

Disparities in Social Capital:

The Shared Journey of African American/Black Sign Language Interpreters

By

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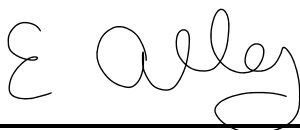
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“I Can Do All Things Through Christ Who Strengthens Me.” ~ Philippians 4:13

“For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future.” ~ Jeremiah 29:11

Being a single basketball/dance mom with two beautiful kids, full time job in management, in a newfound serious relationship, active member in the deaf and interpreting communities, and physically active teaching Zumba and running half marathons; this was no easy feat. It took everything I had to steadfast and to keep my eyes on the prize. BUT GOD! He allowed the right people to be in my path at the right times. He knew what it would take to push me forward and to those of you who knew the right words to say, the right thing to do, the right look to give me when I felt like giving up; I would be forever grateful to each of you.

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To Dream the Impossible Dream ~ Joe Darion & Mitchell Leigh

To dream the impossible dream
To fight the unbeatable foe
To bear the unbearable sorrow
To run where the brave dare not go

To right the unrightable wrong
To love pure and chaste from afar
To try when your arms are too weary
To reach the unreachable star

This is my quest, to follow that star
No matter how hopeless, no matter how far

To fight for the right
Without question or pause
To be willing to march
Into Hell for a heavenly cause

And I know if I'll only be true
To this glorious quest
That my heart will lay peaceful and calm
When I'm laid to my rest

And the world will be better for this
That one man scorned and covered with scars
Still strove with his last ounce of courage
To fight the unbeatable foe
To reach the unreachable star

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ABSTRACT

According to the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf's (RID) 2016 annual report, only 4.89% (487) of its members (8,649) self-identify as African American/Black (RID, 2017). There is an overwhelming concern within the Black Deaf community, as well as, the African American/Black (AA/B) interpreter community regarding the disparities in social capital and underrepresentation of AA/B sign language interpreters in the interpreting profession. "The demographics of the current pool of sign language interpreters does not reflect the diversity of the d/Deaf population, and few white interpreters share the same cultural or linguistic background of the individuals they serve. Finding qualified hearing and Deaf interpreters from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds that are fluent in the diverse native languages of the individuals they serve is difficult, and demand far outweighs supply" (Cokely, Schafer, 2016). In a survey conducted by Aramburo (1993), 87 percent of the Black Deaf community stated that they identify as Black first and Deaf second because people see their color before they know they are Deaf. These comments have been brought up during local, state, and national conferences for well over two decades. This research will present the shared journeys of AA/B sign language interpreters; and the impact of disparities of social capital.

Keywords

African American/Black (AA/B), American Sign Language (ASL), cultural competence, disparity, microaggression, National Alliance of Black Interpreters Incorporated (NAOBI, Inc.), sign language interpreter, social capital, Interpreter Training Program (ITP), heritage language learner, Coda, and Black Deaf community

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background

Growing up as the only hearing child of deaf adults (OHCODA) and three younger deaf siblings, the desire to make a difference in the Black¹ Deaf community has always been on my mind. Celeste Owens stated the lack of access to interpreters was one of the reasons the Black Deaf community “lagged behind in information, job opportunities, housing, and health care” (Dudley-Daniels, 2019). Not ever seeing a Black sign language interpreter face-to-face or, for that matter, not on television, was the impetus for me to become a sign language interpreter. To my family I was their first Black sign language interpreter, but I wanted to be that for the Black Deaf community as well.

My immediate family all are profoundly deaf. Auxiliary aids such as hearing aids would not help them to understand speech. They would only be able to hear sounds. I grew up being the eyes and ears for the family. I was their interpreter and advocate. There are five generations of deafness in my family (grandparents, parents, siblings, nieces/nephews and one great nephew). This gives me the privilege of being a heritage language learner, someone that was raised in a home and acquired native fluency in a language other than English without going through formal training in that language and culture. Guadalupe Valdes coined the definition in 2000 that is commonly used amongst educators today (Valdes, 2000). It is estimated that nearly 90% of children born to deaf parents are hearing (CACDP, 2006). These children, known as, children of deaf adults (Codas), have an innate ability to acquire ASL from their Deaf parent(s) without any formal training. They are considered bilingual and bicultural. They are exposed to

¹ The “B” in Black is capitalized when you are talking about the race/culture (the people).

English (or the dominant language in their country) and American Sign Language (ASL). For example, I learned ASL before I learned to speak English. However, being around my hearing aunts, uncles, cousins, and watching television helped me with acquiring the English language.

When I was born, there were not any deaf organizations for the Black Deaf community. While the National Association for the Deaf (NAD) had been established in 1880 to advocate for the interests of Deaf people in America, Black Deaf people were not allowed membership until decades later (NAD, 2020). In order to have a more representative body that would be attentive to their concerns, a group of Black Deaf leaders established the National Black Deaf Advocates (NBDA) in 1982 (NBDA, 2020). Even still, NBDA was not well known in North Carolina during its infancy. Likewise, other organizations for hearing children with deaf parents were not prominent within the Black Deaf community. In fact, it was not until I had graduated with my bachelor's degree in 1998 and worked in the field of interpreting for a few years before I learned about organizations like Kids of Deaf Adults (Kodas) and CODA International.

While attending college, it was quite clear many of my peers and professors did not look like me. Just as our race and ethnicity were different, so too were our social constructs, our beliefs, and our heritage. Throughout my junior and senior years of college, there were three professors – two deaf and one Black Coda professor who impacted me most. Still, not having a rich and diverse faculty at my college did not deter me from achieving my life-long dream. According to Gallaudet, Dr. Shirley Childress is one of the first known nationally certified African American/Black (AA/B)² sign language interpreters in 1977 (Dr. Childress bio). Since

² African American/Black refers to those from the African diaspora, Caribbean, and/or those born in the United States.

her Coda³ roots were an integral part of her, she honored her parents by creating a college scholarship for kids with deaf parents. The scholarship is named after them – Herbert and Thomasina Childress Scholarship Fund. Although, I was not one of the first Black interpreters to get nationally certified as I had imagined as a little girl; I was one of the first in the state of North Carolina in June of 1999.

After working in the field fewer than six months, there were many educators, interpreters, interpreter referral agencies, and state agency workers that were contacting me for work. Fortunately, I had an advantage because I have deaf parents. In 1999, Carmen Green Smith, former manager of the Wilson Regional Center, under the North Carolina Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDSDDHH), approached me about attending a National Alliance of Black Interpreters, Inc. conference in South Carolina. She was the only other Black interpreter in Wilson, North Carolina. In addition to serving as manager of the Wilson Regional Center, Mrs. Smith was also a freelance sign language interpreter. Of course, I was uncertain of this organization since I had never heard of it during my time in the Interpreter Training Program (ITP). The only interpreting organization mentioned in class was the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID).

During the drive to South Carolina, Mrs. Green Smith tried to prepare me, as best she could, for what I should expect once we arrived at the NAOBI, Inc. conference. No matter what she said, that conversation did not do any justice to what I experienced when I walked into the hotel in Myrtle Beach. It was one of those experiences whereby you had to be there in order to know what it felt like to be among others who look like you. The amount of melanin in the room

³ Coda has become a noun to describe a person with one or more deaf parents (A. Williamson, personal communication, June 9, 2020).

was mind boggling. These were not people who learned sign language out of a book. They were not mediocre interpreters. They were qualified, state, and /or nationally certified AA/B sign language interpreters. There were about 100+ AA/B sign language interpreters at this conference. Upon leaving the NAOBI, Inc. conference, there was a renewed spirit within me to make an even greater difference within the sign language interpreter field. My vision was to become more engaged and assist with the recruitment and retention of AA/B sign language interpreters in the state of North Carolina. With the guidance and assistance of other AA/B interpreters, we were successful in establishing the National Alliance of Black Interpreters, Inc. – North Carolina (NAOBI, Inc.-NC) in 2005. The following year, 2006, our hard work with our deaf allies saw the establishment of the National Black Deaf Advocates Chapter #30 in North Carolina (NCBDA).

My involvement with NAOBI, Inc., NBDA, and NCBDA has impacted my ability to have access to better job opportunities, networking, and sustainability in the interpreting profession. James (2000) correlates social capital to two network characteristics in the workforce: racial similarity and tie strength (p. 496). It has been proven people who have similarity in different facets of life such as race, educational status, organizational affiliation often networks with those of the same social group. The amount of time, emotional investment, and reciprocity included in a relationship between two or more is tie strength. NAOBI, Inc serves as a resource of social capital for AA/B sign language interpreters.

