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Let's bridge the gap! Cross-cultural mentoring

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Let's Bridge the Gap! Cross-Cultural Mentoring

By

Royce M. Carpenter

A thesis submitted to Western Oregon University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:

Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies

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WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE GRADUATE FACULTY OF WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY HAVE EXAMINED THE ENCLOSED

☑ Thesis

☐ Field Study

☐ Professional Project

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Lets Bridge the Gap! Cross-Cultural Mentoring

Graduate Student: Royce M. Carpenter

Candidate for the degree of : Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies

and hereby certify that in our opinion it is worthy of acceptance as partial fulfillment of the requirements of this master's degree.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Let's Bridge the Gap! Cross-Cultural Mentoring

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Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies

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Few Black students graduate from signed language interpreting programs across the United States and even fewer continue practicing in the signed language interpreting field. Black Deaf consumers are often left with White interpreters who know little of Black cultural norms, and the complexity of cultural information is sometimes mishandled while messages are relayed (Shambourger, 2015). The longevity and numbers of Black interpreters in the field of signed language interpreting needs to increase, and Interpreter Training Programs should be trailblazers in this effort (West-Oyedele, 2015). In addition, many White interpreters in the field need to learn about the cultural norms, and linguistic features of Black Deaf and Black hearing consumers (Shambourger, 2015). Such learning could take place in cross-cultural mentoring relationships with Black interpreters.

Black interpreters are already mentoring, but as the numbers of Black students entering the field grows, the need for seasoned interpreter mentors also grows. In some areas of the country, especially rural areas, there may be no experienced Black interpreters. A Black student or beginning interpreter may, therefore, need to seek out a White interpreter to help support their entrance and growth into the interpreting field. Through conversations and interactions with Black mentees, White mentors could gain knowledge of Black cultural norms and linguistic features, thereby enhancing their interpreting for the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities they serve. At the same time, Black interpreters may be encouraged to continue in the interpreting field from cross-cultural relationships with White interpreters who support skills development and introduction to professional norms and other interpreters.

This qualitative study was designed to ascertain whether cross-cultural mentoring relationships between Black signed language interpreter mentees and White signed language interpreter mentors could increase the number of Black interpreters persevering in the field of signed language interpreting. Two focus groups—one group of Black interpreters and one group of White interpreters—of varying ages, who all attended Interpreter Training Programs, were used as data sources. In this study the findings indicated that there is much ground to be covered before cross-cultural mentoring can become routine.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background

I am a signed language interpreter and an instructor at an Interpreter Training Program (ITP). In the city where I reside, I am one of only two certified Black signed language interpreters; there are 38 certified White interpreters. I use the term Black, as that is how I identify. The term is also used to refer to Black interpreters who identify as Black and have experienced Black cultural upbringing, knowledge of cultural norms and issues of the Black community. Yearly, there are not many Black people who graduate from the ITP where I teach and fewer who have continued in the interpreting profession long term. Among members of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), only 4.9% of signed language interpreters self-reported as Black (RID, n.d.).

I mentor students and graduates who are Black and White. After mentoring for several years, I started to get overwhelmed with all of my mentees. I was burdened by the fact that I could not give as much time as I needed to each of them equally. I decided to approach some White interpreter colleagues to ask them to take on mentoring of some of my mentees and help to develop their skills. To my surprise, I was met with apprehension when the White interpreters realized the prospective mentees were Black. When I inquired about the reason for the apprehension, they would convey a feeling of inadequacy because of cultural factors that may be present during a mentor/mentee relationship. They expressed that they would not be able to adequately address those needs.

As a Black person, I first felt disappointed, then saddened that these interpreters, with all of their wonderful skills, were not able or willing to give back to another interpreter due to fears of cultural issues that may arise. I had mentored many White graduates and interpreters over the years without judgment or apprehension of their identity, where they came from, or even how uncomfortable I may be from their life experiences. As I continued to reflect on the issue, I started to consider that the fear the White interpreters felt was due to the lack of knowledge of the Black Deaf and Black hearing culture and a lack of recognition that this knowledge was even needed. I thought back to my own experience in my associate degree ITP and remembered that I had no Black instructors and no education about working with Black Deaf and Black hearing consumers. There was no literature presented on Black Deaf perspectives, even though there were narratives on the lives of Black Deaf people (for example, see Hairston & Smith, 1998).   My education was White Deaf and White hearing majority centered.

The ITP I attended did a wonderful job in bringing in many White Deaf people for us to interact with and learn their cultural norms and language styles, but there were no Black Deaf guests. The only time Black hearing people were discussed was in a linguistics class and the discussion was about Ebonics[1] being the native language of Black people. There was no discussion about signing styles or cultural differences between Black and White Deaf people, which has been studied (see, for example, Arumburo, 1989). Therefore, it stood to reason that my fellow White interpreters might have had similar lack of Black cultural educational experiences. As stated, I have grown up as a Black person in a Black-centered upbringing. I learned of racial issues the Black

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[1] Ebonics—A variation of English used by Black people that has structure and rules impacted by social and geographic influences (McCaskill et al., 2011).

community faced. I read literature by Black writers and Black political activists and grew up aware of Black cultural norms. I learned White cultural norms all through my formative years in school. White Deaf cultural norms were learned in my ITP. I had already been prepared to mentor Black and White students and interpreters by having education: formal, in the case of White culture, and lived and learned, in the case of Black culture. After all these considerations, I decided to focus this thesis on cross-cultural mentoring.

Many Black mentors have had the same educational experience as I have: They grew up knowing about Black history and culture and they attended an ITP that was White centered. In this study, I examine how White interpreters can mentor Black interpreters when needed. The White interpreter mentor can aide Black interpreters with skill development and introduce Black mentees to people in the field who can also be of assistance in their professional growth. The Black mentee can share with the White interpreter mentor insights into Black cultural norms, history, language, and linguistic features that the White interpreters were not privy to in their ITP programs or their daily lives.

Statement of the Problem

The dearth of Black signed language interpreter mentors has left a void of support, knowledge, and examples for incoming Black interpreters in this field as has occurred in other professional fields (West-Oyedele, 2015). From my experience asking for help from the White community of interpreters in my area, I have surmised that there are not enough White interpreters who feel they are able to handle the cultural dynamics of the Black communities, or they are not willing to commit to the task of learning Black

cultural narratives and nuances. The White interpreters have a majority position of power, whether they are fully cognizant of that fact or not. People with power and the powerless have a hard time figuring out how to communicate with each other (Lozano-Reich & Cloud, 2009). Those with power do not recognize the need for conversation with the powerless. If you have no power how can you entice the people with the power that the dialogue is worth their time? Racial inequities are a hard topic to broach. This issue is not going to be an easy topic for Black or White interpreters. The first step is recognizing that there is an issue in the interpreting field and interpreter education regarding racial inequalities. Until this recognition takes place, nothing can change (Li, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to highlight the lack of cultural education on the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities in ITPs and how the lack of dialogue on the topic has left some interpreters in the field lacking in cross-cultural narratives and understanding. Can looking at ways to build mentor/mentee relationships between two culturally diverse groups (Black and White), that have not historically shared cultural information in the field of signed language interpreting, bridge the cultural knowledge gap and increase the number of Black interpreters persisting in the field of signed language interpreting?

In this study, I wanted to know if any education related to the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities was taught in ITPs and how the education, or lack thereof, affected interpreters working with those in the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities. I asked both the Black and White interpreters what their comfort level was

working with consumers of the opposite ethnicity. I also asked what their experience was working within the interpreting community of practitioners with interpreters of a different ethnicity than their own. After gathering literature and reviewing the findings from both focus groups I realized my question—whether cross-culturing mentoring would increase the numbers of Black interpreters—is premature. There has to first be recognition that an inequitable burden still exists. The onus of responsibility for education about the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities is still on the novice Black interpreter. There also seems to be no urgency or real perceived benefit for White interpreters that I asked to seek engagement in this type of mentoring relationship, most likely due to an unknown or unrecognized amount of privilege in the signed language field. After 69 years of interpreter education programs, there is still not a full-length class (either semester or quarter length) devoted to the knowledge of the Black Deaf community in most interpreting programs across the country. The Black Deaf community comprising a large community that has a national organization, National Black Deaf Advocates, and prominent Black Deaf people, such as the first Black Deaf lawyer, Claudia Gordon, that can be studied (NBDA, n.d.). There is more work to be done!

Theoretical Bases

This research is based in Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Bell (n.d.) a Critical Race Theorist, asserts that racial injustice is endemic in American culture and systematically oppresses persons of color individually and in groups. History, education and economic systems perpetuate continued racial inequality by the choice of curriculum focused on ethnocentrism (Delgado, 1995; Delgado, Stefancic, and Harris, 2017). Historically, the education of interpreters has only included White Deaf culture, without

regard for the Black Deaf culture and Black hearing culture; this also occurred in Deaf residential schools (McCaskill, Lucas, Bayley, & Hill, 2011). Looking through the lens of CRT, this exclusion implicitly lessening value, education, services, and access of Black Deaf and Black hearing people. It perpetuates the idea that White Deaf and White hearing cultures are the only correct perspectives worth teaching and learning.

Race still matters in education, politics, and social justice in America. To deny the idea that race is significant is to prolong the remedy (Delgado, 1995). After the United States elected a Black President, senseless deaths of Black men by the hands of a few police officers without repercussion and the increasing economic and educational divide between Blacks and Whites highlights the fact that race still matters (Guhin, 2016; Shapiro, Meschede, & Osoro, n. d.). Knowledge of oppressed people's experiences and stories, as told by them, along with understanding of their unique linguistic nature and cultural understandings can inform and provide growth to the majority White culture (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This knowledge can be applied to the interpreting community and lead to increased sustainability of Black interpreters, increased effectiveness of services experienced by Black Deaf consumers, stronger ties among colleagues, and a richer base of the profession.

Limitations of the Study

The primary limitation of this study was the geographical area from which participants were chosen. The area was limited to a single Midwest state. There could possibly be regional differences unaccounted for in this research that might influence the findings. The study is also limited to two groups: Black and White. There are Hispanic, Asian, Muslim, and other minority groups not represented. Those groups can be added in

future research for a broader perspective. The study was limited by not having Certified

Deaf Interpreters (CDI), as there is only one in the area studied, and this could exclude an

important perspective. The study is limited in terms of interpreter experience, as none of

the participants had 20 or more years of service in the field. The data of these 10

participants is not necessarily generalizable at this point, and yet it points to potential

areas that are lacking.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In looking at the historical inequalities in the education of Black and White Deaf consumers and the lack of education regarding the Black Deaf and Black hearing cultures in ITPs, I spotlight how these two things influenced the insufficient education of signed language interpreters about the Black communities. Historically, Black and White people were segregated; this was no different in the Deaf communities. The lack of language sharing early on and the dearth of shared knowledge of the Black Deaf community have not encouraged open communication between Black and White Deaf individuals and Black and White interpreters on race, culture and certainly not cross-cultural mentorship. Consumers who are Black and Deaf suffer, as some White interpreters do not adequately know how to serve those consumers' intersectionality. Intersectionality is the multifaceted burden of racism from having more than one minority status label (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). These consumers have realities that differ from the interpreting service provider, and thus the onus should be on the interpreter service provider to know that and do something to be better equipped to serve this population. In chapter two the educational timeline of Black and White Deaf people in America and interpreter training program's progression is chronicled, and critical race theory, trust, and mentorship are explored in relationship to cross-cultural mentorship.

