scope of ASL interpreters' roles. Some seem unfamiliar with or unwilling to utilize the resources on campus. The university has an entire department dedicated to captioning.

Along with the caption issues, some professors "talk extremely fast," and the interpreters have "talked to professor [to ask if they] can slow down or try not to mumble that formula really fast... I can't catch it." Because students can have a range of hearing, not all people who may rely on captioning will have an accommodation letter. Students, faculty, or staff who are D/deaf or hard-of-hearing might rely heavily or entirely on captioned content. Also, during class lectures, D/deaf students and interpreters need to have visual accessibility. As one interpreter described, "[I need] to be located in the classroom so [the D/deaf student] can see both me and the professor or me and the PowerPoint or me and whatever other information they are getting".

Interpreters' accounts reflect everyday struggles to navigate the broader lack of knowledge about D/deaf realities and interpreters' work that shapes the dominant hearing environment and the program in which interpreters work. The university is a dominant hearing space, equipped to provide those with the full ability to hear with an education. The non-inclusive practices point toward implicit ableism that is persistent in this higher education setting. The experiences of each interpreter convey aspects of their daily work and examples of cultural and

institutional barriers. While there were professors, hearing students, or staff members who were aware and accommodating, they were the exception rather than the rule.

Finding 2: Structures and Roles Shaping Interpreters' Work

Organizational Structure

The role and positioning of interpreters in the program and university under study makes them a unique category of worker in this system. The field of sociology includes a focus on organizational structures and work roles relevant to this finding. There are two types of positions held by interpreters at the university: permanent full-time staff or temporary independent contractors. They are rarely permanent employees. Interpreters experience complexities in this space that seem to result from the institutional network of service entities in which the program is situated, their roles as contract workers, and their pathway for training at the institution. Also, it is noted in the literature that the interpreting field is dominated by women, primarily white women (Woodall-Greene, 2019). It is also, like nursing and education, a gendered profession. Feminist researchers have studied the varied implications of gendered occupations (e.g., Kang, 2010).

Similarly, the gendered occupational component has implications for the interpreters as they struggled to negotiate their space and power to move within this program, the pay they received, their ability to access permanent positions, and the examples of neglect and disrespect of their skills that are typical of gendered professions (Boni-LeGoff & Le Feuvre, 2017). The institutional interpreting program is located at the university under an office focused on student services but acquired interning interpreting students through the ASL classes offered within an academic department elsewhere on campus. The office responsible for taking care of the students with disabilities on campus is the hiring entity for the independent contractor interpreters. Interpreters must navigate both within and across each of these units.

Independent Contracting: Temporary Workers

Interpreters report varied experiences that relate to their institutional positions. Almost all interpreters who serve D/deaf students in this university settings work on a contract. These contracts range in length from one course to multiple courses throughout the semester. This means that the contractors do not work directly for the university in permanent jobs with benefits and roles; they are instead hired and managed by a services office as needs arise. One staff position in the office handles the coordination of the contracted interpreters. D/deaf students who registered with the office will fill out an interpreting request form with a course schedule. The office will assign interpreters to the courses and provide a schedule with the class details.

The independent contractor is the most common role for interpreters in this institution. Few full-time interpreting staff positions have been available over the years. Like other contract workers (Malos, et al., 2018), interpreters noted the lack of support or benefits to their jobs. During the focus group interview, the women discussed their desires to have more institutional support and enjoy more privileges like full-time employees. One interpreter said, “It would be great if the university would allow us to access the counseling services as a perk to working here.” Other benefits include access to the wellness center and scheduled lunch breaks. The interpreters understand their limited access to break spaces and health resources because of their position relative to the program and university at large. They also recognize their particular line of physical work warrants extra support, which could greatly benefit from access to places dedicated to their well-being.

This independent contracting position relates to the lack of security and empowerment the women felt in their jobs. The interpreters were aware of their vulnerability and powerlessness such temporary job creates, even though they are highly skilled workers. The feeling the interpreters describe in their work environment connects to the gendered role they occupy. The role of the independent contractor is also common in the current neoliberal context which render workers vulnerable and thus gendered feminine. The university may not hire enough full-time

interpreters to cover the needs of its D/deaf population. In another perspective, independent contracting is a flexible way to fill the interpreting requests by a varying number of students with fluctuating needs. Still, interpreters reported feeling defenseless in this position both because of the type of position and because one office held the power and decision making over the interpreters' schedule, hours, pay, and ultimately their income, in this institutional role. All of the workers in this program, in a larger female dominated profession, were women.

Distinctive Job Demands

The independent contractor position produces specific demands on the interpreters due to the structure of the role. Demands of a job are not inherently negative. Demands become negative when inadequate resources are provided to offset the demands. For instance, workload can create demands for an employee while also providing fulfillment and engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). When workload changes to chronic overload on the employee, that's when the demand has the potential to become a strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Other examples of a job's demands include "high work pressure, an unfavorable physical environment, and emotionally demanding interactions with clients" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 312). Interpreting is a specialized profession requiring years of experience, as noted previously. The hiring and training of contractors that resulted in few contractors to share the course load and the varying skill levels of available interpreters are examples of the structural demands shaping interpreters' experience. Yet, despite their specialized skills, interpreters felt very little agency in advocating for better working conditions in this context.

Job strain can develop when job demands are not countered with adequate resources, such as breaks, teams for interpreting, and adequately trained and available interpreters. Job strain often occurs from "poorly designed jobs" that create an environment with "chronic job demands (e.g., work overload, emotional demands)" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 313). The strain can

“exhaust employees’ mental and physical resources and therefore lead to the depletion of energy (i.e., a state of exhaustion) and to health problems” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 313; Demerouti et al., 2000; 2001a, 2001b). The interpreters’ accounts about the details and results of the demands revealed different types of strain labeled into the following subthemes.

Scheduling Inconsistencies and Resulting Pressures.

“I don’t have control over the schedule. So, if I don’t get a lot of hours there’s not a whole lot I can do about it. Even if I ask for extra work, I may not even get it. Somebody else might get it.” – (participant)

The number of hours interpreters will work at the university depends on the semester, the number of D/deaf students enrolled, and other obligations that limit their availability. These institutional features shape interpreters’ working experiences. While working full time is not necessarily a demand, the interpreters discussed the time span of their working hours, which, at times, became taxing for them. Multiple interpreters brought up institutional issues with scheduling and their struggles to negotiate their schedules. The demands the interpreters identified differ from those of other positions because the type of laborious task they perform. The main reoccurring patterns interpreters reported included inconsistency in hours, feeling overworked, resistance to requests for time away from work, and lack of built-in breaks necessary to recover from the physical toll the work of interpreting takes on their bodies.

Commenting on the lack of control both in the hours and the type of classes in which they worked, one interpreter described how the scheduling had “no consistency whatsoever,” and they had to “really adapt and learn flexibility.” Neoliberalism champions the “flexible” work roles like Uber driving, and this flexibility has both positive and negative features (Malos, 2018). The lack of agency in choosing their schedule undermined their say in utilizing their skills or strengths that would be best suited for particular students or courses. Even though they are “independent”

contractors, the interpreters often received schedules without any input in the decision-making process.

Insufficient Breaks.

Most interpreters mentioned the issue of a lack of breaks. The interpreters packed a full day's worth of food, kept "snacks with [them] at all times," and would be "eating while walking" to the next class. By not scheduling breaks, time for lunch, and adequate time to recover, as one interpreter stated, it is "not good for the D/deaf student because they are getting an interpreter that's not got the energy which means they are not using their whole brain." Other practical life issues to which interpreters needed to attend, including using the restroom or making a personal phone call, were challenging with such limited time available between classes.

A common trend that interpreters discussed was "going from class, to class, to class." One described a recent semester as "straight all-day interpreting...and I don't think I was the only interpreter who had that." She was not the only interpreter to have that experience. As another interpreter explained, the typical schedule had multiple classes without breaks.

We have been talking about like individual classes, but the reality is that we are usually going from one class to the next class for at least a block of time. And there's the physical and mental fatigue with that. And as you get later in the day, even if you have a night class, then you are exhausted. But you still have a whole other day the next day, and you have a whole week.

As she points out, the schedule is physically and mentally demanding. Too few interpreters to cover assignments also does not allow interpreters to take necessary breaks for self-care.

The relentless nature of the work and schedule had corporeal strains (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Work expectations could mean interpreting all day without a team, which is an

essential resource the interpreters identified. Most of the interpreters were unable to sustain that workload level. As this interpreter concludes, the consequence of the intense schedule at this university “was pretty mentally exhausting.... you made a lot of money, but you were working too many hours. Mentally you couldn’t sustain any of that.”

Unreliable Days Off.

“The expectation was that you did not take days off... And so, you wear yourself thin.” – (participant)

One extreme demand was the overt and felt expectation that interpreters could not take days off or stay at home when they were sick. When the semesters are extremely busy and few teams are available, the interpreters felt pressured to work regardless of the state of their health. Without a steady supply of substitutes, the interpreters bore the brunt of the responsibility for meeting the student’s needs. This example shows how interpreters did not get treated like professionals who earn (paid) time away from work. The interpreters describe instead having a lack of agency in their role and in their health.

As noted earlier in my research, there are few professionals in the field, which points to an institutional as well as a national issue (Cokely & Witter-Merithew, 2014; Powell, 2013; Schwenke, 2012). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that institutions provide accessibility services for students. In this context, this meant that interpreters had to navigate contextual pressures with personal needs. Two interpreters recounted similar stories about requesting time off last minute to go to the doctor. Once, an interpreter was already at the doctor’s office when she called to take off work due to an infection. The response she received was that she must return to work. “I went to the doctor, and I still had to go straight from the doctor in my pajamas to go interpret because there was nobody [else to interpret]” In the other story, the interpreter called in to request time off and was at her home resting when a campus

supervisor drove to her house and told her that she was fine and needed to go back to work. After this experience, she commented, “I never went to the doctor, so self-care didn’t happen... because I couldn’t take off to go to the doctor. And the doctor wasn’t open when I could go.” As the data reveals, interpreters’ shared experiences seemed to result from institutional stressors from insufficient interpreters and their temporary work status.

These examples reflect several norms within the culture of the work context in the case. These norms were created through contract labor positions and job vulnerability, with insufficient numbers of professionals to fill in when needs arose, and widespread needs among the D/deaf community. Another norm is the gendered vulnerability their positions rendered as they felt like they did not have agency. The result was the expectation for interpreters to sacrifice the health of their bodies to provide services. (I discuss longer term implications of these pressures later in the document.) When asking for a follow-up comment from the interpreter in the former account, she stated that “I’m afraid of the repercussions that are going to happen... even at other places, I’m still terrified to take days off”. The demand of continually being on call without time to recover from the physical work of this unique job is one way that turns job demands into job strains.

Poor Communication.

Another topic that consistently came up is the lack of communication from the administration to the interpreters. The office did not schedule meetings with all interpreters. Last-minute changes to the schedule left interpreters “in the dark” with “vague second-hand knowledge” of matters directly affecting the interpreter’s work environment. The interpreters were unaware of the other interpreters’ schedules and unable to help other interpreters if their class cancels last minute. The lack of meetings among all interpreters created barriers in communicating about reoccurring issues. This extended to lack of communication about individual D/deaf students’ expectations and needs. Interpreters were left to figure out details on

their own, sometimes during their assignment. In the words of one interpreter: “I feel like there is a big gap...interpreters are brought in with zero information about our clients.... we try to do a little bit of communicating with our clients to find out what the needs are.”

The communication issue causes interpreters to be left uninformed about the job’s expectations, how to address issues, and who handles the responsibilities involving the D/deaf students. One interpreter addressed this lack of communication as something that “impacts our work for the entire semester.” As a system, coordinating and handling contact with all team members create unclear goals and role ambiguity.

Availability of Resources

Interpreters’ awareness of resources varied. After asking one interpreter if she knew of others to whom she could turn to for support other than a supervisor, she said, “I’m starting to learn there is, but I didn’t know before.” Another commented that “There’s not really anybody higher up that I can go to that I feel like will really listen to me... like if I go and report something that happens, nothing will happen.” Interpreters reported that they were not informed of resources they could utilize when they were first hired or notified of them later. This lack of information can be linked to the amount of confusion and feeling of lack of support.

At different times there’s been a feeling of little support...at other times feeling like kind of getting thrown in... like being thrown into an engineering class with no prep and no ability to get help or feeling like the help I could get wasn’t helpful... it was really frustrating because it went so contrary to my desire to be effective and do a good job for both clients...I never want to be the problem. I never want to be the reason a student doesn’t do well in their education

The collegiate setting is challenging because of the variety of interpreting placements. They described the challenges of different academic fields, new settings, new vocabulary, and concepts that were difficult to manage. An interpreter describes this phenomenon:

...if you get thrown into an engineering class or vet type classes... there is a lot of vocabulary that is just thrown around and they assume comprehension by the students. Because student have been building the vocab, and the interpreter may not have been because it's a new interpreter or they haven't been doing the classes up to this point. It's really tough.

The interpreters in this setting have limited opportunities to advance their skills outside of their teaming environment. Having to learn on the go with few resources for their unique role created an overwhelming burden and demand on the interpreters. This lack of support becomes a demand and then a strain due to nonexistent avenues to improve skills. Beneficial resources the interpreters identified included books for the classes, access to course content, or formal training to deal with the site-specific demands that university interpreting creates. Instead, what the interpreters face is "you're on your own, figure it out" which isn't doing the service to the client, professor, or the university." Yet few felt they could ask for this support.

The Internship Structure: Trial by Fire

Becoming an independent contractor for the university can happen in many ways. For two narrators, they came into the interpreting program already possessing their certification. For others, they took an unofficial internship in the interpreting program at the university. An official internship, available in some contexts, would have set hours observing and working with other interpreters or instructors, and would be potentially working toward a degree in interpreting.

