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Mentoring: Fostering the Profession While Mitigating the Gap

by

Kimberly A. Boeh

A thesis submitted to Western Oregon University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:

Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies

March 2016

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**WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE GRADUATE FACULTY OF
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- Thesis
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Titled:

Mentoring: Fostering the Profession While Mitigating the Gap

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ABSTRACT

Literature suggests that mentoring in the field of interpreting will help novice interpreters overcome the steep learning curve that exists between graduation from college preparation programs (or through other entry-level avenues) and work readiness. This study investigated the perceived benefits of mentoring for the signed language interpreting profession by practitioners in the field. A total of 443 respondents varying in age, sex, ethnic backgrounds, work experience and certification levels from the United States and Canada were included in this study. The purpose was to clarify the attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives of current practitioners and students in the field of signed language interpreting related to mentoring. Four constructs were investigated regarding mentoring in relation to work readiness for entry-level interpreters: knowing how to present qualifications as well as how to present one's roles and responsibilities, working in specific settings, mentoring in relation to increasing professional acumen related to interpreting, and feelings of readiness to handle ethical decision making as an entry-level interpreter.

A lack of interpreter competence upon graduation has created a gap in college to work readiness (Maroney & Smith, 2010; Resnick, 1990; Winston, 2006; Witter-Merithew, Johnson, & Taylor 2004) and one focus to remedy this issue is mentoring (Smith, Cancel, & Maroney, 2012; Winston, 2006). There is a dearth of research in signed language interpreting, and by researching mentoring and the experiences of practitioners in the field there is hope of better understanding the needs and goals of the

profession, as a whole, in relation to mentoring. Further exploration is needed regarding what scholars suggest about mentoring and mitigating the gap.

Results from this investigation indicated that the majority of respondents perceived mentoring to be beneficial in the majority of the work settings investigated as well as the other topics included in this research. There was however, a higher importance placed upon linguistic skill-based settings over non-skill-based topics in relation to mentoring for entry-level interpreters (e.g., knowing how to present qualifications, knowing how to present their role and responsibilities, freelance business knowledge, general business knowledge). Respondents also reported a feeling of readiness to handle ethical dilemmas during their first year of interpreting.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Signed language interpreting is an emerging profession (Scott-Gibson, 2015) and a field with increasing demands for credentialing to ensure quality services to clients (Mikkelsen, 2013; Pearce & Napier, 2010). “Before the age of signed language professionalization, individuals showing promise [in sign language] were encouraged by Deaf community members to mediate interactions between Deaf and non-Deaf people” (Janzen, 2005, p. 6). At first, interpreting was considered a volunteer activity within the community (Cokely, 2005). This meant those within the community who were not Deaf but who had a family connection to a deaf individual or had a job working with Deaf individuals would be called upon to interpret due to their level of signed language fluency (Cokely, 2005). Over time, the community pools of interpreters were no longer ample to meet the supply and demand that came about. Legislative acts granting equal access for handicapped individuals to federally supported programs (Cokely, 2005), and free public education (Ball, 2013) increased the need for more interpreters. Due to the increased demand for qualified interpreters and the community resources for supplying the interpreters no longer able to keep up, education programs at colleges were established (Ball, 2013).

With the new endeavor of formally training interpreters, instead of the interpreters being chosen by the Deaf community because of their language proficiency, gaps began to develop (Cokely, 2005). A gap emerged and a fear that interpreters were graduating from training programs ill-prepared for entry into the field of interpreting became valid. Walker and Shaw (2011) stated:

The training-to-work gap has been recognized for many years by the Conference of Interpreter Trainers, which has sought to reduce the gap through improved curricula and instructional methods. It has been more than 20 years since Resnick (1990) suggested that post-graduation mentorship, internship, and extended supervision could mitigate the lingering difficulty of preparing interpreters within academic settings to meet the demands of the field. (p. 1)

The gap has been talked about for more than 20 years, an extensive amount of time to have a recognized gap in training that is not effectively leading graduates from interpreter training programs to be successful in the transition to work-readiness. It is imperative to not only identify the individual factors that have created the gap in the interpreter educational programs but also to find a solution and implement changes to work toward mitigating the gap.

Some solutions to decreasing the gap in the education of interpreters that have been proffered include changing program curriculum (Ball, 2013; Kiraly, 2000; Resnick, 1990), providing workshops (Winston, 2006), and implementing mentoring opportunities (Delk, 2013; RID, 2007b). It is recognized that interpreting is considered a performance-based profession (Gish, 1992), and with that, much can be acquired from not only reading and learning academically but also from hands-on experiences (Gunter & Hull, 1995; Resnick, 1990). Brenda Nicodemus, an interpreter educator with 15 years of experience who is profiled in the book *Toward Competent Practice: Conversations with Stakeholders*, stated, “Nothing can ‘grow’ an interpreter quite like real world interpreting experience. Therefore, the graduate should have some form of apprenticeship or on-the-

job training as part of socialization into the interpreting profession” (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005, p. 68).

Mentoring, also known as apprenticeship or internship in other practice professions has been utilized to effectively train new and emerging practitioners to be prepared for their work upon entry into the field (Colaprete, 2009; Gopee, 2011; Killian, 2003). It is known that one can learn tremendously from another with more experience and practice in the same field, as stated clearly by Johnsson and Hager (2008): “Mentors, who are significant role models in the lives of others, often called their protégés, can influence the quality of learning, particularly for novices” (p. 528). The necessity of providing more direct support to veteran interpreters and new interpreters has been discussed for years (Winston & Lee, 2013). For many academics in the field, mentoring is considered an essential component of interpreter education but in many instances, mentoring is a component missing from interpreter education (Winston & Lee, 2013). Mentoring can be established for various reasons and goals, but the common themes include decreasing the impact of the gap on the novice interpreters, improving interpreting services, and building a support system within the interpreting community (Delk, 2013, p. 3).

With suggestions from educators that mentoring is a plausible solution to the gap (Colonomos, 2013), this study elicited perceptions from practitioners in the field of signed language interpreting related to the issue of successful transitions from training programs to work-readiness. Overall, do practitioners currently working in the field feel that mentoring will help prepare entry-level interpreters for work readiness?

The research topic on mentoring was chosen because I believe mentoring is a much needed component in the field of signed language interpreting. I did not have access to mentors during my interpreter training program or the first few years working as an entry-level interpreter. There may not have been enough mentors then, and there may not be enough mentors available now. This may be in part due to a lack of confidence in interpreters to feel they are qualified enough to be a mentor, a lack of time to commit to mentoring, or a paucity of funding sources for mentoring. I have experienced, first-hand, the lack of support and guidance that many entry-level interpreters encounter. Witnessing many new graduates struggling with entry into the field of interpreting has deepened my belief that mentoring is the key to successfully transitioning recent graduates from college to work readiness. Smith et al. (2012) stated the transition from school (being a student) to becoming a professional is not an easy undertaking. This study explores the extent to which current practitioners perceive mentoring as a viable option to reducing the gap experienced by entry-level interpreters.

The data from this research support the assumption that there is a strong need for mentorship in the signed language interpreting field and the belief that if it were made readily available, many novice and experienced interpreters would take advantage of mentorship in various settings. This mentorship would help to bridge the gap that exists between two-year or four-year preparation programs and work readiness in the profession of interpreting as well as providing guidance to individual interpreters to expand their knowledge base leading them to becoming more highly skilled interpreters.

Background

Since the first signed language interpreter education program in the United States was established in 1948 at the Central Bible Institute in Springfield, Missouri (Ball, 2013), programs have been changing and adapting to the growing need and demand for interpreters. More interpreter training programs started developing in the 1960s (Ball, 2013). The gap in signed language interpreting is not new and may have started back in 1973 with the implementation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and 1975 Public Law 94-142 (Cokely, 2005). The passing of these two legislative acts caused a greater demand for interpreters and took the “control” of who became interpreters out of the hands of the Deaf community and put it into the hands of outsiders, essentially starting the shift from interpreters *of* the Deaf to interpreters *for* the Deaf (Ball, 2013; Cokely, 2005). Prior to the passing of these legislative acts, the majority of interpreters came from within the Deaf community as either a CODA (Child of a Deaf Adult) or other individuals who were given the welcome into the Deaf community and the “go ahead” to be an interpreter (Cokely, 2005). This shift caused a gap in the community due to interpreters now being educated through colleges instead of gaining acceptance as an interpreter through the Deaf community (Cokely, 2005).

Another important component of interpreter training was in response to Deaf people wanting to further their education by attending workshops, training, and—eventually—college courses, which placed a high demand for more interpreters (Ball, 2013, p. 16). When this occurred, the previous gatekeeping function for determining who was qualified to serve as an interpreter no longer rested in the hands of Deaf people who encouraged, trained, and mentored “to-be” interpreters by way of these interpreters

spending much time and practice integrating into the role of the interpreter through the acceptance of the Deaf community (Cokely, 2005).

The idea of an educational gap is not new to the signed language interpreting profession and insufficient research into the qualifications and academic training required to graduate interpreters who are work-ready is a detriment to the profession and the communities the interpreters serve (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). Until the proper funding and research is in place to support the education and training of interpreters and teachers of interpreters, another approach must be found to limit the burden on the communities and reduce the amount of stress placed on the interpreters (Resnick, 1990).

What is missing from the gap discussions is documentation of the beliefs, experiences, and feelings of the practitioners in the field. If mentoring is deemed to be the answer to diminishing the gap in the field, current practitioners will be the ones affected by this call to action. I did not find any current reporting on practitioners' perspectives to mentoring. This study seeks to add to the increased research focusing on this specific topic regarding practitioners and mentoring.

Statement of the Problem

Signed language interpreters who begin work soon after graduating from interpreter education programs are vulnerable to challenges for which they may be inadequately prepared (Walker & Shaw, 2011). It is no secret that a true gap between the academic knowledge of interpreting and the actual skill of interpreting exists in the field of signed language interpreting for new practitioners (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005; Witter-Merithew, Johnson, & Taylor 200;). Finding a way to better prepare interpreters to graduate from interpreter education programs and be work-ready is vital

for the profession and those the profession serves. The information learned in training programs is essential to the success of the interpreter and the profession as a whole, but learning through first-hand experience is well recognized as a valuable means to learning a new skill (Gunter & Hull, 1995). It is not enough for interpreting students to know English and American Sign Language; they must also be aware of interpersonal demands, intrapersonal demands, and environmental demands that will impact their decision making (Dean & Pollard, 2001). They must also learn to work in a myriad of professional venues and develop keen professional decision-making skills (Dean & Pollard, 2001). Now that the profession has grown tremendously, there is a focus to “mind the gap.” Providing mentors to newer graduates, as well as current practitioners, seems to be a reasonable consideration to effectively mitigate the gap that exists, thus allowing entry-level interpreters the opportunity to become properly prepared and ready for work in their respective communities. Not enough research exists on the perceptions of current practitioners in the field of signed language interpreting in regards to mentoring benefits. Getting a glimpse into the minds of current students of interpreting and working interpreters to gauge their perceptions on the benefits of mentoring for the field was the focus for this research.

Purpose of the Study

Since a gap in interpreter education has been identified, I have focused my research on exploring the perceptions of the practitioners within the signed language profession to assess their thoughts about the benefits that may be deemed pertinent when referring to entry-level interpreters and mentoring. Research related to the thoughts and attitudes of the practitioners toward mentoring was not found in my initial exploration of

the topic. Through this research, I hope to determine the beliefs, thoughts, experiences, opinions, and perspectives of the practitioners in regards to mentoring and the overall application of mentoring within the signed language interpreting practice profession. To identify practitioners' perspectives on mentorship, I investigated the following:

Question 1: *Will practitioners report feeling prepared in knowing how to present qualifications, roles, and responsibilities during their first year of interpreting?*

Question 2: *Will practitioners believe mentoring is important in various work settings for entry-level interpreters?*

Question 3: *Will practitioners report a need for mentoring in order to assist in developing professional acumen (e.g., freelance business knowledge, general business knowledge)?*

Question 4: *Will practitioners report feeling prepared when applying ethical decisions during their first year of interpreting?*

Theoretical Bases and Organization

There are several theoretical bases relevant to this study: Dean and Pollard's Demand Control Schema (2013), the conceptual framework of a working interpreter (Cartwright, 1999; Dean & Pollard, 2013), and phenomenology (Smith, 2013). Dean and Pollard's (2013) body of work on demand and control factors within the framework of the interpreter processing information from a source language into a target language is very important in the field of signed language interpreting. They mention the importance of understanding the spoken word, the message intent, the participants, and the participants' "thought worlds" (p. 3). Interpreters need to be able to analyze each

situation they encounter in order to learn from their experiences. Some of this learning occurs from being “on-the-job,” and other learning opportunities come from dissecting situations (alone) and with supervision from colleagues and mentors.

One’s conceptual framework stems from each individual interpreter and what they bring to the situation. This includes but is not limited to background, educational training, experience, and years of working experience. All of the knowledge and experiences an interpreter brings to the work forms their conceptual framework and helps them establish their identity as an interpreter (Dean & Pollard, 2013). Interpreters are “thinking, breathing people who bring their own emotions and previous experiences along with them” (Cartwright, 1999, p. viii).