Education

Knowing what has happened in the past teaches the ways of the future (Pinkley, 2015). It is important to examine Black Deaf history as well as White Deaf educational

history. In 1817, Clerc and Gallaudet started a school for Deaf people that was only available to White Deaf people (Ball, 2013). The Kendall School for the Deaf was located in Washington D. C. and would eventually become Gallaudet University (Stapleton, 2014). From 1898 to 1905, 14 Black Deaf students lived on the Kendall school property, but there was so much dissension from White people that Gallaudet asked a senator to help draft legislation that forced Black Deaf children to be sent to the Maryland School for Colored Deaf-Mutes in Overlea, Maryland (Jowers-Barber, 2008). The school was not an official school for Black Deaf children, but was seen as a "separate but equal" place to be educated. Black children were forced from Gallaudet University's campus, and for many decades thereafter Black Deaf students were not allowed to attend the school on Gallaudet's grounds (Stapleton, 2014).

This separation of education along with segregation and the lack of collaboration between Black and White Deaf people lasted for years. Possibly no cultural sharing took place during these years, even though both White Deaf people and Black Deaf people were both oppressed minority groups. A law in 1864 recognized the need for higher education of White Deaf people (Ball, 2013). It was not until 1868 that an official school for Black Deaf children officially emerged (Stapleton, 2014). The school educated Black Deaf children with no mention anywhere about the need for higher education of Black Deaf adults. It was not until 1951, just over 60 years ago, that the first Black Deaf applicant Andrew Foster was enrolled into Gallaudet University (Gallaudet, n. d.).

The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) is the largest advocacy organization for Deaf people (NAD, n.d.). McCaskill et al. (2011) explained how NAD originally allowed Black Deaf people into the association, but a change occurred in 1925 and NAD

renounced Black Deaf people's membership within the organization. They were no longer members and that discriminatory behavior was written into NAD bylaws. Not until 1964, 39 years after NAD was established, did the organization's leaders allow Black Deaf people on their rosters (McCaskill et al., 2011). The 1960s were a tumultuous time in the United States, and it is interesting that the field of interpreting began to emerge here, during the Civil Rights movement, for "equal" access for the Deaf and the interpreting profession. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) was established during those years in 1964 (Hurwitz, n.d.). The question is equal for whom?

For another support outlet, Deaf clubs were used to connect Deaf people so they could discuss the issues of the times, play games, and stay connected (Shaw & Roberson, 2013). During the 1950s and 1960s, there were several White Deaf clubs, but they did not allow Black Deaf people to attend (Stapleton, 2014). This meant a Black Deaf person, who experienced great accomplishments, could not go to a White Deaf club to celebrate such accomplishments. Black Deaf people needed a safe haven and a place to celebrate one another; they began establishing Black Deaf clubs after WWII and before National Black Deaf Advocates (NBDA) was formed (Solomon, 2010).

Racial discrimination and forced separation of the times influenced linguistic signing differences for Black Deaf people, referred to as Black ASL (Aramburo, 1989; McCaskill et al., 2011). Black ASL evolved in much the same way Black hearing people developed Black English during a time of racial apartheid in the United States (McCaskill et al., 2011). During the separation of Black and White Deaf people, the sharing of Black ASL with White Deaf people was limited, at best, across the country. The literature does not describe who the first interpreters might have been for Black Deaf people during

racial segregation, but family and people who worked with Deaf people and learned their language are known to be the first unofficial interpreters in many communities (Cokely, 2005). The Black family and friends who were segregated and spoke Black English at that time possibly interpreted for the Black Deaf people and most likely had an influence on the evolution on Black ASL (McCaskill et al., 2011).

Signed language education emerged at Central Bible Institute in 1948 (Ball, 2013). There was no mention of teaching diversity at the start of interpreter education. Moreover, because the educators of interpreters at the time were all White, and segregation was still a part of the American fabric, it stands to reason that there was no way to transmit the Black cultural narrative information to White interpreters. During the 1970s, training programs for interpreter educators started honing in on particular aspects to teach future interpreters in curriculum, including sign language vocabulary and ethical decision choices (Ball, 2013). But segregation of Black Deaf and White Deaf students also continued through the 1970s in several states (Stapleton, 2014). Thus, there was no effort to include culturally relevant materials into interpreting programs.

The following decade saw interpreter educators beginning to discuss increasing the knowledge of deaf cultural aspects and hearing cultural aspects, specifically White deaf and White hearing cultural aspects (Ball, 2013). At the same time, Black Deaf people were struggling to be heard and valued by White Deaf people. Even though Black Deaf people were finally allowed to join NAD, they were not being accepted or helped in their struggles as Deaf Americans. For them access did not mean equality. At the 1980 NAD convention, Black Deaf people tried to make their concerns known to the White Deaf majority about concerns related to Black Deaf, but to no avail (Stapleton, 2014). A

new organization, the National Black Deaf Advocates (NBDA), was born in 1982 as a result of frustration and a desire to advocate for themselves and other Deaf minorities (NBDA, n. d.).

In the 1990s, several committees and organizations emerged to focus on interpreter education, namely the Educational Standards Committee and the Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (CCIE; Adamiak & Curtis, 2016). CCIE was originally established under the Conferefnce of Interpreter Trainers (CIT, n.d.). CCIE is the body that sets standards and accredits Interpreter Education Programs (CCIE, n.d.). If standards were to be set for cultural education, this association would have possibly been the catalyst. This is addressed minimally in Standards 1.3, admonishing respect for diversity, and 4.6, speaking of diverse faculty and education on diversity for students, but these standards lump gender, race, sexual orientation together and the intersectionality of the language in the standards does not require all intersections be addressed (CCIE, n.d.). The 1990s also saw the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the rise of video relay services that both increased the need for interpreters and educators of interpreters to be able to adequately connect people between geographically and ethnically diverse communities (Curtis, 2016). No cultural education is given to White interpreters about Black Deaf and Black hearing nuances, which leaves Black Deaf with inadequate services. In addition, Black interpreters face a myriad of insensitive racial situations from White callers and some of their White colleagues (Olopade, 2017).

A report was written regarding the educational experiences of interpreters of color in interpreter education programs, but the co-authors are White (Cokely & Schafer, 2016). One could question why there were no Black co-authors involved in chronicling

the Black experience. In the report, many Black interpreters echoed the feelings of isolation and lack of education related to minority cultural information or relevant cultural vocabulary. The information also suggested that White interpreters also did not benefit from culturally related materials, which in turn hinders their ability to adequately serve Black Deaf people. Their "Professional Identity" has not included knowledge to make them successful and confident when interpreting for the Black Deaf community (Harwood, 2017).

Diverse people use code switching. Code switching is when a person can traverse two linguistic group norms when necessary or prudent (Morton, 2014). A possible reason for code switching is to ensure the person receiving the message has the benefit of understanding, even at the discomfort of the giver of the message. Black Deaf people will code switch to accommodate a White person's lack of comprehension of Black ASL when the White interpreter should be linguistically competent to satisfy the needs of the Deaf consumer (Oyedele, 2015; Shambourger, 2015). Black Interpreters have used code switching in their personal life to progress in conventional society (Koch, Gross, & Kolts, 2001). In the 2014 and 2015 Annual Reports (RID, 2014; 2015), the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) reported demographic information about its members. Out of the members who self-identified, the report said there were 8,400 Euro American and 460 Black members in 2014, and 8,848 Euro American and 498 Black members in 2015. Marginalized Deaf people have unique needs relating to their communication and their life experiences and status in their world (Cokely & Schafer, 2016). The low numbers of Black interpreters and the years of separation of the races in the Deaf community and the lack of education concerning Black Deaf and Black hearing

communities in interpreter education programs has yet to address the communication and cultural needs of the minority communities served. This leaves Black Deaf people with the burden of code switching to accommodate White interpreters' lack of culturally appropriate education and the limited number of Black interpreters to care for the interpreting needs of many Black Deaf people (Shambourger, 2015).

To interpret from English to ASL and ASL to English proficiently, it is imperative that an interpreter can integrate crucial cultural knowledge into the interpretation (Shambourger, 2015). Accomplished interpreters should understand how to add cultural information (Hensley, 2016). Although this is related to the cultures of American Sign Language users and English speakers in this study, the same can be said for interpretations and interpreters of any two cultures.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) looks at the subtle, methodical technique of discrimination that is not recognized in America because it is a standard of behavior; it is not as obvious and therefore not labeled actual racism (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT was an outcry against what was perceived as the American legal system's masked ways of deprecating marginalized people and the continuation of implicit racism (Jain, 2014). As the civil rights era was slowing, a Black civil rights lawyer and activist, Derrick Bell, highlighted the injustice of laws that were to be "equal" for all people that were, in fact, being unbalanced and negatively affecting people of color (Tate, 1997). The legal system, White lawyers and White judges alleged the laws were "color-blind" while actually turning a blind eye to actual circumstances; legal outcomes for Blacks and Whites told a different story (Tate, 1997). Educational systems profess the same equality,

even though educational disparities between Blacks and Whites continues to be

documented and has scarcely lessened in 50 years (Camera, 2016). Racial problems are

in the forefront of American society these days, but "omissions and blind spots"

regarding Black cultural knowledge and narratives have yet to be incorporated in

Americas educational systems, including interpreting education (Tate, 1997). Couching

the educational inequities of American Sign Language interpreter education in CRT

illuminates the systematic oppression demonstrated by the lack of education on the Black

cultural narrative. In 1853, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "I advance it therefore as a suspicion

only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and

circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind"

(Jefferson & Randolph, 1853, p. 1). This type of character assassination of Black people

has been rooted in the United States for a very long time, and it is a factor in subtle and

overt racism that still permeates this country and its education (Rosado, n.d.).

Power and Oppression

Power is the possession of control, influence, or authority over others, and

oppression is the unfair way power is wielded (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). RID having only

4.9% Black membership and 87% White membership (RID, n.d.) is an indicator of the

power hierarchy. The majority of interpreting educators are White and there is a

significant need to hire Black educators to include narratives and for Black students to

see someone like them for support (Oyedele, 2015) showing where the power lies in the

interpreting education system. Hiring more Black faculty can help mitigate this gap

(Oyedele, 2015).