The program of the case was not an interpreting training program. The program offered informal opportunities to gain experiences in interpreting classes at the university. The structure

of how the program accepted informal interns, the pedagogy used, and the nature of interpreters' employment are unique features. In this program, there was no formal institutional mechanism to learn the interpreting practice, such as interpreting student cohorts, classes specifically about interpreting, and formal mentors. This circumstance often meant certified independent contractors, rather than program employees, took on a mentor's role and the responsibility of training the interns. The contract interpreters were not trained educators of the field but had the responsibility of educating the interns.

The interpreters who completed the informal internship were in the process of completing ASL course work and showed potential with their interpreting skills. The interpreters followed around other professional interpreters, took notes, asked questions, and practiced when the interpreter in the class and the intern decided it was time for them to interpret. As one interpreter put it, interning was,

a lot of vocabulary exposure.... you're observing these classes and then small sections where you would take on like maybe 30 seconds to a minute of interpreting and go back and then constantly having feedback from qualified and certified interpreters. And then as you got better at that you would obviously take the chair a little bit more.

It is important to note that the program employees did not ask interpreters if they would work with interns. Instead, the program placed the interns in the classes with the certified interpreters to help interns learn these important skills. From this point, the experience varied.

Some of the previous interns only met with their mentor interpreters within their assigned classes, while others met with supervisors for additional work. As each interpreter reflected on their interning days, a pattern of inequities in treatment and feelings of constantly being judged repeatedly emerged. One described the success of the internship "depended on if your [superiors]

like you or not.” The data surfaced power dynamics between the independent contractors and those in charge. I will discuss these power dynamics further in the next section.

The interns described a less than ideal learning atmosphere. They noted a lack of support and formal training. They felt they were failing because of the negative feedback they commonly received, as they learned ASL, which made it difficult to understand how to improve. One interpreter recalls her internship:

Other interpreters would automatically put their hands up to feed me signs, which instead forced me to keep going when I wasn't ready to go just yet... It was frustrating for [the certified interpreters] to think that I should be at a level that I wasn't yet. It was very much like here are the signs, copy me right now, and keep up. So, it was very frustrating in that sense.

These internship experiences reflected a hierarchy as well. The hierarchical structure translated into interpreters from lower levels of certification feeling mistreated compared to interpreters that were more highly certified. They sometimes felt as if they fit on an invisible totem pole. When discussing this hierarchal feeling, one of the previous interns said that:

The only time I didn't feel like... 'at the bottom of the totem pole' was when there were other interns coming up under me and they were very much on the bottom and they were told what their place was. And they knew it. And they just wanted to get up to the next ring, so they were not at the bottom.

Escaping from the hierarchal feeling, interpreted here to be the lowest position (opposite from Indigenous interpretations of the totem pole), was not easy. Even after the interns became certified interpreters, most felt like they were lesser, as if they were “certified interns” or going from an “unpaid internship to a paid internship.” With some teams, the expectations for newly

certified interpreters increased. The level of knowledge, fluency, and exposure to other courses and topics increased as the interpreters participated in advanced classes. Sometimes they interpreted alone. These experiences helped prepared them for a professional role at the university later as this internship advanced their skills.

One former intern who became certified and then became a mentor to new interns commented on the cycle of internship experience as she tried to change how interns felt about themselves and their learning of the interpreting process. When asked how the interns reacted to her style, she replied that “the interns were just so desperate for someone to respect them.” Still, she was not trained in educating and advancing upcoming interpreters’ skills as she was barely out of the internship phase and still learning herself. She stated,

When I worked with interns, I really wanted to make sure I was not hurting them...that they understood where they are doing well... but also where they can improve. ‘How is this a place you can grow?’ I think they’re just doing it wrong doesn’t help them grow or improve.

Interpreters remembered their internships as a culture shock as they dealt with how learning in class about interpreting differed from interpreting in real life. They felt the struggle of working in a competitive environment while the higher certified interpreters did not see them as equals. Late in the focus group, participants brought up similar sentiments about the feeling of inferiority. The two seasoned interpreters reassured the newer interpreter that they did not see them in that manner. All three interpreters discussed how they often felt the “imposter syndrome” (Clance & Imes, 1978) when working, mentoring, or even formally teaching future interpreters. “When is this imposter syndrome thing going to pass? ... and I don’t think it ever does.”

The overlapping learning and training environment and the working environment are unique institutional structural components of the case that affect interpreters’ experiences. One of

the more experienced interpreters who did not attend school and undergo an internship in this context commented on the internship complexities and bad practices. The structural pitfalls the interpreter points out about the university's interpreting program include a debilitating internship experience, lack of checks and balances within the program, unethical relationships between employees and interns, and lack of structural (university) and community (interpreting) support. While it is important to note that this case study does not focus on those perspectives, based on the interpreters' accounts, the intern experience played a significant role in how the interpreters learned to navigate the interpreting field as professionals. As interns, the interpreters were taught the profession's norms at the university with chronic overload and insufficient support.

Power Dynamics

One manifestation of power dynamics that shaped the culture of work interpreters' accounts reveal in the context involved interpersonal relations among supervising personnel, faculty, students, and interpreters. For instance, interpreters experienced various psychological stressors (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) that shaped their work environment from having poor relations with a key personnel member who could shape the conditions of their work. These emotional strains produced an overall stressful work environment. Most interpreters described situations in which they were denied pay raises, felt shut down when asking to be paid on time, encountered disrespectful and unprofessional behavior in front of a classroom full of people, and actions of favoritism, to name a few.

The pay was a particular place of tension and power dynamics. One problem was the control of income through limited personnel, whether being paid in a timely manner or discussing pay issues. For example, one interpreter brought up "not getting paid in a timely fashion...I have literally had to say, 'I can't afford to work here' and threatened to have to leave in the middle of the semester because I am not getting paid and I can't afford to not get paid."

Another issue was feeling disempowered and belittled in asking for pay raises after a certification increase. As independent contractors, the interpreters earn wages based on their certification and the average cost of interpreters in the state. Since they are not university employees, their pay is not set by the university. Yet, in this interpreter's experience, she was told by a university employee the amount she could offer for her wage. After telling her story, the interpreter described working with her as "frustrating" and "it felt like I was beneath her." One interpreter explained how she was refused the amount of pay she requested because she had not worked there as long as other interpreters, despite holding a higher level of certification. Poor working relationships and limited opportunities to advance are examples of job demands as specified in the JDR model. In turn, these demands lead to stressors. These power dynamics shaped interpreters' willingness to ask for pay increases as well. Although one interpreter could work in advanced technical classes that other interpreters could not handle, she chose not to ask for increased pay, stating, "I don't want to deal with the emotional toll that comes with that because there have been interpreters in the past that have asked to get paid regularly, and they have been referred to as 'greedy bitches.'"

Other power dynamics reflected disrespect and public shaming conditions, like those described in the first section with faculty. When newly hired, one interpreter experienced an unprofessional exchange recounting that she "got cussed out in front of the student. In front of the entire classroom... I literally just went home and cried and didn't know if I wanted to work here ... I wanted to quit." Other interpreters discuss the psychological demands of working with a disrespectful leader. The following quotes describe their experiences.

[The program] was not supportive... I feel like [they] didn't care about us. [They] didn't care about our needs. [They] didn't know how to listen to us. And I think that bad leadership has a very top-down affect and... in a lot of ways was kind of the starting point for a lot of the hurtful culture.

The demands of the interpreter that I work most closely with, I do not see it being the actual job, the classroom, or the client... I feel like what weighs heavily on most... is the handling of schedules or the treatment of people as humans. It's becoming not an encouraging environment and becoming more of a cutthroat environment where people in charge are no longer seeming to make choices for the benefit of clients or the benefit of the interpreters.

The only con is an individual that you never know what to expect from them ... how they will handle a situation... The con is watching good people get hurt on a regular basis because an individual with power wants to take advantage of those that they deem are below them.

The data presents multiple examples of tension with power dynamics in the setting in which the workers have unique skills that other workers cannot perform. This finding reveals the institutional complexities that shape the women's working lives and roles. The interpreters filled a position that in a small, specialized program that had few institutional forms of redress or protections given the pressing needs they fulfilled. Yet, not having enough professionals, enough teams, or enough agency to shape their schedules and breaks seemed to reflect extra strains on the system. The interpreters' accounts reflected that they absorbed much of the responsibility for this lack of resources.

Finding 3: Embodied Demands: Unique Nature of the Job

The scheduling tendencies of the program and the nature of the work itself led to a unique experience of the interpreter's embodied lives. The interpreters shared several accounts of feeling tired, achy, pain, and mentally worn out. In this program's culture, the unwritten rules had interpreters locked in a system in which they felt their bodily ailments and did not have the resources to remediate their issues. In addition to feeling overworked, the interpreters faced

pressure to push through each day. The effort they spent at work left little energy for their home lives. In this section, I discuss the embodied components to bring out and bring to life their felt physical demands and emotional strains from this unique role.

Embodied or Corporeal Experiences

“I was going to say that you know in the university setting some of the significant challenges are you have predominantly lecture for extended amounts of time. And that is a physical fatigue that you have to an interpreter has to constantly be aware of... I think you actually increase the longevity of your interpreter when you’re taking care of them.” - (participant)

A significant challenge that can quickly become a strain on the interpreters is physical fatigue due to the number of hours they work without adequate resources such as teams or a scaffold schedule with intentional breaks. Embodied means focusing on the sensory nature of being in one’s body (Ellingson, 2017) and corporeal refers to the body or having a body. They are different because corporeal is how the interpreter’s bodies are used and what is expected of them and the embodied experiences are the body mind and felt realities of the job.

As noted in the section above, the program did not schedule adequate rest between interpreters’ prolonged working assignments. This meant that individuals needed to intentionally manage their body care amid consecutive courses across long days. One seasoned interpreter commented about managing the physical wear on her body: “If [interpreters] want to last...a long time in this profession doing this work, they have to be constantly monitoring the fatigue on the body, overuse syndrome problems... that’s a huge issue.” Interpreters brought up repeated overuse syndrome a few times, reflecting their awareness of the different strains interpreting, in general, can cause if interpreters and the entities for whom they work for do not take precautions. The overuse syndrome is apparent in this recollection: “We all just got spread thin because of our

workload... honestly.... I venture to say I worked more than 40-50 hours, if not more, a week. It sounds unbelievable looking back.” A second interpreter stated, “I need to take care of myself more because if I get sick, I can’t do my job. But there’s not a whole lot that I do. I always try to put my work first.” As evident in the interpreters’ comment, the workers feel like they must put the job above personal health.

Interpreters’ fatigue develops from insufficient resources, such as lack of a team. When teams were not available, the interpreters felt “overwhelmed,” overworked, and exhausted by the end of the day. Not only is interpreting solo a physical strain, but as one interpreter put it, when interpreting solo, you “end up raising the risk of less effective communication because the pressure impacts the emotional side of your brain.”

Interpreters mentioned the same level of fatigue when they could not take days off of work. When the topic of workload came up in the interview, one former interpreter immediately said: “I think there is the issue of being overworked...I just felt burned out... I was just drained by obviously the work environment itself was just stressful for me.” These institutional pressures meant that interpreters felt burdened to push through each day. As this former interpreter recounts, its “...a lot of pressure because you obviously are facilitating communication and if you aren’t there... we were already spread so thin that if you’re not there the D/deaf person has no communication.” Scholarship has noted the pattern of interpreter burnout in various settings (Bower, 2015; Dean & Pollard, 2010; Knodel, 2018; McCartney, 2006; Qin, et al., 2008; Wessling & Shaw, 2014).

The physical and mental exhaustion of interpreting long periods of time without breaks and across different levels of courses often led the interpreters to struggle to handle other life responsibilities and activities. As one comment evidences, “I’ve come home just.... felt like I had nothing to give. Like I gave, and I gave, and gave all day long... I went home, and I did nothing.”

The interpreters identified exhaustion from work influencing the time they spent hanging out with friends and family, attention to self-care, preparing for work, or generally trying to rest.

The lack of a lunch hour or breaks mentioned in Finding 2 creates a strain on the interpreters. They described losing lose energy, focus, and mental capacity as the hours and week go on. One of the interpreters described feeling increasingly overwhelmed and at times delusional from the “lack of food, lack of energy [after] walking around campus all day long.” Other adverse physical strains they identified included bodily pain and tension in their arms, shoulders, back, head, and wrist, to name a few. Commenting on the pain in her body, one interpreter reflected, “I don’t seem to take care of myself until I start hurting... the entire last year, I had really bad shoulder problems in my back and upper back/neck problems.” One of the seasoned interpreters described other employment locations, even at a small college, that provided a space for interpreters to unwind. The other places provided massage chairs to help with the physical demands of the job.

The physical demands and physical strains on interpreters become mental strains, as well. As one described, the physical and mental strains are not separate from each other but rather work in tandem. She said, “...just the physical exhaustion that comes with the body aspect of interpreting, not just the mental aspect, but I think hand-in-hand. It’s just like, the perfect storm.” The strain may result in part because interpreting is a caring profession that provides emotional and physical care work (England, 2005).

Emotional Strains of the Type of Work

“It’s tough being an interpreter. People may not think it is hard, but it is... it’s tough on your brain” - (participant)

The power dynamics and hierarchical culture that sometime appeared in narrators' accounts, described in finding 2, had emotional effects. I focus on the emotional and physical effects here. When interpreting for spoken languages, the translating process reflects an alternating method, meaning one person speaks at a time. There is a pause in the language processing for the translation to occur. With sign language, the common practice is for translation to happen simultaneously, meaning as a hearing person speaks, the interpreter is signing. As the D/deaf person signs, the hearing interpreter will be voicing what is signed. The mental processing of the languages (on top of physically producing the language) is a strenuous activity that those who are not involved in the communication transaction rarely understand. An interpreter described the simultaneous work as: "completely different because you are processing information while giving new information while receiving other information... it's mentally so draining, which is why you're supposed to have a team after 20 minutes.... [if not] the quality goes down."