In addition to the idea that each interpreter brings a conceptual framework to their work is a theory called phenomenology that encompasses experiences of perception, thought, memory, emotion, social, and linguistic activity (Smith, 2013). From the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2013), Smith wrote that with phenomenology the focus is on consciousness and direct experiences. In consciousness, we find reflection and analysis of our own experiences. Phenomenology is a complex grouping of temporal awareness, spatial awareness, attention, awareness of one’s own experiences, thoughts, perceptions, memories, self-awareness, the self in various roles, embodied action, awareness of other persons, linguistic activity, social interaction, and everyday life experiences (Smith, 2013). Due to phenomenology being linked to our experiences, this study is informed by the theory of phenomenology however, it is not a phenomenological study.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This research had tremendous participation from members of a relatively small professional field: 443 respondents, which allowed for a large sample of the practitioners' responses to be recorded. The survey was distributed nationwide (and even reached Canada) allowing for a broad scope of experiences, beliefs, and perspectives to be included. The survey questions were formatted in a primarily quantitative mixed-method approach of multiple choice questions, open-ended questions, and Likert scale questions, which allowed the gathering of multiple types of data. An open comment section was supplied for respondents to leave comments that they felt important but not specifically assessed in the survey. The survey was anonymous, which allowed participants to self-report with no ramifications for their responses.

Previous research has focused mainly on the perceptions of mentees who were new to the profession. This left little information to guide this research or to use for comparison. The survey was distributed digitally so anyone without access to a computer, email or a Facebook account may not have been able to participate. Online reporting does not allow for authentication of the participants taking part in the survey.

Since I was not present for the participants to ask questions or clarify any uncertainties on how to respond, some answers may not have been answered or may have been answered from a different perspective than what I had in mind when writing the question.

Limitations that affect the scope of this research include: time constraints; limited experience writing survey questions; a long survey; a large pool of participants, which led to a large dataset; and a topic that was broad and which did not allow for more succinct

survey questions. The survey was piloted with colleagues, feedback was sought, and changes were made accordingly. There was also not enough time to include current mentoring programs that have been established in the United States and Canada to explore the impact of such programs on the participants in those programs.

One thing that I learned is although I thought I had narrowed down my original topic of the “gap” to mentoring and then narrowed the topic of mentoring into sub-categories, there are still many other directions to go under the umbrella of mentoring. I left an “open comment” question at the end of my survey for people to make comments. The comments could be related to the survey itself or anything they wanted to share about mentoring that they felt they did not get to say during the survey. I honestly did not expect many to participate in the open comment section within the survey, but I was pleasantly surprised by the comments the participants shared.

Definition of Terms

The Gap: the difference between skills of recent interpreter training program graduates and the skills needed to work effectively at an entry-level position (Maroney & Smith, 2010). The amount of time between when one graduates from an interpreter education program to the time they pass the National Certification Test provided through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, which has been established as the minimum competency standard for the profession (Resnick, 1990).

Mentoring: the sharing of knowledge, skills, experiences, and critical thinking between one seasoned interpreter and one novice interpreter for refinement and development of skills, situational awareness, understanding of professionalism and preparation to work successfully in the field of interpreting (Gordon & Magler, 2007;

Kahle-Piasecki, 2011; Killian, 2003; Parsloe & Leedham, 2009; Shaffer & Watson, 2004; Shaw, 1997; Whynot, 2013).

Professional Acumen: knowledge and understanding of the professional aspects of interpreting. This can be anything from how to approach professionals in the field who employ interpreters to how to write an invoice as a sole proprietor.

Ethical Decisions: decisions interpreters make that affect the work they deliver to clients and also how those decisions affect others (e.g., hearing clients, Deaf clients, the interpreter making the decision, the interpreting profession, the Deaf community; Dean & Pollard, 2013).

Practice Profession: a profession where academic preparation and skills development precede a career in human services (Dean & Pollard, 2004).

Skill Development: improving one's ability to transfer meaning between languages: American Sign Language to English skills, English to American Sign Language skills, and vocabulary building.

Scaffolding: support from an instructor to guide students to the completion of an activity (Kiraly, 2000).

Work Readiness: the ability for interpreters to graduate from interpreter education programs and enter the field of interpreting properly trained as well as culturally and linguistically capable of interpreting between their native language and acquired language(s).

Skill-based: A focus on linguistic work interpreting ASL-to-English or English-to-ASL.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

In 1964, it was evident that signed language interpreting and transliterating was not recognized as a profession yet (Cokely, 2005) so it is safe to say that it is a comparatively young profession. With this, come the trials and errors of an up-and-coming profession. One of the identified issues of this growing profession is a gap between the skills and experiences of those graduating from interpreter training programs and their readiness to begin work in the field with the proper skills to maintain fidelity with their work in the community in which they serve.

Interpreting

Interpreting requires the interpreter to simultaneously process two languages while taking into account body language, emotions, message intent, individual and profession roles, and the goals of the interaction between two or more people (Dean & Pollard, 2013). As stated by Roberts (1992), “interpretation, like translation, involves a multi-dimensional competency that is hard to define and to teach, and even harder to evaluate” (p. 16). The task of interpreting is one that is complex and requires multiple abilities that are not limited to language competencies (Bontempo & Napier, 2007; Metzger, 2005; Obst, 2010; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). Linguistic and various other skills are required to facilitate an effective interpretation. Many interpreter education programs have an emphasis on teaching vocabulary concurrent with interpreting due to the needs of the community changing over time. Initially, those who pursued training programs entered with the knowledge of signed language vocabulary they had gained from Deaf native language users who were in the community or who

were teachers of the Deaf (Ball, 2013, p. 16). As the demand for interpreters grew and the demand outweighed the supply, educational programs had to start incorporating more signed language vocabulary and fingerspelling courses to teach students the language as well as interpreting skills (Ball, 2013). The need for interpreter training to be established quickly in order to meet the demands of the community for interpreting services brought some students into programs without signed language competency (Ball 2013). This change of students entering without signed language competency added requirements for the students to learn a language while simultaneously studying to become an interpreter (Ball, 2013, p. 41). They had less time to focus on the art of interpretation and the various degrees of difficulty that are involved in the basic task of interpreting such as the added complications of multiple clients, environmental demands (e.g., cold, noxious smells, long periods of standing/sitting, limited breaks) (Dean & Pollard 2013), cultural implications, professional protocol, ethical practices and so on (Gunter & Hull, 1995). Gunter and Hull (1995) suggested that in addition to the myriad of factors related to interpreting, one also has to include the ethical parameters that come into play in interpreting. The discussion of ethical scenarios and proper decision making in the classroom is, at times, far different from what transpires in the “real world” outside of the classroom. As Gunter and Hull (1995) suggested, “The clear-cut Code of Ethics we memorize in interpreting class soon loses its black and white appearance in the real world. A bridge across the gap from theory to practice is needed” (p. 112).

The Gap

Since the first meeting in 1964 in Muncie, Indiana and the incorporation of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf in 1972, the interpreting profession has grown and

shifted tremendously (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001). The way it was then and how it is now is vastly different (Cokely, 2005; Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001). Interpreters went from volunteer interpreting to getting paid to interpret. Some interpreters had mentor support on their journey, such as Anna Witter-Merithew reported in *Legacies and Legends* (Ball, 2013) and as reported by other interpreters in the field (Shaw, 1997). Unfortunately, not everyone has access to mentors and support. Interpreting has developed into a profession with years of experience invested by previous practitioners in the field, but so many are still trying to fill the “gap” in their learning (Whynot, 2013). Many interpreters freelance within their communities and travel from one appointment to another, day-in and day-out, feeling isolated from the colleagues that they rarely see (Napier, 2006). This can increase the burden on interpreters as they can feel alone in the work they do.

Interpreters can work anywhere and can find themselves working in a wide range of settings on any given day (Demers, 2005). Due to this wide range of possible work sites, new interpreters entering the field can find themselves in new situations that they have not experienced before and never learned about in their training programs. In other words, as Dean and Pollard (2013) stated, what they did learn was not the same as what they encountered in real-life work situations. As Ruiz (2013) described it:

Working professionally as a signed language interpreter, I have experienced many different situations that I never imagined I would encounter. I have experienced a variety of situations as a novice interpreter that I did not feel fully prepared to handle on my own. (p. 1)

Interpreters can find themselves in uncharted territory on any given day, but it is how they handle these unexpected situations that can make or break their reputation (Cartwright, 1999).

Part of the gap can be related to lack of world experiences and knowledge (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). Many graduates enter the field and do what they can to learn what they need to know to do their work (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). *Baptism by fire* (Investopedia, 2015) is when a person must learn lessons by being thrown into a situation without prior knowledge or experience. It seems that baptism by fire has been the way many interpreters learn about interpreting in their first years working as a signed language interpreter (Ruiz, 2013). When these situations arise, the novice interpreter figures out a way to maneuver through the situation and then later they reflect on this situation. Finding someone to debrief with regarding such situations is a struggle in the field of interpreting due to the stringent rules of confidentiality (Napier, 2006; Schwenke, 2012). Having a colleague to discuss specific situations and scenarios with as well as discussing solutions to issues that arise can cut down on workplace stress and burnout (Dean & Pollard, 2001). Lack of workplace support has been mentioned as a reason for dissatisfaction among signed language interpreters (Pearse & Napier, 2010).

In a study by Dean and Pollard (2001), most interpreters reported feeling “insufficiently prepared” or “not at all prepared” (p. 9) for many of the interpreting skills necessary in their work. As Gish (1987) noted in *I Understood all the Words but I Missed the Point: A Goal-to-Detail/Detail-to-Goal Strategy for Text Analysis*, sometimes with interpreters and interpreter students she noticed that while all the individual linguistic pieces to the interpretation would be present, often the overall message would

be missing and therefore the interpretation from source language to target language would fall short of message equivalence. Dean and Pollard (2001) described several studies (e.g., Branum, 1991; Heller et al., 1986; Neville, 1992; Swartz, 1999; Watson, 1987, that emphasized the lack of appropriate training to prepare graduates for entry into the field of interpreting. There is what appears to be a gap between what is provided in academic training and what is expected in the real world of interpreting (Maroney & Smith, 2010; Mikkelsen, 2013). Developing mentoring programs for entry-level interpreters, as well as veteran interpreters, can start to minimize the gap as mentoring programs are beneficial regardless if they are established with a formalized structure or informal structure (Bynum, 2015; Gorman, Durmowicz, Roskes, & Slattery, 2010). As Helen Keller stated; “Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much” (as cited in Gorman et al., 2010, p. 12).

According to Resnick (1990), standards for quality interpreter education programs are important in order to graduate qualified interpreters who could provide quality services professionally. Through research, Resnick (1990) discovered there was a gap that existed between the college graduate and a qualified working interpreter. The interpreting field has established a national certification which signifies a minimum competency standard through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). Therefore, one way the gap can be measured is by how long it takes a recent graduate (entry-level interpreter) to get certified once they enter the field of interpreting. Unfortunately, it seems there are students entering the field who can barely pass basic state assurance tests for interpreting: “This indicates that often novice interpreters are working without appropriate skills, wreaking havoc on our professional standards and demoralizing our

new generation of interpreters. As a remedy for this situation, some have proposed that mentoring programs be established” (Resnick, 1990, para 1).

Suggested Solutions

There have been changes suggested within interpreter education and professional development requirements, including supervised professional training for students of interpreting (Dean & Pollard, 2001). Having a required level of language competency has also been discussed as a requirement for acceptance into interpreter training programs (Ball, 2013; Resnick, 1990). Other challenges that have been recognized are program lengths, possible prerequisites to enter the programs, focusing more on ethnic and cultural diversity, critical thinking skills, and the competencies of the program educators (Ball, 2013; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). These are all things to consider in the betterment of program education for interpreters, but changes in academic programs and professional practices do not occur overnight. While small changes are set in motion, the field needs a current action to help remedy the gap, and that may be mentoring (Resnick, 1990).

An issue of insufficient pre-screening of those entering programs to ensure they have sufficient mastery of both ASL and English has been recognized (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). Resnick (1990) suggested that ASL and English language skills and cultural understanding should be acquired prior to entering the interpreting programs (p. 1). She proposed that an emphasis on interpreting theory, development of basic interpreting skills, and expansion of language and cultural knowledge should be the focus in the interpreter training programs instead of language acquisition (p. 1).