To mitigate oppression in interpreting, White interpreters must constantly self-reflect to learn themselves (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001), taking note of the ideas or beliefs that may unknowingly cause oppression to a mentee or fellow Black interpreter. Equality is the best way to an effective conversation about issues between groups (Lozano-Reich & Cloud, 2009). When inequality is present, the subsequent power issues can be sizeable barriers that prevent mentees from asking questions or even beginning a mentoring relationship. Dominant culture groups (e.g., White, hearing) have a hard time processing their privilege and discussing issues of lesser-privileged people, which will prevent a sustainable mentoring relationship (Arao & Clemens, 2013). Dominant groups struggle with facing the negative experiences of minority groups or accepting that the experiences actually occur and are wounding to the minority groups (Arao & Clemens, 2013). It is easier to ignore and feel secure than to confront and feel apprehensive which prevents the development of cross-cultural mentoring relationships.

Equity should be the case for all interpreters, but how do Black interpreters bridge the equity gap with White interpreters? Equity happens through possible discomfort in the acceptance of the views and thoughts of the less powerful (Foss & Griffin, 1995) and White interpreters must recognize their power to close this gap. When a person with less power informs someone about ideas that make one wince, the person with power may want to take offense, but they could instead take in the new understanding with appreciation (Foss & Griffin, 1995).

Trust

Trust is the confidence that someone will be genuine in their dealings, words, and actions with another (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Trust is one of the key factors in cross-

cultural experiences (Mueller, Singer, & Draper, 2008). Any type of relationship without

trust is doomed to fail. When one or both parties lack conviction in the work of the other,

a team breaks down, communication breaks down, trust is broken; understanding that

relationships require effort before trust can develop is paramount (Reinhardt, 2015).

Showing interest in another person's culture and identity is a way to build trust.

  The 2010 CCIE Standards recommended that interpreters understand and learn to

serve the cultural issues and the perspectives of minority groups to adequately work with

these consumers respectfully (Ball, 2013). White educators cherishing the ability to

connect with the diversity of people they teach is advantageous when they are willing to

face cultural concerns and subject matter (West-Oyedele, 2015). Not shying away from

sensitive issues relating to diverse people, while simultaneously showing a student they

recognize who the student is as a person, builds and fosters trust. The aspiration should

be to use interactional goals—goals different groups have in common—to reconnect

consumers with the interpreting community. Reminding consumers, co-workers, or

community members of the reasons and ideas that bound them together in the beginning

can help to mend what divided them (Foss & Foss, 2012). A "Deaf Heart" is having an

understanding of the social concerns Deaf people face and wanting to socialize with the

community members to better understand their perspective (Mindess, 2006). A team

member or mentor/mentee with cultural insight could signal another team member when

important cultural information has been unintentionally omitted (Hensley, 2016). Once

this omission or miscomprehension of the cultural cues is brought forward, more accurate

interpretations and learning can occur. When cultural connections and trust are built in a

working environment, that cultural knowledge and awareness can continue to pass on

between colleagues and subsequently to consumers who would benefit from that newly acquired understanding (West-Oyedele, 2015).

Mentorship

Mentoring is defined as a more experienced person nurturing a person with less experience (Blake, 1999). Mentors can also guide mentees through unspoken, inherent aspects of an environment (Blake, 1999). The mentor can help to support the mentee in many different aspects: social, mental, career focus, preparation, and encouragement. Mentoring across cultures must be done with intention and adapted to the life experiences of someone who may not share the same worldview, race, or many other life factors (Shea, 1992). Cross-cultural mentorship pairs need to find common ideas that are important to both mentor and mentee, which can allow them to bond and have a successful partnership. The bonding process will not be easy and it will require time and patience, but the benefits are immeasurable (Crutcher, 2014).

Confidence is an important factor in the development of a mentoring relationship, but the level of confidence will be varied among mentees, and the mentor may have to work on helping to formulate confidence-building techniques and figure out the needs (Tait, 2003). The mentor and the mentee need to know that open communication will happen even when it is uncomfortable; this is a way to prevent impracticable ideas and subsequent demise of the relationship (Tait, 2003). New graduates in the Signed Language Interpreting profession or neophytes within the profession can garner technical skill and confidence from a seasoned interpreter. The need for reinforcement of skills, ideas, and decision making from a mentor could help give them the self-esteem boost needed for their career (Tait, 2003).

In corporate America, research on experiences of White mentor and Black mentee cross-cultural mentoring relationships in the corporate arena has shown that White mentors learned of the negative encounters people of color face while trying to advance their careers (Thomas, 2001). When mentors allowed themselves to better understand how race affects the professional growth of a person of color, then the mentors can build a strategy for mentoring with a more complete understanding of the struggle inherent in the professional life of a person of color.

Whether the mentor or mentee is White or Black is not the guiding question for this study. The guiding question is whether cross-cultural mentoring, in addition to or in the absence of same-culture mentoring, can educate White interpreters about nuances of the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities and build relationships with Black interpreters to mitigate their feelings of isolation. Cross-cultural mentoring research has not been explored in the signed language interpreting community, but it has been researched in other professions.

Within medicine, an effective cross-cultural mentorship relationship has varying facets, and the participants must feel protected and trusted, experience mutual reverence, and have an understanding that time must be put in for success to occur (Liam, Wade, Lau, Hasan, & Furler, 2016). This kind of relationship is also referred to as a "cultural brokerage" since one or both parties will share cultural information that can lessen negative encounters and bridge the gap for the mentor and/or mentee and the communities served. Possible misunderstandings and setbacks can occur during the course of a cross-cultural relationship (Liam et al., 2016). Some situations can include unintended actions or assertions that are deemed as disrespectful or racist. The literature

suggests that interactive conflicts relating to personality might be perceived as cultural norms and give the wrong impression of a group. The flip side is that participants in a cross-cultural mentoring relationship can share cultural knowledge. Knowledge leads to trust in the community, which is served from knowledge and skill learned by the mentor or mentee and put into practice (Liam et al., 2016).

Similar to the field of interpreting, the broader field of education has a disproportionate amount of White educators to Black educators. However, success stories can be used as benchmarks for what could work in the field of signed language interpreting. One story of a successful cross-cultural mentoring relationship is that of Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2004). They shared their experiences of their cross-cultural mentoring relationship in the educational arena. Cervero, who is White, mentored Johnson-Bailey and facilitated her learning and the dynamics of the higher education system. Johnson-Bailey, who is Black, shared her experience as a Black woman and made him aware of his privilege while explaining her story. They encountered rough patches but persevered through open and honest dialogue, which fostered trust (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero 2004). Any type of relationship needs trust and there are historic experiences of oppression and mistreatment of Blacks by Whites. This could possibly be a reason trust may not be automatically available from Blacks to Whites, but White people also have feelings of mistrust for Black people (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004). White people have a harder time in interracial dialogue and conversations focused on race than do Black people, and the reason for this disparity is that Black people experience more interracial-related experiences and discussions than do White people (Trawalter & Richeson, 2008). The multiple experiences makes them more equipped to

engage in race-related conversations (Trawalter & Richeson, 2008). Conversely a study revealed White people having fewer experiences may feel a sense of dread or guilt regarding racial issues since they do not want to be perceived as racist (Trawalter & Richeson, 2008). Being vulnerable and opening up to a cross-cultural mentor regarding negative experiences with White people could allow the White person to get a better understanding of the Black perspective as occurred with Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2004). In doing this, they can build trust, which was the foundation of Johnson-Bailey and Cervero's mentoring relationship and mutual growth.

Black educators deal with isolation and lack of support for their ideas or suggestions, and the White educator/mentor can provide backing for those ideas and be an intermediary and ally in those times (Stanley & Lincoln, 2005). If not for the trust established between groups, the ideas in the heart and mind of the Black educator may never come to fruition and students will not be able to benefit from unrecognized knowledge.

The literature review revealed a vacuum left by systemic racism and bigotry deeply rooted in American educational culture. This reinforced my idea of gathering data to see if cross-cultural mentoring can possibly bridge the gap in how White interpreters learn about Black cultures and how Black interpreters can learn to traverse and thrive in the predominantly White interpreting profession. Even though the literature has shown that successful cross-cultural relationships have succeeded in the field of education, this has not been replicated in the field of signed language interpreting. In this study, focus groups were used to explore if the presence of cross-cultural mentoring relationships exist and if not how such relationships can be cultivated.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this study, a qualitative approach to research was used. Qualitative research discerns the world and the people in the world including their cultural identities and experiences they have had, and it should include the people who are being studied to get a fully rounded view of all perspectives and be inclusive of perspectives that have been ignored historically (Mertens, 2015). I conducted two focus groups to get the viewpoints of Black and White interpreters. I, as a Black interpreter educator, facilitated one focus group of Black interpreters. I did not answer any of the questions to avoid influencing or leading answers of the participants. The second focus group consisted of White interpreters facilitated by a White interpreter educator. As to not influence the answers of the White participants by participating in the conversation related to issues of race relations between Black and White people, I enlisted a White facilitator. My goal was for the participants to answer questions and make statements without any concern for what I may be thinking about their responses. Both the White facilitator and I have cross-cultural mentoring experience, and we have both used multi-cultural curriculum in our teachings that would be a match to facilitate the two groups.

Design

Focus groups may be one of the only ways marginalized groups can be heard; they can help majority persons gain an understanding about the viewpoints and feelings that influence actions and perception of the marginalized and how those experiences become part of the whole of the person (Cary & Asbury, 2012). The idea that focus

groups would allow for both groups to have an equal opportunity to express their ideas and opinions appealed to me, and thus I decided on that medium.

In doing these focus groups, I sought information about the amount and nature of education related to Black minority communities that both groups of interpreters received during their ITPs. In addition to the impact, if any, that this education had on their work with those communities, I wanted to know from the Black interpreters what their comfort level was with the White Deaf and White interpreting community. I also wanted to discover if each group was willing to engage in a cross-cultural mentoring relationship. One of my goals surrounding the focus group of White interpreters was to know if they were willing to learn more about the Black community and if they felt open to entering into a mentoring relationship with a Black interpreter. Both groups helped me to see the varying facets of cross-cultural mentoring and the obstacles faced in bringing this intense subject matter to the forefront of the interpreting profession.

Population

All of the participants live in the Midwest. The first focus group consisted of five Black interpreters who graduated from an Interpreter Training Programs (ITP) and identify as Black. The second focus group was comprised of five participants, who also graduated from ITPs and identify as White. All participants were over the age of 18 and under the age of 60. The participants' experience in the field of signed language interpreting is as follows: one person 10 months, three people 3 years, two people 4 years, one person 5 years, one person 7 years, one person 9 years, and the longest person having 19 years of experience.

Data Collection

Participants from the Black focus group were contacted by email and given the requirements concerning the focus group. The email was sent to a Black interpreter support group. Interpreters in this group were required to have gone to an ITP program. The participants who responded were all in the Midwest state where the email was sent and were all members of the support group. The email requested Black interpreters who attended an ITP who were able to meet for one to two hours with a group of their Black peers and a Black facilitator. Video Relay Service (VRS) was considered for recruitment, but was not utilized for the Black focus group as the VRS company in that state does not have enough Black video relay interpreters to satisfy the need of the study, most likely due to the negative racial experiences faced by Black interpreters (Olopade, 2017).