Specifically, within the collegiate setting, the mental strain comes from many levels. It is the complex interpreting process as described above as well as the academic setting, the variety of classes, the lack of preexisting signs for the concepts presented in class, and the speed that communication happens. When discussing the difficulty of interpreting at the university level, one of the experienced interpreters who has been in multiple settings described:

The mental fatigue [is a challenge] because you're dealing with a high-level vocabulary of a higher-level register... and that's taxing on an interpreter mentally processing that going particularly if that interpreter doesn't have any training or a strong command of that particular field of instruction.

Depending on how the schedule is, I just feel very exhausted... you know the brain just is worn out and I think the first place it attacks is the emotional stuff... it's really hard to navigate the home life if there's a lot going on.

You're...not providing the most accurate message to your clients if you are experiencing mental fatigue. As you go throughout the day [the] mental exhaustion...leads to physical exhaustion. So, it's just more tiring, more wearing, and it makes the job more challenging.

The mental fatigue wears down the interpreters and, in their words, "affects every aspect of life. It makes it more stressful, ...makes it more difficult to leave work and be able to process and mentally handle the rest of life." As with the physical strains, the psychological stresses also spill over into the interpreters' everyday lives.

Another point they made was the necessity of time for self-care. Often their work schedule left very little room for them to take serious steps to prevent injury or heal themselves from work strains or trauma (Dean & Pollard, 2001; Schwenke, 2012). As one participant noted,

Honestly, I really struggle with adding one more thing like mental health care. So, we're supposed to do this for our bodies...for our spiritual well-being, we're supposed to do this for our emotional well-being... all these things... is another to-do list item.

Working in an environment with high demands can negatively impact the interpreters who have little help or resources to overcome the demands.

Interpreters reported the common emotion of frustration from a constant lack of resources. An example is placement in classes without preparation or team support, underscoring some interpreters' feelings that having less experience in the field becomes a barrier. Interpreters also felt confused and anxious when working in classes they have never experienced before or in

which they felt unqualified. When trying to address the situation to program administrators, the interpreters felt more frustration and “bitterness” about their work environment because their “voice wasn’t heard.”

Additionally, the interpreters felt frustrated about their colleagues’ experiences. For various reasons, one interpreter may experience the environment differently due to their mentors, lack of mentors, or status as a lower certified interpreter, among other reasons. The seasoned interpreters who had outside support and experience from the university spoke about the toll of watching the treatment of other interpreters:

Drama that’s happening... outside of my control, but yet I feel I wish I had the way to help you know because it affects.... Especially if I’m teaming... if the person I’m teaming with is experiencing challenges with the system... and I am helpless to help them and feeling frustrated about wishing I can help them. I have no resources, no ability, and no authority to help and make it better.

Often, interpreters’ accounts reflected a culture of criticism that made interpreters, both new and seasoned, want to quit. Interns transitioning to fully employed interpreters experienced a sense of “inferiority” and “deflated.” Multiple interpreters described the culture as hierarchal that they had to manage to find their place while struggling to advance. One interpreter explained working for the first time with a supervisor in the context she described as abusive:

One of the very first classes I actually teamed with.... I mean I got cussed at. I got told that fingerspelling is wrong and if I do that, I’m just going to confuse the students and that they don’t like that, and they can’t keep up.... still even today I still have a hard time finger spelling because of that.

As this interpreter recounted her story, she was upset. In the interview notes, I made a point to write down the emotional tension the interpreter had while recounting her working experience. She shed many tears during this portion of the interview. The interpreter was visibly shaken in sharing her experiences.

The role ambiguity and lack of autonomy, as noted by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) are present in these examples of interpreters' struggles to navigate their work environments. One former interpreter bluntly stated: "The culture is toxic. It is very toxic." Others support this claim of workplace toxicity as shown in the following quote:

I feel like no matter how challenging your work is, if your superiors are emotionally making things more difficult it becomes more taxing. So, unfortunately, that plays a role into how long interpreter have stayed here.... the work itself can be challenging but most times that can be improved upon. That you can learn more concepts, you can improve your work, you can practice, you can do all the things to make yourself better or make the classroom better. But if things are emotionally taxing as far as 'if I don't do this class because I know if I don't then I don't get those hours and then I don't get paid'. And then on top of that maybe whatever emotional influence is happening from a superior that's playing a pretty heavy toll on the interpreting environment here... Good interpreters don't want to work here. Qualified interpreters don't want to work here because it is not worth the emotional toll. The majority of the people that do work here are burnt-out. I mean, currently I don't want to work here.

I interpret this as interpreters deciding to leave the field due to the case's culture and organizational structure for this unique type of work, and their own multi-stressors such as school. As one of the five interpreters who left the university sums up, "The only literal way I could help myself was to physically move places and then get diagnosed with anxiety." This same

interpreter followed up with this comment about having to leave the university and profession by stating:

I think just the type of personality that I am is ‘go, go, go, go’ and non-stop, and that will burn you out really quickly... I had to escape it in order to not mentally, literally, physically go insane. And I don’t wish that on anybody.

In this example, the individual and incessant demands of the field align. The program wanted more from its workers than they could provide with insufficient time to heal. Dedicated workers who want to contribute to D/deaf students’ education, to earn money, and/or who have personalities that align with the job evidence how demands can become strains.

The interpreters chronicled their physical, mental, and emotional states while in this position. The overall embodied demands highlighted in this finding again points at a system created without either awareness or consideration of the needs of those who occupy the position. The overall setup with the scheduling, mentors, interning, hours, and breaks all create this picture of what the interpreting profession is supposed to be which makes it difficult to imagine it any other way. Another complex factor of this environment, the varying needs of D/deaf students, adds another layer to the intricacies of the role.

Finding 4: Meeting the Diversity of D/deaf Students Needs

Another component of the interpreters’ work in this program is their work to fulfill diversity of D/deaf students’ needs. The interpreters work with minority language users who all have diverse access needs. Interpreters described the diversity of the job needs, including a change in classes, professors, and D/deaf students. Prior findings have already discussed the diverse classes and professors. This finding frames the interactions between interpreters and the D/deaf students they serve. The language, culture, and relationships with students are all varying and there are no one size fits all approach to effective communication for the students.

A Range of Languages

The interpreters assess the linguistic and cultural needs of the student when they first meet. There are also times when a new assessment needs to occur if the interpreter is a new classroom environment with a different layout (i.e., a lab versus a lecture hall) and people (i.e., new professor, large or small class size). One interpreter stated the language needs of the D/deaf client and hearing client were vital to effective communication. She expressed,

The key is to really get to know their language and their needs, and then trying your best to convey the information in both directions in a manner that is respectful of both sides of that equation...depending on who the client is...assessing where they are in terms of the education that they're getting, their own command of their language as well as English that they are using to get their education and then trying to navigate...on the pendulum...Is it going to be really strong ASL? Or is it going to need to be more of a transliterating type of work?

When arriving at an assignment, the interpreters must be able to gauge the type of language the D/deaf client needs and be able to produce the register of English the hearing client is expecting. In the data included above, the interpreter mentions a phenomenon ASL scholars call the "ASL pendulum" or the ASL "continuum." This concept reflects, and that is where on one side of the spectrum, there are D/deaf people who use strong ASL following all of the language's grammatical aspects. On the other side, there is a signing system called Signed English or English interpreting in which signs are based on English and produced in English order (Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1991). Between ASL and Signed English on the continuum is a mix of the two signing systems known as transliteration or Pidgin Signed English (PSE). Transliteration is a mix of ASL signs that are produced in English order. Each D/deaf person may

fall somewhere on this spectrum, and the interpreter must evaluate where that D/deaf person's signing falls on the continuum and adjust to match the language of the D/deaf client.

Along with assessing the language needed for that context, the processing and the production of the language is another typical demand of the job that multiple interpreters identified. As one interpreter sums up the work:

Sign language is a mental and a physical language...with spoken language interpreters.... the number of mental processes they use at a single time simultaneously is lower than what a sign language interpreter uses because there are the physical actions as well as the mental process in two languages and working in two languages for extended periods of time.

As noted in a previous section, the body's physical uses required for using the language present demands for interpreters. Still, other factors are essential to consider when considering specific job demands. The work environment, language level, number of hours worked, and overall experience of the interpreter can play a role in how well she/he can handle the demand.

Along with the language's mental and physical requirements, the interpreters have to comprehend the concepts delivered in both languages. Every participant brought up the complexity of the work. The following excerpt sums up their general sentiment:

It's not like words come in and it just goes out... you have to actually understand what the message is. Which can be hard sometimes. It can be really hard.... I have to process in my mind 'What does this mean?'.... Every interpreter has to do that.

As she points out, understanding the language is insufficient for effectively interpreting the message. The interpreters must understand the concepts the faculty are delivering in the context of the course or assignment.

The interpreters must have flexibility and the ability to match the student's language and classroom expectations to make assignment effective. The interpreters have to assess the language by initiating conversation, and usually, quickly, the interpreter will get an idea if they understand the language mode of the D/deaf person. They also must consider their capability to voice in English for them, which means they have to also be comfortable with the English being used in the classroom. These are all complicated parts of the professional work.

Distinctive D/deaf Students

Many interpreters introduced the topic of working with students in their interviews. Two common threads involving the students are labeled as motivational reasons for staying on the job and job demands. The student's language level, knowledge of the course content, and how the students interact with the interpreters all interact to shape how the communication and learning process. As the following quotes illustrate, the D/deaf student is a significant factor in the overall effectiveness of the interpreting process.

A D/deaf student makes a difference on how hard a class is... you can have a hard class, but if the D/deaf student's language level is really high and they are communicative, they work with you as an interpreter, and it makes that class a lot easier because you have the resources to be able to succeed.

The same interpreter describes how students can be a demand because of the variety of skills or effort the interpreters must exert for each student and their particular needs.

Students are also a resource if and when they can work with the interpreters in the language facilitation process. As one interpreter states, “Our students now are more advocating for themselves. They are requesting more of what they expect out of an interpreter, and they’re speaking up for what their classroom needs are.” The students are significant factors on the type of classes the interpreters prefer working in, as well.

Also, at times, students’ and interpreters’ personalities can clash (Rowley, 2018; Tomaszewski, 2008). As the interpreter from above continues, “Sometimes I was put in a difficult class with a difficult student and a team that didn’t really support me... all that can make a huge difference on how overall difficult the class is...” Some shared stories of students blaming interpreters for not knowing the content of the course, miscommunication issues for requesting interpreters, and issues of D/deaf students not understanding the role or boundaries that interpreters must follow. Specifically, two of the interpreters were having issues with the D/deaf students. Instead of taking care of this uncomfortable work environment, the scheduler repeatedly placed interpreters with the students instead of acknowledging the interpreter’s concerns and making changes. Interpreters who expressed their concerns to the administration felt ignored.

Interpreters must assess the D/deaf student’s language needs, balancing the mental processing and physical aspects of the language, interpreting multiple hours in a row, and maintaining the ethical responsibility to all parties involved in the communication exchange. The student is at the forefront of all of these decisions. They also affect how interpreters must make adjustments to how they perform their jobs. Since every student is different, every interpreting assignment must also be different linguistically and culturally. More information is needed about interpreters’ perspectives about these disconnects between the D/deaf students to aid with understanding of and relationship between the two communities.

Finding 5: Culture of Focused but Stretched Resources

The context of the site of the case also reflects the program's stretched resources. There is a very intense community of support for D/deaf students and ASL interpreters, but it is also limited. This finding describes the absence and presence of resources at the university as identified by the participants. Few resources were provided, but what the interpreters were able to access made significant differences in their performance and sense of support.

Places of Agency and Triumph

Since very few people can understand and provide resources to an interpreter, the women relied on each other and their prior experiences to strengthen their skills.

Necessity of Mentors and Colleagues.

The presence of mentors and colleagues in the work field was foundational to the interpreters' success. When asked how the interpreters handled the environment's demands, the first response was to seek advice from fellow interpreters and mentors. One of the seasoned interpreters who did not go through an internship at the university explained:

I think that's the key is to be sort of taken under the wing of someone that is reputable that is a leader in the field that is ethical and that will teach you but also bring you along, and help you when they know you, they know what your weaknesses and strengths are... they can help fill those places for you when you work together. And that is just crucial. It made a world of difference... I had someone who vouched for me... that opened doors for me... I've just been really blessed because I think if I hadn't had that mentorship going in in front of me and open those doors for me my path would look very different.

The interpreters were intentional about seeking advice from those with "more language... and interpreting experience." For one interpreter who experienced the internship phase with a

mentor described her experience as continuing the use of mentors and colleagues as sources of aid for skill improvement and advice. She noted,

Those first couple of years, I had mentors I would meet with on the regular to practice skills to learn new signs... even as a full-fledged interpreter... There are times I felt like I need help... so I would meet with someone who maybe had more experience.

Even though the relationships were strong between several interpreters, colleagues at the university were still a significant resource for the interpreters if they needed support. As one interpreter addresses this sentiment states: "Honestly, you only have each other to understand the tasks that you're going through. How taxing it is everyday... and that's what you had for support." However, as this case data demonstrates, the support was at times insufficient to overcome the demands. A participant who left the university explained how the support was critical but not enough: "I really think that if I didn't have [other interpreters], I don't know if I would have made it. I mean, I obviously still quit. So, I guess I could only do so much. I mean, I had to turn to medical help."

Resourcefulness in the Culture of Teaming.

Like having mentors and colleagues that are supportive, another resource identified by the interpreters was the use of teams in the classroom. As described by the interpreters, teamwork at the university consists of two interpreters going into the classroom. The courses can be a mixture of either 50-minutes, 1 hour and 15 minutes, or 3-hour courses. The typical switch time will occur approximately every 20 minutes. Depending on the classroom environment, the presentation of materials, the ability to understand the content conceptually and produce the target language may impact how long each turn lasts. As this interpreter emphasized, "research shows that after 20 minutes an interpreter's accuracy starts to lower."