Purpose of National Alliance of Black Interpreters, Incorporated

The National Alliance of Black Interpreters, Incorporated (NAOBI, Inc.), is a premier national organization comprised of AA/B Sign Language Interpreters (Help Center, n.d.). NAOBI, Inc. was established by a core group of interpreters who felt the need to bring cohesion

and support to an underrepresented group of interpreters; share commonalities and find solutions that would eradicate discrimination from the interpreting field. NAOBI, Inc. also provides professional training and promotes excellence and empowerment among AA/B within the context of a multi-cultural, multi-lingual environment (Home Center, n.d.). For the first two years NAOBI, Inc. held an annual summit held at Gallaudet University. Their first conference was held in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina in 1999 (Aramburo, 2019). Currently, NAOBI, Inc. is in defunct status while subchapters are still actively operating. The active chapters are listed below in order of establishment.

Affiliated Chapters of NAOBI, Inc.

NAOBI Inc., - District of Columbia (NAOBI Inc.-DC). It was the first chapter to be established in 1999 to provide interpreter education, mentorship, advocacy, and peer support to the AA/B sign language interpreters and aspiring interpreters (History-NAOBI-DC, 2019). NAOBI-DC primarily served AA/B sign language interpreters from the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia (DMV). The DMV area is often considered the MECCA for AA/B sign language interpreters. Due to the amount of exposure, skill, and professional growth that occurs in this area, NAOBI Inc., DC serves as “the lightning rod of hope” for aspiring AA/B aspiring sign language interpreters (History-NAOBI-DC, 2019).

NAOBI Inc. -New York City Chapter (NAOBI, Inc. -NYC). This chapter was established in 1999. Christine Dudley-Daniels (2019) the author for the book, “*That They May Hear*,” records the establishment of the National Alliance of Black Interpreters – New York City Chapter. She indicates that the push for AA/B working professional sign language interpreters working together to assist with being more visible to the Black Deaf community, Interpreter Education students, religious interpreters, codas, and spreading the awareness of the shortage of

interpreters stemmed from two individuals on July 31, 1998. They were Celeste “Cee” Owens (Coda) and Sharon Williams (Dudley-Daniels, 2019, p.1). They initially established a chapter for both Deaf and hearing AA/B sign language interpreters. Majority came from an organization called “Minority Interpreters for the Deaf” (MID). This group comprised of Deaf and hearing interpreters from various levels (Certified, pre-certified, non-certified, and students). They partnered with other Black Deaf and hearing organizations to strengthen their support and visibility. Majority of the interpreters on the onset of this organization were religious interpreters. Many of them did not have any professional trainings but happen to fall in love with the language and its people. Throughout its years it never lost its purpose and drive. Although they have gone through different leadership, they are still going strong.

NAOBI Inc.- Metro Chicago Chapter (NAOBI, Inc. - MCC). This chapter was established in 1999. They were the fourth chapter to become an affiliate of NAOBI, Inc. in the late 1990’s. The chapter remained robust until mid-2014 (Annual Report, NAOBI-Metro Chicago, 2018). As time drew near for election, people were not stepping up into leadership roles which causes the leaders in the front to burn out. During that time the chapter became dormant. However, the chapter developed a survey in 2017 because they felt more work needs to be done (Annual Report, NAOBI-Metro Chicago, 2018). “The respondents wanted to re-establish NAOBI Inc., -MCC with a focus solely for the purpose of providing professional development opportunities. Instead of having elected officers, (since it was difficult to get people to run for office) a LEADERSHIP COUNCIL was established” (Annual Report, NAOBI-Metro Chicago, 2018).

NAOBI Inc., Atlanta (NAOBI, Inc. – ATL). This chapter was established in 2001. Their mission is “to promote excellence and empowerment among AA/B to achieve a level of

professionalism in the sign language interpreting field where they are known as skilled credentialed and/or certified interpreters” (History-NAOBI-Atlanta, 2020) This chapter has developed a scholarship opportunity for an AA/B sign language interpreting student or any d/Deaf or Hard of Hearing person pursuing Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) training. This award is in honor of Renee Olson who died in 2010 (History-NAOBI-Atlanta, 2020). They have also developed an award in honor of Eric Toland who died in 2007 (History-NAOBI-Atlanta, 2020). Both individuals were very instrumental in the NAOBI-Atlanta Chapter. Since COVID-19, they have been moved their meetings virtual to continue to provide support to their membership.

NAOBI Inc. - Detroit. This chapter was established in 2003. “We offer events that galvanize and enrich the interpreting and deaf communities” (History-NAOBI-Detroit, 2020). They have partnered with the CATIE Center (St. Catherine University, MN) who receives federal funding to provide programs focused on sign language interpreter trainings and certification (CATIE Center, 2020). The partnership aligns with the mission on recruitment efforts of AA/B sign language interpreters. The specialized professional development trainings range from mental health, legal, and DeafBlind (History-NAOBI-Detroit, 2020).

NAOBI Inc.- North Carolina (NAOBI, Inc.-NC). This chapter became the eleventh chapter in 2005. They were originally called Professional African American Interpreters (PAAI) with the pronunciation of PAH (PAAI-Constitution, 2005). According to the former President, this chapter captured a few members of the North Carolina Black Deaf Adults (NCBDA) on video to preserve Black American Sign Language (BASL) and to provide this project as a resource tool for ITPs, (T.Edwards, personal communications, June 4, 2020). The state is a large state which has caused the barrier for this chapter to thrive throughout the years. They have been dormant for some years and now are back into gearing up with innovative ways of being able to

connect with more AA/B interpreters across the state. The group will be using Zoom (2020) to assist with these efforts.

Statement of the Problem

The shortage of certified AA/B sign language interpreters within the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) is an acute problem. West Oyedele (2015) uses James' (2000) definition of social capital "the qualities that characterize the network of relationships one has with organizational peers, subordinates, and superiors" (p. 496). Aspiring AA/B sign language interpreters are dropping out of the Interpreting Training Programs (ITPs) because of the disparities in social capital in their programs and racial discrimination by their professors and peers (Schafer, Cokely, 2016). The ongoing dialogue within the sign language interpreting field regarding the need to have marginalized groups represented with interpreters that look like them and know the culture, especially within the Black Deaf community has been ineffectual. Dr. Shirley Childress was the first to recognize this problem while working at Gallaudet University. During her tenure at Gallaudet University, she organized a group called BRIDGES to focus on Black Deaf consumers and interpreters (Dr. Childress bio, 2020).

Additionally, Erica West Oyedele (2015), argues that the lack of cultural competency/capital represented in the ITPs, discriminatory actions, and behaviors towards AA/B aspiring sign language interpreters as well as sign language interpreters and professors who do not represent diversity. Cultural competency is the ability to interact with other cultures outside of your own (Cole, 2020). Not only interact but understand and communicate with others from

other cultures while being cognizant of your own cultural worldview. It's also your attitude towards others (Cole, 2020). A sociologist by the name of Pierre Bourdieu developed the term social capital. National Public Radio (NPR) captured a study done on high school students which asked if having a teacher that looked like them had any influence on their academic performance (2017). In fact, it does, and it also impacts their future aspirations.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research was to create awareness around the experiences that an AA/B interpreter goes through while they are in an ITP and/or as a professional interpreter; how providing diversity teaching methods helps with retention in school and on the job; the discriminations interpreters face; and how this creates a shortage in certified AA/B sign language interpreters. This research identified the variations of social capital needed to increase the representation of AA/B sign language interpreters in the interpreting profession. Participants shared the drive, discriminations, and the hardships they endured disclosed and the need for racial diversity within the ITPs to retain more AA/B sign language students.

Participants experience discrimination in the form of microaggressions. Microaggression is a term that was coined by psychiatrist and Harvard University professor Chester M. Pierce in the 1970. It is used for brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative prejudicial slights and insults toward any group, particularly culturally marginalized groups. The participants experienced microaggressions in the form of cultural incompetence such as misunderstanding the significance of Black Lives Matter, in the ITPs (Gallon, 2018). Most of the times the negative impact of their behaviors or comments went unnoticed by the oppressor. Data was collected using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. Initially,

a Qualtrics survey tool was used to capture the quantitative data, and two focus groups were used to collect the qualitative data. Combining the two methods strengthened the analysis of the data.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Importance of Cultural Competence and Social Capital

Cultural Competence is the abilities a person carries inside of them. Dr. Billy Vaughn describes cultural competence having four major components: awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skill (DTUI.com, n.d.). Examples of this type of competence include being empathetic towards other cultures, being aware of your own biases, and having the ability to manage cross-cultural interactions.