Making appropriate decisions in a matter of seconds is extremely important for interpreters, and the more self-awareness and self-control they have will allow each decision to be more effective (Shaw, 1997). Obst (2010) theorized that an interpreter who delivers an accurate interpretation can really push their mind to maximum capacity, suggesting that “In challenging situations, accurate interpretation is no less sophisticated, complex, and intellectually demanding than brain surgery” (p. xi). Given these statements, how can interpreters become trained to enter the field with competence? Kiraly (2000) suggested the changes needed to assist in bridging the gap in interpreter preparation stems from the education itself. His non-didactic approach, deeply rooted in social constructivism, is called socio-cognitive apprenticeship (p. 47). This cognitive apprenticeship is established by having scaffolding built into the education process. Scaffolding refers to support from an instructor to guide students to the completion of an activity (Kiraly, 2000). The scaffolding designed by the instructor signifies their role by allowing guidance, interaction, empathy, and spontaneity into the educational activities (p. 47). Properly used scaffolding will allow students to become autonomous in learning and action (Kiraly, 2000). Kiraly also stated that cognitive apprenticeship is a process that allows students to become culturally assimilated into authentic practices by completing activities and social interactions in the same way other practice professions or apprenticeships gain their knowledge and skills. Brown et al. (1989) stated:

Similarly, craft apprenticeship enables apprentices to acquire and develop the tools and skills of their craft through authentic work and membership in their trade. Through this process, apprentices enter the culture of practice. So the term apprenticeship helps to emphasise the centrality of activity in learning and

knowledge and highlights the inherently context-dependent, situated, and enculturating nature of learning. And apprenticeship also suggests the paradigm of situated modelling, coaching, and fading...whereby teachers or coaches promote learning, first by making explicit their tacit knowledge or by modelling their strategies for students in authentic activity. Then, teachers and colleagues support students' attempts at doing the task. And finally they empower the students to continue independently. (Brown et al., 1989, p. 39, as cited in Kiraly, 2000, p. 48)

Another aspect of education that can be considered is Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development. The Zone of Proximal Development is the difference between what learners can accomplish on their own and what they can accomplish with guidance from peers and adults. This process claims learning occurs through interactions with others (Gordon & Magler, 2007). This concept of learning can certainly be applied to interpreters. There are many things interpreting students can do alone: study vocabulary, practice interpreting, watch instructional videos, and more. However, one can only improve so much on their own. Seeking guidance from someone who has more experience is a natural tendency for humans in any conquest, so why not in interpreting? Gish (1987) stated that the introduction of new information does not make the greatest difference in learning, but the application of existing knowledge to new situations can develop broader learning. This application of previous knowledge to new situations is where mentoring could start to minimize the effect of the gap (Resnick, 1990). Other professions have used mentoring in the same manner (Kahle-Piasecki, 2011). Talking about interpreting situations and working through theoretical problem solving in

classrooms are great activities but some things are experienced-based, not learned as well in a classroom environment but better learned with hands-on experiences (Resnick, 1990). That is why Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning applies to the field of interpreting. Learning by social interactions first (shadowing other interpreters) then internalizing those interactions (self-awareness, self-assessing) and experiences become the foundation for the critical thinking processes that are a necessity in the interpreting profession (Hoza, 2013). One way for a professional to advance in the profession is to establish a mentor relationship with a colleague (Kahle-Piasecki, 2011). Instead of having interpreters learn through being baptized by fire, mentoring would allow the establishment of a relationship where two or more people work together in a capacity to share and pass on information that has been previously gleaned through experience (D'Abate, Eddy, & Tannenbaum, 2003; Gorman et al., 2010; Hoza, 2013). After all, a professional can learn from mistakes made in the past (Dean, 2014), and that knowledge can be passed on to other interpreters so the past mistakes are not repeated. Veteran interpreters have acquired a great deal of wisdom and experience through the years and they have been paving the way for future generations of interpreters (Winston & Lee, 2013). Reciprocity within the interpreting field can strengthen the profession by sharing previous knowledge and experiences with each other developing "communities of learning" for professional collaboration (Ehrlich, 2013, p. 46). Working successfully with a mentor can change one's life (Kovnotska, 2014), and reflective practice and mentoring can help the interpreter to continue on their life-long commitment of learning (Ehrlich, 2013; Hoza, 2013).

Defining Mentoring and Mentoring Benefits

Mentoring has many definitions. Various professions refer to the novice in a mentoring relationship as a protégé, a mentee, a coach, and/or an apprentice (Parsloe & Parsloe, 2009; Whynot, 2013). Parsloe and Parsloe (2009) stated the purpose of mentoring and coaching is “to help and support people to take control and responsibility for their learning” (p. 61). Parsloe and Leedham (2009) stated “The aim [of the mentor] is to help and support people to manage their own learning in order that they may develop their skills, improve their performance, maximize their potential, and enable them to become the person they want to be” (p. 67). Gopee (2011) stated the term mentor has evolved over time, but the term reflects the relationship of a person dedicating time to support individuals’ learning during developmental years, progress and achieve maturity and establish their identity (p. 9). Shaffer and Watson (2004) stated, “For the interpreting profession, mentoring has traditionally looked much like an apprenticeship: a master practitioner dispenses knowledge to a novice in order to mold them into an effective professional” (p. 1). Throughout this research study, the term mentorship is used to represent what other practice professions may refer to apprenticeships and internship, and the term mentee or novice interpreter is representative of other synonyms such as protégé and apprentice. The term mentor is used to represent the person who has more experience and is at times, therefore, referred to as seasoned.

For the purpose of this research study, mentoring has been defined as the sharing of knowledge, skills, experiences and critical thinking between one (seasoned) interpreter and another (novice) interpreter for refinement and development of skills, situational awareness, understanding of professionalism and preparation to work successfully in the

field of interpreting. The goal of mentoring is to naturally assist the novice interpreter in professional development, but that does not mean the mentor does not gain from the experience too (Ferguson & Hardin, 2013; Gordon & Magler, 2007). The *Standard Practice Paper on Mentoring* from the Registry of Interpreters of the Deaf stated the mentoring relationship can be advantageous for consumers of interpreting services and those working in the profession (RID, 2007b). For all who are involved, it is a learning and growing experience that raises the level of professionalism for individual practitioners as well as the field as a whole (RID, 2007b). Mentoring can be mutually beneficial because the “growth in another always inspires growth in ourselves” (Resnick, 1990, para. 19).

There is much talk about mentoring (Bynum, 2015; Maroney & Smith, 2010; Resnick, 1990; Tareef, 2013) but currently there is a limited amount of research focusing on mentors and mentees as a unit; most research focuses solely on the mentee (Jones, 2013). Mentoring itself embodies knowledge that has been gained by a person which is then passed on to newer and less experienced interpreters in the field (Tareef, 2013). Being able to prepare for assignments that may be unfamiliar by asking colleagues about possible scenarios, vocabulary, and specific demands of said assignment can lessen the burden that is placed upon novice interpreters (as well as experienced interpreters) due to their lack of practice experience in a specific setting (Shaw, 1997). It will allow for a more seamless transition from college to work readiness that also decreases the burden placed upon the community by not forcing unskilled and inexperienced interpreters into the field (Obst, 2010; Resnick, 1990).

Mentoring can and should be a positive learning experience for both the mentor and the mentee (Gordon & Magler, 2007). Mentoring can allow the mentee and the mentor to observe each other's work, participate in teaming processes, and have a shared experience while in a real-world situation (Hoza, 2013). Mentoring can start to mitigate the gap in some respects, but it can also bring the practitioners and students of interpreting together (Shaw, 1997) on a new level by improving work performance and transferring knowledge and sharing experiences (Kahle-Piasecki, 2011). As Whynot (2013) stated, "Wisdom comes from others who have gone before me, and I believe in actively seeking it together with peers" (p. 9-10). Furthermore, Foster and MacLeod (2004) stated, "Many people ascribe their success or accomplishments to the most influential person in their life. That person is often regarded as their mentor" (p. 442). Mentorship can be evaluated on two different levels regarding success: achievement of goals and success of the mentoring relationship (Gordon & Magler, 2007, p. 103).

A myth that must be dispelled is that a mentee is assumed to know nothing and a mentor is assumed to know everything. As Shaffer and Watson (2004) suggested, "In Western culture, a typical mentoring relationship has an assumed hierarchy (Shea, 2001). There is the mentor: one who brings recognized expertise and experience, and the mentee: one who is seeking that knowledge" (p. 77). In reality, the mentee and mentor work as a collaborative team to reach common goals and professional development (D'Abate et al., 2003; Shea, 2001). It stands to reason the mentor may have more experience than the mentee; however, this is not a requirement. Instead, each person can bring their own knowledge and experiences together and share and learn from one another during their mentoring journey. According to Shea (2001), research has

provided seven types of assistance that a mentor can provide a mentee: (1) Shifting context, which is envisioning a positive outcome; (2) Listening, which is the ability to listen to others when they need to debrief or discuss a situation; (3) Identifying feelings, which is evaluating feelings so one is focused on success instead of failure; (4) Productive confrontation, which is discussing negative behaviors without judgment; (5) Providing appropriate information, which is suggesting resources and solutions; (6) Delegating authority and giving permission, which is empowering self-confidence in the mentee and deterring negative thinking; and (7) Encouraging exploration of options, which is encouraging critical thinking (p. 43). These components foster professional development and are present in professional mentoring relationships (Shea, 2001).

It is important to establish the mentoring process as a positive experience that is mentee driven with provided feedback avoiding the use of judgmental language (Dancer, 2003; Gordon & Magler, 2007). One must be cognizant of language, assessments, and rating scales so that one person, or means of assessment, does not seem too authoritative (Gordon & Magler, 2007). The use of judgmental language, blaming, antagonistic behavior or harassment (Lackman, 2014), and gossiping only leads the process down a path to what has been referred to as horizontal violence in some practice professions (Ott, 2012). Those who intentionally sabotage another colleague or their colleague's work is creating a negative environment that is not the course mentorship should travel (Kahle-Piasecki, 2011).

Call for Mentoring

Educators have been faced with a challenge of knowing what to teach in order to graduate interpreters with a sufficient amount of skill competency to allow them to be

successful in their work as an interpreter (Roy, 2000). Interpreters who hold National Interpreter Certification possess general knowledge of the field of interpreting, ethical decision making, and interpreting skills (RID, n.d.a, para. 2). Furthermore, those who hold this certification have met or exceeded the “minimum” professional requirements to work as an interpreter (RID, n.d.a, para 2). In the article *Defining the Nature of the “Gap” Between Interpreter Education, Certification and Readiness-to-Work: A Research Study of Bachelor’s Degree Graduates*, Maroney and Smith (2010) stated students self-reported that their interpreter educators assured them they could graduate and enter the field as an entry-level interpreter but recommended that they gain experience working in the field for up to five years before attempting the National Interpreter Certification Test. This recommendation came from the educators as well as interpreters in students’ local area. What is alarming is that when one receives national certification they are said to have the “minimal” skills required to work as an interpreter, but programs are graduating interpreter students who are not prepared to take the national certification test yet and unleashing them into the interpreting profession as “qualified.” As Maroney and Smith (2010) asked: “If the professional organization is saying that certification is the minimum professional standard, then why are interpreting students told that they are ready to work, but not yet ready to be certified upon graduation?” (p. 37). Ball (2013) stated the gap that is evident between graduation and the ability to pass the national certification exam can be significant.

“Mentoring consistently emerges as one of the field’s most promising practices” (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005, p. 88). Some mentoring programs have started developing across the United States (Wiesman & Forestal, 2006, p. 194). Winston

(2006) mentioned mentoring and its growing popularity of being offered through workshops and academic courses to help ease the difficult transition from interpreting programs to a working professional for those students and newly graduated interpreters finding gaps in their skills (p. 1).

According to Remley and Herlihy (2001), “One of the main reasons to establish a profession is to limit practice to those who have been made aware of mistakes of those practitioners who came before them and to those who are dedicated to using the knowledge and strategies they gain to avoid future pitfalls” (as cited by Hill, 2004, p. 134). Kaye and Jacobson (1994) discussed a mentor’s role with having the following goals and objectives in mind: “developing people’s capabilities through instructing, coaching, modeling, and advising, as well as providing stretching experiences” (p. 44); sharing past learning experiences and failures; sharing personal scenarios and insights to build rapport; and a sharing of responsibility of the learning process over a period of time (p. 44). Mentoring is a reflective practice that allows one person to see various perspectives of a particular incident thus allowing for more understanding of situational responses and outcomes that can be applied in a multitude of situations (Parker, Hall, & Kram, 2008). Traditional explanations of mentoring are easy to comprehend, but without further development and implementation of strategies, the concept falls short in establishing the requirements for successful professional development during a lifetime (Mullen, Whatley, & Kealy, 2000).

Finding available support systems in some geographical areas has been a challenge in the past (Cartwright, 1999). Finding practitioners who are willing to commit their time (Ferguson & Hardin, 2013) and dedication to working with others across time

zones and even traveling great distances is certainly a challenge but the key is to be flexible and remember that mentoring does not require face-to-face-meetings (Kovnotska, 2014). E-mentoring is another option that is currently more viable for some individuals due to busy schedules (Ehrlich, 2013). For example, instead of meeting one-on-one in person, mentors and mentees can meet online either by typing responses to one another or virtual meetings (Ehrlich, 2013; Johnson & Winston, 1998). Quite often, those involved in mentoring seek advice and guidance that was not available at the academic level (Mullen et al., 2000).

Ruiz (2013) suggested that experiential learning activities, including mentoring, can provide students of interpreting with an important tool to bridge “the gap” after graduation. Other successful organizations are turning to mentoring more often to attract, hire, train, and retain stellar employees (Kovnatska, 2014). As stated previously, mentoring embodies knowledge that others have gained through experiences, and sharing this information with others to lessen a burden is beneficial for all (Tareef, 2013). Being prepared will allow for less stress and an easier transition from college to work readiness (Obst, 2010; Resnick, 1990; Shaw, 1997).

Gunter and Hull (1995) also suggested that mentoring is not new to professional practices because lawyers and physicians have been involved in such an approach for many years. In each of these professions, the novice lawyers or physicians work under the guidance of a more experienced colleague through an internship where they do the “work” while being monitored and getting advice from more experienced colleagues. Many interpreters continue to nurture professional relationships through informal mentoring and the “flow of knowledge from one generation to the next, through

mentorship, strengthens the service in our local community” (Whynot, 2013, p. 13). With mentoring, “the value of hands-on experience in a formal structure with modeling of professional behavior and critical evaluation from a more experienced colleague is well recognized” (Gunter & Hull, 1995, p. 111).

With many professions incorporating mentoring as a tool for refining skills of their newer practitioners, it would seem a natural process for the signed language interpreting profession to also incorporate mentoring to better prepare their new practitioners (Davis et al., 1994, p. 129). Winston (2006) stated that with the continuance of students graduating with gaps in their skills, the transition from student to professional interpreter becomes challenging; therefore, mentoring has been suggested as a solution to the skills gap (p. 183). Mentoring is also used by veteran interpreters for professional development and the quest for “life-long learning” (Winston, 2006, p. 183; see also Ehrlich, 2013; Hoza, 2013; Whynot, 2013).