The “hot seat” interpreter is the active interpreter translating the main content from the main presenters. Most often, this interpreter will position herself in the front of the classroom so the D/deaf student or consumer will have the best visual access to class content. This could mean sitting close to the professor, close to the projector screen/board, or most often, where the D/deaf person chooses. The “warm seat” interpreter is the second interpreter who is “monitoring” the interpreting process. They will feed the “hot seat” interpreter to which they may not have access, such as visual cues/aids the hot seat cannot see. Having teams helps maintain accuracy in the interpreting process by checking signs, adding supplemental information, and being there for support. The “warm seat” interpreter is also available add cultural knowledge to the D/deaf client.

One of the interpreters who has many years of professional experience recalled when the profession did not consistently have teams. When she became certified, teaming was a brand-new concept, and so was the idea of switching every 20 minutes to reduce interpreter fatigue and increase accuracy. When teaming first began, there was no concept of a warm-seat interpreter who monitored the interpreting process.

Now, the practice of teaming has become a key resource. The practical benefits include reducing “fatigue on any one interpreter” while also having two minds working together to ensure accuracy in the translating process. In general, teaming in this environment allowed interpreters to work more hours because they did not have to process information continually and overwork themselves for multiple hours. In the words of one interpreter, there is less risk of struggling to “stay engaged, not lose out. . . . mentally or physically, [and you can] stay plugged in the whole-time processing.” With this pressure, one can wear down and miss information. With two interpreters, there is a “better chance of getting closer to 100% of getting the info out as opposed to just having to live with the gaps.”

Teaming also allows individual interpreters to grow and ultimately advances the profession as a whole. The warm seat interpreter can be exposed to new concepts or new presentations of ideas. Most of the interpreters have worked together long enough that they have been able to figure out the best way of teaming with one another. The participants also pointed out how having team interpreters is an overall service to the university because it provides reassurance for the interpreter's accuracy, an extra person to help share the load, and another brain to help process the content. Teams provide the opportunity for the university to give full access to the D/deaf students continuously. If a D/deaf student needs to talk with the professor after class, one team can stay while the other leaves to the next class. Also, if there is an emergency, one interpreter can step away while the team stays at the original assignment.

For the informal interns, teaming is crucial to their development in the field. They used notebooks in which to receive feedback and advice from other interpreters. The notebooks the interns often referenced also served as positive reinforcement, a place to gauge improvement, and a powerful learning tool kept between team interpreters. One former intern said the notebooks were a place where interns were "...constantly having feedback from qualified and certified interpreters." The notebooks were for "...asking questions, taking notes... with just random words and how to sign them." Having that feedback loop can create a resourceful relationship for the interns to use.

Another resource the team environment provided is extra support emotionally. The interpreter who brought up this benefit mentioned how "overall [teams] have each other's support for emotional aspects of the work we do because there is some exposure to the stresses." Having that team discuss any situation, detangled ethical questions, or provide feedback and help in assignments gives interpreters peace of mind that they can express themselves and take risks to try and push themselves to better their skills.

When teaming is not effective, interpreters are unable to connect beforehand and do not communicate about each other's strengths and weaknesses. In situations like these, the "overall benefits of teaming diminish significantly." At times the relationship between two interpreters creates a more challenging environment because, as one interpreter phrases it, the team "would criticize you a lot. They would point out how you're failing, but then they won't support you while you were interpreting." Power dynamics or hierarchies sometimes occurred in teams. Teams often consisted of a more experienced interpreter with a newly certified interpreter. When this happened, some interpreters reported that their teams seemed frustrated when they were "still trying to learn and better [themselves]." There was also the possibility that some teams just did not know how to give feedback or help. Even though a few reports of bad experiences with teaming came up, most of the discussion framed teaming as a positive resource that genuinely benefited the interpreter.

Years of experience were passed down from each interpreter. From experiences of pursuing their own degrees, to many years interpreting at the collegiate setting, and interpreting for the D/deaf community, the interpreters were able to create their own beloved community (hooks, 2003). In an inadequately designed job, they were able to still foster growth and advancement. For instance, some signs in specific fields like advanced sciences, geology, or women's studies are not readily available online to look up. Instead, the signs are passed down from each interpreter as they all build their vocabulary and knowledge base of specific topics. If one team member has had multiple classes or repeated classes, they can pool those resources and do additional training to advance and prepare the next interpreter.

Resources from the Outside Interpreting and D/deaf Community.

Every interpreter discussed attending workshops to help gain resources. The trainings provide tools, both linguistically and culturally, to handle a variety of situations. In the state

where the university is located, interpreters must obtain a certain number of hours each year Continuing Educational Units and 1 of those hours must be dedicated to ethics training. However, the workshop locations, days, and times made attending difficult. The workshops were held in cities that were an hour drive away and typically on a weeknight. The interpreters would have to take off work early in their late-night classes, losing money and overtime pay, which also affected the team. Also, they never geared these workshops toward collegiate interpreting. They instead focused on community interpreting (medical, legal, or k-12). The university did not offer workshops or provide resources to specifically handle interpreting at the university level.

Lastly, the interpreters pointed out the invaluable resource of the D/deaf community. As put by one interpreter: “I talk to D/deaf people a lot... I’ve asked them if they could explain a concept to me because I didn’t have a team in class, and they just shot me a quick sign or explained what it meant.” A seasoned interpreter discussed this aid from the D/deaf community as a useful resource for the remainder of an interpreter’s career. Not only are the D/deaf community members there to support interpreters while they are actively working, but they are also vital in the process of immersing the interpreter in D/deaf language and the culture.

Self-Care: Bodies as a Resource.

Self-care is a means to offset the physical and mental strains that are the cost of sign language interpreting. It is a critical component of the work of an interpreter. Still, neither the interpreter nor the institution provides the appropriate amount of attention needed to sustain an interpreter’s body and mind. A few self-care practices the interpreters identified included quality time with other people. They mentioned drinking water, getting sufficient sleep, taking time to unwind, listening to music to take a break during work hours from processing, seeking time to be calm, meditating, going to church, and relaxing at home. Some put intentional effort into self-development such as eating healthy, exercising, and communicating with friends. One interpreter

recognized that “the more I make time for self-care or mental health, the easier it is just to handle everyday little stressors... it’s easier to give more of myself if I take care of myself first.”

Some interpreters sought professional help as a means of self-care. This included visiting doctors for their bodily pains, such as the chiropractor, physical therapist, and obtaining counseling services. One interpreter bought a massager to help alleviate pain, but she rarely used it. They described turning to medicine for headaches, heat and cold packs, and pain cream to help with pain or sore limbs. Before the start of the workday, doing stretching routines also helped to prevent injury or pain. However, some of the pain continued even after interpreter left the field.

Peers were a fundamental resource for interpreters in navigating the profession’s demands. As evident in this case, few people understood interpreters’ needs as corporeal workers because they did not fully understand interpreters’ experiences. The field demands were eased when colleagues provided support, mentoring, or a sounding board to process and empathize. The support from fellow interpreters helped to develop their collegiality, professional outreach to the interpreting and D/deaf community, advancement in skills, emotional support, and confirmation for the inevitable ethical dilemmas that came with the job. Lastly, since the interpreter’s bodies are vital to the work, they realized that taking care of their bodies was a crucial resource. Staying fit mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually means the interpreters can give more to their work. Still, demands were not met, and therefore, job strain developed.

Finding 6: Vision and Change for Meaningful Work

Sign language interpreting is a career of meaningful work that in turn motivated the interpreters. Communicating in a language that few know, feeling fulfilled by providing acts of service, and being honored for being allowed in this incredible community were some of the many reasons the interpreters felt called to be in the field.

Language, Community, and Culture

The interpreters have varied reasons why they decided to pursue interpreting as a career. The language, community, and culture were prominent answers from the participants. The language was seen as “beautiful... and just so underappreciated.” This love for the language captivated many of the interpreters and kept them in the field.

The D/deaf community and the D/deaf students were also reasons why interpreters choose this profession. The joy of working with D/deaf students in the academic environment kept the interpreters engaged. As one participant explained, “it’s enjoyable to work for the students that want to be here and want to earn an education.” The D/deaf students and interpreters had special bonds that helped curate an encouraging culture at the university. Commenting on this phenomenon, an interpreter explained that some D/deaf students “are very supportive, and they really are what drives people to move forward and really add positivity to the culture...[and] help establish a good culture for a community with both hearing and D/deaf.”

The D/deaf community at large played an immense role in the interpreters drive to be in the field. A former interpreter described her perspective of entering the D/deaf community as a student: “It was just so unique, and I felt such a privilege to be able to step in their world.” Overall, the interpreters who did not have D/deaf family members felt grateful for the opportunity to interact, learn, and build relationships with D/deaf people.

Access, Service, and Setting Variety

Interpreters described an internal motivation in serving the community by providing access. Scholars have evaluated the reasons interpreters enter the field and stay in the profession. In these studies, the reasons are related to the social justice factors of serving, advocating, and having compassion for the D/deaf experience (McCartney, 2017). Being an ally to the D/deaf

community and having “Deaf-Heart” is also in this social justice aspect of interpreting (McCartney). “Deaf-Heart” is connected to the service and care work they carry out in tandem with their interpreting. Having Deaf-Heart means interpreters “act culturally sensitive” and are “mindful” and “cognizant of the struggles that D/deaf people have had to endure” (McCartney, 2017, p. 91). Through inductive analysis, I connect and interpret the social justice aspects of interpreting work to that of care work. The care work, for these interpreters, is the want to see justice served and oppression of D/deaf people end.

Interpreters felt their work was important because they are “providing access to information where otherwise that access and language exchange would not happen.” One interpreter added that being from a minority group and serving another minority group gave her a sense of fulfillment. As this interpreter describes it, the allyship aspect of interpreting moves her to be “always willing to fight for justice for people who are oppressed or have experienced oppression or systemic oppression [and] that’s something that I want to make sure that I don’t contribute to and help prevent.”

For other interpreters, fulfilling their natural inclination to serve others as a career kept them motivated in the field. As one interpreter put it, “I am a server...I enjoy being able to fill that need... Just being able to serve and provide access to things that maybe people have been not able to access before.” Another interpreter supported this statement as she added she is also a “natural service person... knowing that’s a service that is needed, especially in that area and I could provide that was just fulfilling.”

One interpreter with D/deaf parents noted an important point from her experience. She grew up watching interpreters working that should not have been. As this interpreter describes her reasons for staying in the field, she stated: “I think seeing my parents and what they went through and having interpreters that.... [were not] qualified.” This call to serve the D/deaf community

offered a slightly different personal perspective for this interpreter. This Child of a Deaf Adult (CODA) saw the injustice of not being given access to information and pushed her to enter the field. The intensity for each interpreter's motivation to provide access varies for each interpreter, but all cited this intrinsic desire to provide for language equality.

Lastly, the variety of work settings, even though challenging, as noted above, was another appeal of the job. The intellectual challenges stimulated the interpreters and kept them motivated. The university provided a perfect work environment for diversity in people and subjects. The following quotes reflect this sentiment.

I enjoy variety, and I enjoy learning... and listening to people... it gives me a chance to get all of those things in a career where everything is a little bit different everyday... also the career is flexible enough that I can work around my life in most situations.

A seasoned interpreter echoed the interpreter above as she comments:

I love the variety of settings, and the variety of subjects. I love getting exposed to just a gamut of topics and subjects and it's almost like just you know... 'jack of all trades and master of none' ...If you are in one profession typically you don't get exposed to other professions...It is a challenge. Constant challenge.

Rewards and Recognition

Feeling rewarded and recognized is a considerable part of maintaining job motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Given their role as contractors, most do not get to enjoy typical workplace rewards that the university offers. However, they still identified several times they felt rewarded or recognized for their efforts. The interpreters identified working with supportive teams, internal satisfaction with their work, and being a resource for other interpreters or students.

Teaming/Development Opportunities.

Working in teams felt like a reward because the interpreters felt extra reassurance by having back up and could learn from one another. As one interpreter described her appreciation for teaming, “I appreciate like feedback in the environment, or just I think teamwork can really play into that reward... like having an encouraging team member.” The feedback the interpreter mentions is a way to congratulate and recognize improvement in skill. One former interpreter explains that “appreciation was more between peers. And more so like holding each other accountable and helping each other be encouraged.” The interpreters described recognition and rewards being from team members and not from upper administration to the interpreters.

Another reward comes from the satisfaction of doing a good job. One interpreter discusses the gratification she feels after thinking she thinks she had done an excellent job. They also recognized each other’s work performance through offering praise during or after their assignments. The notebooks served as a location for recognition, feedback, and tips for improvement. One example in a notebook passage was from one interpreter encouraging the other that was feeling overwhelmed. The example reads, “Don’t beat yourself up; this is such a hard class.” From a different interpreter, “Seriously, you’re doing awesome! You’re getting the concepts which is important” (artifact, p. 3, 11).

Sometimes, recognition was given from the professors or D/deaf students to let the interpreters know they appreciated their work. However, they primarily noted receiving recognition only from other interpreters or mentors. As this interpreter stated:

Our system as it stands, we are not employees. We do not receive benefits, or I mean typical workplace rewards because that’s not how our system is working... There was recognition of when we expressed that the job was too difficult without enough teams that did create change. So, we did get recognized in the fact that we needed teams and it

took a little bit of convincing. But we do work with teams now and that is kind of a recognition on the fact that we need that for accuracy and just for our mental health.

The interpreters identified a variety of motivations to become and remain in the profession. The D/deaf and interpreting community they learned to gain resources from is also why they feel compelled by their work. The interpreters highlighted intrinsic motivation to provide a service, fulfill a need, and give access to the D/deaf and hearing communities. The diversity in topics and classes that interpreters get to work in also plays a role in their job satisfaction. The interpreters also felt it was a reward to support their colleagues when teaming or when they were able to seek guidance from others. Recognition and feeling rewarded are essential to the motivation of employees. While the interpreters did not get the credit or rewards from their superiors, they did feel recognized by colleagues, D/deaf clients, and hearing clients.