The participants for the White focus group were contacted through an email to one of the video relay interpreting agencies in the same state and an ITP graduate Facebook page. The White interpreters involved were required to have attended an ITP and were able to be available for a one- to two-hour focus group session. They were made aware that the facilitator would be White. Participants from both groups are hearing, therefore both sessions were conducted in spoken English. All participants were informed that the study concerned cross-cultural mentoring, and all participants signed consent forms before the start of the sessions (See Appendix A). They were made aware that at any point they could refrain from answering any questions and could completely withdraw from the proceedings at any point without reprisals.

Data Analysis

Focus group data were first transcribed for both groups. Codes were placed into categories then grouped into themes. I used a qualitative method for analysis of the findings. I searched through the data to find patterns of similarities to the literature in the review and any that were in opposition to the literature. I looked at possible themes in the answers of the interpreter groups separately at first. As I worked through both groups, the data supported the absence of Black cultural perspectives in the literature for participants in ITPs. After the analysis was complete, I connected the information and combined the codes when data was similar in context and parsed out the pieces of data that had no similarities into codes all their own.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In this study, I examined the level of education that working interpreters (who graduated from Interpreter Training Programs) received during their education about the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities. The purpose was to see if I could ascertain how much education, or the lack thereof, about Black Deaf and Black hearing cultures influences their current work as interpreters, if at all. Another issue probed was the level of mentoring these interpreters have experienced in a cross-cultural manner. I wanted to know if cross-cultural mentoring is occurring and if so, what the outcomes of these relationships have been. The final questions related to what the Black interpreters wanted people to know about them and what the White interpreters wanted to know regarding the Black Deaf, Black hearing, and Black interpreter communities. The narrative below is a starting place for future literature development and further research and dialogue exploring the topic of cross-cultural mentoring and the needed knowledge about the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities. The narratives are from questions found in Appendix B.

Results

The data for this study were collected from two focus groups. Both focus groups met face-to-face. I facilitated the Black focus group as I am a Black interpreter and interpreter educator, while the White focus group had a White interpreter/interpreter educator as the facilitator. The focus groups were conducted one week apart in the same location.

Presentation of Results: Black Interpreters

I, a Black interpreter/interpreter education, facilitated the group of Black interpreters. There were five Black participants in this group, all of whom graduated from an ITP and one who is in their first year of teaching in an ITP. All participants are hearing with no Deaf family. They all learned ASL as a second language. Pseudonyms have been used for all participants: Barbara, Beverly, Marie, Sharon, Valerie. The pseudonyms have no particular relationship to any participant or responses.

Participants were asked if their ITP/IEP provided education on the Black Deaf or Black hearing cultures and if they did, what did that look like (for a complete list of question see Appendix B). They were also asked how that education aligned with their personal knowledge and experience. The participants did not all attend the same ITP. The participants stated that the programs they attended had extremely minimal information taught or given to them about the Black Deaf or Black hearing cultures. Beverly remembered learning information about interpreting in Black churches from a religious special topics class in which the instructor was Black. She did not feel a sense of loss from the lack of education, because she felt she could talk to the Black instructor about any issue relating to her as a Black student. When questions arose regarding a Black issue in the Black instructor's classroom, it was discussed at that moment.

Beverly had a specific Black instructor in many of her skills classes and saw videos and other material about the Black Deaf and Black hearing cultures. Outside of that one instructor, she did not feel there was any particular curriculum focusing on the Black Deaf or hearing communities. Beverly purposely made her schedule each semester so she could have the Black teacher as one of her professors, because she felt they had a

shared experience and she could be herself and ask questions without fear of isolation. Marie, Barbara, and Valerie stated they wished they had the benefit of having a Black instructor to learn anything about the Black Deaf community. These three participants shared some of their education on the Black Deaf community. The limited education consisted of one event where a Black Deaf man came to a class to talk to the students, and finally a paper that had names of a Black Deaf organization and a Black interpreter organization they could look up themselves.

Sharon said she remembers one video of a Black Deaf person, one Black interpreter coming to a class and signing to give voicing practice after which the class discussed the difference in her signing style, and a small discussion on the history of Black Deaf people. None of the participants could easily recall any of these facts. It was not until after some thinking and reflecting that they recalled most of the stated events.

The second part of question one asked, "How did that education align with your personal knowledge and experience?" The participants all agreed that the education itself did not align much at all since it was pretty non-existent in their memories. Their own cultural knowledge of the Black hearing culture helped them connect understandings of Black Deaf cultural nuances like facial expressions or body movements found in Black hearing culture has that have no words attached, per se, but do have meaning which needs to be interpreted. There is also Black vernacular that the participants understood that helped their sign choices to match the intent of the message or spoken choices that conveyed the appropriate meaning of the slang sign or cultural significance.

The one thing that most of the Black interpreters also agreed was that they were not prepared by their ITP regarding the difference in signing styles of the Black Deaf

community. Marie said that near the end of her program there was a Deaf panel and one of the panelists was Black and the difference in the signing style amazed her. Not only was the signing itself different, but she was also saddened that she could not fully understand the person even being of the same racial identity because of the signing style differences. She also came to the realization that her ITP had not prepared her to work with this population of consumers. Valerie said when she signs for Black Deaf people they are so excited and feel as if she will understand their signing more readily and their signs are faster and in more of a Black ASL manner. She said when she first graduated she was overwhelmed and needed to ask them to slow down and wished she had a team that could help her. She, too, was not prepared for the signing difference but has since been able to grow in that respect.

The next question posed was what the participants felt was the dominant culture (i.e. White, Black, Asian, etc.) taught during their time in their respective interpreter education programs. If it was non-Black, did they request any education on signs relating to Black cultural issues (e.g., history, hair, and slang). All participants responded either White or Caucasian to the first question under number two. Marie shared that all the Deaf events they recommended students attend were predominantly White events. No one suggested a Black Deaf event or an event where there was a mixture of diverse cultures. Sharon stated that she did not know there was a subset of Deaf people who were Black until she graduated and realized there were a lot more than the one or two she saw in a video in class.

The follow up question to number two was, "Did you request any education on signs relating to Black cultural issues?" Marie and Beverly shared that they did not ask

because they were not comfortable asking Black cultural questions of predominantly White teachers and with predominantly White classmates. Barbara felt that it could possibly be her own fault for not asking, but she did not feel safe doing so. Sharon mentioned that she did not ask any Black culture questions because she felt there was no one who could answer the questions. Marie and Valerie both found Black Deaf people in the community while in their ITP, and they would ask them questions about race and Black cultural signs and styles. They had no resources at their schools. Neither Marie nor Valerie had any Black teachers nor did they know of any Black interpreters in their areas. Valerie and Sharon also felt they could not interrupt the class with a question about Blackness and interpreting. Several participants shared the feeling that their Blackness made them an island. Blackness is a term used by Black people in the United States to represent their connection to one another due to negative emotional experiences from a collective social struggle solely based on of their identity as Black in America (Urbandictionary.com, n.d.). Marie and Valerie, knowing they were alone and help was not coming from within their programs, tried to find avenues outside of school from the Black Deaf community to aid them in succeeding through their respective programs.

The Black participants were asked to relay any challenges they encountered interpreting for White Deaf and White hearing communities. Valerie said she encounters more racial issues in video relay settings than in person. She feels that occurs because people have bravado from the separation of the TV screen. She explained how many times the Deaf consumer will say they do not want a Black interpreter and then abruptly hang up on her. When those situations occur, she does not feel she has a safe outlet. She questions if she will be believed, supported, or brushed aside. She wondered whether her

manager would have responded in a negative manner, which led her to then wonder what she would do with the feelings that come from her manager rejecting her feelings, and ultimately her as a person, in some way.

Marie did not appreciate the way the White hearing person always assumed that the White team person was the one "in charge" or the one with the most experience when she, the Black interpreter, was actually more seasoned. Barbara still has bad memories from her time in her ITP from a particular White teacher who constantly commented on how her skin color would be a problem finding interpreting clothes and how her expressions needed to be toned down. She was happy to say that she pushed and pushed and made it through the program in spite of what she viewed as harassment by someone who should have been nurturing her. She said she understands she was lucky to have made it out through that intolerant teaching, but the other few Black students did not have the same outcome. She ended up being the only Black graduate of her class.

Beverly further explained how uncomfortable she becomes when a White team interpreter tries to "sound" Black. She feels the person is mocking the Black Deaf consumer and possibly not realizing how it comes across. If she says something to the White interpreter, she does not want the person to feel she is criticizing their interpreting skill but at the same times she is trying to figure out how to advocate for the Black Deaf person.

Shifting to a look from within, the participants were asked to share any internal struggles they have had or still have when working in the White Deaf and White hearing communities. Beverly said no matter how skilled she becomes and how hard she works, her work will always be called into question by some, just because of the color of

her skin. She works to ignore that fact but she unfortunately feels that challenge will never dissipate. Marie shared her feelings of inadequacy when she first graduated, finding no one she could turn to. She said she constantly second guessed herself because she was new and unseasoned and because she was not being accepted like her White counterparts who were also new grads. She said now she has gained much more confidence just by being in the profession and finding another Black interpreter to talk to about issues that come up relating to how she feels as a Black interpreter. All participants shared the same inescapable feeling of constantly being judged and, often, before they ever interpret a sign or utter a word. The judgment they felt was coming from the White interpreter, White consumer, and the White hearing consumer.

The participants were asked to share their experiences working with White interpreters and if those experiences have been positive, negative, or a combination of both and why. Beverly works in educational settings most of the time and shared that she has not had a lot of experience with teams in general, but the few times she has worked with White interpreters, she has had good experiences. The rest of the participants have had a combination of positive and negative experiences with White interpreters. Marie spoke about how White interpreters do not ask before they assume she needs help in some way. Often she feels they want to take over or feed her information she already understands instead of asking if she is okay. She may process information at a different speed, and, therefore, she feels they assume she needs help, but she would rather they ask her if she needs help. She has to often reiterate to the White interpreters that she will let them know if she needs assistance. Sharon said she feels exactly the same as Beverly many times. Barbara says White interpreters tell her she is good after working with them

but the comment is stated in a way that they seem shocked that she has the skill she demonstrated. She wonders how they would feel if the roles were reversed. She said she appreciates that they recognize her as a capable interpreter but resents the implication that it is shocking in some way—especially when it is the first time she has worked with these interpreters. She expressed the idea of "guilty until proven innocent" instead of "innocent until proven guilty." Valerie spoke of the dismissive manner White interpreters have spoken to her. One instance in particular occurred where she had to ask for a break from the session they were interpreting because the White interpreter's behavior and mannerisms were not conducive to a productive work environment. After a brief discussion in the hall, the two were able to go back and resume the interpreting with no further interruptions. She felt the whole situation was unnecessary and avoidable if the White interpreter would have had more respect for her. All participants felt there were White interpreters they teamed with who showed kindness and support while working together.