Successful Mentoring Models

The development of more peer mentoring and formal mentoring programs across the United States could help support the advancement of interpreter communities through collaboration and camaraderie. The Massachusetts Mentorship Program founded in 1993 (Kahle, 2013) reports their mentoring program to be a success. Their program pairs a mentee with a supervising RID-certified mentor and allows the mentees to observe, interpret with supervision, discuss the use of language and vocabulary, discuss ethical situations, and much more. This working relationship allows for participation in real-life interpreting assignments and expansion of professional networks (Kahle, 2013), which fosters the interpreting community.

Western Oregon University has a mentoring program, the PSIP Program (Professional Supervision for Interpreting Practice), which is discussed in the article *Creating Innovative Opportunities for Interpreter Education Program Graduates: Transitioning to the Professional World* (Smith et al., 2012). Within this article are also personal accounts from mentors and mentees as to the benefits they received from their involvement in the mentoring program.

Challenges

Interpreter education programs have been criticized for focusing primarily on vocabulary and other technical aspects of interpretation without considering the myriad other components that exist in each interpreting assignment (Dean & Pollard, 2013). Interpreters must bring multiple skills including linguistic abilities in two languages, the ability to interact with others and between two cultures, technical skills, academic knowledge on a vast spectrum, and personal and professional characteristics that ensure a minimal amount of competencies (Witter-Merithew, Johnson, & Taylor, 2004). Another issue is that many universities are supported with funding that is dependent upon the number of graduates they produce (Torenbeek, Jansen, & Suhre, 2013). According to Shaffer and Watson (2004),

Another dilemma presents itself when there are those who do not see themselves as experts. Again, if those being asked to do the mentoring do not have their own mentor they may experience the onus of responsibility “to know”. To “not know” then is to fall short of the role of mentor. It is far less daunting to be the one with the questions seeking answers, than to be the one expected to provide the guidance and support. (p. 78)

The amount of knowledge needed by an interpreter is vast (Janzen, 2005). It is necessary for a professional interpreter to have more general knowledge going into each and every job than architects, engineers, and other professionals need in the daily work of their specific professions (Obst, 2010). With this enormous requirement on each interpreter, interpreting proves to be a profession where lifelong learning is paramount, as stated in the NAD/RID Code of Professional Conduct (RID, 2005). Tenet 7.0 of the Code of Professional Conduct covering Professional Development details that interpreters are to maintain professional interpreting competence through career development (RID, 2005). The tenet also delineates ways to achieve career development, which can be through workshops, pursuing higher education, participation in community events, and seeking mentoring opportunities (RID, 2005). Ideally, however, as Whynot (2013) stated, “A love of wisdom, and not merely the duty to Continuing Education Units (CEUs), is the inspiration behind my commitment to lifelong learning” (p. 9).

Conclusion

Signed language interpreting has been acknowledged as a complex and challenging skill (Bontempo & Napier, 2007; Dean & Pollard, 2013; Demers, 2005; Metzger, 2005; Roberts, 1992; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). The complex nature of the skills needed to interpret effectively and the challenge of teaching interpreting skills to others has led to a gap that has been recognized in the field (Dean & Pollard, 2001; Maroney & Smith, 2010; Mikkelsen, 2013; Resnick, 1990; Whynot, 2013; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). Standards for quality interpreter education programs are important in order to graduate qualified interpreters who could provide quality services (Resnick, 1990). Suggestions have been proposed to making changes within interpreter

education including supervised professional training for students of interpreting to help mitigate the gap (Dean & Pollard, 2001). Mentoring has been proposed as one possible solution to diminishing the recognized gap in the signed language interpreting profession (Kahle-Piasecki, 2011; Resnick, 1990; Winston & Lee, 2013). The need to decrease the gap found in the skills of entry-level interpreters from training to work readiness has prompted more mentoring to develop within the field (Whynot, 2013). Exchanging knowledge from previous experiences and applying this knowledge to new situations is where mentoring may start to minimize the effect of the gap (Resnick, 1990). Mentoring can allow the mentee and the mentor to observe each other's work and have a shared experience while in a real-world situation (Hoza, 2013). Mentoring should be a positive learning experience for all participants (Gordon & Magler, 2007), and although it has been suggested that mentoring can lessen the gap that interpreters encounter upon entering the profession, it may also bring practitioners and students of interpreting together to foster supportive professional relationships (Kahle-Piasecki, 2011; Whynot, 2013).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study was designed to gather both qualitative and quantitative data on American Signed Language interpreters and students of interpreting working or preparing to work in the United States and Canada. The study used a mixed method approach to explore the beliefs, thoughts, opinions, and perspectives of the participants on the topic of mentoring and its possible benefits to assisting entry-level interpreters to be better prepared, upon graduation from an Interpreter Education Program, to enter the field of interpreting autonomously. The overall goal was to see if the current working practitioners in the field, as well as those preparing to enter the field, perceived that mentoring would benefit entry-level interpreters in various work settings and other investigated topics that would be encountered by signed language interpreters in the field.

Design of the Investigation

Asking participants about their perceptions on how mentoring may or may not be beneficial can be subjective, as everyone has the potential to have both positive and negative experiences and opinions regarding mentors and mentoring. Due to the need to access the perceptions of the participant (qualitative) and the need to analyze background data (quantitative) the survey was established as a mixed-method approach. An online survey of 31 questions varying in format (Likert scales, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions) was developed by using web-based software and delivered via email and social media to interpreters nationwide (Appendix C). The recipients were encouraged to disseminate the survey to others in a snowball effect, to reach as many participants as possible. Also, special permission was granted for the survey to be disseminated to all

working interpreters at a specific video relay provider. The survey was comprised of various topics including background information (e.g., age, level of certification, highest degree obtained, state in which one does most of their interpreting work, ethnicity), opinions on payment for mentor/mentee services, experiences with mentors, which settings an entry-level interpreter may/may not benefit from having a mentor, settings current practitioners felt comfortable working in when they first entered the field, and who would want a mentor now if one was available. The survey was piloted to colleagues, and all feedback was incorporated prior to the release of the survey. The survey was detailed and could take a participant up to 15-20 minutes to complete in its entirety. I did not find any existing surveys or data collection methods that were applicable to the data that was intended to be collected so an original survey was developed. The survey and research process were approved by Western Oregon's University Institutional Review Board.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Question 1: Will practitioners report feeling prepared in knowing how to present qualifications, roles, and responsibilities during their first year of interpreting?

H₁: Respondents report feeling prepared in knowing how to present qualifications, roles, and responsibilities.

H₀: Respondents do not feel prepared in knowing how to present qualifications, roles, and responsibility.

Question 2: Will practitioners believe mentoring is important in various work settings for entry-level interpreters?

H2₁: Respondents believe that mentoring is important in various work settings for entry-level interpreters.

H2₀: Respondents do not believe that mentoring is important in various work settings for entry-level interpreters.

Question 3: Will practitioners report a need for mentoring in order to assist in developing professional acumen (e.g., freelance business knowledge, general business knowledge)?

H3₁: Respondents will report a need for mentoring in order to assist in developing professional acumen (e.g., freelance business knowledge, general business knowledge).

H3₀: Respondents will not report a need for mentoring to assist in developing professional acumen (e.g., freelance business knowledge, general business knowledge).

Question 4: Will practitioners report feeling prepared when applying ethical decisions during their first year of interpreting?

H4₁: Respondents report feeling prepared applying ethical decisions during their first year of interpreting.

H4₀: Respondents do not report feeling prepared applying ethical decisions during their first year of interpreting.

Population and Participants

Participants self-selected by choosing to participate in the survey. The survey was disseminated to interpreters via email, social media sites, and to interpreters working for a video relay service provider. The participants needed to be at least 18 years of age and identify as an interpreter or an interpreting student. The survey had no other stipulations. The survey results compiled a total of 443 responses from participants and no participant was disqualified from the sample. Once data was collected, I realized there was too much data to be analyzed and included in the time frame allotted for the research. Therefore, as outlined in the Data Analysis Procedures section, I focused, quantitatively, on specific questions related solely to the research questions regarding perceptions of benefits for entry-level interpreters having mentoring. Other data was collected quantitatively such as demographics, ethnicity, and certification.

Procedure

An online survey was developed using web-based software and the link to the secure, confidential survey was delivered via email and social media to interpreters nationwide (students of interpreting could also participate). The survey was distributed with a consent form explaining the parameters of the research including the purpose, perceived risks, and perceived benefits as well as to inform participants of their right to participate or decline participation without penalty. Potential participants were advised that their participation would be completely anonymous and on a volunteer basis. Participants could choose not to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. The participants were informed the survey could take up to 15-20 minutes to complete and all the data would be collected and stored in a password-

protected electronic format and later analyzed using quantitative data analysis software. The independent researcher retained sole access to the data. There was no collection of identifiable information such as names, email addresses, or IP addresses; therefore, responses would remain anonymous. The data collected in this study will be deleted within five years of the completion of the research. The consent form and survey may be found in Appendix A and Appendix B.

Data Analysis Procedures

Using Qualtrics software, specific questions from the survey were selected for analysis. For Hypothesis 2 a Chi-Square test was run to test the significance of the data reported. For Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 3, and Hypothesis 4, data was collected and percentages were reported. Only a small selection of questions were analyzed due to the abundance of data reported by the respondents. I did not have the foresight to predict such an overwhelming response to the survey. Therefore, due to time constraints, specific questions were chosen to report on, and those questions related solely to the research questions in relation to perceptions of mentoring benefits for entry-level interpreters and feelings of readiness to enter the field of signed language interpreting.

To test Hypothesis 1, quantitative data was calculated in the form of percentages and reported regarding the participants' responses of feeling prepared in knowing how to present qualifications, roles, and responsibilities during their first year of interpreting.

With Hypothesis 2, a Chi-Square test was used to determine the significance between two variables: 1) *It is beneficial for entry-level interpreters to have a mentor for their first year working as an interpreter* and 2) *How important do you think it would be for entry-level interpreters to have a mentor when working in one of the following*

specialized settings? Mental Health, Legal, Medical, K-12, Post-secondary, VRS, Theatrical, Government, Platform setting.

For Hypothesis 3, quantitative data in the form of percentages was obtained and reported regarding the participants' response to mentoring being beneficial in assisting in developing professional acumen (e.g., freelance business knowledge, general business knowledge).

For Hypothesis 4, quantitative data was obtained in the form of percentages and reported pertaining to the participants' response regarding level of preparedness during the first year of signed language interpreting work when applying ethical decisions.

There were multiple pages of comments left in the open comments section at the end of the survey. The comments were analyzed and then coded and categorized into separate headings (Appendix A). Those headings were as follows: Payment of Mentors, Reciprocity and/or Bartering for Mentoring, Mentoring Informal, Mentoring Formal, Mentoring Experience, Mentoring Benefits, Deaf Inclusion, Training, Stakeholders and More, and Seeking Mentoring. Any identifying information was removed from the comments to protect the identities of the respondents. Some of these comments are cited in chapters of this thesis while others are contained in the appendices. All comments can be seen in Appendix A.

Chapter 4: Findings

This section includes data on the respondents' self-reported background information, and the findings related to each of the hypotheses previously stated in Chapter 3. This chapter describes the backgrounds of the respondents as well as data regarding their perceptions of possible benefits of mentoring in specific settings for interpreters. Survey items for various interpreting settings were included in this research sample such as mental health, K-12, legal, medical, and several others. These survey items helped me to investigate which settings the participating practitioners perceived as those that may require more guidance or support perhaps by a mentor in the field. Some of the settings in this research were deemed to need mentorship more than others, in order to ensure the best possible outcomes for the work provided by the interpreters to the community.

Presentation of Findings

The participants varied in age from 19-68 with 28 participants declining to answer the question regarding age. Demographics were established for results reporting dependent upon the RID regional map of regions (Regions 1-5 and a separate region for Canada was included in this report) as shown in Figure 1 (RID, 2015).

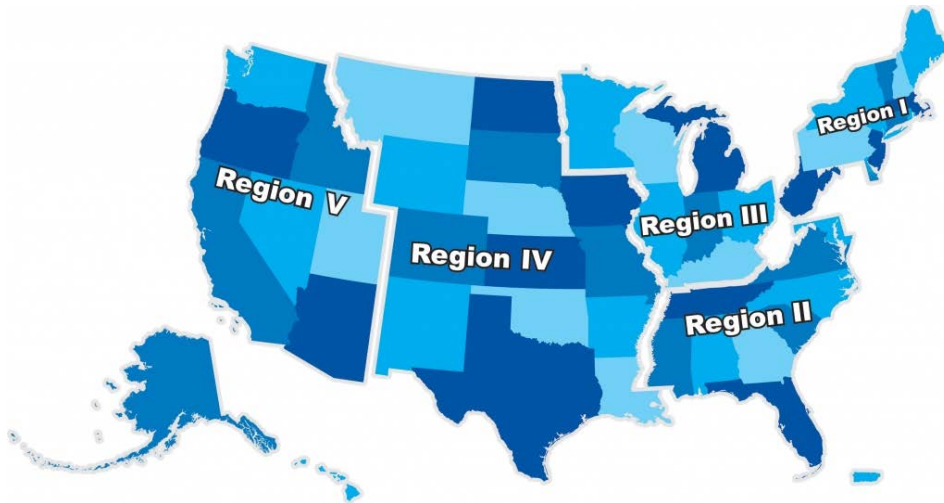


Figure 1. RID Regional Map. Reprinted from Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (2015). Retrieved February 7, 2016 from <http://rid.org/membership/rid-regions-map/>.