Social capital refers to external resources that an individual may leverage. Relevant to AA/B sign language interpreters are mentors, teachers, peers, culturally relevant curricula, and targeted recruitment practices. In other words, the more access to social capital AA/B practitioners have, the greater the chances they will advance and develop as professional interpreters.

Disparities in Social Capital and Multicultural Diversity within the Interpreting Profession

There has been continued dialogue within the interpreting field regarding the need to have marginalized groups represented with interpreters that look like them and know the culture, especially within the Black Deaf and AA/B interpreter communities before 1993. Dr. Shirley Childress is well respected within the Black Deaf and AA/B sign language interpreting

communities for her interpreting and advocacy efforts. According to Gallaudet, she was the first to recognize the attention needed for the underrepresented groups (Dr. Childress bio). After her death in March 2017, Gallaudet University created a Shirley Childress Memorial Scholarship Fund for Students of Color that are entering Gallaudet University's interpreting program. After Aramburo (1993) documented the inquiries of the shortage, Jackson (1993) proposed that an analysis be done to discover the barriers of recruitment efforts and retention of AA/B students in ITPs. Jackson is a member of the AA/B interpreter community. Although the conversations have been happening, the dial has only moved an inch within the last decade.

According to the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) 2016 annual report, only 4.89% of its members are AA/B (RID, 2017). Figure 1 clearly shows a significant disparity in the number of interpreters who self-identified as AA/B compared to those who self-identified as white for the years 2015-2018. Tracking the actual data within RID has been challenging because of how data was collected. Some years only indicate membership while others will differentiate certification and membership. Since the dissemination of RID's annual reports in 2009 (RID, 2010), the numbers remain constant at 4% and 5%. In an article of the RID Views, Aramburo (1993) states, "judging from the statistics. . . it is going to take a considerable amount of time to get the numbers to where the ratio of minority interpreters is in sync with Caucasian interpreters." Almost three decades later and the numbers are unmatched compared to the White sign language interpreters. Jackson believes the issue lies within the organizational structure. Determining the issues within would lead to assessing the problem (1993, p. 21). Today we still hear those same echoes from the Black Deaf and interpreter communities.

Within the last five years, there has been more of a push from other researchers that are AA/B pointing out this very same issue. On May 4, 2019 at the Street Leverage Conference

LaTanya Jones gave a presentation entitled, “*Lacking Melanin: A Cause for Concern for the Sign Language Interpreting Profession*”, she pointed out of 8,237 certified interpreters that there were only 345 certified AA/B sign language interpreters (Registry Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Annual Report, Thomas, 2018). Black students have reported difficult experiences in their ITPs that have not improved and unfortunately, neither have the racial demographics of the profession (RID, 2009; RID, 2017).

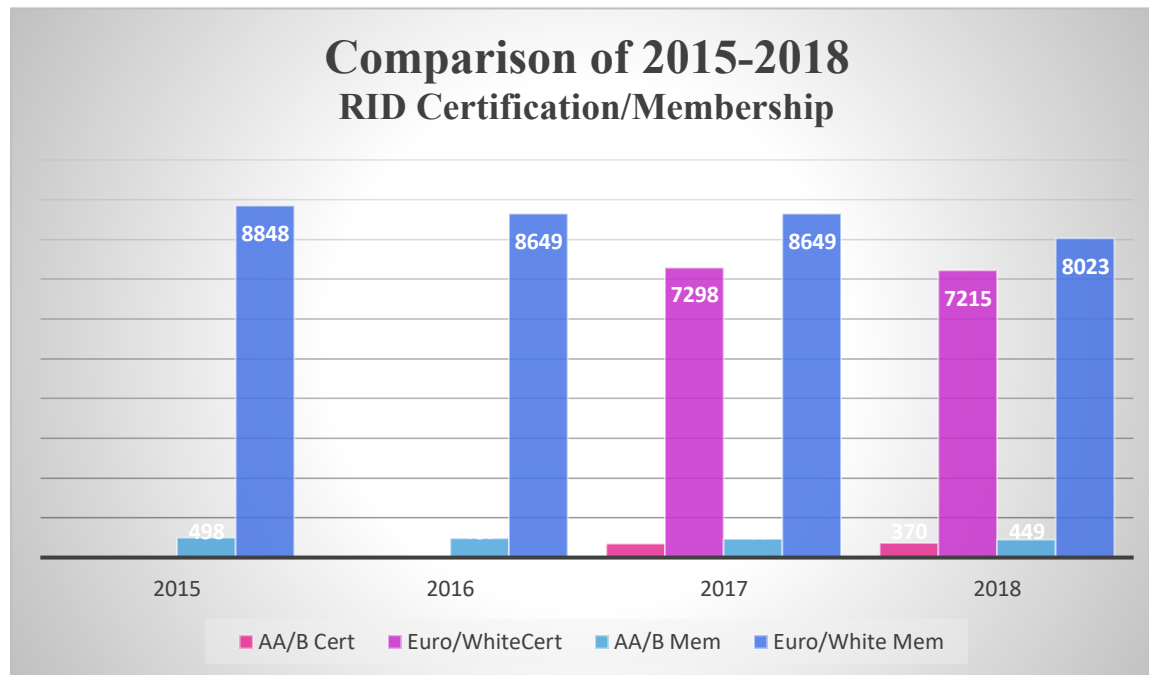


Figure 1. RID Comparison of years 2015-2018

Erica West Oyedele (2015), argues why there may be a smaller number of professional AA/B sign language interpreters such as the lack of having cultural competency/capital represented in the ITPs, discriminatory actions, and behaviors towards AA/B aspiring interpreters as well as interpreters and professors who do not represent diversity.

National Public Radio (NPR) captured a study that outlined if having a teacher that looked like the high school student had any influence on their academic performance (2017). These findings will support my research as well. In addition to the researchers, there are businesses, such as Sorenson Communications, that understands the need to increase the number of Black Deaf sign language interpreters by developing a program called Deaf Interpreter Academy (DIA), a program designed only for representatives from marginalized groups. DIA is in its second year and beginning to get an influx of applications as the word is getting out. Sorenson Communications has a Video Relay component that employs “the most diverse and most experienced” sign language interpreters across North America (2020). The sign language interpreters facilitate communication between a Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind, and/or hearing person over video. Sorenson values all their video interpreters and have developed Employee Resource Groups (ERG) for marginalized groups such as AA/B, Coda, Trilingual, Pride, etc. (M. Parks, personal conversation, June 8, 2020). The ERGs function as a safe space for those who self-identify as a member of that group to connect with one another, provide support to each other, and to celebrate for one another. Sorenson Communications is the largest VRS provider that empowers deaf and hard of hearing communities to communicate with both deaf and hearing family members, friends, and/or business contacts through using video relay service. VRS is an internet based service where sign language interpreters who work in this setting can be seen by the deaf, hard of hearing, and/or deafblind person on a T.V. screen, computer, cell phone, and/or iPad and is connected to the hearing person through the phone while interpreting between two to three (American Sign Language, English, and/or Spanish languages).

African American/Black Students’ Perspectives on Social Capital in ITP Programs

In the June 1993 RID Views, Jackson expresses that the field of ASL interpreting is non-existent to AA/B students. He feels that there needs to be an effort of recruitment of People of Color from the educators in the ITP. Do the ITP educators feel the same as Jackson? When you analyze the ethnicity data within certification and/or membership from RID, inevitably there will be more white ITP educators. Therefore, there is a teacher diversity gap within the educational system that impacts the racial disparities in academic performance (NPR, 2017). “Culturally, the Deaf community is made up of variety of individuals that demonstrate the diverse talents needed in providing sign language communication” (Aramburo, 1993, p. 8). Bruce (1998) shares ways of recruiting/retaining AA/B students into the ITP. Black students have reported difficult experiences in their ITPs that have not improved and unfortunately, neither have the racial demographics of the profession (RID, 2009; RID, 2017).

Bruce (1998) points out that having AA/B mentors and/or teachers for the AA/B students will heighten their success rate within the field. This is where culture competence comes into the picture. Culture competence is an ability to understand, communicate with, and interact effectively with people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. “We need to establish support networks within the ITPs” (Jackson, 1993).