Chapter V Summary

The findings of the study provide insights from the interpreters who work for the program which is the focus of this case. The program exists in a space where few understand the complexities and nuances of interpreting and this creates issues for accessing the university environment. The structure of the program and its position at the university relative to the interpreters are disconnected. The disconnects stem from issues with staffing and power dynamics within the organizational structure.

Across all participants were strong examples of job demands that were both tolerable and expected in the interpreting field in general, but there were also examples of demands that were specific to the university setting. Interpreters also revealed what helped them to succeed and overcome their demands of this unique job, such as teaming and community with the D/deaf students. The interpreters also identified their motivation for entering and remaining in the field which involves social justice and care work roles.

The interpreters provided an outlook of their daily work, the successes, struggles, and joys they find in their jobs. It is through these stories, their lived experiences, that scholars can sift through and find what it is about their jobs that needs to be understood so that one day changes can be made to help keep improving the field and provide access.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction and Summary of Study

The purpose of the current study was to explore the sign language interpreting program at a public university through the experiences of the interpreters who work there. There is very little scholarship on interpreter's experiences in university settings or through the lens of social foundations. I am an ASL interpreter and brought my understanding of the field to bear on designing this study. I used a constructionist epistemology, interpretivist theoretical perspective, and descriptive case study methodology for the study (Crotty, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2017). The purpose of the case study was to understand the depth and detail of a phenomenon (Stake 1995; Yin, 2017). I sought out the interpreters' experiences to understand their work and their work context. I used inductive analysis and the theoretical lens of Job Demands-Resource (JDR) theory to aid in making meaning. I identified cultural and organizational issues shaping the program where the study took place. Using the interpreter's narratives, I situated the findings to draw attention to structural and cultural workings at the university that shaped the case and interpreters' experiences within it. The JDR model further elicited job demands, resources, strains, and motivation.

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do participants describe their working experiences and perceptions of interpreting at a public university?
2. What are interpreters' perceptions of the institutional culture and contextual factors?
3. What insights into culture and context do interpreters' experiences reveal?

Methodology

The study used case study methodology focusing on interpreters at a public university (See Chapter III). Case study methodology calls for multiple sources of data collection to understand a phenomenon holistically (Baxter & Jack, 2015; Pearson, et al., 2015). It is particularly valuable for exploring this work environment because the majority of those who work with interpreters understand the ins and outs of the profession or the university setting. I focused on seven participants with experiences interpreting in a program at the collegiate level.

The methods used to collect data were seven individual interviews, a focus group interview with three participants, a group collaging exercise, formal and informal documents, and artifacts. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. The goal of the interviews was to collect stories of lived experiences working at the university. Questions and discussion topics focused on their relationship with the D/deaf community, why they became interpreters, what type of workload they carry, skills or background knowledge that helps them in the field, times they felt rewarded or recognized, what resources help them succeed, and their work/life balance. The documents and artifacts collected for the study consisted of the university interpreting handbook, state ethical standards required for interpreters, and collages participants created during a focus group. The collages were made in response to the question of "What does it feel like to be an interpreter?" (See Chapter IV).

I analyzed the data with the analytic approach of inductive analysis and the Jobs Demands-Resource theory. After the data was collected and transcribed, I created thematic and

theoretical codes that I separated into categories. After multiple readings and constant comparative coding, I used the technique of convergence coding to find reoccurring patterns to create themes. Next, I applied the divergence coding technique where I connected and extended themes. This helped with finding divergent themes that did not follow the Job Demands Resource model. I also collaborated with my advisor on meaning making through the perspective of Social Foundations. Through this immersion process, I constructed the following findings:

- 1) Little Understanding about ASL Interpreters' Work: The Hearing University Environment
 - 2) Structure and Roles Shaping Interpreters' Work
 - 3) Embodied Demands: Unique Nature of the Job
- 4) Challenge of Meeting the Diversity of D/deaf Students Needs
 - 5) Culture of Focused but Stretched Resources
 - 6) Vision and Change for Meaningful Work

The current study offers valuable insights into the contours of interpreting in higher education that help answer my research questions. This case study sheds light on *embodied stressors* of interpreters' working to meet *diverse students' needs* across varied areas of academics in a *primarily hearing university environment* in which few university employees or students understood the work or the demands. In turn, these components offer insights into the challenges of this unique educational role in a higher education setting. The interpreters' experiences also provided insights into the social, cultural, and organizational context that contributed to some difficulties in interpreters' experiences. Categories of employment have differing values and resources. The interpreters' testimonies about this case site provide opportunities to reflect on broader issues of burnout in the field that guide this study. In particular, the lack of respect of the value of interpreters' work and understanding about this profession and D/deaf student's needs may contribute to burnout.

Another major offering of my case study is the insights it provides into the necessary resources within the university organization to support interpreters and in turn D/deaf students. Among other insights, the findings offer an opportunity to consider through the lens of sociology of work and education how the structure of contemporary work roles in higher education shaped by neoliberalism (e.g., independent contractors, flexible employment, and informal internships) plays out in interpreters' educational roles. Interpreters' thick description of working in this unique role provides insight into its function within various campus offices and policies. Meeting ADA requirements may create pressures to provide interpreters and in turn a sense of urgency to staff a role in which few possess the skills and knowledge to successfully fill. The informal intern, which is unique role at this university, is one strategy the institution set up to fulfill the important needs of D/deaf students, develop interpreters' skills, and balance the requirements of ADA. Another role, the independent contracting, is not unique to this institution as others within the state also utilize this model. Yet, its flexibility and pay, both an appeal and a stressor as I discuss below, may provide the most immediate value for the institution rather than cumulatively for the worker.

Further, interpreting is a gendered profession that focuses on care work (Maslach, 2003; McCartney. 2017). This is part of the structure of work that has implications in my study. Like the profession of teaching, with a care work profession, there is a "pull" for people to enter the profession and "push" factors that leads interpreters to exit, too. The study provides detail about how that role plays out within the institution, classrooms, library, tutoring facilities, and all the spaces a campus provides to offer students success. This includes other roles the university has created, such as positions within the services office, the directly shape the interpreter's experiences.

Discussion of Findings

The experiences of the interpreters working in the program reveals the broader context shaping interpreters' experiences and the uniqueness of their labor in this context. In this section, I will discuss each of the components listed above. A variety of cultural and structural components of the program became visible in the participants' reflections of their interpreting experience. They included a culture of ignorance (Asimov, 1980) about the complexities of interpreters' work. This culture reflected a *lack of awareness in the hearing environment, D/deaf students' diverse needs*, and scarcity of resources to support this unique position. This reflects the broader ableist attitudes that shape American culture and university education (Annamma, Ferri, & Connor, 2018; Dolmage, 2017). As stated previously, ableism, is the "stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and social oppression toward people with disabilities" (Bogart & Dunn, 2019, p. 651). Also, the stories of dismissal the women felt has implications for the interpreting profession as a gendered profession. All these characteristics have implications for D/deaf students who attend universities like the one of this case.

The placement of the program structurally in the organization accompanied with *corporeal demands* is revealing. However, the most significant lesson this case provides is a close look into the process of how it is that a group of people can become weary and burned out in a particular context. The following discussion points will tease out the broader implications of what this case has to teach.

Broader Perspectives on Interpreters and Disabilities

My case study surfaces findings about a "culture of ignorance" about the dominance of hearing at the research site that shapes the experiences of interpreters and D/deaf students. This finding of *little understanding of ASL interpreters* in a hearing environment, helps answer both RQ 1, focused on interpreter's experiences, and RQ 3, focused on what we can learn about the context through interpreter's experiences. In an educational environment the intention is to serve the needs of diverse students. Yet, in my case study, there is one particular group of diverse

students whose needs are not consistently and fully met because hearing staff and educators are not fully aware of their needs. They are also unaware of interpreters being a resource that aid in meeting those needs. This lack of knowledge is significant because it effects full access to an equal education for students who are D/deaf. Do D/deaf students feel welcomed or embraced when professors draw attention to their differences because they are uneducated about, uncomfortable with, or dismissive of those difference? The cultural and structural layout of my study matters because it threads a problem that seemingly starts at the individual level (an unknowing professor) and ties it more broadly to ableism in the hearing *culture* and practices within an institutional structure. Interpreters' work is an issue of equity.

The concept of the culture of ignorance² (Asimov,1980) helps to explore how equity issues manifest themselves and come to matter in this site. This concept captures how broad external forces such as the norms, laws, cultural dynamics, knowledge, and power and that shapes how mainstream citizens perceive disabilities and those, like interpreters, who are employed to serve those communities. Simply put, the data and literature review reflect common misunderstandings, lack of awareness, and at times, a dismissive attitude toward the needs of D/deaf people. They also reflect a lack of awareness of the needs and role of the interpreters who serve them, which matters because the finding points to continuing challenges in meeting the needs of D/deaf students, through their interpreters, which cumulatively is about recognizing disabilities. The lack of recognition of the needs of people with disabilities as an institution are subtle acts that enable ableism to continue in the setting.

There are legal protections, such as the American's with Disabilities Act, that governs institutions and equity practices that make up public universities. In ADA standards, interpreters are seen the role that provides effective communication required by law. What this means is that

² The famous quote by Isaac Asimov that reads, "There is a cult of ignorance in the United States nurtured by the false notion that democracy means that my ignorance is just as good as your knowledge" (p. 19).

the D/deaf community is provided communication as “equally effective” as those without disabilities (U. S. Department of Justice, 2014). Therefore, interpreters are essential to equity. And while compliance with ADA is one aspect of serving student needs, the spirit of equity should transcend merely compliance. In this case study, serious questions about how equity plays out in a classroom comes into question as faculty question interpreters’ presence in the room or accuse them of being in the way. If interpreters feel they are in the way, it means that they are not recognized as essential to equity.

The action is consistent with how sometimes institutions treat disability in terms of a medical model (Dolmage, 2017). Dolmage (2017) writes that the universities flag themselves as accommodating and inclusive with wide open arms to students with disabilities, such as through advertising their services office. Universities may truly seek to orient their services to help ensure equal access to all. And yet, ableism is pervasive. To Dolmage (2017), the equal access institutions might promise reflects a design for “accessibility” in the “medical or liability model” (p.27). This is a way to

define disability medically, treat it in a legalistic, minimalistic manner designed to avoid getting sued. This can force accommodation to happen, but it also tends to force—always and only—the legal minimum accommodation. Disabled people, then, come to have their experiences of education shaped by these legal minimums. That’s a difficult way to learn, and a difficult way to live (Dolmage, 2017, p. 27).

This approach may characterize some educational environments. D/deaf students are classified in this model, even though many D/deaf people reject the medical model’s perspective in favor of a cultural perspective of D/deaf people.

On one hand, scholars have suggested that there should be common denominator for everyone, which is the democratic threshold principle (Guttman, 1999). On the other hand,

critical scholars suggest that the policies that are justice oriented should be focused on the most vulnerable (Crenshaw, 1989). When we envision a society of policy makers and policies what should they look like? What are the ideal normative claims that they are making and what is the vision of society that they are putting into their policy? These are competing types of perspectives of what policy threshold ought to be in a democracy. It is worth considering the complexities of intersectionality, disabilities, and the mission of higher education in a society where neoliberal economics reign. For this case, exhausted and limited interpreters may translate at times to D/deaf students not adequately accessing information. It is not that the individual interpreter or student who is failing, but rather the failure of the educational environment to support the body or space.

That few people were aware of D/deaf resources, D/deaf life, and interpreters' placement as mattering is important because equity matters. When professionals at the university did not know how to engage D/deaf students, make them feel welcomed, or value their differences or perspectives, it sends the message that they will not be able to fully participate in their education and models this behavior as acceptable to hearing students. The struggles to connect to a hearing university has been noted in the literature (Convertino, et al., 2009; Holmes, 2018; Lang, 2002). This case study gives insights into interpreter experiences and pressures, which, in turn, has significant implications for how successful a D/deaf student can be in this environment.

These findings also suggest that the resources for interacting with D/deaf students and interpreters present in the site may not provide sufficient information and support for the hearing professor. It may not be available in enough forms and ways to support faculty, who in turn, support interpreters and students. Based on interpreters' experiences, these resources are not explanatory or helpful in describing the interpreting process in the site. The hearing staff and faculty with whom they interacted rarely used captions. This is another obstacle to equity. From this lack of support the interpreters experience the workplace as stressful, tiring, isolating, and hard on their bodies, which connects to the literature about characteristics of burnout (Bakker &

Demerouti, 2007; Dean & Pollard, 2001). The interpreters thus also do advocacy work on behalf of D/deaf students with faculty and with other hearing people. And, based on interpreters' experiences, the faculty, staff, and institution may not be doing enough.

Consider the captioning issue. Technological advances make captioning accessible, sometimes instantly, but it is not at the forefront of people's minds. Turning on the captions could be a simple way to show others that this is the norm, to be fully inclusive of those who are D/deaf and hard of hearing (who may not have an accommodations letter). Captioning as a resource is simple. If the small, simple things are regularly overlooked, then the bigger picture of inclusivity and equity may be challenging goals to carry out. It is in the very way that we, the hearing culture, continuously do not have to think about issues like captioning that gives us a hint into a broader pattern of inaccessibility in society.

The dominant culture is insufficiently informed of D/deaf and interpreters' needs which leads to the burden of D/deaf students and interpreters left with individual teaching work. In turn, D/deaf students will have to wait for the lights to come on to learn what the movie was about, correct placement of interpreters, watching interpreter sign a movie instead of watching the movie will continue to happen. The failure rate of D/deaf students who attend higher education is "about 70%" (Pirone et al., 2018, p. 45). This number tells a story about D/deaf students struggling to maintain attendance at college for likely a variety of reasons. My study details how interactions with the campus community members might create an unwelcoming and inaccessible environment that could contribute to attrition. All of this cumulatively add up to an institutional structure and culture that have not fully integrated the best practices for inclusion.