The following are percentages from previously established RID regions (see Figure 2):

- Region 1- 9.5%
- Region 2- 20.5%
- Region 3- 24.8%
- Region 4- 18.5%
- Region 5-16.4%
- Canada- 3.8%

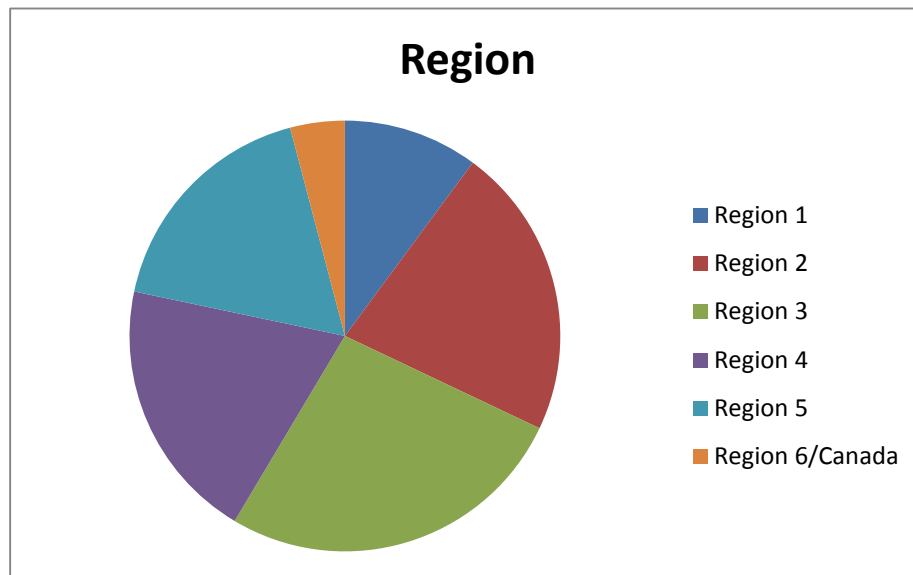


Figure 2. Regions in Which Participants Work

Of the respondents, 386 identified as Caucasian White/Non-Hispanic, 17 identified as Latino/Hispanic, 14 identified as African American/Black, one identified as Native American/American Indian, one identified as Pacific Islander, 11 did not identify with any of the options available in the survey, and no respondents identified as Asian.

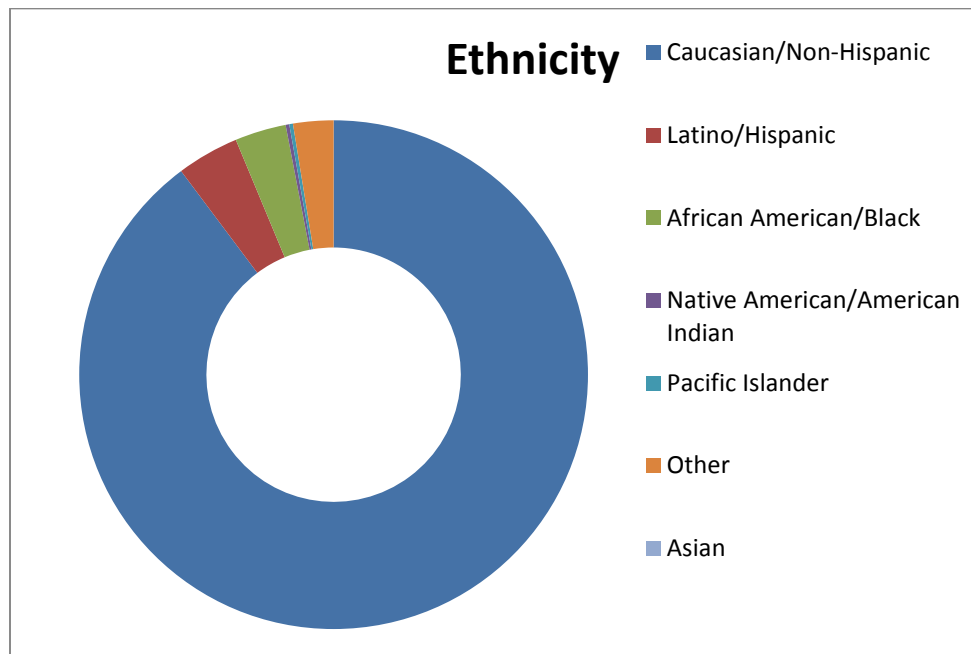


Figure 3. Participants' Ethnicity

There were 419 of 443 respondents who answered the question related to which certifications, if any, they held. Of the 419 responses, 273 were RID nationally certified, 79 were EIPA certified, 98 held state certifications, 51 stated “other,” 54 had no certifications, and 4 reported being students of interpreting.

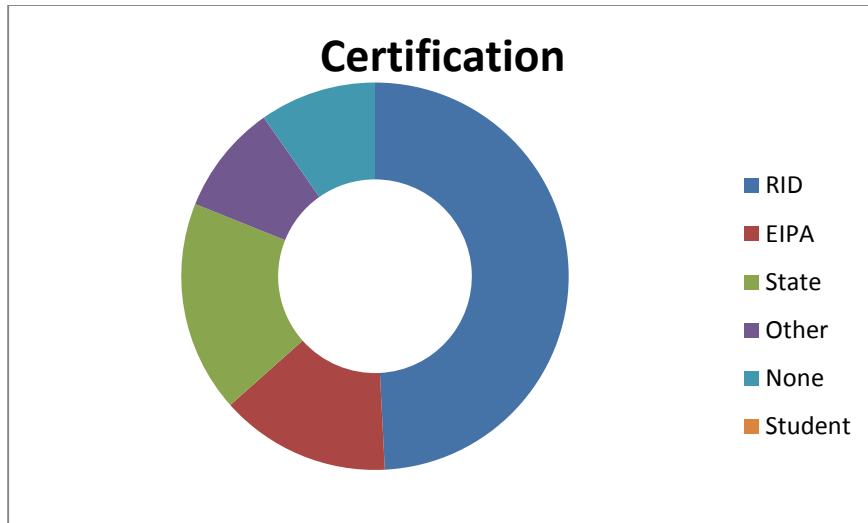


Figure 4. Participants' Credential Level

Hypothesis 1 Results

Percentages were calculated and reported regarding the participants' responses of feeling prepared in knowing how to present qualifications, roles, and responsibilities during the first year of interpreting. A response of 61% of participants either somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed with a feeling of knowing how to present qualifications during the first year of interpreting work. A response of 71% of participants either somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed with a feeling of knowing how to present roles and responsibilities during the first year of interpreting work.

Table 1
Percentage of Respondents Reporting Feeling Prepared in Presenting Qualifications, Roles, and Responsibilities

	<u>Responses of Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree</u>	<u>%</u>
Feeling prepared in knowing how to present qualifications during the first year of interpreting	195	61%
Feeling prepared in knowing how to present roles and responsibilities during the first year of interpreting	233	71%

Hypothesis 2 Results

A Chi-Square test of independence was performed to examine practitioner's perceptions of mentoring in various interpreting work settings. This test was performed on nine different settings to determine significance across specialty settings. Eight factors reached significance, as detailed in Table 2.

The percentage of respondents who believed it is beneficial for entry-level interpreters in mental health settings to have a mentor reached significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 383) = 281.04, p < .05$. The percentage of respondents who believe it is beneficial for entry-level interpreters in legal settings to have a mentor reached significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 381) = 102.20, p < .05$. The percentage of respondents who believe it is beneficial for entry-level interpreters in medical settings to have a mentor reached significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 381) = 438.41, p < .05$. The percentage of respondents who believe it is beneficial for entry-level interpreters in school (K-12) settings to have a mentor reached significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 381) = 178.43, p < .05$. The percentage of respondents who believe it is beneficial for entry-level interpreters in post-secondary settings to have a mentor reached significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 382) = 224.31, p < .05$. The percentage of respondents who believe it is beneficial for entry-level interpreters in video relay settings to have a mentor reached significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 377) = 126.20, p < .05$. The percentage of respondents who believe it is beneficial for entry-level interpreters in government settings to have a mentor reached significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 381) = 140.56, p < .05$. The percentage of respondents who believe it is beneficial for entry-level interpreters in theatrical settings to have a mentor did not reach significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 381) = 44.22, p > .05$. The percentage of respondents who believe it is beneficial for entry-level

interpreters in platform settings to have a mentor reached significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 382) = 108.32, p < .05$.

Table 2

Perceptions of the Benefits of Mentoring During the First Year Working as an Interpreter

<u>Perceived importance for entry-level interpreters to have a mentor when working in...</u>	<u>Chi square</u>	<u>Degrees of freedom</u>	<u>p-value</u>
Mental Health	281.04*	36	0.00
Legal	102.20*	36	0.00
Medical	438.41*	36	0.00
K-12	178.43*	36	0.00
Post-secondary	224.31*	36	0.00
VRS	126.20*	36	0.00
Government settings (e.g., politics, military, IRS)	140.56*	36	0.00
Theatrical	44.22	36	0.16
Platform settings (e.g., graduations, conventions, special guest speakers, workshops)	108.32*	36	0.00

*p<.05

Hypothesis 3 Results

Quantitative data was obtained in the form of percentages and reported regarding the participants' responses to mentoring being beneficial in assisting in developing professional acumen (e.g., freelance business knowledge, general business knowledge). Of the participants, 45% either somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that having a mentor would be beneficial in assisting in the development of professional acumen related to freelance business knowledge. In addition, 40% of participants either somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that having a mentor would be beneficial in assisting in the development of professional acumen related to general business knowledge.

Table 3

Perception that Having a Mentor is Beneficial in Assisting the Development of Professional Acumen

	<u>Responses of Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree</u>	<u>%</u>
Mentoring is beneficial in assisting in developing professional acumen related to freelance business knowledge.	160	45%
Mentoring is beneficial in assisting in developing professional acumen related to general business knowledge.	140	40%

Hypothesis 4 Results

Quantitative data was obtained in the form of percentages and reported regarding the participants’ responses of feeling prepared during the first year of signed language interpreting work when applying ethical decisions. A response of 65% of participants either somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed with a feeling of preparedness during the first year of signed language interpreting work when applying ethical decisions.

Table 4

Feelings of Preparedness in Applying Ethical Decisions

	<u>Responses of Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree</u>	<u>%</u>
Feeling of preparedness during the first year of signed language interpreting work when applying ethical decisions (n=323)	209	65%

Discussion of Findings

In analyzing the data from the respondents I performed coding on the qualitative data received from the open-ended comment section, which included the headings

of: Payment of Mentors, Reciprocity and/or Bartering for Mentoring, Mentoring Informal, Mentoring Formal, Mentoring Experience, Mentoring Benefits, Deaf Inclusion, Training, Stakeholders and More, and Seeking Mentoring (Appendix A). With the qualitative data and the quantitative data in this thesis, I could explore the perceptions of the importance of mentoring.

The perceived value of mentoring for entry-level interpreters was explored in this research as well as feelings of being prepared during the first year of interpreting work. Mentoring topics ranging from ethical decision making to perceived need for mentoring in various work settings to knowing how to present one's role to managing a freelance business as a signed language interpreter were explored and analyzed. The total of 443 respondents participated in the survey. Data showed that the majority of the respondents perceived mentoring to be beneficial in all work settings in the survey with some settings having a higher importance than others.

Data showed that only 61% of respondents felt prepared in knowing how to present qualifications, 71% felt prepared in knowing how to present roles and responsibilities, and 65% felt prepared during the first year of signed language interpreting work when applying ethical decisions. The data showed the respondents did perceive mentoring to be a benefit to entry-level interpreters in the following work settings: Mental Health, Legal, Medical, K-12, Post-Secondary, VRS, Government, and Platform. Theatrical interpreting was not found to have as high of importance for mentorship compared to the other settings.

Hypothesis 1 Discussion

There were 71% of respondents who felt prepared in knowing how to present qualifications during the first year of interpreting compared to 61% feeling prepared presenting roles and responsibilities. According to RID's *Mentoring Standard Practice Paper* (2007), mentoring is a learning and growing experience for everyone involved in the process and the experiences that are gained through mentorship foster a higher level of *professionalism for each individual practitioner*. Results indicated that current interpreters and students of interpreting felt prepared in these two specific categories, but since the responses were less than 75% perhaps additional training through mentorship would be beneficial. The preparedness of the respondents may be due to improved curricula at interpreter education programs or varied practices and procedures that are unique across geographical areas. Also, the respondents are at different levels in their careers: four reported to be students of interpreting, 273 reported they hold RID Certification, 79 reported they hold EIPA Certification, 98 hold State Certification, 51 reported "other," and 54 stated they did not have any certification. The survey did not specifically ask how long each person had been working as an interpreter and this question would have helped to identify whether some of the respondents were newer to the field. Perhaps their thoughts have changed or their memories have faded as to what was perceived as important when they first were starting out in the field. Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2005) stated some graduates struggle to find their own identity within the profession "which impacts their ability to project professionalism and objectivity as part of their work persona" (p. 92). Being involved in a mentoring

relationship with a veteran interpreter could help decrease this impact upon the individual interpreters and the profession as a whole.