African American/Black Professional Interpreters Perspectives on Social Capital within the Interpreting Profession

In 2016, the National Interpreter Education Center (NIEC) conducted a survey of 59% of the 80 AA/B sign language interpreters of color from around the country (Schafer and Cokely, p.4). Students that had a negative experience in an ITP was because they felt isolated and/or did not feel a sense of belonging. This experience resulted in most of them leaving the program. And those that had positive experiences were due to having other students of color in their

cohort. Bruce (1998) attested that having another AA/B sign language interpreter in her class helped. Fairchild (2009) analyzed how the lack of social capital in the educational system could influence a person's job of choice. Does this have an impact on the number of AA/B sign language interpreters? Social capital is a person's participation or position within a particular social group (shared norms, shared understanding, and shared trust). There is a correlation between social ties, or social capital and the educational system. Most participants reported that they were not exposed to diverse cultures and/or signers (Schafer & Cokely, 2016). The lack of development of social capital with faculty was perceived to have led to "cultural clashes with peers and instructors" and even resulted in being "directly or indirectly discouraged by their instructors with regard to pursuing a career in interpreting" (Schafer, Cokely, 2016, p.4).

National Public Radio (NPR) captured a study that outlined if having a teacher that looked like the high school student had any influence on their academic performance (2017). NPR is a media organization that produces and disseminates information on cultural programming and news. The study validates that when Black high school students have Black teachers, their attitude is much better, and the outcome of graduating is higher. Now you may be wondering why a teacher who resembles me have any bearing. That teacher becomes a role model for that student. The cultural competency/social capital is automatically displayed in the classroom. The study surveyed Black, white, and Hispanic students in the same classroom on how they rate the same teachers. "The study found that when students had teachers of the same race as them, they reported feeling more cared for, more interested in their schoolwork and more confident in their teachers' abilities to communicate with them. These students also reported putting forth more effort in school and having higher college aspirations." (NPR, 2017) The

study also indicated that when the teacher does not resemble the student, they were less motivated. This was more noticeable in Black girls.

At the National Black Deaf Advocates (NBDA) Conference held in August 2019, Shaw presented on *#representationmatters: A Black Interpreter Educator's Experience*. Shaw argued that it is imperative to have someone that shares the same cultural background and/or looks like you. She gave many recent examples on how her students who attended other ITPs where they were the “only one” and how their professors discouraged them to continue to pursue interpreting as a profession. However, when they get to their current ITP their experience is much different just due to Shaw being one of the professors. In 2016, the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Center (NCIEC) carried out a needs assessment to further understand the experiences and training needs of interpreters of color (NCIEC, 2016). To meet the needs of linguistic and cultural minorities means having more interpreting practitioners who are not just knowledgeable and sensitive, but who are of the communities they serve (Cogen & Cokely, 2015). They can speak with her about any microaggressions they may be feeling from their peers and it also lessens the feeling of being isolated. Shaw encourages more AA/B interpreters to be more visible in ITPs by serving as the instructor, mentor, guest speaker, etc. Cultural representation in an educational environment that reduces experiences of marginalization and promotes retention and persistence for Students of Color is referred to as “critical mass” (Hagedorn, Chi, Cepeda, & McLain, 2007). Eighty-five percent of the Black professional interpreters that West Oyedele (2015) surveyed responded that they were in classrooms with three or fewer Black classmates. Fifty-seven percent reported that no Black guest presenters visited their classrooms, 76% had no access to Black educators, and 72% had no access to Black

mentors. This correlates to Shaw's presentation at the 2019 NBDA conference that #representationmatters (2019). I am going to quote Leslie from Oyedele's second focus group.

“I think as people of color we have an understanding about community and a respect and shared experience. I believe we are placed into situations that may be difficult to handle but as people of color we have always had to figure out how to adjust to and accommodate the settings that we go into, and I think we bring that with us as interpreters in the job. We have heart, we have a community, we have an understanding, and some people might say that there are people who are White who have grown up in poverty and in bad situations, and I agree that this is true. But, what we have is unique because we have a different kind of shared experience and shared struggle that has been passed down, and that experience and society's perspective of who we are as being less than...I believe that as interpreters, all of these influences us and how we behave” (p. 54, 2015).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

A mixed methods approach is a procedure for collecting and analyzing data. It also is a mixture of two methods (quantitative and qualitative methods) in a single study. Surveys were given to perform the quantitative method and the two focus groups satisfied the qualitative method. The purpose of combining the two methods is to provide a better understanding of the disparities in social capital: the shared journeys of AA/B sign language interpreters than doing either approach alone (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011).

Design of Study

This section analyzed the data that was formulated from an anonymous survey developed through Qualtrics tool and two separate video recorded focus group meetings. At the beginning of the survey each participant had to consent to being involved in the research. There was a mixture of twenty-five fill in the blank, multiple choice, and open-ended questions. The very first question asked the participant if they self-identified as AA/B. If a participant answered no then the survey would not allow them to move forward. The very last part of the survey asked if they were interested in being a part of a focus group. If a participant was interested, then it would take them to a Google Docs form to fill out. The data collected from the survey gave general information while the focus group meetings gave a more in-depth overview of a participants' journey.

Participants

All of the participants were a minimum of 18 years of old, self-identified as AA/B sign language interpreter, and live either in a southern state such as Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, and/or live in a state that has a NAOBI, Inc. affiliated chapter. The states that have a NAOBI affiliated chapter are as follow, NAOBI, Inc.-DC, NAOBI, Inc.-NYC, NAOBI, Inc.-MCC, NAOBI, Inc.-Atlanta Chapter, NAOBI, Inc.-Detroit, and NAOBI, Inc.-NC.

Data Collection

On Feb. 15, 2020 the survey was disseminated to various deaf and interpreter groups on social media. Those groups included AA/B interpreters, Reality of ASL Interpreting-People of Color (ROI -POC), RID Interpreters and Translitterators of Color member section

(RID-ITOC), Multicultural Codas of Color, Black American Sign Language, NAOBI, Inc.-Detroit, NAOBI, Inc.-DC, NAOBI, Inc.-NC, NAOBI, Inc.-NYC, and NAOBI Family.

Dissemination also happened through online solicitation via Sorenson Communications AA/B VI email list serve, Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Interpreter Consultant email blast list and forwarding to likely candidates. Due to the lack of information about AA/B sign language interpreters, community members were overwhelmingly excited by the opportunity to participate in this survey. Once the survey link was shared on social media community members sent positive responses, tagging others, and/or reposting the survey on their page. The survey link was disseminated three more times being two weeks after the initial post, one week before the last day, and the day before the expiration of the survey. Majority of the participants did not respond to the last section of the survey. Either they overlooked it, hit submit too quickly, or was not interested. Several participants informally contacted the researcher and expressed interest in the focus group participation but failed to complete the necessary Google form. On the last day to respond March 15, 2020 only three participants had completed the Google form.

A total of ninety-five people consented to take the survey; however only eighty-eight met the research qualifications. There were variations in the number of participants responding to each question. The survey was set up to impel participants to answer each question unless they answered a certain response that was not applicable to the following question, in which case the survey skipped to the next appropriate question. Several participants have reached out to apologize for not completing the survey and wanted to complete it. This could explain the fluctuation in response rates from question to question.

Limitations of the Study

As with any self-reporting survey study, the researcher depends on respondents answering truthfully, accurately and attest to meet all the criteria for participation. Due to the anonymous nature of the survey, the researcher does not have any outlet to independently verify responses. Another reason this study is limited is because of the geographical area surveyed. The study focused on the southern states and/or states with a NAOBI, Inc. affiliate chapter. Perhaps if this study was done in the Midwest and/or Northern states without a NAOBI, Inc. affiliate chapter, the findings could be different. There may be external and internal factors that could affect the differences. Although a good number of participants with various backgrounds were studied; however, there still may not have been an adequate number of representation from the diverse communities within the AA/B population such as LTbQ, biracial/multiracial, heritage language learners, Deaf, etc. Therefore, the data collected may not be generalizable.

An additional limitation to this study was the onset of COVID-19 as the survey deadline approached. This likely had a negative impact on the response rate of the participants. It is possible, the community's focus shifted from their "everyday norm" to COVID-19 and its impact on their livelihood (e.g., work, school, family, etc.). States across the country were in various stages of shut down. Schools were closed, social distancing measures were being implemented, people began to work remotely from home, some were furloughed, and/or lost their jobs. Parents began homeschooling their kids as well, which likely impacted availability or interest in participating in a research study.