For the purpose of this study, the lack of knowledge among hearing members of the community revealed in interpreters' accounts that even universities that have service offices have to do more for their students with disabilities. The interpreters and the D/deaf students are just an

example of what has been previously written as “academic ableism” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 31). In this case, the interpreters gave countless examples of well-meaning people who do not know how to accommodate their student’s different disabilities and their specific needs. Faculty and staff cannot do better if they do not know better. Behind the culture of ignorance, people may assume that the syllabus attachment is all they need to do to provide accommodations. Having an equal education means that D/deaf students have the same chance at accessing the content. However, not providing accommodations contributes to social and educational oppression of students with disabilities. My study is at a higher education institution. Access to content looks like having captions on videos, allowing interpreters and D/deaf students to decide the best placement in the classroom, and full access to course material (handouts/notes) that could adequately prepare interpreters for each class. The institution can better prepare faculty by providing training as a part of orientation, teaching workshops, and having clear directions and steps from relevant offices. Overlooking these steps are clearly acts that inhibits the D/deaf students’ chance in being active participants in an institution that values community, diversity, integrity, and service. Dolmage (2017) writes that “at the contemporary college or university, ableism is everywhere...[and] we are all responsible for looking for it, recognizing our roles in its circulation, and seeking change” (p.31).

The conditions in which the interpreters work and the conditions in which D/deaf students attend school matter, as well. Few people on campus understand the uniqueness of this setting for D/deaf students. The higher education setting is unique linguistically as different degrees and fields of study may not have standardized signs or vocabulary at the ready for either the D/deaf student or interpreter to use. Each semester, a new set of professors must be educated by the D/deaf students or the interpreters because this site and majority of society do not know enough about D/deafness. However, this educative role is one that the institution can and should play. Since they do not understand the nuances of accommodations, access, positioning, lighting,

visibility, the creation of sign, or sign language interpreters, the hearing community will not be able to make appropriate adjustments for the success of the D/deaf students on campus. It is obvious to the interpreters that each year they will have to confront and educate hearing people because certain steps to ensure equity have yet to be taken.

As a profession, interpreting is intricate and not well understood by people who are not in the field. The lack of professional understanding visible in my case adds to previous literature (Mindness, 2014; Schwenke, 2015). It is important to take seriously because the lack of understanding and aid from other campus professionals and systems of support could be factors that contribute to the exodus from the field. Another implication about the professional status of the interpreter ties to gender. Not only is this field made up of an overwhelming majority of women, but in their stories, the participants of this case draw attention to stereotypes, tensions of payment, and expectations of flexibility (Boni-LeGoff & Le Feuvre, 2017). This case evidences more than just burnout and turnover, but also dehumanizing labor that is gendered. It is dehumanizing in the way it does not allow for autonomy, breaks, and protections to the interpreters from roles at the university that exploit their position by overworking and eventually burning them out. Not only is this a serious equity issue, but it would have serious social and legal ramifications for the D/deaf students and the universities they attend.

This leads to the last core point from this section. The needs of the D/deaf community and of those with disabilities overall are intricate and matter because this country believes in civil rights to all citizens. The principle of nondiscrimination coupled with the founding belief in our Declaration of Independence (US, 1776) that all are created equal with “certain unalienable Rights” such as “Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (para. 4) means that we have a foundation of caring for fellow citizens. When citizens of our society have unjust circumstances that oppresses them and keeps them from have an equity access, it is the advocates duty to “listen to the

concerns of the oppressed group and then advocates/ speaks for them in the halls of power”
(Baker-Shenk, 2014, p. 7).

Implications for Interpreters.

The finding of *little knowledge about interpreters' roles* also has implications for interpreters' sense of professional status which ties to RQ 2 about interpreters' perceptions of the institutional culture and contextual factors. The professionalism of an interpreter is in question to those who are unaware of the field. The interpreters felt their work was neither understood nor taken seriously by other professionals on campus and felt they had to validate their own position constantly. The lack of knowledge about D/deaf students' needs and accommodations reflects interpreters' feelings in research conducted in other settings. Emmart (2014) notes that “like it or not, the non-deaf majority sees us more as an extension of D/deaf people rather than professionals performing a cognitively complex task” (np). One example of this is evident in the official communication in the case setting about interpreters. It refers to them as a “tool,” rather than a laboring human who is a holistic being. While the goal is to ensure the campus staff focus on the D/deaf student in their communication, it also results in ignoring a central aspect of that process.

One factor in this process is the common institutional construction of an interpreter as a “tool.” The data demonstrated that instructors asked participants to interpret entire movies and to remember a lectures worth of information to sign after the lights were turned on again. This type of construction matters because when a job and those who are in that role are viewed as tools, it dehumanizes and objectifies the interpreters. It strips away the intricacies of the work which interpreters explain in the data and is well established in the field (Crezee, et al., 2015; Powell, 2013; Watson, 1987). This “tool” perspective articulated in both the literature and campus materials makes it seem as if the interpreting body was built for/capable of performing regardless of strain, fatigue, and classroom conditions. More so, the instruction to “ignore the interpreters”

sets a precedent that this field, filled with highly skilled individuals who take years to develop their profession, is not one to take seriously. This connects directly to the literature as interpreters feel little respect, misunderstood, and at times struggled with role strain like previous studies have found (Powell, 2013; McCarthy, 2016, 2006; Watson, 1987).

The official university message educates in particular way, one that does not educate about the real, human experience of this mentally and physically draining task. The contours of work, drawn out by the interpreters, gives a different perspective of the institutionally and socially prescribed value of their position. Interpreters are professionals working for the common good, just like other university professionals but they are not always seen in such a light.

Lastly, and importantly, this profession is a gendered and racialized profession (Bontempo, et al., 2014; Litosseliti & Leadbeater, 2013; MacDougall, 2012; McCartney, 2016). White female interpreters make up the majority of the field. This study reflects the literature because all of the interpreters were women and only one associated with a minority group. The gendered profession of interpreting has further structural implications as the women in this study felt devalued as professionals. This is evident in how they can move in offices, classrooms, and the “tool” metaphor. There were no clear avenues on advocating for themselves since they also did not feel supported by the services office. Research over other gendered professions, like teaching and nursing, critique the “inequalities in income, promotion opportunities, career patterns, and access to leadership positions” (Boni-LeGoff & Le Feuvre, 2017, p. 1). Feminist scholars have traced gendered occupational structures and their positioning of gendered bodies. There is a hierarchal value placed on some professions over others. Interpreting as a gendered profession matters because of societal views on female dominated professions have structural implications on issues of value in labor, professionalism, and pay.

The Pull Factor - Social Justice and Care Work

There are both “pull” factors and “push” factors evident in my case. Pull factors are aspects of the job that appeal to people and make them want to enter the field. In terms of a pull factors, the findings about the interpreter’s perceptions of the field as a place where they can provide a service to *meet the diversity of D/deaf students needs* has social justice and care work ties that gave the interpreters a sense that their jobs were *meaningful*. These findings also reflect the service call of this particular profession.

The case underscores participants’ motivations to enter the profession, which helps answer RQ 2 focused on interpreters’ perceptions of the institutional culture and contextual factors. As I mentioned earlier, McCartney (2017) discusses that interpreters identified their orientation to social justice as one reason for entering the interpreting field. Although not all scholars or interpreters think about sign language interpreting as a social justice profession (McCartney, 2017), interpreters in this study often described service in this way. Social justice professions are identified as “people who work with those who do not have a voice in the public square” and “strive to give everyone a fair and equal opportunity in life, just as other groups enjoy” (McCartney, p.79). The interpreters in the study had this desire to level the playing field by providing access because they saw the needs of the D/deaf students and wanted to be involved. They also recall the joy they felt while performing their work, which is consistently with the literature about why interpreters enter and stay in the field (McCartney, 2015; Ramirez-Loudenback, 2015).

The interpreting field also pulls women in as a care profession because it offers the opportunity to educate and validate D/deaf people. This pull factor, like the teaching profession, can lead to the interpreters themselves working beyond their comfort and their health. The study’s finding over the demands on the interpreting body connects to women’s roles in dismissing their own health as they succumbed to conditions of institutional pressure. The pressure, which was a push factor, made interpreters become overworked. The push factor of being pressured and

overworked is partly to blame on one pull factor to the position. The interpreters knew they were utterly important to the university. So, in an effort to fulfill their desires of social justice and performing the care work critical to the job, they became worn out and pushed out of the position.

The interpreter's devaluing their health does not only happen at the individual level. There is also a large devaluing of the profession at times. The U. S. Department of Justice (2014) states that the ADA requires state and local governments, businesses, and non-profits to "ensure that communication with people with these disabilities is equally effective as communication with people without disabilities" (para. 2). Yet, these identified entities contribute to the devaluing of the gendered profession by justifying not paying for an interpreter or having the interpreter volunteer their services (McCartney, 2017). The literature finds this constant "combating of misconceptions" and educating the hearing community about the existence of D/deaf people and interpreters can lead to "burnout in sign language interpreters" (Bower, 2015; Dean & Pollard 2001; McCartney, 2006; McCartney, 2017, p. 84; Schwenke, 2012).

Another characteristic of social justice, and a pull factor, is the advocacy work. The interpreters identified this, however, as a required portion of the job. They had to constantly advocate for themselves and the D/deaf students to combat the inequalities. However, their work made up more than just advocating. McCartney (2017) identified this advocating work as "Deaf-Heart", which is when the interpreter "acts culturally sensitive" and is "cognizant of the struggles that D/deaf people have had to endure"; in other words, they are allies to the D/deaf community (p. 91). Deaf-Heart is required of the labor of an interpreter, but it is invisible.

I argue this Deaf-Heart is the care work of interpreting. Care work happens when professionals provide a variety of personal services to other people in need, and this often occurs in close contact (Maslach, 2003). Most care work professionals are women. Care work goes unnoticed in the home and professional lives of women (Maslach, 2003). Just like interpreting,

care work is often not seen as a social justice role and the care work involved also goes unnoticed. The interpreters worked to create conditions for the D/deaf community's empowerment, speaking out against injustices, culturally mediating even after an interpreting assignment is complete, striving to aid where they can because they realize they are among the few members on campus who can linguistically connect with the D/deaf students. It is unwritten rule to success. The action part of Deaf-Heart is a naturalized part of the invisible body labor the interpreters must perform, which is an embodied experience of labor that Kang (2010) wrote in her research over invisible body labor of nail salon workers. It is both written in Code of Professional Conduct, and unwritten in how it feels and looks when being done. The care work aspect of this study is different than the literature and can help with framing of this profession's relationship with burnout.

The layout of the work setting is also another identified pull factor. The interpreters discussed variety in settings and flexible hours as something they appreciate about their jobs. This flexibility is both an appeal and a stressor for this site. For instance, the interpreters expressed concerns about their job if they were unable to accept assignments. They also felt pressured to work overtime and come to work when ill. Arbitrary demands and interpreters concern for their jobs turned the flexibility aspect into push factor.

This case provides insight into how interpreting in this site (like other care professions) struggle with tensions between the individual orientation versus a community and system orientation. The problem with care work is we think of the workers as individuals who are providing the care, and they think of themselves as individuals providing care. These conceptions are where the damage is done. In contrast, a social foundations lens encourages us to consider the role of context, structure, and systems as shaping the positioning and experiences of individuals. In the findings, the interpreters describe feeling exhausted, like they had no handle on balance, that *they* felt like *they* must sacrifice themselves to be available for the D/deaf students. Again,

the danger in this thinking is the interpreters feel because their abilities are so unique and they have this desire to provide, they become caught up in the norms, practices, and hegemony of the system by giving and sacrificing to help. Even though helping is a pull factor, like “flexibility” of occupations that was previously discussed, the care work and desire to help turned into a push factor. Together the care work and flexibility may have met the immediate needs of the women and the institution, but it relies on an individualist frame rather than an orientation to teams, resources, and humane care work for interpreters in context. In fact, these two factors combined with other institutional dynamics point to experiences that might burn people out.

The mindset is that issues will occur at the individual level and therefore the fault of and responsibility of the individual to address. By framing issues as individual in nature, it takes the perspective away from the structure that creates this environment. Considering this case through a social foundations lens forces a shift in perspective. The details of interpreter’s individual experiences reveal a variety of common patterns: the pockets of care in teams and student service; the orientation to social justice; discrimination against interpreters and D/deaf students; ableism that shapes ignorance about interpreting and the D/deaf community, the burden of educating about their work role, and examples of an unsupportive university structure. This context is not individual at all. Instead, it is *structural*. The pull factors of this profession need holistic and ethical support beyond the linguistic and communication skills. This means is that we are looking beyond individualism to instead see these processes as structural and cultural that pull in those who want to serve. Past studies about an interpreter’s success focus on individual qualities such as grit (McCarthy, 2016) and leadership (Chung & Bemak, 2011). This study is different from those studies because it identifies structural support as necessary because individual traits along with the pull factors are not enough to aid and keep interpreters in the profession. Ultimately, as it is reflected in the study, the culture and structure should be cultivated in ways to support this job.

The Push Factor

Neoliberalism and Itinerant Workers.

The case findings detail the factors that pushed several interpreters to leave the field. This finding of *the types of roles and structures* interpreters hold within the university maps out how the interpreters navigated these complexities. Like the section above, the *diversity of D/deaf students needs* and interpreting's *embodied demands* details how interpreters felt pushed to change careers which helps to answer RQ 1 about their experiences and perceptions of their work. The study takes an in-depth look into the processes that may have led up to that conclusion.

A significant aspect of my case study is the insights into *processes in one context* that exemplify how interpreting work can lead to exhaustion and burnout. This is the strongest message of my case. Studying processes of burnout in a particular case can help illustrate the formation of varied cultures to serve D/deaf students. Notably, research into the burnout and turnover in the interpreting field reaches back to Watson in 1987. Since Watson's (1987) study, scholars have studied burnout extensively in the interpreting field and my study's findings are consistent with the literature (Bower, 2015; Dean & Pollard, 2001; McCartney 2016; Powell, 2013; Schwenke, et al., 2015). However, another component my study adds to the literature is how it focuses on the educational context and the connection to neoliberal practices and the vulnerability certain types of working roles add to the interpreting profession. In the last decade or more, there has been a national shift to the "gig" economy. It means that workers do not have the stability of health insurance or in making a contribution to a retirement fund (Malos, 2018). Neoliberalism has shaped the nature of work. Instead of set working hours and promotions, we now have a "flexible" economic world. The various features of neoliberalism shape work roles, and thus, equity and experiences for workers in those roles. The university uses temporary, independent contractors to fulfill interpreting roles, and helps to prepare interpreters through informal internships. This is flexible for both sides; that's how it works to set up the situation. In some ways, this 'flexibility' is a pull factor. Yet it is also a push factor as well.