Participants were asked to discuss any apprehensions about how they are perceived as a Black interpreter, and, if they have experienced apprehension, what has caused the apprehension. All participants' responses mirrored one another. They all stated, in their own way, that they know they have to work harder, be more professional, and dress more professionally to get the respect White interpreters receive just by showing up. Sharon added that Black interpreters have to have a strong inner confidence to be successful in the field. They do not get the support as readily as White interpreters do, but they will get a complaint much faster. Sharon added that the apprehension from having to prepare her mind for challenges could be taxing. The participants all pointed to

the isolation that is so frequent for the Black interpreter and the negative comments that are received from White interpreters, White Deaf, and White hearing consumers. The comments were reported to come almost daily in some form or another. Beverly said she loves the language, and she is willing to keep pushing to see a better day.

Participants were queried about any experiences they had mentoring or being mentored by a White interpreter and the nature of that or those experiences. Beverly never partook in an interpreting mentoring experience with a White interpreter. She had a one-time mentoring experience with a White Deaf interpreter but it was only a one-time opportunity. They worked on skill-based issues. Beverly has a Black interpreting mentor. She said it is wonderful to be able to freely discuss any issue whether skill-based or culturally based without the fear of judgment or offending someone.

Marie had a brief mentoring relationship with a White interpreter. They, too, discussed skilled-based work. She said she was never felt comfortable asking cultural questions of the mentor. The mentor never brought up cultural discussion, issues, or curious questions with Marie. She did say the White interpreter would suggest a Black interpreter for an interpreting assignment that was perceived as culturally Black but that was the extent of the topic between the two. Marie has never had a Black interpreting mentor but would like to engage in a mentoring experience with a person who culturally identifies as she does.

Barbara had a White mentor for a year through a mentoring program. The program was to be a two-year experience, but after the first year, the White interpreter stopped working at the program and the mentoring ended. The relationship was skill-based, and Barbara said she learned many things from the White mentor and they had a

very cordial relationship. She would like to have continued to learn more in the second year. Barbara and her mentor never discussed cultural questions, but she had a Black interpreting mentor who filled that space, so she did not feel the need to discuss those things with the White mentor.

Valerie currently has a White interpreting mentor, but she had nothing to add at this time. Sharon has never had a White interpreting mentor, nor has she had a Black interpreting mentor. The mentor she has had for years is a Black Deaf mentor. They have been able to work on skill concerns and cultural concerns, and the mentor has been a connection for her to many people in the Deaf and interpreting communities. At some point, she would like to engage in a relationship with a Black interpreting mentor. Sharon is not interested in a mentoring relationship with a White mentor. Her reasoning stems from the struggle Black people face on a daily basis and specifically Black female interpreters in this profession. She feels she needs people who can understand her struggle and help her navigate that road. A Black Deaf and/or a Black interpreter can help her traverse anything in the interpreting field that a White interpreter could relate to skills she explains. In her estimation, a White interpreter cannot steer her on the right path when it comes to issues of being Black in a predominantly White field. Currently, that is where her needs lie.

Continuing with mentoring, I inquired of the participants if they learned from their mentoring experience. If they did not have one, what did they think they could learn from being in a mentoring relationship with a White interpreter? Beverly said one meeting was not enough time to establish a relationship, but she felt that she did benefit

from the time that was spent. The mentor pointed out some areas in need of improvement and some strengths she can build upon.

Marie understood that some White interpreters see Black people as people—not less than, just people. The short period of time with her White mentor changed her thought on working with a White mentor in the future regarding her skill. She still was not sure the relationship could handle sensitive cultural matters, but it at least opened her mind to the possibility.

Barbara learned that skill improvement could come from any race or ethnicity. The White interpreter she worked with was passionate about the skill of interpreting; that is what she signed up for, and that is what she received. She enjoyed the experience.

Sharon did not think she could learn anything at this point from a White interpreting mentor. She feels that she needs a Black interpreting mentor in her life. She explains that a Black mentor can tell her how to be the first—or the only—interpreter in assignments that have never been done before. A Black mentor can share how they became the first Black teacher in an interpreting program or how they broke down walls that have stood for decades. Sharon was passionate about the strength that it takes to do what some Black interpreters have done in a predominantly White field. She experienced such hurt in her interpreting program, and although she has healed in many ways, she wants a Black interpreter mentor to help her gain strength for future success, failure, hurt, and happiness.

Sharon was the only person with no experience working with a White mentor and was asked what has prevented her from engaging in a cross-cultural mentoring relationship. She has not had a good example of a White interpreter willing to put herself

in an uncomfortable position and mentor a Black interpreter. She feels Black interpreters deal with discomfort daily, and if a White interpreter does not want that feeling or put forth effort and extend the olive branch why should she be responsible to seek them out.

The participants were asked to explain what they would like White interpreters to know about the Black interpreting community. The participants all echoed similar sentiments: they want White interpreters to recognize that they are equals. They want to tell White interpreters that actions speak louder than words, so saying you think all people are equal but displaying actions that reflect something different is worthless. All but Sharon are open to mentoring both ways. The four that are open feel they have so much to offer to White interpreters that could enhance their performance and cultural sensitivity if they are open to feeling uncomfortable. Beverly added that she wanted White interpreters to understand every Black person and Black interpreter is not the same. She implores White interpreters to avoid thinking of stereotypes when a Black interpreter is their team and when Black Deaf people are their consumers.

After I concluded all my questions, I gave the participants the opportunity to share anything else they wanted to that they had not had an opportunity to share. Valerie strongly suggests more education on Black Deaf culture in ITPs. She wants to find ways to have Black interpreters more visible so new interpreters do not feel so isolated and alone. Sharon feels that before classes and curriculum can be taught in programs with no Black faculty that the teacher, instructors, and professors need education on the needs of Black students related to the field of interpreting. This means they need to seek out Black interpreters and want to hear their stories, want to know the experiences, and care about how they interact with Black students.

Barbara recommended that if the White teachers feel uncomfortable with certain topics related to the Black community and there are no Black faculty to help them learn, they can bring in Black Deaf presenters and Black interpreting presenters as guest speakers. Barbara feels the educational establishment has to want to grow and that forcing people to teach something they do not care about will not succeed.

Marie wanted to add that this was the first time anyone has asked her about her feelings about being a Black interpreter and this focus group experience was therapeutic. She wonders why no one seems to care about the Black interpreter's experiences or Black student's struggles in an already difficult educational situation.

Presentation of Results: White Interpreters

A White interpreter, who is also an interpreter educator, facilitated the White group. I did not want my presence, as a Black person, to affect the reliability of the White interpreters' answers unconsciously. Just as with the Black interpreters, all five of the interpreters in this group are hearing with no Deaf family, and all learned ASL as a second language. One of the participants has been teaching at a college that offers ASL as a foreign language for several years and two have recently started teaching. Pseudonyms have been used for all participants. The pseudonyms have no particular relationship to any participant or responses.

The first question was the same for the White participants as the Black participants. The question was if their ITP/IEP provided education about the Black Deaf or Black hearing cultural communities, and if they did what did that look like. All participants were struggling to think of exactly what they remember learning. Most felt they had some education. Miley remembered watching a video with a Black Deaf man

discussing his research on Black ASL. She also thought she heard about a group she thought was named "Natural Black Deaf Advocates." Adele felt since she was in school 19 years ago she could not remember any of what Miley said and thinks that may have been taught way after her time in the program. Paige commented that if there was any education on Black culture it had to be very minimal, as she could not recall any information at this time. Camille thought for sure she probably watched a video with a Black signer and had to notice some differences, but she said she could be just trying to fill in memories because she was not sure that happened. Camille did say she was sure she did not learn anything about the Black hearing community during her ITP and Miley agreed. Haven could not think of what she learned if anything, about the Black Deaf community. Adele remembered having a class called Specialized Interpreting and thought if there was anything it may have been in that class.

The participants were asked how they personally prepared to work with the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities. Adele did not do any personal preparation that she can recall. She noticed differences when she would interpret for Black Deaf people and tried to be aware of differences while she was working with them. Adele said she was trying to think about professional development opportunities that have been offered and she remembers a few but she never took advantage of going to any. Miley shared that if she were called to interpret for a historically Black event she would request an interpreter of color to take the assignment instead of accepting the job. She did not do any personal preparation. Haven's preparation was to be surrounded by as many different people as possible to increase her knowledge and awareness of others.

Paige thought back to her time as a new graduate and during her early years as an interpreter and could not think of anything she purposely sought out to learn about the Black Deaf or Black hearing communities. After she was in a situation and realized differences were there, she became more cognitively aware. After years of interpreting and later becoming an interpreting teacher she started to be more cognizant of things happening in the United States and the world that affected people who were different than her. She started to watch videos of varying ASL users to recognize signing styles and learning more about the concerns of people in her community.

Adele felt that even though the Internet was alive and well during her time in her ITP, she mentioned that YouTube was not what it is now. Now students and interpreters can view videos on YouTube and see varying signing styles. She does not feel she had the same opportunity to access a variety of cultures on the Internet as there are today. Teachers went out and videotaped Deaf people and brought the videos back to share with the class in her recollection. She did not elaborate if that meant a variety of races/ethnicities of Deaf people or only White Deaf people. She did feel like variation was harder to access in her early days.

Camille did not feel the need to do any personal preparation. Living in a bubble is how she described that time in her life. She was not aware that it was needed or that there were even differences. As she matured and started paying attention to the world around her, she noticed racial dynamics and challenges experienced by people who did not look like her. She likes being more aware of those issues today.

Haven described how she was not prepared for the world in general, not just the Black world, when she started out as an interpreter. Looking back to answer the

questions in the focus group made her realize how unconscious she was—and still is—to certain things. She wished she were better prepared to handle things early on in her interpreting career. She feels she is more conscious now in the world from life experience.

The participants were asked what challenges they encountered interpreting for the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities. Working with Black callers in Video Relay Service (VRS) interpreting is challenging for Adele. She said she does not know what the expectations are from the callers, which makes her feel uncomfortable and a little inadequate when interpreting those calls. She wonders if she is matching them appropriately, but in VRS she feels there are so many other things happening and issues to focus on she does not stay focused on the issue of race. In general, interpreting for Black Deaf and hearing callers' slang is something she feels she struggles to interpret. As a White woman, she wonders how well she can match the affect of a Black man. She says Black consumers, in her opinion, are a little more dynamic in their body movements, and she is not sure if her interpretation is a match or if she is sometimes applying a stereotype to the interpretation that does not reflect that actual consumer. When she struggles with those thoughts and questions she has no one to turn to for answers, and she stated she was certainly not trained in her ITP to address those topics. Since there is no advanced notice of who the caller will be that will pop on your screen, she never knows if she will get a Black caller. When she does, she sometimes struggles without prior knowledge of the participants or the call content.

Camille agreed with Adele in her experience. Camille also says that while interpreting for Black males in prison (not that there are only Black males there), there

have been experiences when scriptures are being discussed. One particular time she felt she had no business interpreting for the call because she was not equipped and had no idea if the message was being relayed appropriately. She wondered if either party was getting the information they needed from the other caller.