Hypothesis 2 Discussion

For hypothesis 2, results indicated statistical significance for eight of nine factors; the majority of respondents believed that mentoring is important for all interpreting settings investigated for entry-level interpreters but was less important in theatrical settings. Perhaps the theatrical setting received a lower importance rating due to new graduates not tackling theatrical settings as entry-level interpreters or perhaps there is a feeling that theatrical interpreting will not have detrimental effects to anyone if mistakes were made. Although the theatrical setting did not reach significance within the Chi-Square test in this specific study, 81% of respondents did feel an importance of having a mentor for the theatrical work setting would be beneficial to entry-level interpreters (See Table 5). The respondents did concur with the benefits of mentoring in the other eight settings, which is in line with Kiraly (2000) who spoke of the importance of collaboration, commitment, and community:

Collaboration, I believe, is the fundamental basis for authentic work and learning, a tool for getting students involved in the dialogue that constitutes the translator's profession, for turning inert knowledge into active intersubjective knowing, and for introducing students to the kinds of team-work they can be sure to be involved in after they graduate. This belief in the value of collaboration also reflects an underlying approach to education as a commitment to the many facets of "community." (p. 194)

Pearson and Napier (2010) conducted research to see if newly graduated interpreters with mentors would feel they were included as part of the profession (p. 59), and participants did report a feeling of camaraderie as well as developing friendships with their mentors that continued even after the mentoring research project was completed. Ferguson and Hardin (2013) stated when peers collaborate and work together mutual growth can occur.

Table 5

Settings Where Respondents Felt It was Important for Entry-Level Interpreters to Have Mentors

<u>Category</u>	<u>Responses of Moderately Important, Very Important, Extremely Important</u>	<u>Number of Overall Respondents</u>	<u>%</u>
Mental Health	380	383	99%
Legal	378	381	99%
Medical	376	381	99%
Government	364	381	96%
Post-Secondary	358	382	94%
K-12	355	381	93%
VRS	345	377	92%
Platform	347	382	91%
Theatrical	310	381	81%

Hypothesis 3 Discussion

A response of 45% of participants agreed that having a mentor would be beneficial in assisting in the development of professional acumen related to freelance business knowledge. A response of 40% of participants agreed that having a mentor would be beneficial in assisting in the development of professional acumen related to

general business knowledge. Freelance, also known as community interpreting, encompasses a vast array of aspects within the profession of signed language interpreting. To work as a community interpreter, one typically works as an independent contractor (self-employed) or as an employee with an agency. Practitioners must decide to either apply to work for agencies or establish their own sole proprietorship. If one decides to be self-employed, there are many things they need to know. A self-employed interpreter is required to have a grasp of business knowledge, including how to approach businesses to market one's skills and explain one's role as an interpreter, how to relate to consumers, how to write invoices, how to manage billing, as well as knowing how to obtain a business license, manage taxes, and obtain appropriate insurance; basically, how to run a small business (RID, 2007a). Dean and Pollard (2013) suggested that in a practice profession, supplementing one's abilities outside of the mechanics of interpreting to incorporate the social aspects of business relationships and having quality relationships with consumers is paramount for success.

Hypothesis 4 Discussion

A response of 65% of participants either somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed with a feeling of preparedness during the first year of signed language interpreting work when applying ethical behavior. Only 65% reported feeling prepared so where does that leave the other 35% of signed language interpreters? Cartwright (1999) suggested that signed language interpreters, regardless if they are new to the field or long-time veterans, need to receive feedback in order to achieve higher levels of professionalism. Receiving feedback, then having reflective processing would benefit the practitioner in preparation for future situations (Dean & Pollard, 2013). Whynot (2013) stated, "Ethical

behavior shapes interpreter practice” (p. 9), and Cartwright (1999) further stated that an interpreter may have mastered the skill of interpreting but if the interpreter acts unethically, their professional journey will be a short one. Demers (2005) stated, “As trained professionals, interpreters understand that ethical conduct is the cornerstone of the entire profession” (p. 209). Although interpreter education programs may have included ethical discussions and training in the programs, there is still the issue of theory versus actual practice. With various control factors discussed by Dean and Pollard (2013) related to interpreting, it is important to continue the ethical discussions after graduation, because when discussing the Code of Ethics in the classroom, situations portrayed as “black and white” decisions in theory can become shades of gray in the real world (Gunter & Hull, 1995).

Comparing Qualitative Results to Quantitative Responses

The open-ended comment section allowed for a myriad of insightful and meaningful information. Minimal coding was performed on the responses and these data were used for triangulation with the quantitative analysis. Comments ranged from suggestions on how to limit the scope of questions for future research to descriptions of in-depth encounters and experiences with mentors. The various definitions of mentoring and considerations of how they apply to the field applications to the field of interpreting by respondents were also enlightening.

What is interesting about these results is how they compare to the open comments that were provided by respondents that suggest mentoring is beneficial across the board. Here are several examples:

The idea of co-mentoring has really shaped who I am as an interpreter. When I was first hired at my first high school K-12 job, there was another new hire/recent grad with which I often discussed dilemmas, worked out problems and discussed best practices.... We both grew equally and benefited from each other. I think that type of mentoring is typically underrepresented in literature and research.

I have sought out mentoring from the day I graduated. Over the years I have had three official mentors.... They have made me the interpreter I am today. I have also become a mentor to give back a piece of what I gained.

I have mentored in the past and continue to do so now on a volunteer basis. I believe strongly that mentoring is extremely important for new and seasoned interpreters.

I don't think I could have been as successful as an interpreter today without the mentors I had in my life who volunteer.

There are many interpreters that can mentor. You don't have to be certified to mentor. You can be working for a few years and help guide a new interpreter in the field and show them the ropes as it were. All new interpreters can benefit from someone in the field no matter how long they have been interpreting. And sometimes mentoring could be just having someone to bounce ideas off of. But of course in more specialized fields a more seasoned interpreter should be sought out.... But I do think it is beneficial to the Deaf community that newbies receive mentoring their first year. That way, the Deaf community gets better, well rounded and qualified interpreters in the long run.

At times, what the quantitative data suggests is not supported by open-ended comments. This could be a result of quantitative survey items lacking specificity, not allowing for clarification, or not capturing the elements respondents felt important. A potential secondary outcome of this study could be to bring about awareness of mentoring as a way to strengthen the relationships of the entry-level interpreters with the seasoned interpreters to build camaraderie while simultaneously bridging the work-readiness gap. This is supported by respondents' open comments:

I feel that we all need Mentors, no matter how seasoned we are... So much is learned and can be learned as a mentor that will directly improve our own 'craft'... When we collaborate with both new and seasoned interpreters we all benefit as professionals and the community at large benefits from the collaboration...New interpreters can bring so much to the table and contribute much to the field.

I ... often end up doing unofficial or informal mentoring. It is a natural process and I can learn from younger or new interpreters, too.

The panacea for the issue of the gap that is evident in the signed language interpreting profession would be that everyone has all the time they need to accomplish their skill building and knowledge without pressure and without any negative effects arising from working before one is ready after graduation. Although there are some obstacles to overcome for mentoring to be incorporated nationwide, researchers in the field believe that all interpreters have something to offer in way of knowledge, thought processing, skills, experience, and so on, and we can all learn from one another (D'Abate et al., 2003; Gordon & Magler, 2007; Hoza, 2013; Kahle-Piasecki, 2011; Resnick, 1990;

RID, 2007b; Shaw, 1997; Whynot, 2013). All new interpreting graduates could be paired with veteran interpreters to “learn the ropes” just as other practice professions prepare their new recruits under titles of internships, apprenticeships, and journeymen (Colaprete, 2009; Gopee, 2011; Johnsson & Hager, 2008; Killian, 2003). Having colleagues support, encourage, and guide one another allows each interpreter to not feel alone, which could be invaluable to the novice interpreter trying to cross that chasm from college knowledge to real-world practice. Starting mentoring as practicum students and then continuing through to post graduation could greatly benefit the novice interpreter as stated by respondents during this research:

I was fortunate enough to go through a stellar interpreter program that provided mentorship-then got hooked up with another mentor upon graduation who worked with me on a regular basis for the first 3 months and continued to mentor informally for years.

I've been a trained mentor... for several years now. I think it's essential for recent graduates to have that professional (non-teacher-centered) relationship to guide them in learning self-assessment and self-monitoring.... Mentoring is the bridge for the gap between classroom and independent practice...

Other Related Findings

Due to limiting time factors, all the data collected in the survey could not be analyzed to be included. However, I feel the information included in Table 6 and Table 7 could be beneficial for future research in the field of signed language interpreting and the topic of mentoring.

Table 6

Settings in Which Respondents Felt Most Prepared to Work

<u>Answer</u>	<u>Responses* (n=328)</u>	<u>%</u>
Freelance/Community Interpreting	202	62%
K-12	185	56%
Post-secondary	168	51%
Religious	124	38%
Medical	92	28%
Platform	38	12%
Theatrical	39	12%
Other	38	12%
Government (e.g., political, military, IRS)	24	7%
Mental Health	20	6%
Legal	9	3%

*Multiple responses were allowed

Table 7

Perceptions of the Benefit of Having a Mentor

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
Do you feel you benefited from having the support of a mentor during your career? (Participants who had a mentor; n=292)	235 (80%)	8 (3%)	49 (17%)
Do you feel you would have benefited from having a mentor? (Participants who did not have a mentor; n=218)	194 (89%)	20 (9%)	4 (2%)
Do you feel the signed language profession, as a whole, would benefit from having trained mentors in the field to work with entry-level interpreters as well as seasoned interpreters? (n=327)	315 (96%)	3 (1%)	9 (3%)
Do you feel you are qualified to become a mentor in your local community? (n=327)	184 (56%)	60 (18%)	83 (25%)
If mentors were available for free, would you seek to collaborate with them? (n=325)	266 (82%)	8 (2%)	51 (16%)

Table 8

Importance of Having a Mentor

	<u>Responses of Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree</u>	<u>%</u>
Importance of having a mentor upon entering the field of interpreting (n=354)	342	97%
Importance of having a mentor for freelance community work (n=349)	331	95%

It appears from these above responses that there is a strong desire for mentoring in various settings within the field of interpreting. It also shows that 97% of respondents stated a need for mentoring upon entry into the field of interpreting and 95% stated a need for interpreting in the setting of freelance community work.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

What was interesting about this research and the data that was obtained was how many respondents placed a higher importance on the skill-based linguistic constructs over the non-linguistic constructs. By skill-based I am referring to the actual physical interpreting work (e.g., ASL-to-English, English-to-ASL) in specific settings. The respondents did not perceive other factors (non-skill-based) as important for mentoring (e.g., definition of roles, responsibilities, qualifications, and freelance and general business knowledge). These findings can be seen in Table 9 and Table 10.

Table 9

Percentages of Respondents Agreeing that Mentoring is Beneficial for Entry-Level Interpreters (Skill-based Settings)

<u>Category</u>	<u>Responses of Moderately Important, Very Important, Extremely Important</u>	<u>Number of Overall Respondents</u>	<u>%</u>
Mental Health	380	383	99%
Legal	378	381	99%
Medical	376	381	99%
Government	364	381	96%
Post-Secondary	358	382	94%
K-12	355	381	93%
VRS	345	377	92%
Platform	347	382	91%
Theatrical	310	381	81%

Table 10

Percentages of Respondents Agreeing that Mentoring is Beneficial for Entry-Level Interpreters (Non-skill-based)

<u>Answer</u>	<u>Responses of Somewhat Agree, Agree, and Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Number of Overall Respondents</u>	<u>%</u>
Freelance Business Knowledge	156	352	44%
General Business Knowledge	140	351	40%

One note of interest was the data regarding the freelance community setting (Table 8) and the need for mentoring (Table 3). In the former when respondents were asked how many felt mentoring in freelance business knowledge was important only 45% stated they felt it was important. In the latter when asked how important it is to have a mentor for freelance community work 95% stated it was important to have a mentor. From this data it could be gleaned that respondents feel the linguistic skill-based knowledge of working in the freelance community interpreting arena is more important than the business aspects of freelance community interpreting.

The investigation of current students of interpreting and current working practitioners as to their thoughts, opinions, and perspectives on whether mentoring would be beneficial to entry-level interpreters was the goal of this research. The study was based on three different frameworks: Dean and Pollard’s Demand Control Schema (2013), the conceptual framework of a working interpreter (Cartwright, 1999; Dean & Pollard, 2013), and phenomenology (Smith, 2013). These three frameworks encompass the complexities of interpreting through recognizing the importance of message intent, the spoken word, demands that are placed upon the interpreter and the controls that are

available to the interpreter, as well as the involvement of the participants' thought worlds (Dean & Pollard, 2013, p. 3); the interpreter's background and experiences and the realization that interpreters are human beings with their own emotions and previous experiences that influence their work (Cartwright, 1999, p. viii); and finally, acknowledging and incorporating self-reflection, perceptions, memories, temporal awareness, spatial awareness, embodied action, social interactions and everyday life experiences (Smith, 2013, para 6.).

A mixed-methods survey was developed and distributed via social media and email, and it was also disseminated to all interpreters at a specific video relay service provider. A total of 443 participants responded to the survey. The respondents were diverse in age, experiences, certifications, and geographical areas. The responses were reviewed and analyzed to determine whether the respondents felt mentoring would be beneficial to entry-level interpreters in various settings where interpreters work (skill development) as well as ethical discussions, freelance knowledge, and professional acumen. The results showed that respondents' perception that mentoring is beneficial for entry-level interpreters achieved significance in all settings except the theatrical setting. The results showed that respondents' perception of the benefits of mentoring entry-level interpreters in the areas of ethical discussion making, freelance knowledge, or professional acumen did not reach significance.

Mentoring is a topic that needs more exploration and more implementation in the field of signed language interpreting so more research can be conducted. This study was devised due to curiosity about the education-to-work readiness gap that exists in the signed language interpreting profession and the often-suggested idea that mentoring can

possibly help to reduce this gap. Scholars in the field suggest that one possible solution to mitigating the current gap is to create some form of mentoring for newly graduating interpreters (Dean, 2014; Dean & Pollard, 2001; Delk, 2013; Gunter & Hull, 1995; Hoza, 2013; Resnick, 1990; Smith et al., 2012; RID, 2007b; Winston, 2006; Winston & Lee, 2013; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). The goal of this study was to explore the thoughts and perceptions of current practitioners in regards to the ability for mentoring to mitigate this gap by assisting entry-level interpreters. The data showed a strong feeling of support for providing mentoring to entry-level interpreters. In Table 3, 97% of respondents stated a need for mentoring upon entry into the field of signed language interpreting. Exploring current practitioners' attitudes and opinions toward mentoring is important; if mentoring is determined to be the nationwide answer to mitigating the gap, the current practitioners would be the ones involved in implementing this plan.