Why does considering the itinerant nature of the work matter to understanding context?

These interpreters are professional, skilled workers who work within a larger environment with limited resources from the university. By and large, they described not having benefits or stability that other university employees have and that position itself renders them vulnerable. The role itself is part of a larger restructuring of work and it manifests itself in particular ways on the bodies of interpreters. Majority of the interpreters were young women who were excited to enter the profession and the social justice, service work, the care work, and the values of this field (pull factors). Those women were caught up in the energy and value of the work. Yet, as the informal and stressful learning process and service process continued, after only a few years, many referred to exhaustion and burnout.

The Perfect Storm for Burnout.

This case exemplifies the “Perfect Storm” scenario to create burnout. The interpreting field gets enthusiastic young people who are pulled into the money, flexibility, care work, and social work, to dedicate years of training. Yet research demonstrates that interpreters can burnout early in their careers. The context operates within ADA requirements which is important for understanding how pressures can manifest themselves in a system and on the people within the system that serve D/deaf students, enforce ADA, and want to help. In my study, interpreters experience these institutional pressures. One way of seeing this play out is the informal internship role. This role is used to help prepare interpreters and help with the work and serve the university. ADA is about equity, but that does not mean it plays out in equitable ways in an institution that has hiring pressures, financial pressures, and limited number of people who can do this role.

Burnout happens from the perfect storm of having eager people wanting to help, inadequate skills and resources to handle the workload (Cogen & Cokley, 2015), and the invisible care work of the profession (McCartney, 2017). All these features were at work in this context.

While the interpreters were highly skilled from their experiences, the unique needs of the setting (varied courses, constantly changing schedules, insufficient team members) demanded at times more than their skills could provide. The education system did not teach interpreters the message of balance. Because people needed to be helped and the interpreters have the skills to help, they allowed themselves to be overworked. Therefore, it is useful to think how these characteristics might become a perfect storm of how burnout can happen. This case speaks to the need for more support, resources---and holistic education for ASL interpreters—in this context to help see what it looks like to have a healthy work life for an interpreter. This point both connects and adds to the literature about university interpreting. By the end of the study, two more interpreters left the profession. In total, of the seven participants, five left the field.

Education – Training – Awareness

The University.

The case study reveals a strong need for more training and exposure for faculty of interpreter and student needs. While some resources What is being done is not enough. The data points to experiences that reflect disability access issues. This section is about providing the needed accommodations without sacrificing those who serve in the interpreting role.

Faculty and staff need to be aware of the D/deaf student's accommodations, which includes the use of an interpreter. The participants explained instances when faculty were helpful or, in contrast, what would have been helpful. What these professors and staff members did differently was respecting the interpreters and D/deaf students by asking what they could do to be accommodating. These faculty would check to make sure captions were correct and provided transcripts to an audio as extra support. The accommodating professor was intentional about the necessary visual resources for D/deaf students and made it a point to provide the interpreter space to set up in the classroom that works best with both D/deaf students and interpreters. All notes,

lectures, and slide shows were made available in plenty of time for interpreters and D/deaf students to study before they came to class. These professors were aware that interpreters would need to create many of the signs prior to class because of specialized vocabulary in each class. The accommodating faculty look directly at the D/deaf student when they speak and only bring interpreters into the conversation when it involves an accessibility issue. Helpful professors are also aware of the pace and volume of their voice when they lecture because of the wearying effect of rapid speed on solo interpreters. Faculty would be intentional in educating themselves about D/deaf culture and interpreters' needs and therefore would ask specific questions to the D/deaf student about what best fits their needs with respect to the diversity of D/deaf people, their language preferences, and resources.

The university seems to approach the interpreter role as the same as other contractor roles within the broader practice of 'flexible' job roles. And yet not all work roles are the same. The organizational structure at the university means the interpreter's work is tied to D/deaf student's real needs. The culture is also unique because only a few people in the entire university can communicate with D/deaf students. Since the structure and culture has particular con on the bodies of interpreters, knowledgeable people who understand work-life balance and what burns interpreters out need to be contributing to the scheduling.

The built environment of any university context is also important to consider. The data reveals that some campus classrooms do not have space where an interpreter can place their chair where the student can still have a line of sight of all needed information. The design of the large lecture hall means that the distance between the stage and the first row of seats is not large enough to squeeze in a chair. The interpreters will have to sit on the ledge of the stage without proper back support to provide a clear, signing space for the D/deaf student to access. Faculty and staff need to know about the importance of these issues and accommodations.

Such accommodations might aid in preventing unnecessary physical stress on interpreters. For example, one interpreter described a consistent back injury she sustained while interpreting and another having consistent shoulder issues that a chiropractor diagnosed as caused from improper posture during sustained use of her muscles. This reflects common confusion, misunderstandings or even dismissals of the unique nature of interpreters' work and their bodily placement to serve students. Interpreters need to know about this physical care. Institutions can create accommodations and space designs where interpreters and D/deaf students can maneuver comfortably. Otherwise, this places a burden on both groups as they must solve the problem that neither created. Other issues with design throughout the university involves lighting and visibility in common areas. Natural lights are best on the eyes and designing spaces with this in mind eases strain on D/deaf students and their interpreters who must visually process language.

Interpreting Educators and Mentors.

There is a need for holistic education for interpreter that moves beyond only learning the language. Interpreting trainers, mentors, and teachers all need to be explicit about the realities of the profession. With changes in approaches to teaching and preparing interpreters, they can learn the language with a broader philosophy rather than simply 'training' to communicate. The university is an educational environment with D/deaf students so it's an ideal place to do this type of preparation of interpreters. As indicated in the research, there is vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, the education, and grit needed to handle the daily grind of this role. The data in this study also links to the literature about the stress on interpreters' bodies (Qin, et al., 2008) development of musculoskeletal disorders (Delisle, et al., 2005) and other physical and mental health issues (Crezee, et al., 2015). These characteristics need to be clearly discussed. This is the only way that interpreters can be "proactive" instead of "reactive" to what they face in the field. Yet, this is only half of the battle. Interpreters can only prepare so much about what to expect in the interpreting field. There comes a point when entities will also have to take the initiative and the responsibility

of taking care of their employees to promote their health and longevity in the field. Settings can include target resources tailored to promote the success of interpreters. It will do a service to the interpreters and ultimately to the D/deaf students. The elements of a job that are known to burnout employees must be combatted with education, training, and forced accountability by the institutions that hire the sign language interpreters.

Job Demands Resources Research

While the Job Demands Resources theoretical framework (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) was insufficient to reveal any of the structural or cultural aspects of the case to help consider the interpreters' experiences in context, there were also some valuable insights from the JDR model with which I began the study. First, the interpreters described their working environment and identified several demands they experienced over the years. The demands include the physicality of the work, long hours, adjusting to diverse language needs, lack of support, and lack of awareness of interpreter's work by other professionals on campus, inability to take breaks, and poor managerial skills of supervisors. The stress described by the interpreters matches the literature that also finds interpreting environments with high strenuous settings as leading to "fatigue, injury, and burnout" (Bower, 2013; Schwenke, 2015, p. 2).

Next, the resources of a job include physical, mental, social, and even organizational structures all in place to support an employee in managing their workplace demands. The interpreters identified physical resources such as workshops and teaming. Lastly, using resources to help take care of themselves and understanding their bodies as more than just tools to help them withstand the physicality of the labor of interpreting over time. The findings reveal that there are both resources that are crucial to the interpreters as well as specific resources that the interpreters are lacking that would help them have more effective communication.

The findings of this study match the strains noted in the literature associated with interpreter burnout (Bower, 2015; Dean & Pollard, 2010; Knodel, 2018; Qin, et al., 2008; Wessling & Shaw, 2014). Strains experienced by the interpreters at this site include physical, mental, and emotional stress. Specifically, some felt a lack of autonomy and little control over their work conditions which led to more toxicity in their environment. The interpreters exhibited extreme strain, and as one of the most moving moments in the collection of the data, one interpreter, with tears in her eyes, said “The majority of the people that do work here are burnt-out. I mean currently I don’t want to work here”. After almost ten years of interpreting with the university, she turned in her resignation.

Motivation to stay in the field include engagement with other interpreters, students, and the community and culture of D/deaf people. A point made by each interpreter was that the system at the university did not create a space for acknowledgement of improvement, give rewards, or a means to recognize workers. The document analysis of the collages from the three interpreters in the focus group revealed an overall joy for interpreting. Their purpose and motivation for staying in the field comes just as much from within them (i.e., sense of fulfillment and achievement) as it does from outside forces (i.e., their love for the community and language).

Conclusions

Implications and Significance of the Study

The sign language interpreting profession is a critical component to D/deaf and hard of hearing student’s access into K-12 and higher education. As D/deaf students have more access to language as children and become bilingual (ASL and English) and bicultural (hearing and D/deaf cultures), they are well equipped to attend mainstream colleges around the United States. The interpreters working for current and future students need to also be equipped with the skills and knowledge of interpreting in the collegiate terrain. What this means is a different type of

education for interpreters needs to occur so they know how to think about act to ensure this as a long term career. This change would be in the approach to educating interpreters. Research is available about specific settings of interpreting, but only a few studies look at higher education interpreters. The collegiate setting is important because of the variety of assignments, ranges of complexity, and diverse language users creating a demanding work environment for interpreters to navigate.

The collection of stories and experiences of the interpreters working at the university has much to offer the field of professional interpreting, interpreter education, and general education to the population who unfamiliar with interpreters and D/deaf people. It really extends a blistering commentary on the absence of attention to interpreting labor of the profession and making visible the gendered dynamics of an occupation. More research is needed on the gendered dynamics of the profession and in college settings. The patterns and themes emerging from the data reveal that on top of previously reported demands from interpreting, there are demands at the collegiate setting that are going unmet. Once interpreters leave, they take knowledge, experience, skills, and countless hours of training on their part and from others with them (Cogen & Cokely, 2015; Dean & Pollard, 2005). The findings may also provide insight into reasons why interpreters leave the field, which may help inform future policy or curriculum in interpreting training programs and continuing professional practices. Studies in different fields about job turnover have prompted further investigation with the aim of mitigating demands by provided the needed resources.

For example, what are the implications of interpreter turnover for the D/deaf community? There are ethical, legal, and educational equity ramifications. The problem with insufficient numbers of interpreters, according to research, is not the recruitment of people to enter the interpreting profession (as demonstrated earlier through the pull factors), but rather the high turnover rates once they do enter (Bower, 2015; Cogen & Cokely, 2015; Dean & Pollard, 2001; Holmes, 2018; Schwenke, et al., 2014; Schwenke, 2015). Retaining interpreters will also help to

evaluate the field as more knowledge and expertise is able to build up and be passed on to the next generation of interpreters.

Bakker and Demerouti (2007) recognized the need for conducting more qualitative research using the JDR theory. On this level, the significance of the findings in the study can add to past literature dedicated to the JDR model and the Demand-Control Schema (Dean & Pollard, 2011). The rich description, narratives, and in-depth perspectives the interpreters shared cannot be captured the same way if this research used different means to collect and analyze the data. Even this small study, focusing on a one case and setting, provides valuable information about how interpreters perceive their work, navigate their environment, and ultimately some insights into what keeps them in field or drives them to leave the profession.

Implications for Theory.

Decades worth of studies have tied job characteristics with employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001; Karasek, 1979; Salanova et al., 2005; Siegrist, 1996; Taris & Feij, 2004). The research conducted exclusively uses surveys and statistical methods to gather and report the data. The study uses a developed model from theory and adds to the knowledge base by providing different type of findings from a qualitative research design. Allowing space for detailed explanation of experiences with demands and resources given in the employee's environment can add further depth to the study of employee well-being. More work on ableism and feminist theory tied to education and employment will greatly benefit the field.

Scholarship and theory regarding sign language interpreters have implications educationally, professionally, and managerially. Researchers have already noted that there is a lack of information about the experiences of working interpreters (Powell, 2013; Schwenke, 2012). Since interpreters are vital to the educational experience of D/deaf students, it is worth educational researchers to take on this topic to assess how interpreter's experience on the job may

have spillover effects on the students they work with. With findings like the physical exhaustion the interpreters report about and the comments they made about the D/deaf students at times not getting the best physical and mental state of the interpreters for various reasons (i.e., hours worked, lack of food). Taking the experiences of the interpreters seriously matters because their work “output” is not an end product; rather, it is a set of processes that affects the lives of D/deaf people. Consumers of interpreting services need to be aware of the factors that have negative and positive effects on the interpreter’s performance.

The findings highlight the need for open dialogue and research over interpreters working in the interpreting field in specific settings, such as at the university or medical setting. The study also gave the interpreters the opportunity to have their own voices heard. Professional interpreters doing independent contracting work in the community feel isolated, and if future research focus on the interpreting experience, the more can be added to the professional experiences once graduating students enter the field. Once more research is gathered, the pedagogy, curriculum, and mentorships can better reflect reality with the goal of improving the practice at every step.

Implications for Practice.

Some job strains interpreters experienced were tied to the positioning of the D/deaf program within the hearing university and the resources available for this unique work. Job strain (scheduling, lack of awareness, fatigue) connects to resources. A very well-resourced environment would reduce these kinds of strains. If scholars and other stakeholders in ASL interpreting field know more about how interpreters experience their work, they may be able to improve the practice. Directly relating to the university that employ interpreters, the findings of this study can give a deeper understanding to university officials that can implement change in how interpreters are treated at the university. Some interpreters did not feel confident in reporting their experiences in hopes of changing the system or their circumstances. Emphasizing the

avenues for voices of independent contractors can lead them to have more of a voice where they work. The study may help inform future policy or curriculum in interpreting training programs and continuing professional practices. The literature notes that burnout is a common problem with sign language interpreters, an area that has been studied since 1979 (Watson, 1979). Once out in the field, there is a need for more research as to what is making interpreters turn away from the profession.