Miley added that in VRS there is an option to pick an interpreter by gender but not by race or ethnicity. She does not feel she is the best choice during some calls with a person of color and wished that were an option at times. She does not want to be offensive when working with these callers and also wondered if her preconceived ideas or stereotypes bleed into her interpretation. She thinks about whether her mere presence is "making things worse" for the callers. She said all she can do is be culturally sensitive to those communities of people, to learn about what is happening within their culture and try to be sensitive as a White person.

Participants were requested to describe any internal struggles they had or still have when working in the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities. Adele felt she already answered this question in prior questions but wanted to reiterate some things she previously mentioned. She felt internal struggles about Black cultural language, slang, matching the Black person whether in English to ASL or ASL to English, or knowing cultural vernacular when she sees or hears it, and what it means. Adele really thinks about matching affect, unconscious stereotypes, and the feeling that she is an appropriate match considering the setting and the participants. She wants to figure out where she can go for support. She notes there are not a lot of people of color interpreting in her community and that makes it challenging. Finding a Black interpreter as a team, or being able to give them jobs she feels they would be a better fit for, is a struggle. She shared

those as some of her continual challenges working with the Black Deaf and hearing populations.

As the discussion was in process, Camille said she realized she struggles with the movements of Black signers and the confidence in which they sign. Camille has done quite a bit of mental health interpreting. She does not feel she can effectively match the signing style of Black signers. Some movements she tries to figure out as a sign, then realizes that she should not be producing English words per se, but what she should be producing is a voice inflection. She said she was just having that realization as the comments by the other focus group participants were happening. Paige asked Camille if she thinks it is because she has just had a lot more experience interpreting for White Deaf people in the mental health field. Mental health is such a specialized field on its own. The addition of cultural nuances in some consumers, that she has not had enough experience with, is what actually made it harder. Camille said that was a possibility. Paige added that mental health can look different to each person because of their own cultural upbringing, and that could also influence how a different culture is being viewed by the interpreter.

Miley said she struggles with the actual mechanics of slang. She wonders how to sign certain words and if there is a sign, how does she voice it. She said she wants it to sound authentic but if she does not even know what it means or how to say or sign something how will that message be translated correctly. She struggles mostly with Black teenagers and their vernacular. Camille added that some things just do not seem good coming out of the mouth of a White person. She feels like if she uses some of those slang terms in ASL to English, people will look at her and wonder why she is speaking

that way. Miley said she sometimes walks in an assignment that is a "Black" assignment and wishes she could apologize for being White. She wants to give all those assignments to Black interpreters, but at the same time understands that is not fair to Black interpreters and finally she said she knows she will not grow in that area without doing those assignments. Haven recalled working with a practicum student and interpreting at a Black event. She was supposed to start interpreting but when she realized it was a Black event she asked the Black student if they wanted to start. The student, she recalls, had an emotional response and said she did not want to be thought of by her racial identity but as an interpreter. Haven said she did not realize she had somehow labeled the student. Camille said that is where cross-cultural mentoring would be a great benefit—to ask the hard questions of someone who you have a relationship with who would tell you the truth. Adele agreed and said cross-cultural mentoring in safe spaces is needed. Lauren added that she just thought about how it must feel to Black interpreters when they have to interpret content that they have been hurt by but are the interpreter because it seems like a better fit for the assignment. It might be a benefit for a White interpreter to do an assignment with Black people because as a White person she felt she may not have the same hurt attached to the topic and it would not have the same vicarious trauma as it would to a Black interpreter.

Paige said that she often feels conflicted about trying to make a judgment call on how to sign or speak when every culture has varying ways to express themselves. She is not sure she should make the call on how that person comes across but then she wonders if it is her personal fear that decides not to make the call at all and just interpret how she would do it personally. She struggles with minimizing a Black person's life experience

because her fear will not allow her to really engage in being that person when she is interpreting for them. She feels like there are invisible lines, and she does not know where they are or when she is crossing them. She does not want to try to own something that is not hers.

The Black experience is not something Haven grew up knowing. When there are implicit things that happen when interpreting, she feels she does not catch when working with Black Deaf or Black hearing consumers. She recognizes that those implicit instances are far more meaningful and important than explicit, but she does not often understand them in the moment. She specifically recalls a person from another country discussing how, in the other country, they felt more oppression from their deafness but when they moved to the United States there was far more racial oppression they experienced. She said as the person was telling their story, she knew there were missing things that were implicit but she could not get the understanding, and she felt that message did not come across as it should. This was a time she felt that a Black interpreter would have caught more of the implicit meaning and been able to add it to the interpretation in a more succinct manner. Camille agreed and wondered if a person does not have that experience how do you put a feeling to something you do not feel.

Adele felt interpreters cannot be knowledgeable about all cultures' varying nuances and being aware is the best that can be done. It is just too hard. You can try to be aware of something then grow from the point of awareness. Adele said she has more knowledge from being involved in the focus group of things she is still unaware of and can leave and try to learn more.

Participants were asked about their experience working with Black interpreters. Two of the interpreters have never teamed with a Black interpreter. The three other interpreters have had limited experience working with Black interpreters. They did not expand on the experiences; they stated if they had or had not been in a cross-cultural teaming situation.

Participants were probed about if they have or had any apprehensions about working with a Black interpreter and if they did what caused the apprehension. Haven's apprehensions stemmed from feeling ill-equipped to things in the Black community, and she is not accustomed to something that might arise in the process of interpreting. She worries that she will not know what to do with certain aspects related to the culture and be judged by the Black interpreter. Haven tries to be mindful that some things are considered microaggressions and tries to avoid comments that could be considered as such. Haven said she also tries to make sure she is friendly. While she was making the comment, she said she does not know why because she can just be friendly like she is in any other situation. Haven said she realized she might be making the interaction more awkward by trying to be overly one way instead of just being natural in her interaction with the Black interpreter.

Miley did not feel she had any specific interaction in general when working with a Black interpreter except when working at a historically Black event. During these particular kinds of events, and having a Black team, she is constantly second guessing if the signs she is using or the way she is interpreting is appropriate for the event. Miley also wonders how much she should actually interpret and if the Black interpreter should

do most of the interpreting at the event. Paige spoke up and said that giving one interpreter a lot more of the interpreting work did not seem like a good thing.

Paige said she did not feel any more apprehension about working with Black interpreters than other interpreters. She added that her apprehension is the same with every experience that interpreting brings. Paige notes that all interpreters have different personalities, different styles and different processing times. Those are usually the things Paige feels apprehensive or stressed about. Paige might have more of a thought process about working with a male interpreter, but her apprehensions are not about racial identities.

The questions then focused on mentoring. Participants were asked to describe any experience they had mentoring or being mentored by a Black interpreter and, if they did have such an experience, to share the nature of that or those experiences. Camille shared that most of her mentorship from Black interpreters probably comes from Black interpreting students who come through the ITP program where she works. Camille talked about how she learns more about the students and the culture they belong to while in the program than she has actually experienced working with a professional Black interpreter as a mentor or mentee. She has not had experience working one-on-one with any Black interpreters. Camille said she also learns from the Black coworker who teaches at the same ITP where she works. She notes how she has learned more about herself in that aspect, but not necessarily while interpreting. She has been learning more about the lack of diversity in the interpreting field, which has become more evident, especially when only two Black students went through the program this year. She did not notice the lack of diversity until she had conversations on the issue with her coworker.

Camille does feel like she has been mentored in those ways, even if they are not considered a formal type of mentoring. She concluded that she feels mentored.

Miley said she mentored a Black student while they were in school and they focused on the mechanics of interpreting. They never had any discussions surrounding race or the student's feelings of being a Black person in the field. Miley did not think of the person's race/ethnicity and she did not think of her own either.

Paige has not had any type of mentoring relationship with a Black interpreter. She teaches in an interpreting program and issues of race come up from time to time, and she does not feel adequately equipped to talk about the Black experience, especially when there are Black students in the class. Paige told how when some of the Black students share the experiences, she is learning from them. She stated that sometimes a Black student will ask why the class is discussing Black issues and how does it relate to the interpreting profession. Those incidents are when she recounts feelings of incompetence because she cannot answer in a way that feels authentic. She does not want to be a spokesperson for a culture that she is not a part of. Paige shared about a training class to become a VRS interpreter. There was a Black interpreter in her same training class, and the trainer told the Black interpreter to prepare herself for some Deaf people who will say they do not want a Black interpreter and will hang up on this interpreter. Paige was flabbergasted at the idea that someone would have to navigate such a negative experience and further supported her notion that she could not be a spokesperson when she has not had any experiences as such. She said she has experienced people having negative feelings about her as a gay/queer person if they realized she was, but nothing from just a

glance at her color. Paige said she does not have to think about the weight of being a minority in a profession of predominately White people because she is White.

Haven had a Black student under her tutelage for a semester and felt mentored by the openness of the student's responses to issues that arose regarding Black events. The student told Haven that it is weighty to be the one always called on to give an example, experience or opinion in class or as the practicum student regarding race. Haven had a realization that she had not had before about being Black in the field of interpreting. Haven believed she learned quite a bit from the student during their time together. As a practicum instructor she learned that the Black student's experiences and struggles often stemmed from being Black and often did not have anything to do with their signing choices or skill. There were things they dealt with that the White students did not have to face. That experience helped Haven get more understanding of the diverse nature of interpreting (or the lack thereof). Haven did not think this might count as mentoring in the sense of the question asked, but she felt mentored through those experiences nonetheless.

Staying with mentoring, the participants were asked what they learned from the cross-cultural mentoring experience. If they have not experienced cross-cultural mentoring, they were asked what they think they could learn from being in a mentoring relationship with a Black interpreter. Miley viewed having a cross-cultural mentorship as a relationship. She said you learn by being in a relationship with anyone, so not that the conversations need to always surround racial issues but just talking and learning about many things including racial aspects.

Adele felt that she could learn linguistically from a Black interpreter just like she could with any other interpreter. When she has teamed with White interpreters she says she always walks away feeling like she has received benefits from watching or listening to their work. Adele guessed she could do the same thing, even if it is informal mentoring, watching the Black interpreter's interpretation and observing the body language. Adele supposes one would not really know if it is the person, their identity, familial, language choices, demeanor, and so on. She feels it would be good and the two could converse and hash out the possibilities of what things could stem from. Adele has no mentoring experience but feels she could benefit in a lot of ways. Adele liked hearing the comments of the other focus group members and what they learned from conversations with Black interpreters and how they felt mentored.

Camille expressed the desire to learn when might be a good time to have conversations about race and ethnicity with Black interpreters and what times or topics are less desirable to discuss. She also thinks she could benefit from learning more of their life stories and be more aware. Paige agreed and added she needs more knowledge to be comfortable and make necessary changes in some areas regarding working with the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities and having a mentoring relationship with a Black interpreter could help her accomplish that learning.