Conclusion

Ever since signed language interpreting changed from a volunteer position to a paid position, educators have been challenged to graduate competent interpreters (Roy, 2000). According to the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf's website, it is reported that the interpreters who hold National Interpreter Certification have met or exceeded the "minimum" professional requirements to work as an interpreter (RID, n.d.a., para 2). But as Maroney and Smith (2010) pointed out, students self-reported they were informed of the ability to graduate and enter the field but they were also cautioned to work for approximately five years before attempting to pass the national certification test. Maroney and Smith (2010) posed a great question to the professional community when they asked if certification is the minimum professional standard, then why are students

graduating and entering the field without certification when they were told they would be work-ready upon graduation.

With this type of disconnect, the gap between education and work readiness can be substantial (Ball, 2013). Winston and Lee (2013) emphasized the importance of providing more formalized mentoring for those entering the field of signed language interpreting as well as the implementation of more mentoring programs. Mentoring can be a process where a mentor and mentee can work together to accomplish common goals and therefore benefitting both participants (Gordon & Magler, 2007). In many practice professions there are often established mentorships or apprenticeships that occur to help bridge the gap from book knowledge and theory to real-life application (Smith et al., 2012). Signed language interpreting is said to be a newer practice profession (Dean & Pollard, 2013), and it has been recognized by interpreters and educators in the field of interpreting that there is a gap in regards to interpreter education programs and the students readiness to graduate and become “work-ready” in the field of interpreting (Dean & Pollard, 2013; Gish, 1987; Maroney & Smith, 2010; Mikkelson, 2013; Resnick, 1990; Walker & Shaw, 2011; Winston & Lee, 2013). A solution to this gap needs to be found and a plan implemented to start to lessen the affect it has on entry-level interpreters and the entire profession.

This study showed that practitioners in the field perceived a need for interpreting mentorship in many capacities and settings within the signed language interpreting profession. The respondents agreed that mentoring would be beneficial to entry-level interpreters in various settings (e.g., mental health, legal, medical, K-12, post-secondary, VRS, government, platform). They did not find mentoring to be beneficial in a theatrical

setting, nor did they find it as beneficial in other areas such as ethical dilemmas, for knowing how to present qualifications, roles, and responsibilities or for increased professional acumen. Other practice professions have evolved over time as new knowledge is gained, more research is conducted, and new ideas come to light (RID, n.d.b, para 8). The field of signed language interpreting is no different, and it is currently in the midst of new discoveries, changes, and reflection. Refinement of standards and expectations and implementation of new theories and practices are part of the journey and one that will be unfolding in the years to come.

Recommendations

I propose that establishing strong mentoring programs will help the interpreting profession in three ways: (1) professional growth of the novice and seasoned interpreters, (2) the betterment of critical thinking skills, linguistic skills, business knowledge, professional knowledge and technical skills by both the novice and seasoned interpreters, and (3) the strengthening of relationships among interpreters for the benefit of the overall profession and the communities that signed language interpreters serve.

More empirical data is needed to affirm that mentoring is a viable option for diminishing the gap that exists. More research overall, in the field of signed language interpreting, is crucial for improvement of the education, training, and practice of interpreters. Through future research, if mentoring is not found to have a substantial effect on mitigating the gap then researchers will know to continue searching for other answers. However, if mentoring is found to decrease the college-to-work gap then a new focus and drive to better mentoring programs can begin.

Further research on current practitioners' experiences, opinions, and expectations regarding mentoring is encouraged as it seems there is an enormous interest in the topic of mentoring and varying opinions of how mentoring should take place. These various opinions can be seen by reading the *Open Comments from Survey for Future Research* section found in Appendix A. Table 6 shows 60% of respondents stated they did not feel qualified to be a mentor and 25% reported that they were unsure if they were qualified to be a mentor in their areas. Not only is the concept of mentoring important for investigation, so is the recruitment and training of mentors. What qualifies someone to be a mentor? How can training occur to prepare more interpreters to become mentors? This is another research path that can be explored to better assist in the training and recruitment of qualified mentors.

There are many subcategories within the topic of mentoring, and I learned about some of the subcategories from the candid comments left by fellow practitioners in the research survey that was distributed for this study. There are ample opportunities for more researchers to explore this topic and its possibilities for mitigating the gap and the possible benefits mentoring can add to the signed language profession.

Open Comments of Interest

There appears to be a lot of interest in the topic of mentoring from those in the field. More research on mentoring would be beneficial especially with a more narrowed and distinct focus. For instance, in the open comments section of the survey a comment regarding paying for mentoring stated that mentors should not be paid for their mentoring services. Further discussion as to how a mentor could be compensated suggested paying for a meal, coffee or even having the mentee volunteer at a Deaf event. Also, instead of

having agencies or other funding system allocate funds for mentor services, it was suggested that RID offer CEUs for validated mentoring. These suggestions are just a few of the comments that could lead to more research. I was surprised at how different practitioners viewed mentoring and how that would affect how they answered specific questions. The comments left by the practitioners participating in this research have opened up opportunities to do more intensive study on very specific components of mentoring.

In Appendix A, comments from the survey participants in regards to mentoring, payment of mentors, issues with the specific survey used in this research, complication of answering some of the survey questions, bartering, and more can be found. Many comments from the survey are included there for others to possibly use to spark ideas for future research topics regarding mentoring. I felt it was important to include some of these comments because the participants took the time to reply, I felt their voices should be included in this research, and they provided great topics to further explore. All the participants' comments are anonymous and some information has been changed or removed to protect any identifying information.

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Appendix A: Responses to Open Comments Section

Payment of Mentors

“RID should give credit to mentors through CEU's. Mentors should be compensated for their time, albeit not always monetarily. Our profession was built on the backs of selfless mentors who sacrificed everything to see this profession through its infancy; why are we now asking for money for a service we should be providing with good intentions of enhancing the field for future interpreters and Deaf people?”

“Mentors and protégées relationships are tainted by the business aspects of it. Most other professional do not pay for mentoring. It is a gift.”

“In regards to having RID setting up a fund to pay for mentors an alternative might be free or discounted conference fees.”

“*‘If mentors were free...would you collaborate...?’* Yes. Also, I think mentors could be paid in part from the agency/employer and part by mentee and the extra pay wouldn't have to be substantial, but should include debriefing time. Mentors should be paid based on interpreting and mentoring experience and ability which could be monitored by attending mentor training programs/certifications.”

Reciprocity and/or Bartering for Mentoring

“I believe in reciprocity. I do not think a mentor should be paid. If someone is willing to work with you as a mentee during your first few years, it only makes sense that you would then become a mentor to someone else when the time comes. I think ‘payment for someone's time’ could come in many different ways other than money. It could be coffee upon arrival at a gig, paying for dinner to debrief etc. I do not think that providing a pay check to a mentor is right. We as interpreters pay for so much already PD, parking, bills et cetera that we do not have to pay to have someone's support. Nor should a first year graduate.”

“The cost of hiring a mentor is always going to be an issue. If we can find a way to eliminate this worry, we might have a lot more great interpreters in this field.....”

“The field would clearly benefit from increased access to qualified mentors. Although a lofty goal, I hesitate to approach the pay factor as those who have the need for these services may not have the ability to pay. My experience is most mentoring is pro bono and to promote professionalism and grow the next generation of interpreters in the field. Perhaps instead of payment there could be another form of credit: recognition, CEUs, or something of this nature.”

Mentoring Informal

“I am in my 33rd year of interpreting and I often end up doing unofficial or informal mentoring. It is a natural process. I can learn from younger or new interpreters, too.”

“I have worked as a mentor for 10 years. I still do and would love one of my own.”

“Someone helped me out when I was starting out and I want to pass it on.”

“The idea of co-mentoring has really shaped who I am as an interpreter. When I was first hired at my first high school K-12 job, there was another new hire/recent grad with which I often discussed dilemmas, worked out problems and discussed best practices.... We both grew equally and benefited from each other. I think that type of mentoring is typically underrepresented in literature and research.”

“I feel many informal mentoring situations are missed. Any time you have a team, whether interpreter of equal years in the field or less, there is always room for feedback and growth and exploration. Agencies especially should strive to put new interpreters in teaming settings. My ITP was geared to train interpreters for educational settings- hence the lack of training in other areas of the field! All of that I learned from mentors!!”

“I believe all varieties of mentors/mentorships can be beneficial-not a one size fits all... It would be wonderful to have more professionally trained mentors available for hire but expecting a recent graduate with little income, either working for free or a tiny stipend, to pay anything for a mentor is not fair. The most successful mentor relationships I have seen tend to develop organically and over a period of time...”

Mentoring Formal

“I think the medical profession can offer a lot of suggestions and ideas for how the interpreting community handles mentoring and providing adequate support for entry level interpreters. Practicums/Internships through a university are not enough. We must provide opportunities for students/recent graduates to be able to grow in the field. The harder it is for them to grow, the more likely they will drop out of the profession. Sorenson currently offers a graduate to work program, but the available spots are limited. This concept should be applied on a larger scale to assist those that have the drive and desire to put in the work needed to improve their skills. There should also be more consistency in what constitutes mentoring...”

Mentoring Experience

“...I would have benefited from a mentor. I have one now, and after 10+ years, I feel better about my skills.”

“I was fortunate enough to go through a stellar interpreter program that provided mentorship-then got hooked up with another mentor upon graduation who worked with me on a regular basis for the first 3 months and continued to mentor informally for years.”

“I never had an ‘official’ mentor, and when I did, I had been interpreting for almost 20 years. But having that person in my work life greatly improved my interpreting, my confidence and understanding of Deaf Culture. It made me understand just how important and beneficial mentors are.”

“I have sought out mentoring from the day I graduated. Over the years I have had three official mentors.... They have made me the interpreter I am today. I have also become a mentor to give back a piece of what I gained.”

“I have mentored in the past and continue to do so now on a volunteer basis. I believe strongly that mentoring is extremely important for new and seasoned interpreters...”

“I don’t think I could have been as successful as an interpreter today without the mentors I had in my life who volunteer.”

“I have a mentor through the company I work for. I really felt it has been beneficial... because there is always something new to learn.”

Mentoring Benefits

“I believe the most important thing anyone can do is to receive and provide mentoring (when qualified) it supports the interpreting field and the Deaf and hearing communities...”

“The experience I had with a mentor during my ITP was less than ideal but it taught me so much about working with people that overall it was an excellent experience.”

“I’ve been a trained mentor... for several years now. I think it's essential for recent graduates to have that professional (non-teacher-centered) relationship to guide them in learning self-assessment and self-monitoring.... Mentoring is the bridge for the gap between classroom and independent practice...”

“I do believe that Mentors are so important to the interpreting profession...and to our new interpreters. We need them. And, many of them cannot get certified without having a mentor.”

“I had a Deaf mentor....and then three [other] interpretersI have been a mentor to new interpreters and seasoned interpreters. Without support there is... no real way to know if your skills are improving, no exchange of knowledge, as you are never just a mentor you are also a mentee, and you are never just a mentee you are a mentor.”

“I have mentored people in their last semester of college. I was not paid extra money but I believe it was a worthwhile endeavor. Helping a novice interpreter become better prepared to serve our Deaf community benefits the entire

community. In addition, the questions asked by my intern forced me to evaluate my work in a new and refreshing way. I believe I benefited greatly from the experience. I would absolutely do it again.”

“There are many interpreters that can mentor. You don't have to be certified to mentor. You can be working for a few years and help guide a new interpreter in the field and show them the ropes as it were. All new interpreters can benefit from someone in the field no matter how long they have been interpreting. And sometimes mentoring could be just having someone to bounce ideas off of. But of course in more specialized fields a more seasoned interpreter should be sought out... But I do think it is beneficial to the Deaf community that newbies receive mentoring their first year. That way, the Deaf community gets better, well rounded and qualified interpreters in the long run.”

“I feel that we all need Mentors, no matter how seasoned we are... So much is learned and can be learned as a mentor that will directly improve our own ‘craft’... When we collaborate with both new and seasoned interpreters we all benefit as professionals and the community at large benefits from the collaboration...New interpreters can bring so much to the table and contribute much to the field.”

“While there are many, many excellent interpreters/transliterators within our field, I strongly feel that any formal mentoring should be done by an interpreter that is either RID and/or NAD certified. Otherwise, that could give a misconception that certification is not what an interpreter should aspire to...”

“I feel that mentors should be certified, but I don't think there needs to be a requirement to how long they have been in the field. Those who are new interpreters often still have valuable experiences that can be shared with mentees. I had volunteer mentors going through school and during my first year of interpreting who met with me once a week and helped me develop my skills through practice, giving feedback, and discussing situations that had come up either for me or during their career that I could learn from. It was very beneficial and I am indebted to my mentors forever! I wish more people were willing to volunteer of their time. I would love to, but I also don't feel qualified as a mentor.”

Deaf Inclusion

“It’s also important to include Deaf Language Coaches/Models as mentors, as well.”

“Language Mentors would be even more beneficial than interpreter mentors.”

“I received more constructive time with a Deaf mentor, later in my career.”