Interpreters are actively taking on the role as an ally in their practice. One aspect of being an ally is self-evaluation and aiming to improve their practice. If interpreters are being put in environments that are not conducive to effective communication, then adjustments need to happen. By learning from their own demands, current interpreters can educate upcoming interpreters and prepare them for how to deal with issues such as burnout, injury from repetitive overuse syndrome, schedules that do not allow for you to take care of yourself, and how to utilize their teammates to maximize their benefits. It is noted in the literature that the quality of interpreting services received is associated with D/deaf students feeling connected to their classes, ability to participate, and graduating college (Convertino et al., 2009; Holmes, 2018; Lang, 2002). Knowing the importance of accurate interpretation on providing an equal and accessible college experience, then changing the practice of interpreters prioritizing their needs will be common practice taught from training programs and mentorships.

Implications for Educational Practices.

As previously stated, higher education interpreting is an important area of study with little research. The higher education institution is both a place in which interpreters work, one place in which interpreters learn their skills, and a vital space for D/deaf students to learn. The classroom is also a place that can prepare future interpreters for the realities of the field making this space critical in the development of the field and the type of interpreter that occurs. Asking

interpreters from all aeras (medical, legal, educational, community) to come and educate about their experiences can help to prepare future interpreters. Also, the guest lectures could serve as an interpreting community contact that students could use after they are in the field. Scholars have noted the benefits of formal mentors in the interpreting field (Dean & Pollard, 2001) and my case also exemplifies the value of experienced interpreters intentionally working with novice interpreters to help guide them through the field.

Intentional lectures about body work, self-care, and work life balance can also be incorporated in the classroom. Curriculum of educational training or mentorship did not, in my study, focus on interpreters as holistic beings. None of the interpreters discussed good self-care practices. An understanding and orientation to self-care is key element to the long-term survival in the field. Preparing students with resources before they enter the field and getting them may help curb some physical, mental, and emotional hardships that will show up in their career. Instead of training interpreters we could educate professionals. Education is holistic and engages the mind to think critically. Training prepares a person to perform a task. This profession has demands on the body. The demands can look like physical injuries, stress, anxiety, and burnout. This study also points to a pattern of identified in the literature, which is the critical nature of mentorship. Interpreters face challenges working alone after graduation without the guidance of a seasoned interpreter. My study details how stressful interpreting is and how training is not thorough enough to help these interpreters succeed. The field is difficult to navigate and even more so without the professional relationship of a seasoned interpreter, and this reality has implications for the novice interpreters and their future.

As previously stated, interpreting conferences continually call attention to the attrition and the need for the field to keep advancing educationally. This study helps make visible the particulars of an interpreter's experiences working in a higher education institution. From this knowledge, a curriculum and educational resources can be designed to help develop better

strategies to increase longevity in the field. Teaching interpreter holistically about the field, such as the needed body care or how it is a gendered profession, may help guide interpreters while they are at work and how to develop as professionals.

Interpreters are one step in the process of language and access for the D/deaf community. Ultimately, this research is for them, the D/deaf people who have faced many barriers throughout history. The D/deaf community has experienced many setbacks with language access and language ownership since D/deaf educational history started to be recorded. D/deaf access to society has remarkably increased, but the struggle still continues. The experience that can be passed down to each generation of interpreter is invaluable. Books, lessons, and practice compare little to the “hot seat” stories interpreters share with each other, the real and raw knowledge interpreters give to one another. Knowing the culture, language, past oppression, current oppression, and the road that lies ahead to build the bridges of communities rising and lifting each other up, makes this interpreting work critically important. Having skillful, knowledgeable, and experienced interpreters who have been in the field for multiple years increases the effectiveness of communication. Majority of D/deaf students who enter college will not finish. One avenue for improving the D/deaf experience is for future interpreters to receive a holistic education rather than just training. This education would help prepare interpreters humanely and skillfully for the job long term.

Implications for Research.

Future research about sign language interpreters can examine multiple cases across different colleges to get a better understanding of what is typical treatment of interpreters and what may have been atypical because of variables in the working environment. Previous studies about collegiate interpreters examined the accuracy of their work (Delisle, et al., 2005; Pirone, et al., 2018), how D/deaf students access college through interpreters (Convertino, et al., 2009;

Holmes, 2018; Marschark, et al., 2005) and burnout in the profession with Video Relay, mental health, and K-12 interpreters (Bower, 2015; Dean & Pollard, 2010; Knodel, 2018; Qin, et al., 2008; Wessling & Shaw, 2014). There is also a need for more research about interpreters' perspectives in every working environment. Gaining perceptions of the interpreters may lead to more information about the relationships and potential disconnects between the D/deaf and interpreting communities.

Another recommendation based off of a limitation of this study is conducting research at a university that also has a program specifically for D/deaf students to attend. Examples of this would be at a university like Rochester Institute of Technology that houses the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. A large number of D/deaf students attend RIT and there is a bachelor's degree program for sign language interpreting. If the demands are similar or different than the demands at the university in this study, further knowledge about policy or curriculum changes can be made at either site specific or university interpreting as a whole.

Additionally, like many other helping professions, white women dominate the field of sign language interpreters. It is worth studying the work environment along with the educational programs that train interpreters to see which factors of the profession appeal to white women and turn away others. The dominant white demographics of the ASL profession and the diverse demographics of D/deaf communities create a complicated dynamic. There are complex racial, gender, and class dynamics that can manifest in conflicts between the D/deaf and hearing interpreting communities and complicate assignment environments (Cogen & Cokely, 2015). Examining training institutions, intentionally recruiting minorities, and actively working toward diversity has value because it can better serve the D/deaf community that is made up of diverse background and cultures. D/deaf people having an interpreter who can represent them because they come from similar backgrounds is a step toward equity in interpreting services. Also, it is a step toward equity in intentionally creating space for people of color and from other cultural and

linguistic minority background to become a part of the profession and help change it for the good. Work that specifically teases out the why specific people are becoming interpreters while others are not and how that influences the language and the D/deaf community.

Future research can focus on other individuals that interact with interpreters within the case. For instance, D/deaf students, student interns, faculty, and staff. The staff who work on the administration side that deal with hiring interpreters and access for students with disabilities. There are also implications for research in terms of interviewing faculty and staff who work at university's that serve predominantly hearing students with a minority D/deaf student population. There is action research that could implement education changes about the D/deaf community and their needs. Designing a workshop that identified area that specifically accommodate people with disabilities and then studying the professor's classes who participate in this training could provide valuable information.

Lastly, the embodied experience of the interpreters needs further research. While it was not in the scope of this study to look at solely physical side of the work, the body labor required of interpreting was identified as contributing factors why some of the interpreters left the field. According to the JDR model, all jobs come with certain physical and mental cost due to the demands involved to complete tasks. Looking at resources that take care of interpreters and the physical wear on their bodies and the effects it has on their minds may help to reduce the number of interpreters who leave the profession.

Limitations

Originally, the program at the university was the case under study. Ideally, I would have liked to focus on the program, its history and other contextual factors to holistically describe and present the program in depth and detail. I did include components about the setting that helped situate the interpreters as contract workers who work in an institutional structure with certain

roles and support within the setting. However, because of confidentiality and the nature of access to certain information, I could not focus on the program as much as I would have liked.

The individual case narratives are not being presented in this case for confidentiality reasons, as well. Ethically, it was not appropriate to report identifying information that could be linked to a singular interpreter due to the nature of reporting experiences that criticizes the interpreters' work experiences. Without this extra layer of protection, aligned with ethical practices of research supported through IRB, many of the interpreters would not have felt comfortable documenting their experiences. Power works in institutions. Protecting the anonymity of the participants was a necessary tradeoff for the standard presentation of individual case narratives. My positionality as an "insider-outsider" (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) and status as an interpreter gives insight of being an interpreter and access to the interpreters at the institution. On the other hand, my insights could create a limitation in the study.

Chapter VI Summary

Seven former and current sign language interpreters working in the university setting were interviewed to examine their lived experiences. The study used the Job Demands-Resources model in identifying work characteristics including demands, resources, strains, and motivations. This study found a strong connection between job demands, developed strains, and burnout at this university. The study also identified how the university setting has its own specific demands that can be addressed to help reduce job turnover.

Implications for scholarship for the study suggest that further understanding of the Job Demands-Resources model can occur with more studies taking the qualitative research design utilizing interviews and observations. The typical JDR research uses surveys and statistical analysis of their data. By changing the research design and epistemology guiding the research, detailed explanations and narratives from participants can add depth and richness to the JDR

model and its use on specific jobs. Implications for practice include seeking out interpreters to relay their stories and knowledge so a more complete understanding of their work experience can be made. By understanding more of what real life interpreting is like at particular locations, then curriculum design, assigning mentorship, and future research studies can be modified to specifically incorporate the interpreter's experiences.

Future research is needed to examine other collegiate institutions to compare the demands the interpreter's experience. More studies about the demands and resources available for this specific type of interpreting are needed as more D/deaf students enter colleges that require interpreters to access course content. Furthermore, continuing research on the embodied experiences of interpreters and why a particular demographic is dominating the field.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A



Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: 12/09/2019
Application Number: ED-19-163
Proposal Title: Collegiate Sign Language Interpreting: A Case Study

Principal Investigator: Taylor Woodall-Greene
Co-Investigator(s):
Faculty Adviser: Ben Bindewald
Project Coordinator:
Research Assistant(s):

Processed as: Exempt
Exempt Category:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in 45CFR46.

This study meets criteria in the Revised Common Rule, as well as, one or more of the circumstances for which continuing review is not required. As Principal Investigator of this research, you will be required to submit a status report to the IRB triennially.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be approved by the IRB. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, adviser, other research personnel, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any unanticipated and/or adverse events to the IRB Office promptly.
4. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the IRB Office at 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,
Oklahoma State University IRB

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

COLLEGIATE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING: A CASE STUDY

Taylor Woodall-Greene

Interview Protocol

General Background Information

1. Could you tell me a little bit about yourself (e.g., where you grew up, family, cultural background, etc.)?

Relationships with Deaf People

2. Did you have any relationships with deaf people prior to entering the interpreting profession?
3. If so, what were those relationships like?

Entering the Field of Interpreting

1. What attracted you to the profession of sign language interpreting?
2. What qualifications were required to enter the field?
3. What was the transition like when you first began working in the profession?

Nature of Work

1. What does your typical day look like?
2. What type of workload do you carry during the semester?
3. Are there any particular courses that you prefer working in?
4. Are there particular skills or background knowledge that help you in those courses?

Rewards/Demands of Interpreting

1. What engages you the most about interpreting?
2. Can you tell me about a time you have ever felt rewarded or recognized in your work?
3. What are some of the challenges that you have faced in your work?

Work-Life Balance/Self-Care

1. What do you do after work?
2. What type of self-care practices do you partake in?
3. How would you describe your work/life balance?
4. Do you utilize any resources that help you in your profession?
5. If so, where do you obtain these resources?
6. If so, could you explain how they help?

The Culture

1. What are some pros and cons of working as a sign language interpreter at this university?
2. Are there any specific support systems you turn to when you need help navigating workplace demands?

Closure

1. Do you have anything to else you would like to say that you believe would be a meaningful addition to this interview?

Appendix C

Focus Group Protocol

COLLEGIATE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING: A CASE STUDY

Taylor Woodall-Greene

Focus Group Protocol

The one focus group interview will consist of 3-7 participants. Subjects will give their consent one week prior to the interview. The primary investigator will discuss the consent document to the participants. Participants will not fill out a demographics sheet for the discussion. A break will be provided during the middle of the two-hour focus group interview.

The consent of the participants will include consent to record the interview session, the measures taken for confidentiality, and their option to withdraw.

Introduction:

Welcome! I want to thank you all for participating in this focus group interview. Today's purpose is discussing your experiences as sign language interpreters. The topics for this focus group will center around interpreting at the university both in your teaming experience and as a solo interpreter for an assignment. The goal is to gain further understanding to the type of work university interpreters perform. By doing a focus group interview, the intended effect is for all to contribute to the discussion, recall specific scenarios together, and generate discussion that leads to greater insight and understanding of the interpreter's experience.

Questions:

Interpreting: Working in teams

1. Could you tell me about the team interpreting environment?
2. What do you think makes team interpreting beneficial?

Working at the University

1. Can you tell me about the university setting of interpreting?
2. Can you tell me why or why not teams are necessary in this setting?
3. Do you recall a time when you as a solo interpreter or as a team struggled for a particular assignment?
4. Can you recall a time when you felt assignment was successful?

The Culture

1. What are some pros and cons of working as a sign language interpreter at this university?
2. Are there any specific support systems you turn to when you need help navigating workplace demands?

Closure

1. Do you have anything to else you would like to say that you believe would be a meaningful addition to this interview?

VITA

Taylor Woodall-Greene

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: COLLEGIATE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING: A CASE STUDY

Major Field: Social Foundations of Education

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Social Foundations of Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2021.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in International Studies at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater Oklahoma, May 2016

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in American Studies, Oklahoma State University Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2015

Experience: Advanced coursework in qualitative methodologies, theoretical foundations of inquiry, statistics, research methods, and analysis of variance.

Experience designing and collecting qualitative data with the Deaf community and professionals who serve them. Quantitative data collection and analysis experience in research pertaining to program design and international comparative education

Professional Memberships:

- Member of the American Education Research Association.
 - Member of the Biographical and Documentary Research, Research on Deaf Persons, Social Context of Education Special Interest Group
 - Member of the Society of Philosophy and History of Education
- Member of Phi Beta Kappa of Oklahoma State University Chapter