The participants were asked to share the reason they have not engaged in mentorship with a Black interpreter. There was a consensus from the group that there are not enough Black interpreters in the area for the vast number of White interpreters. Miley said she did not want the few Black interpreters to feel like they had to mentor everyone on the Black experience. Haven added mentoring programs tend to come and

50

go just in general, so she has not sought mentoring in general. Adele does not have the time. She explains she works, has a family, and is too busy at this time to try to seek out a cross-cultural mentoring relationship. Camille said she has no excuse not to have had this type of mentoring relationship besides the lack of Black interpreters in her area, because she could use an online format. She really does not like technology and that may be a barrier for her. She said honestly it is hard to get people to do anything when there seems to be no reward in it for them, and White interpreters do not recognize the benefit until there is a conversation like the one had in the focus group.

The participants were asked what they would like to know about the Black Deaf, Black hearing, and Black interpreting communities. Miley feels like everything that was talked about in the focus group was something she needs to know more about and more in-depth from the Black community. Camille wants to know what the Black community feels she should know or needs to know to work with them more fluently. Paige would like to know what linguistically she could improve upon. Paige shared that one of her Black students said she does not want White people to speak for her, but she wants to know that White people can stand with her in times of struggle, and Paige wants to learn about that struggle. She wants to learn how to be involved in the struggle in a respectful manner. Haven wants more information on the Black hearing community. She feels that she could ask a Black Deaf person about being Black and Deaf but does not have the same confidence to ask a Black hearing and Black interpreting person about things that are important or needed to be known from them. What she would ask Black Deaf consumers is more general, related to how to walk into the world as a White person with other identities that hold different types of privileges and experiences.

Camille wants to know more resources to give to the few Black students that come through the program so they do not feel so isolated. She often notices the Black students keeping to themselves, and she wants to find a way that helps them feel comfortable to come and ask questions and get the resources they need to be successful.

The final question was if they had anything else they wanted to share that they had not had an opportunity to share. Adele says allyship in any kind of diversity or field needs all parties to engage to be successful. She added that having mentors and mentees who are Black, who are willing to go through this dialogue and help White interpreters and accept White interpreters where they are, is imperative. Adele's final thoughts were that she hopes that "people of color are willing to participate and accept us where we are and where we need to get to and help us on that journey."

From the findings it is evident there is a void in ITPs regarding instruction related to the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities. Both groups struggled to remember what, if any, information on these communities they learned during their time in their respective ITPs. The two groups had different outlooks on that void at the time or soon after graduation. The Black interpreters acknowledged they felt the void but the White interpreters said they did not feel a great impact, as it was not something they thought much about unless specifically interpreting for a Black consumer. Both groups want more knowledge on the Black Deaf culture now and most have learned more information since their time in their ITPs. In the discussion section, implications of the findings will be explored.

Discussion

Relationships between Black and White interpreters can influence cross-cultural growth and professional growth, which can possibly become the catalyst for maintaining more Black signed language interpreters in the profession in places where no Black mentors are present. Issues relating to accuracy and seeing things in light of cultural nuances when working with the Black Deaf population, understanding deeper layers of meaning, and building interpersonal relationships are more themes that were unveiled in the findings—things that create a better human being. Attrition in any field most assuredly is due to more than one factor, and yet, a contributing factor could be lack of cross-cultural mentoring. In the endeavor to uncover if cross-cultural mentoring could improve the persistence of Black interpreters in the field of signed language interpreting, improve the cross-cultural knowledge of White interpreters to better serve their Black Deaf and Black hearing consumers, and improve the services to all Deaf consumers, several matters will be discussed.

The dearth of knowledge of Black Deaf signing styles and history of the Black experience also affected Interpreter Training Programs. From the first ITP program in 1948 (Ball, 2013) to 2017, there has not been much growth in the education about Black Deaf and Black hearing cultures en masse. Participants from both the Black interpreters and White interpreters struggled to unearth the memories of such learning in their respective ITPs. They all felt they had some shallow learning on the topic, but none had any dedicated curriculum on Black Deaf or Black hearing people and their signing styles, in-depth vernacular, or historical components. They had no knowledge of what was missing and left with the impression that there wasn't anything left to learn. ITPs could

use direct lessons on the content areas that need to be added but also direct lessons on how to be a continuous learner and engage in awkward or potentially uncomfortable conversations. These lessons will increase skill development and critical thinking skills that would help them, long term, in adding to their knowledge base in many areas. Educational racial divides can leave Black interpreters with a sense of isolation and leaves White interpreters without knowing how to engage in the conversations and thus the divide grows. Apprehension and feelings of trepidation are completely understandable in those cases. I believe Black and White interpreters want to share, educate, and have an open mind toward another's experiences but lack the confidence and tools to engage. If they can learn to understand the linguistic styles of people different from themselves then that can help lessen that great divide.

The extremely low numbers of Black interpreters compared to White interpreters may have had an effect on the Black interpreters, but this is still unclear (West-Oyedele, 2015). As a result, they may leave due to culture shock and lack of support (Olopade, 2017; West-Oyedele, 2015). Oberg (1960) said cultural shock occurs when the signs or cues you grew up with are vastly different than what you encounter in the new environment:

> Now these cues which may be words, gestures, facial expressions, customs or norms are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept. All of us depend for our peace of mind and our efficiency on hundreds of these cues, most of which we do not carry on the level of conscious awareness. (p. 142)

The lack of education on the Black experience in ITPs can be viewed as neglect—or from the Critical Race Theory lens the idea that anything other than White is of no significance and is not relevant enough to be addressed. That was not the perspective of the White participants, who were also educators. They felt ill-equipped to address some of the education of Black people, as that is not their community of origin. At least one person felt she did not want to be the educator of such treasured information out of respect. Her sense of not wanting to present that information inappropriately or stepping out of her comfort zone may be what earlier White educators felt as well, but when will the information be taught? By providing a supportive and welcoming environment when entering the field and being seen and heard, cross-cultural mentoring could improve services provided by White interpreters to Black consumers by bridging gaps in knowledge of the White interpreters and enhancing their ability to interact in ways differing from their own culture.

Many of the Black and White interpreters did not have a Black teacher while in their ITPs, and those who did had only one Black teacher throughout their entire educational experience. Most of the interpreters from both groups did not have the opportunity to work with Black interpreters as teams much, so the vacuum is still persistent while the education is stagnant.

The literature review showed that cross-cultural mentoring in the field of education has been successful, but not without hard work from all parties. There would be discomfort on the part of White and Black interpreters when discussing issues related to race, ethnocentrism in the interpreting field, and a hosts of other topics that arise when a relationship is being fostered. The White mentors and Black mentees in the literature

review were willing to be vulnerable in the process. They learned how to listen to someone with a different worldview and advocate where they could and be open to listen at other times. Several of the Black focus group participants described learning about the interpreting field from their White interpreter mentors, which has been a benefit in their career. They did not have the benefit of having conversations about being Black in the field or how they could get help navigating some of the struggles as a Black interpreter from their White mentor. One of the White participants felt she had an experience with her Black mentee that opened her mind to knowledge of the Black experience she had not previously known before their conversations. None of the interpreters in either group has had a long-term, sustained, cross-cultural mentoring relationship.

The literature shows cross-cultural mentoring has been and can be done in the field of higher education and business, but there is no literature on cross-cultural mentoring relationships in the field of signed language interpreting. This study can be a stepping-stone to further research on how to advance education of the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities in interpreter education programs in the United States, starting with how to educate the educators. This study can also jump start the much-needed conversations of race relations between Black and White interpreters and how both cultures can share their perspectives and talk about their needs.

The limitations to such progress include the low numbers of Black interpreters and Black interpreter educators in many ITPs and interpreting communities across the country. Technology can help bridge the gap to some extent, but the numbers of White interpreters compared to Black interpreters would put a heavy burden on the part of Black interpreters and Black educators. There are a few places in the United States that have a

larger presence of Black interpreters that could be pilot areas for cross-cultural mentoring trials. At the very least, this study will open up dialogue that has been taboo for way too long. Interpreter Education Programs can talk about how they can add the Black Deaf and hearing narratives in their curriculum. They can start to discuss how to bring Black interpreters, Black Deaf, and Black hearing speakers in for more than Black history month. There is a vast amount of knowledge and skill they can share on other topics and perspectives that are not being added to the education and dialogue of the ITP classrooms.

Significance of the Study

This study adds information regarding cross-cultural mentoring in the field of signed language interpreting where the current literature is lacking. The findings can help ITP teachers understand a segment of the student population (Black) and their particular needs, allowing teachers to help open up the understanding of a Black student regarding cross-cultural mentoring. This study can also help ITP educators understand the need for curriculum specifically related to the Black Deaf, Black hearing, and Black interpreter communities. For those already immersed in the field of signed language interpreting, this study may provide a varying perspective, other than their own, to help them to embrace the idea of cross-cultural mentoring for self and community enhancement. Using focus groups, I was trying to ascertain the degree to which the participants had exposure to the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities while in their ITP. From all responses it was clearly only microscopic. I also attempted to garner the understanding of the level, if any, to which the participants experienced cross-cultural mentorship. The responses were miniscule at best. I expect that there will be a lot of apprehension when

delving into the heated topic of race relations. I believe there will be some interest and some resistance. Curriculum development and advances in technology have not been included the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities. Interpreters need to be educated to serve the needs of all the consumers they engage with on a daily basis. I believe cross-cultural mentoring will be useful in advancing the field to serve the Black Deaf population more effectively than is currently accomplished. Participants also pointed to this as well in their discussion about gaps in their understanding that could be filled by such directed study.

Where is the cultural education currently coming from? How have the gaps in the education of Black Deaf people and the specific linguistic nuances they bring affected on the services they are receiving from White interpreters? What stress has this lack of knowledge brought on White interpreters who want to serve their clientele at a high level but who lack the education and confidence to sufficiently do their job? Can cross-cultural mentoring be an option until and when the education system catches up to the times? These are all questions that need further examination.

Researching this idea of cross-cultural mentoring has been fascinating—because of the eagerness of the participants to want to know more about each other—and yet sad—that in the year of 2017 this absence of information still exists. One thing that is becoming more apparent in the current tenor of United States is that people are not comfortable with having differences of opinion related to racial issues. How can we come to the understanding that because our experiences are different we view situations or ideas differently? We can try to understand, learn, and grow from another's perspective but it may not necessarily change our opinion on something we strongly

believe. Does that mean we cannot get along because we have different beliefs, perspectives, or opinions? I do not think this is the case. I must believe that people can learn from one another and possibly disagree on some things; this does not mean we have to be disagreeable.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In reviewing the history of the signed language interpreting profession and reading the experiences from the interpreters in both focus groups, the need for education about the Black Deaf, Black hearing, and Black interpreting communities becomes clear. Before Black students graduate from interpreter education programs, they often feel beaten down by the educational experience and experience feelings of isolation. The feeling of isolation and continuous judgment continues as they enter into the professional interpreting world. When people leave the field of interpreting because of less-than-welcoming experiences, the field loses what that person had to contribute. Feelings of oppression can be too much to bear for any person who feels isolated.