Impact of COVID-19

Although COVID-19 may have had a negative impact, it also may have had one positive impact. More people may have had the time to be a part of the focus group for this study because they were working at home or not working at all. As stated earlier that there

were not many participants that filled out the Google Docs for participation in the focus group. However, after a quest was posted onto social media groups, twenty-four people expressed an interest in being a part of the focus group. Of the twenty-four that expressed interest, sixteen were able to participate during the dates and times offered.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this study, I assessed the journey of AA/B sign language interpreters of various backgrounds including skills, knowledge, education, years of experience, certification, gender, and/or exposure. The purpose was to gather data to create roadmaps for aspiring AA/B students, get ideas on how to retain/recruit more AAB sign language interpreters, find commonalities within the educational system of ITPs and provide constructive feedback on ways to make it more inviting for AA/B students going into ITPs. I wanted to learn if disparities in social capital is a barrier for those who graduated from an ITP and/or if it is encroaching on the Black Deaf community from thriving by not having those who may easily understand their culture and language.

Qualtrics anonymous survey was used to analyze the data and two video recorded focus group meetings. The survey was opened for one month. It was disseminated amongst social media on deaf and interpreter group page, Sorenson's AA/B VI list serve, and to those that are members of the AA/B deaf/interpreter community. The focus groups were conducted two days apart through Zoom (2020). Both focus group meetings were facilitated, and time kept by the researcher.

Results of the Qualtrics Survey

The researcher pulled data from the survey and focus group meetings that caught the researcher's attention. Outlined further in this chapter will cover some of the disparities in social capital for AA/B interpreters. The three themes are entry into the field, discrimination, and recruitment and retention efforts for AA/B sign language interpreters.

The first question asked if the participant self-identified as AA/B. If they did not, then they were excluded from participating in the survey. In fact, of the 95 responses to the consent three removed themselves prior to answering the first question, and four were rejected after the first question. After recognizing the respondent's response was no, then the survey automatically ended. Question four asked for the state in which the participant lives. Responses are represented in Figure 2 below.

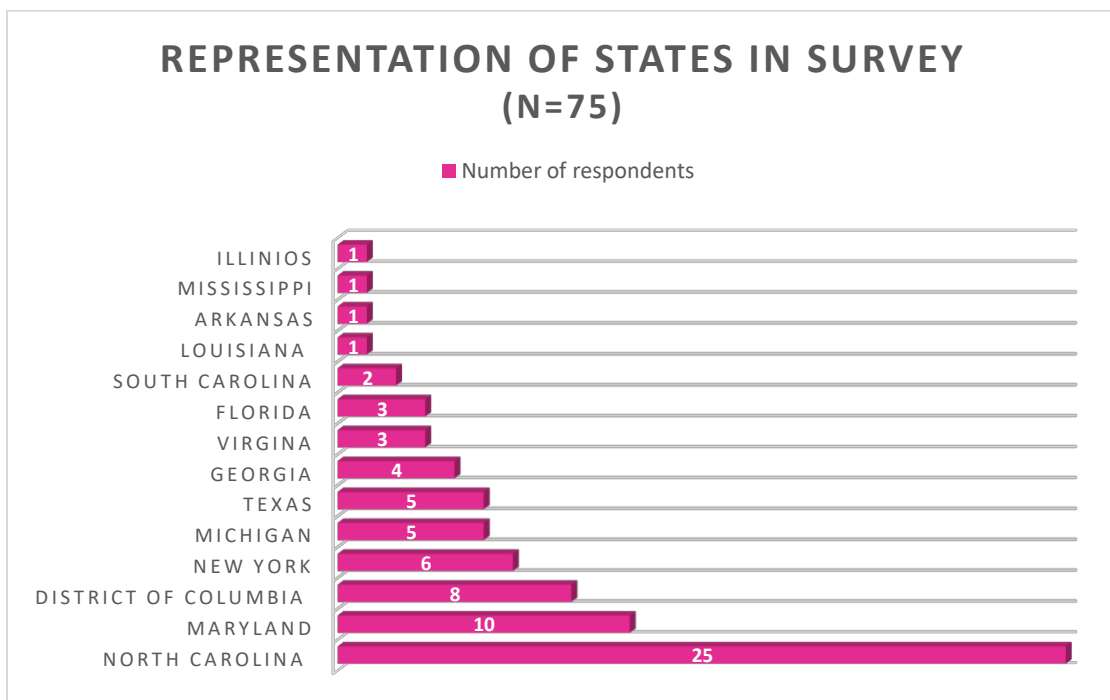


Figure 2. Representation of States in Survey

Question eleven asked their highest level of education. Of the 82 responses, 1.22% had completed high school (1), 13.41% some college courses (11), 12.20% AA/AS degree

(10), BA/BS degree 32.93% (27), some grad courses 8.54% (7), MA 25.61% (21), some doctorate courses 3.66% (3), and PhD 2.44% (2). It is unclear if the degree was related to interpreting or another field. Figure 3 shows the percentages of how many people received a specific degree.

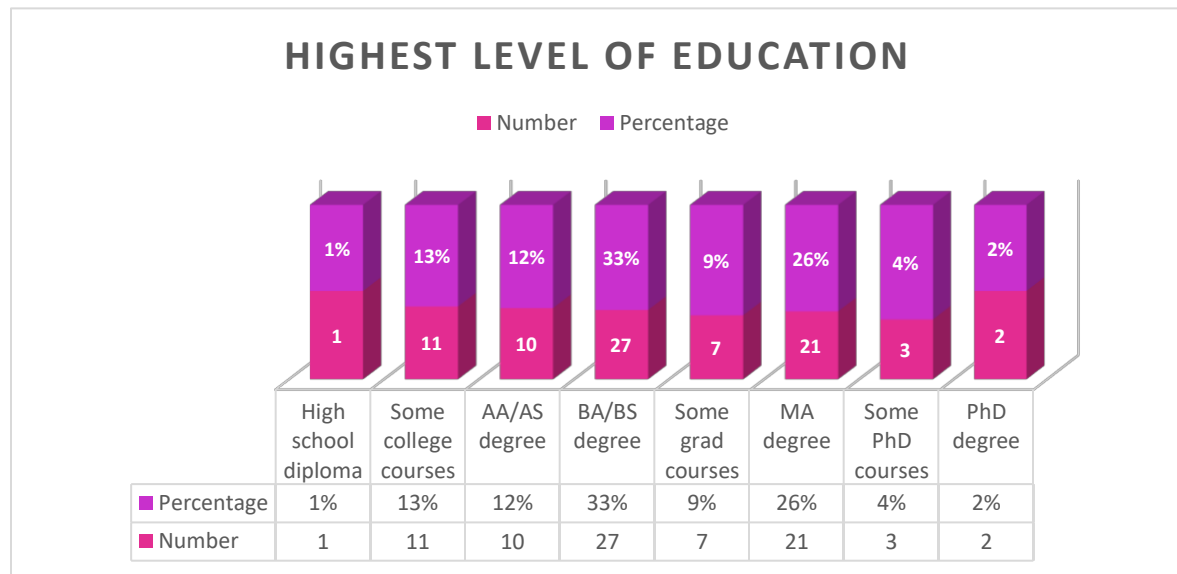


Figure 3. Highest Level of Education

Question number thirteen refers to if a participant had attended an ITP and when did, they stop and/or if they had graduated. Out of the Eighty-two responses, forty-seven responded yes for graduating from an ITP. The results of the five out of the thirty-five that did not graduate are as follow: Two had left their program during the entrance of the first year. Out of those two, one had left per semester (Fall and Spring). Two more from the five, left their program the second semester of the second year of their program. The fifth person out of the five, left their program during the third year during the second semester of that year. It is unclear if the participant entered a two year or four-year program and their reasonings for leaving the program.

Question fifteen asked, “Did you have an AA/B instructor in your ITP?” Thirty-one out of the sixty-five said yes which brings that to 47.69%. Thirty-four out of the sixty-five said “no” which brings that to 52.31% (see Figure 4). This does not differentiate if this was before the participant entered the field of interpreting or while they are presently an interpreter. There may be a small number of AA/B sign language interpreters who may be the “only” AA/B sign language interpreter in their state or city.