Training

“I've often thought that I would like to become a mentor, but, I need help honing my feedback skills. Specifically, how to articulate and name the various parts of

interpreting that may need to be addressed... I have been greatly encouraged by mentors throughout my interpreting career. I have been fortunate to have seasoned, talented, ethical interpreters to seek information from.”

Stakeholders and More

“Too often in this field interpreters have to find an informal mentoring situation that they themselves create - which can make it hard, because not everyone has that skill. Also - interpreters tend to gravitate to those who will validate their current practice as opposed to someone who will challenge growth...The "buy in" of local communities is also an important factor - without the willingness of the local community (both Deaf and Hearing) to support mentoring as on the job learning.”

“I find there is a lack of seasoned interpreters who are willing to associate with new interpreters, let alone mentor them. This is a shame, and does a great disservice to our profession.”

“We live in a fast paced society and I think many forget what it’s like to be the new kid. Many give the excuse they don’t have the time to help but if there is an incentive many more would be willing to be a mentor.”

Seeking Mentoring

“I would like to be a mentor to those seeking to work in the medical field. I would like to find a mentor to break into legal interpreting...”

Researcher’s Comments

Mentoring is certainly a multifaceted topic with many opportunities for exploration as can be clearly seen by the plethora of comments supplied by the respondents of the survey. The above comments were only a few of the many comments which make it apparent why all the data received could not be included in just one study. I hope the readers of this study will find one of the headings listed above regarding mentoring and explore it further to add to the research to the field of mentoring and signed language interpreting.

Appendix B: Consent Form

Research Study Title: Perceived Benefits of Mentoring for Entry-level interpreters for Work Readiness, Professional Acumen, and Skill Development.

You are invited to participate in a web-based online survey on “Perceived Benefits of Mentoring for Entry-level interpreters Regarding Work Readiness, Professional Acumen, and Skill Development”. This is a research project being conducted by Kimberly Boeh, a student at Western Oregon University.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. There is no penalty for not participating. This survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

BENEFITS

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about the need and value of mentoring for entry-level interpreters.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. This survey is a self-report measure designed using web based software. Results will be collected anonymously and analyzed using SPSS software. Results will be deleted upon the close of the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information gathered from this study will be anonymous. Your answers will be collected via the use of a web based survey where data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. There will be no collection of identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study. The data will be deleted once it has been analyzed within a window of no more than five years.

CONTACT

You may contact Kimberly Boeh at kboeh14@wou.edu should you have any questions or concerns about this survey or this research. You may also contact my thesis advisor, Dr. Elisa Maroney via phone at 503-838-8735 or via email at maronee@wou.edu.

This study has been reviewed and approved by Western Oregon University Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Western Oregon University Institutional Review Board at irb@wou.edu or 503.838.9200.

Thank you,

Kimberly Boeh
Western Oregon University College of Education

Appendix C: Survey

Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: By selecting "YES" below, you are giving your consent to participate in this research. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate. If you do not wish to participate for any reason or if you are not at least 18 years of age, please select "NO" below and close the survey.

- Yes No

Did you attend an interpreter education/training program?

- Yes No

Which of the following best describes you?

- Hearing
 Hard of Hearing
 Deaf
 CODA
 Other

To which racial group(s) do you most identify?

- African American/Black
 Asian
 Caucasian/White (non-Hispanic)
 Latino or Hispanic
 Native American or American Indian
 Pacific Islander
 Other

What is the highest level of education you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.

- High School Diploma or GED
 Associate's Degree
 Bachelor's Degree
 Master's Degree
 Doctorate Degree

Which certification(s) do you hold? (Select all that apply)

- RID National Certification
 EIPA
 State Certification
 Other
 None
 I am an interpreter student

Please type the full name of the state(s) (e.g., California, South Carolina, Ohio) in which you currently complete most of your interpreting work?

What is your age?

Which of the following best fits your definition of the qualifications needed to be a mentor in the interpreting field?

- An interpreter who has worked in the field less than 5 years
- An interpreter who has worked in the field for at least 5 years
- An interpreter who has worked in the field for 5 years and is certified
- An interpreter who has worked in the field for 6-10 years
- An interpreter who has worked in the field for 6-10 years and is certified by RID
- none of the above

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Scale of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

It is beneficial for entry-level interpreters to have a mentor for their first year working as an interpreter.

Entry-level interpreters should be paid during mentoring in their first year working as an interpreter.

Mentors should be paid extra for their mentoring role.

Which of the following bests matches your thoughts on paying *entry-level interpreters* during their first year on the job? They should receive payment via:

- Working at a specific location (e.g., schools, universities, hospital) their employer should pay for the mentoring time
- State funds should be developed within each state to pay for mentoring of entry-level interpreters
- The interpreter referral agency they work for should pay the entry-level interpreters while they team with seasoned interpreters

If you believe that mentors should be paid more, who should pay them for their time and work as a mentor?

- The mentee (the person seeking mentoring)
- The interpreter referral agency for whom the mentor and mentee work
- The profession itself (separate funds developed and set aside for mentors perhaps through RID)
- The state where the mentor works
- No one--they should not be paid more
- Other

How important do you think it would be for entry-level interpreters to have a mentor when working in one of the following specialized settings? (Scale of Not at all Important, Low Importance, Slightly Important, Moderately Important, Very Important, Extremely Important)

Mental Health

Legal Medical K-12

Post-secondary

VRS Theatrical

Platform settings (e.g., graduations, conventions, special guest speakers, workshops)

Government settings (e.g., politics, military, IRS)

If you were an entry-level interpreter, how willing would you be to pay for an interpreter mentor to help with skills development, studying for professional tests, discussing ethical scenarios, and various other interpreting needs (Scale of Not at all Important, Low Importance, Slightly Important, Neutral, Moderately Important, Very Important, Extremely Important)

How willing would you be to pay for a mentor?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all Willing | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat Willing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly Willing | <input type="checkbox"/> Willing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral | <input type="checkbox"/> Very Willing |

If you would be willing to pay for a mentor how much would you be willing to pay for the mentor if they were a certified RID interpreter but had no formal mentoring training?

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> less than \$10/hr | <input type="checkbox"/> \$36-\$40/hr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10-\$14/hr | <input type="checkbox"/> \$41-\$45/hr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15-\$20/hr | <input type="checkbox"/> \$46-\$50/hr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$21-\$25/hr | <input type="checkbox"/> \$51-\$55/hr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$26-\$30/hr | <input type="checkbox"/> \$56-\$60/hr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$31-\$35/hr | <input type="checkbox"/> \$61/hr + |

If you were willing to pay for an interpreter mentor, how much would you be willing to pay for a certified RID interpreter who was also professionally trained and certified as a mentor?

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> less than \$10/hr | <input type="checkbox"/> \$36-\$40/hr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10-\$14/hr | <input type="checkbox"/> \$41-\$45/hr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15-\$20/hr | <input type="checkbox"/> \$46-\$50/hr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$21-\$25/hr | <input type="checkbox"/> \$51-\$55/hr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$26-\$30/hr | <input type="checkbox"/> \$56-\$60/hr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$31-\$35/hr | <input type="checkbox"/> \$61/hr + |

If you had an interpreter mentor during your first year of paid work as an interpreter, which of the below options best describes the type of mentoring you received?

- Formal (I paid for a mentor)
- Informal (I shadowed another interpreter at no cost to me)
- Provided (mentoring was provided to me by an agency or other employer)
- I had no mentor
- other

If you had a mentor during your first year of paid work, was the mentoring a positive experience?

- Yes No Other

Reflecting on any past mentoring experiences when you were the mentee, how much do you agree with the following statements? (Scale of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

- My mentor was someone I knew well.
- My mentor was someone I respected.
- My mentor had a positive attitude.
- My mentor was/is a teacher of mine.
- My mentor provided feedback in a manner that did not hurt my feelings.
- My mentor provided feedback in a way that focused on the 'work' and not on me as an interpreter.
- My mentor was often available for meetings and discussions.

My mentor was most often available to answer my questions.
My mentor helped me feel good about my work.
My mentor asked me how "I" could develop my work instead of "telling" me
how to develop my work.
My mentor made the mentoring experience positive.
My mentor made the mentoring experience negative.

How much do you agree with the following statements? (Scale of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

I have previously sought the assistance of a mentor.
I am currently seeking the assistance of a mentor.
I am struggling to find a mentor in my local area.
I would like to become a mentor but do not think I am qualified.

How much do you agree with the following statements? (Scale of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

If I had the opportunity right now, I would like to have a mentor for the following purposes:

To study for a state quality assurance test
To study for a national certification assessment (NIC)
To study for the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA)
For various skill development (e.g., sign vocabulary, ASL to English skills, English to ASL skills)
For professional development
For freelance business knowledge (e.g., how to be a freelancer, taxes, invoices, mileage tracking)
For general business knowledge (e.g., how to work well with hearing and deaf clients, how to approach receptionists while on the job, how to handle tough clients and situations)

For the following settings/situations, please indicate how important it would be or would have been for you to have had a supportive interpreter mentor? (Scale of Not at all Important, Low Importance, Slightly Important, Neutral, Moderately Important, Very Important, Extremely Important, N/A)

During college practicum
Upon entry into the field of interpreting
While working in K-12 settings
When starting community freelance work
Working in mental health settings
Working in legal settings
Working in medical settings
Working in post-secondary settings
Working in Video Relay Service (VRS) settings
Working in government settings (e.g., politics, military, IRS)
Working in a theatrical setting
Working in platform settings (e.g., graduations, conventions, special guest speakers, workshops)
Studying for a state assurance test

Studying for the EIPA
Studying for a national certification test (e.g., CI/CT, NIC)

How true are the following statements in relation to your feelings of being prepared during your first year of interpreting? (Scale of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

I felt prepared...

Applying for interpreting assignments at interpreter referral agencies
Applying for full-time interpreting jobs in school districts
Applying for work as an interpreter in other interpreting settings (e.g., hospital staff, government interpreter job)
Working in K-12 setting
Working in freelance settings (e.g., doctor appointments, business appointments, ER's, meetings, platform appointments)
Working in mental health settings
Taking assessment tests at interpreter referral agencies
Taking state quality assurance tests
Taking the NAD/RID National Certification Written test
Taking the NAD/RID National Certification Performance test
Knowing how to present my qualifications
Knowing how to present my role and responsibilities
For teamed assignments
Dealing with difficult interpreters
Dealing with difficult hearing clients
Dealing with difficult Deaf/Hard of Hearing clients
Managing my freelance work (appointments, travel, protocol, invoices, billing, taxes)
Debriefing with colleague(s) over difficult/stressful assignments
Dealing with vicarious trauma
Handling role conflicts during assignments
Knowing how to further my skill development
Handling ethical dilemmas
Approaching hearing clients at appointments (e.g., receptionist, clerks, dispatchers)
Controlling communication between multiple professionals and the deaf client (e.g., two nurses and two doctors in an ER room all asking the deaf patient questions at the same time)
Handling "wait" times in waiting rooms
Staying safe when traveling from one appointment to the next (e.g., neighborhood safety, dark garages, the ER at 2am, jails, half-way houses, detention centers)
Knowing how to advocate for the Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing client
Knowing how to advocate for myself

Upon entry into the field of interpreting, in which setting did you feel you were most prepared and qualified to work within? (select all that apply)

- K-12
- Post-secondary
- Freelance/Community Interpreting
- Religious
- Mental Health
- Medical
- Legal

- Theatrical
- Platform
- Government (e.g., political, military, IRS)
- Other

How much do you agree with the following statements regarding the reasons why interpreters, of any level, would want or need a mentor? (Scale of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

- To improve skills interpreting from ASL to English and to improve skill interpreting from English to ASL
- For sharing and learning professional information and practices
- To support professional development
- For guidance and support
- To share positive and constructive feedback
- To debrief stressful or challenging work related situations
- To have a role model
- To show an interpreter "the ropes" in a specialized setting
- To build confidence
- To build rapport and camaraderie
- For encouragement
- To share experiences

Which of the following do you feel are the most important attributes and/or qualities for mentors to possess? (select all that apply)

- gives positive, constructive feedback
- focuses feedback on "the work" and not the interpreter
- provides a high standard of practice
- gives ample time to mentee
- is encouraging and supportive
- has good time management
- is organized
- genuinely cares about the profession, the Deaf community and interpreters
- has clear communication skills
- positive role model
- is respected in the community where they work
- possesses good problem solving skills
- realizes their own limitations
- is open for discussing their own work and experiences as well
- demonstrates professional and personal values
- demonstrates a positive attitude
- works well with others
- is knowledgeable about the various settings interpreters encounter
- treats others as equals
- has good listening skills
- establishes goals with you and follows through

If you had a mentor, do you feel you benefited from having their support during your career?

- Yes No Unsure

If you have not had a mentor, do you feel you would have benefited from having one at some point in your career?

Yes No Unsure

Overall, do you feel the signed language profession, as a whole, would benefit from having trained mentors in the field to work with entry-level interpreters as well as seasoned interpreters ?

Yes No Unsure

Do you feel you are qualified to become a mentor in your local community?

Yes No Unsure

If mentors were available for free, would you seek to collaborate with them?

Yes No Unsure

Please feel free to add any comments you may have about mentorships, mentors, mentees that were not addressed in this survey.

The survey is complete. Thank you for your participation and willingness to assist in developing more research to further the profession of signed language interpreters.

The Principal Investigator conducting this study is Kimberly Boeh. You may contact me at kboeh14@wou.edu should you have any questions or concerns about this survey or this research. You may also contact my research supervisor Dr. Elisa Maroney at 503-838-8735 or via email at maronee@wou.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Western Oregon University Institutional Review Board at irb@wou.edu or 503.838.9200.