Without enough mentors who have a shared experience, Black interpreters have fallen by the wayside without someone to even recognize their falling away. If a new Black interpreter feels they will not get a warm welcome or a colleague feels their job could be jeopardized from questioning someone in power, then there is a lost growth opportunity for all parties. Evening the power in the interpreting field with more Black educators and Black experienced interpreters is necessary.

Interpreter education programs are continuing without acknowledging the deficit in the education regarding the Black experience in the curriculum, which can negatively affect many of the Black Deaf consumers to whom they promise to Do No Harm (RID, n. d.). There is information accessible in literature, in talking with the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities it affects, and by having discussions with Black interpreters

currently working in the field. Interpreter Training Programs have no excuse for ignoring the rich information available to them. Cross-cultural mentoring has not been in the forefront of discussion or practice in the interpreting profession or within interpreter education.

White interpreters have not been able to benefit from education in their ITPs or cross-cultural knowledge that could lead to more confident interpreting when a Black consumer is present. When working with the Black Deaf community, interpreters want to understand the issues they face and understand the linguistic components to the signing of the Black consumers. Creating an educational platform through cross-cultural mentoring that White interpreters can use will ultimately help them better serve one of the Deaf populations they work with and are concerned about. Recognition, conversations, and knowledge about the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities are necessary. Both groups have a mistrust of the other for various reasons it seems, and coming together on their own is doubtful—hence the importance of this research. If Black and White interpreters can establish trust, cultural sharing will help the White interpreters better meet the need of their Black Deaf consumers and novice Black interpreters can learn from the White interpreters' experience. All interpreters and Deaf community members can benefit from the advantages of cross-cultural mentorship.

Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of the study, I recommend interpreter educators seek Black Deaf, Black hearing, and Black interpreters to recognize the issues that their Black students may be facing in order to help them succeed in their ITP and beyond. The educator can also build relationships with Black Deaf, Black hearing, and Black

interpreters to learn of their experiences, invite them to speak in their classes, and ask them to mentor their Black and White students. I also recommend interpreter education programs recruit more qualified Black instructors and mentor aspiring Black educators to join their programs to model success for Black students. Additionally ITPs can use this research to get information about the Black Deaf community to use in a dedicated class on Black narratives and experiences. Another recommendation is for working professional interpreters to have open forums to discuss the needs of the communities they serve. The forums should include Black and White participants, Deaf and hearing, interpreters and non-interpreters. This particular study is focused on the Black communities, but the researcher does not wish to stop there. Although this particular study is limited in scope, further research should be done exploring the impact to other marginalized communities.

Closing Thoughts

As a Black person, I am disheartened by the lack of people who look like me in the signed language interpreting field. This thesis opened with a description of facts from the literature in 1817. It is now 2017, 200 years later, and the topic of race relations still plagues the signed language interpreting profession. Where does trust begin? How do we ask the oppressed to teach the oppressor? These will most certainly be questions that enter the minds of some who read this research. The United States has endured heartache, pain, tragedy, and grief but we are a resilient nation and we also know joy, life, and laughter. We, as Black and White interpreters, *can* be supportive and learn from one another. We *can* open our minds to varying experiences and perspectives. We *can* have the hard conversations that need to happen to bring us a better understanding of each

other and the Deaf community we serve. Hopefully, more Black people and other people of color will enter, continue, and thrive in this profession. When one advances we all advance!

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Focus Group Participant Consent

Title of Study: Cross-cultural Mentoring

Principal Investigator: Royce Carpenter
Rcarpenter16@mail.wou.edu; 614-332-5873

What is the purpose of this study?
- The purpose of this study is to find out if any of you have experienced a cross-cultural interpreting mentor/mentee relationship.
- If you have not, what has prevented you from being involved in that type of relationship?
- If you have was it beneficial or detrimental?
- What educational information was taught or provided about the Black/African American Deaf and Black hearing communities while in your interpreting education program?

If I choose to participate in a focus group, what will happen?
You will be asked to have a conversation with a group of your peers where a facilitator will ask some open ended questions that you can answer or refrain from answering if you choose.

You must be a working sign language interpreter who has attended/graduated from an Interpreting Education Program to be involved in the focus group. You will be asked several questions on being a mentor or being a mentee of someone who is Black if you are Caucasian or someone who is Caucasian if you are Black. There will be questions that may feel uncomfortable but if you choose to answer please answer honestly. You may refrain from answering any question or completely withdraw from the study without penalty at any point in the focus group.

- You will participate in a discussion with 5-7 other community members.
- The discussion will last approximately one to two hours.
- A discussion leader of the same race/ethnicity of the group will ask questions about your thoughts on mentoring and your educational process.
- You can ask for clarification at any time.
- You can ask questions of your own at any time of one another.

If I choose not to participate, or change my mind, what should I do?
- You do not have to participate in the focus group.
- You can choose to answer only some or all of the questions.
- You can leave the focus group at any point.

- You may contact the principal investigator to decline involvement in the study prior to or at any point during or after the focus group process.

What are some general things I should know about this research study?
- Your participation is completely voluntary.
- You may refuse to participate—for any reason—without penalty.
- The purpose of research is to gain knowledge that may help interpreters engage in cross-cultural mentoring in a comfortable and fruitful manner. The study may also help educators understand the value of including culturally diverse curriculum.
- You may not receive any direct benefit from your participation in studies.
- You will be given a copy of this consent form.
- If you have any questions, you should ask the researcher named above.

Who will take part in this study?
There will be two focus groups. One group will be Black/African American interpreters and the second group will be Caucasian interpreters. The groups will meet at different times and have different facilitators.

What are the possible benefits of the study?
One possible benefit of the research is to gain knowledge that may help interpreters engage in cross-cultural mentoring in a comfortable and fruitful manner. The study may also help educators understand the value of including culturally diverse curriculum.

What are the possible risks involved from being in this study?
- Every effort will be made to keep your answers confidential on the part of the researcher. All participants will be asked to keep focus group questions and answers confidential as well but the researcher cannot promise on behalf of a participant to follow through on the confidentiality agreement.

How will your privacy be protected?
The researcher will gather information by handwriting, transcription and video recording. The researcher will keep all data in a confidential locked cabinet in a private office only accessible by the researcher and her thesis committee chair, Dr. Elisa Maroney. All names will be replaced with a participant number and/or pseudonym. No identifying information will be included in the research thesis.

- Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study.
- Any identifying information noted during the discussion will be deleted.
- All handwritten notes will be kept in a confidential locked cabinet in a private office only accessible by the researcher.
- All electronic documents created from the notes will be password protected.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?
There will be no compensation given for participation in this study.

What if you have questions about this study?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, complaints, concerns, you should first contact the researcher listed on the first page of this form. You may contact my thesis chair Dr. Elisa Maroney, maronee@wou.edu who is supervising me during this research.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Western Oregon University. The IRB reviews and approves proposals to ensure participants are informed and safe for the duration of the study. You may also contact the Institutional Review Board at WOU, 503-838- 9200 or irb@wou.edu.

Title of Study: Cross-cultural Mentoring

Principal Investigator: Royce Carpenter

Name of focus-group participant

Signature of focus-group participant   Date

Signature of Principal Investigator or Designee   Date

Royce Carpenter- Focus Groups Questions
Caucasian Group

1. Did your ITP/IEP provide education on the Black Deaf or Black hearing cultural communities and if they did what did that look like?

2. How did you personally prepare to work with the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities?

3. What challenges have you encountered interpreting for the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities?

4. Please share any internal struggles you have had or still have when working in the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities?

5. Tell me of your experience working with Black interpreters?

6. Do you have any apprehensions about working with a Black interpreter and if so what has caused the apprehension?

7. Have you experienced mentoring or being mentored by a Black interpreter and if so please share the nature of that or those experiences?

8. What did you learn from that experience? If you did not, what do you think you can learn from being in a mentoring relationship with a Black interpreter?

9. If you have not what has prevented you from engaging in this type of mentorship?

10. What would you like to know about the Black Deaf, Black hearing, and Black interpreting communities?

Follow-up questions:

1. Was there anything else that you would like to share that you have not yet had an opportunity to share?
2. Tell me more about your response to _____.
3. Please give me an example of your response to _____.
4. What other information would you like to add?
5. Tell me more about your answer.
6. Please give me an example that clarifies your answer

Black Group

1. Did your ITP/IEP provide education on the Black Deaf or Black hearing culture and if they did what did that look like? How did that education align with your personal knowledge and experience?

2. Explain what you felt was the dominant culture taught during your time in your interpreting education program? Did you request any education on signs relating to Black cultural issues (history, hair, slang, etc.)?

3. What challenges have you encountered interpreting for White Deaf and White hearing communities?

4. Please share any internal struggles you have had or still have when working in the White Deaf and White hearing communities?

5. Tell me of your experience working with White interpreters? Are those experiences positive, negative, or a combination of both and why.

6. Do you have any apprehensions about how you are perceived as a Black interpreter and if so what has caused the apprehension?

7. Have you experienced mentoring or being mentored by a White interpreter and if so please share the nature of that or those experiences?

8. What did you learn from that experience? If you did not, what do you think you can learn from being in a mentoring relationship with a White interpreter?

9. If you have not what has prevented you from engaging in this type of mentorship?

10. What would you like White interpreters to know about the Black interpreting community?

Follow-up questions:

1. Was there anything else that you would like to share that you have not yet had an opportunity to share?
2. Tell me more about your response to _____.
3. Please give me an example of your response to _____.
4. What other information would you like to add?
5. Tell me more about your answer.
6. Please give me an example that clarifies your answer.

APPENDIX C: CODES AND CRITERIA

Black and White Focus Groups

Codes	Applied to…
Minimal Information Learned	Instances when interpreters expressed amount of cultural learning in ITP.
Alignment with Personal Knowledge	Instances when interpreters felt they had personal information to aid their work.
Experiences	Detailing of the participants work and educational experiences.
Signing Styles	Discussions on how consumers signing were perceived.
Consumers- Black and White	Interactions with Deaf and hearing consumers.
Interpreters and Classmates- Black and White	Interactions with other interpreters and classmates while in ITPs.
Feelings of Fear, Apprehension, Discomfort	Participants' discussions of how events influenced them in a negative manner.
Feelings of Apprehension	Working in a cross-cultural relationship.
Lack of Trust	Discussing racial issues cross-culturally.
White Instructors Knowledge of Black Cultural Information	Participants from their perspectives as students and their perspectives as teachers.
Struggles/Challenges in School/work	Feelings of inequality and judgment.
Black Cultural Issues/Black Identity	Knowledge or the lack thereof, knowledge of needing to work harder.

Video Relay Challenges	Issues regarding being a Black interpreter in VRS
Cross-Cultural Mentoring	Discussions about experience and lack of experience.
Same-Culture Mentoring	Discussions about experience and lack of experience.
Privilege	Participants' responses that could be perceived as privileged.
Above and Beyond	Feelings Black interpreters had in school and in the field.
Barriers to Mentorship	Lack of Opportunities, lack of motivation
Consciousness	Participants' recognition of lack of cultural information taught in their ITP education.
Lack of Consciousness	Participant's unconsciousness of lack of cultural information taught in their ITP education.