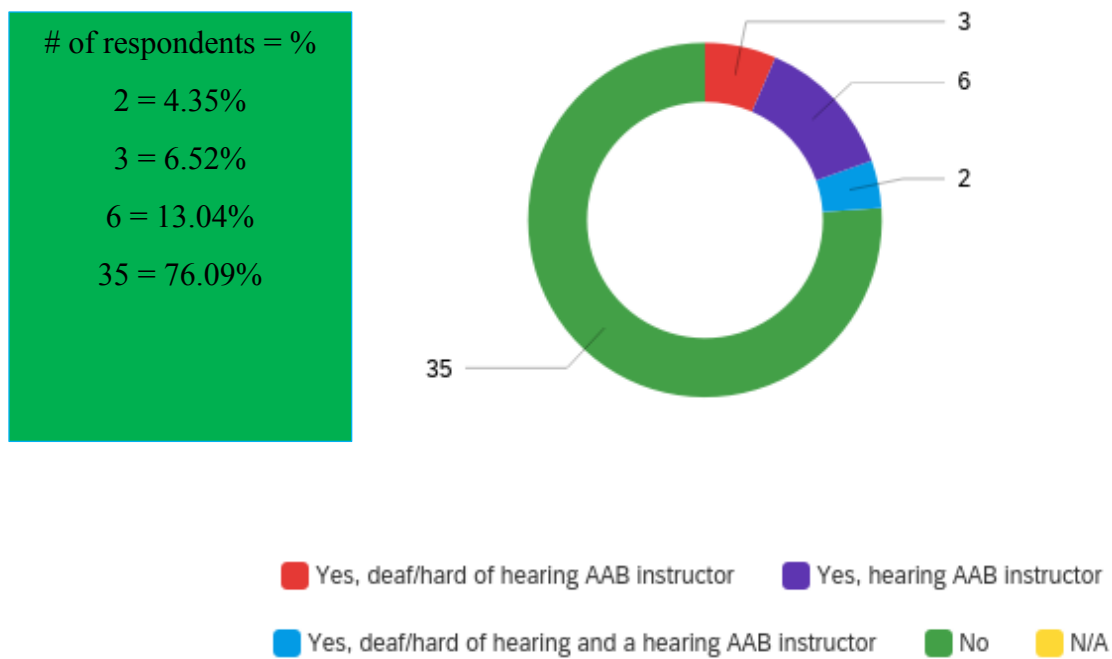


Figure 4. AA/B instructors in the ITP

In question number sixteen, participants responded to why they did not attend an ITP. 55 out of 71 respondents stated “other.” This equaling at 77.46%. The choices given ranged from financial reasonings (5), family obligations (3), no ITP in proximity, wanted to attend an HBCU instead (1), and/or it was not a requirement for their state (7) (see Figure 5).

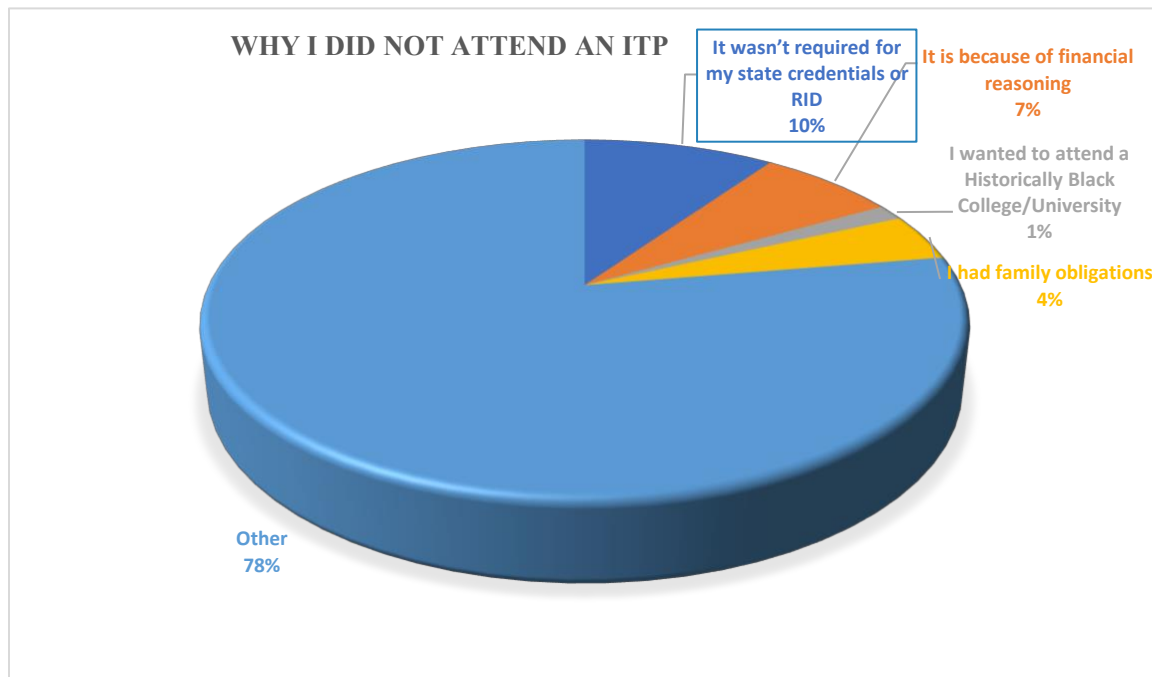


Figure 5. Why I did not attend an ITP?

Here are some of the findings for not completing their ITP.

- I didn't have reason. However, since I am taking workshops on becoming DI/CDI I may consider taking some courses in ITP.
- Interpreting was a 2nd career I had already attended college.
- I did but was unable to finish because of finances.
- I had enough college credits to take the BEI.
- I had a degree in education.
- Had no idea it was an option.
- My undergrad was in Deaf Ed and when I later became more invested in interpreting, finances were a barrier.
- I was already enrolled in university; the ITP was just starting and not yet accredited. Wasn't really a priority nor career goal.
- Was recommended to just go test...ITP not required.
- ITP's are not set-up for AA/B nor Codas.
- I learned before the era of ITPs.

Number seventeen asked, “Have you ever seen another AA/B sign language interpreter? If yes, then where?” (see Figure 6). Of the thirty-one that responded yes there were some common themes such as:

- religious settings (church, convocation,)
- public event (NBDA, political campaign, theater, tv)
- school (mainstreamed setting, junior high school, school for the deaf, local college)
- certain states (New York, District of Columbia, California, Ohio, Texas, and North Carolina)

The remainder thirty-three responses were no they have never seen another AA/B sign language interpreter?

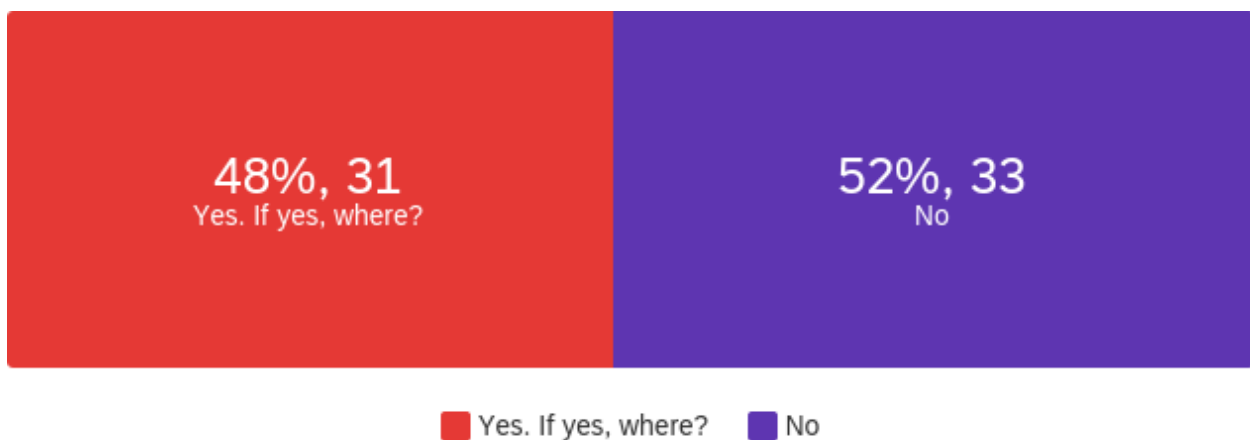


Figure 6. Have you seen another AA/B sign language interpreter?

In question number twenty about years of interpreting experience, there were 65 respondents. The percentages are as follow: 1-5 years 31.82% (21), 6-10 years 15.15% (10), 11-15 years 12.12% (8), 15-20 years 24.24% (16), and 21+ years 16.67% (11) (see Figure 7 below). This gives a variation on the different generational experiences.

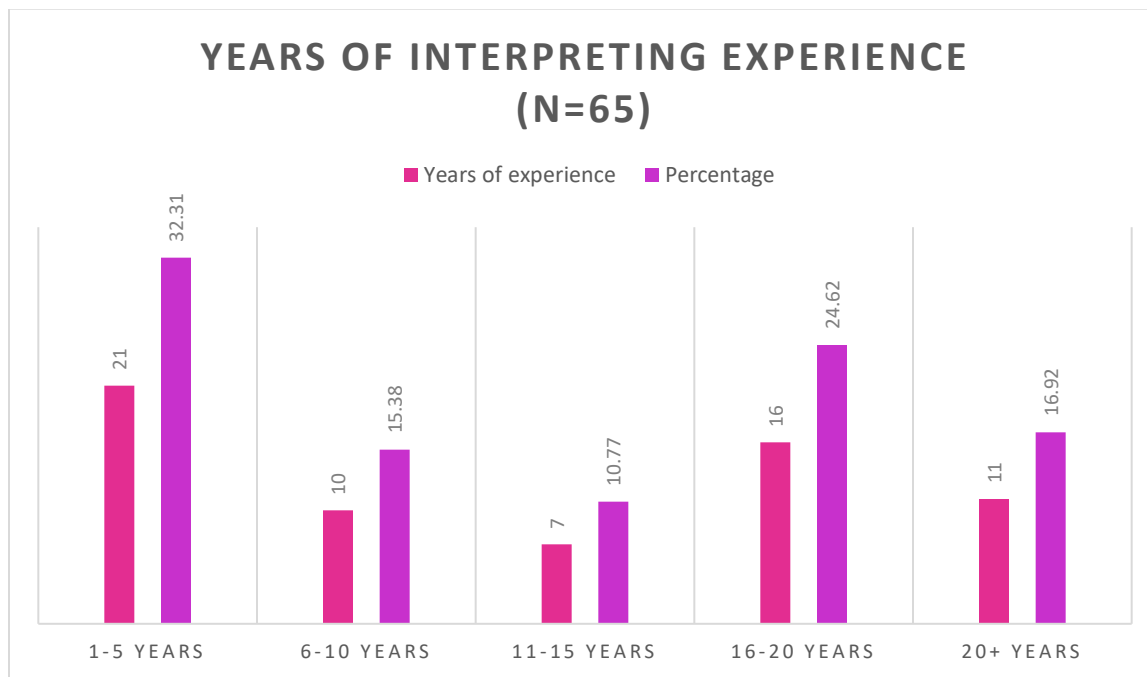


Figure 7. Years of interpreting experience

In question number twenty-three asked, “Have you been a mentor in the interpreter community?” It is essential to have AA/B mentors to empower, encourage, inspire the next generation of AA/B interpreters in the future. Also, there is a comfort in knowing someone in the same field look like me may understand the frustrations one may experience (Carpenter, 2017). More than one half of the respondents have had experience working with a mentor.

Question number twenty-five asked if AA/B interpreters are discriminated against, if so, by whom? The top three answers are consumers, colleagues, and interpreter trainers (see Figure 8).

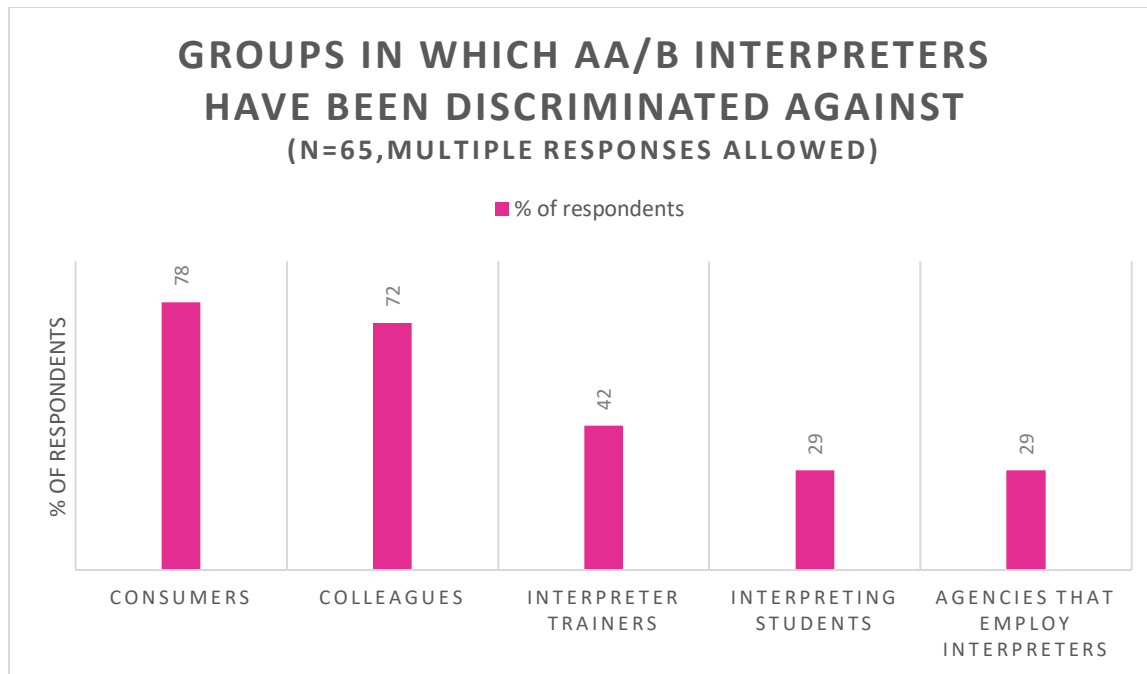


Figure 8. Discrimination against AAB sign language interpreters

“People of color are judged more harshly at a novice level by both white interpreters and white consumers; often differences in hair, clothes, mannerisms, and personality are viewed as equaling a lower skill level, instead of rightfully being seen as a cultural difference” (Jackson, 1993, p. 21). The respondents rated consumers being the highest and colleagues being the second highest as it relates to being discriminated against. According to the Code of Professional Conduct (CPC), tenet four states, “Interpreters demonstrate respect for consumers.” This tenet does not hold the consumers liable for their actions. Sign language interpreters working in a team setting should be more collaborative and have respect for one another according to our Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) in tenet five. The CPC tenet number five states, “Interpreters demonstrate respect for colleagues, interns, and students of the profession.” West-Oyedele’s (2015) research coincides with this study by indicating discrimination happens mainly from the consumers and colleagues towards the AA/B sign

language interpreter. West-Oyedele's study covers the frequency of the discrimination. Then the third highest number is from the interpreter trainers. In comparison to white teachers at a predominantly white institute (PWI) to an AA/B teacher, AA/B students may perceive the white teachers to be culturally insensitive (Guiffrida, 2005). This perception may cause it difficult for the AA/B student to value their interactions. Previous studies have indicated AA/B teachers are concerned with the students' academic as well as them as a whole person (West-Oyedele, 2015).

Results of Focus Groups

One qualitative method is hosting a focus group discussion to bring individuals together that have a shared culture while having a facilitator to guide the discussion. The survey was able to give superficial data, while the focus groups gave more substance to the data collected. Each person was able to express themselves in their preferred mode without having to explain their excitement, frustrations, trauma, and/or resiliency. The focus group consisted of AA/B sign language interpreters from all facets of life e.g., (years of experience, educational level, ITP graduate, ASL instructor, mentor, heritage language learner, credentials, etc.). There were two separate video recorded Zoom (2020) focus group meetings along with the transcriptions of the meetings. Lucky number eight was the golden number for both focus group meetings. Five was the minimum and eight was the maximum number for each focus group meeting. Each focus group was for ninety-minutes. There were five questions asked in each group. There were heartfelt rich valuable stories shared amongst the two groups. The first two figures (Figure 9 and Figure 10) gives you the demographics of each member of the group with pseudonyms names.

Focus Group Session #1									
Participant	Gender	NC	no	ITP	Degree	Credentials	Years of Experience	Settings work	NAOBI, Inc. Affiliate Chapter
Angel	Female	Deaf	NC	yes	BS	provisional state license, ASL teacher/tutor, mentor	10+ years	Deafblind, platform, 1:1	yes
Greg	Male	Hearing	DC	no	no	CI/CT, Mentor	30 years	religious, government, platform, etc.	yes
HIS Terp	Female	Hearing	NC	yes	BS/AA (ITP)	EIPA, ASL teacher at church	11 yrs Religious, 8 years community/ed.	religious, educational	yes
Kay	Female	Coda	TX	no	ITP Certificate	BEI, Mentor	31 years	Ed. (16 years), VRS experience currently Freelance	no
Kerrie	Female	Deaf (functions Hard Of Hearing) low vision	TX	no	AA	Mentor	20 years	VRS, community	no
Mercy	Female	Coda	TX	yes	BA/AA (ITP)	BEI	4 years	VRS	no
Samson	Trans	Hearing	DC	yes	AA	Pre-certified - waiting to take test	3 years but left the field for 6 years	LGBTQ spaces, government	yes
Thad	Male	Hearing	DC	yes	BS(ITP)/MA	Non-certified - waiting to take it - June 2020, Adjunct Professor	6 years	Ed., government, mental health (freelance)	yes

Figure 9. Demographics of Focus Group Session #1

Focus Group Session # 2									
Participant	Gender	Status	Resides	ITP	Degree	Credentials	Years of Experience	Settings work	NAOBI, Inc. Affiliate Chapter
Camille	Female	Hearing	ARK	Yes	BA	Non-certified	7+ years	Staff, VRS	no
Dorothy	Female	Hearing	NC	Yes	AA/BA (ITP)	CI/CT, Mentor	20+ years	VRS, community	yes
Genneen	Female	Hearing	NYC	Yes	BS/AA (ITP)	CT, Mentor	20+ years	VRS, community	yes
Grace	Female	Hearing	MD	no	PhD	CI/CT, Mentor, Presenter, ASL Teacher	19 years	Religious, VRS, Community	yes
Lula	Female	Hearing	FLA	Yes	AA	ITP Educator, Mentor, Nationally Certified	14 years	VRS, religious, community	Not in her state but is a member of one
Mary	Female	Deaf	NC	no	BA/AA (ITP)	provisional state license, ASL teacher/tutor, mentor	10+ years	Deafblind, platform, 1:1	yes
Paul	Male	Deaf	DC	no	AA	CDI, presenter, ASL Instructor, Mentor	15+ years	Staff, Business owner (teaches workshops), freelance	yes
Red	Female	Hearing	DC	Yes	BS(ITP)/MA	CT, Mentor	22 years	Freelance/VRS	yes

Figure 10. Focus Group Session #2

In Figure 11, each participant that attended an ITP are included in the chart. For each person, the number represents how many others AA/B peers in their class. Majority of them did state that having another person in the class with them helped them to not feel alone.

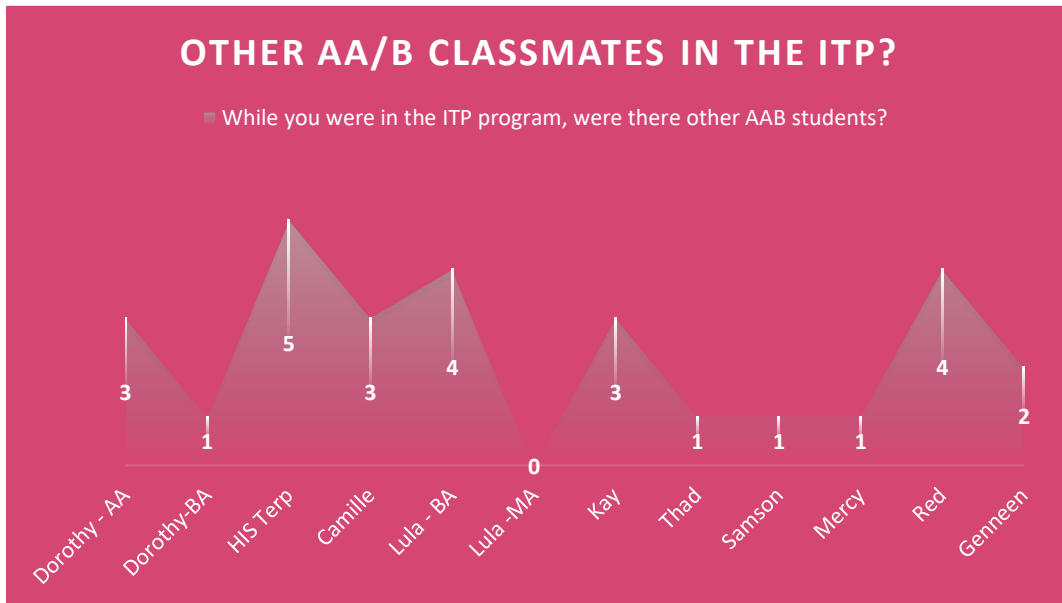


Figure 11. Other AA/B students in class

Within the two focus groups, there were three themes.

1) Entry into the interpreting profession, various factors lead them to this profession. Here are the reasons:

- met a deaf person at school, work
- in a public setting,
- parents are deaf
- learned ASL in grade school, or church

- other family members are deaf

2) Discrimination

“Vickers assert that “oppression, discrimination, racism, tokenism and a host of other “isms” lends sway to the disparity in the field of interpreting” (Jackson, 1993, p. 21). Participants were asked if they felt they were discriminated against while in their ITP. Majority of them mentioned that either they were not or was not aware of it at that time. However, Dorothy, Samson, Thad, and Genneen did experience discrimination. Dorothy recalls an incident that happened in her BA program that left her raw. Being the only Black student in the program at that time, no one else could understand why showing a video of a Black person being treated terribly would be insensitive. Of course, Dorothy left out of the class because it was too painful to watch and in fact was disappointed in the instructor’s decision making. Dorothy does realize it was not intentional but felt compelled to let the instructor know so they would not make the same mistake again with the next Black student that may come through that program. Seems the discussion was well received. Genneen was the first and only Black student in her ITP at the time and would notice that her peers would get better opportunities in the community or classroom. Genneen was not afraid to speak up for her rights and would approach the counselor of her observations. Samson’s experience was a little different than the other two. However, discrimination is just that no matter what form it happens. Samson (prefers to use the pronoun them/they/theirs) did not feel that they were a good fit for that particular ITP program and wanted out for various reasons. One of the reasons Samson wanted to leave the program was because their perception was the program was in a “racist state.” People would comfortably use the N-word around Samson’s presence. Secondly people assumed Samson was accepted into the program because they were Black. Due to the microaggressions faced by Samson, they wanted

to transfer to another program. When Samson approached the school to inform them of their decision; the school said “no” because they needed Samson for their demographic numbers. They justified by saying if Samson leaves then it would throw the numbers off. Samson’s experience has been up until that point of dismissal, pushed to the side, and/or didn’t feel as though they belonged. At this point Samson felt like it was “tokenism.” Tiffany Hill drives home with her presentation in 2018 at the Street Leverage Conference on, *Is Diversity a Mask for Tokenism in the Field of Sign Language Interpreting?* Ms. Hill outlines, “The issue of tokenism can start to arise when that one individual becomes the sole representation of “diversity” by means of their presence. On the other hand, true diversity, by its very definition, is inclusive and is seen when there is more than one group represented at all times.” While Samson was exploring their intersectionality, a few interpreters were privy to this information and began to spread rumors. This caused Samson to lose work and get dismissed from jobs. At one-point Samson left the field of interpreting for six years due to so much trauma and discrimination they had faced within this field. Samson eventually came back to interpreting about a year ago after they had moved to another state because they realized they had allowed others to take away their joy. We are so grateful Samson did. Thad experienced race and skill discrimination while in his MA program. Majority of his classmates were white and “cliquey.” He tended to be with the group of people who were “different” (deaf interpreter, queer, coda). They were considered the bullies, but they were the ones shut out from the other group. During a discussion about “isms” in a class with only two Black students, the topic of Black Lives Matter came up. One of his classmates decided to let them know she was married to a cop and not all cops are bad. “There are some good ones,” she said. But the way it was said it was oppressive and disregarding their feelings altogether. Thad felt when things are said discriminatory in the classroom that the

professor just allows it to happen without any repercussion. It caused too much trauma for Thad and he switched majors. Fortunately, Thad is still an interpreter but chose to get his MA in a different field.

The irony is that majority admitted to not experiencing discrimination in their ITP, however, did experience it being an interpreter. Lula noted she had encountered her first discriminatory experience after working in this field for working ten years or more. Many of the interpreters talked about having to compensate in their attire “dress to the nines” so that people would know they were a professional sign language interpreter. They felt they had to be “better” than their white colleague. But one day Lula went to work professionally dressed as she normally does, and a security guard questioned her purpose of being on site. In fact, she was the most professional looking person in the room with a name badge that stated “interpreter” and she was still questioned. Of course, with the sense of the current climate, her immediate reaction was the security guard was being discriminatory. And more so because she had on a name badge that explicitly stated “interpreter.” Greg also mentioned that he worked at a prestigious university at the time in which the people that were being the oppressors understood how it feels to be oppressed. However, he had to still endure that same type of trauma.

This goes back to Kay experienced it only working in the Video Relay Services (VRS) industry. She always felt being good was not enough, but she had to be great. She recalled a moment where a White Deaf caller began signing fast just to test her receptive skills. After experiencing that more and more in this setting, it became too toxic and draining. She decided to leave the VRS industry altogether.

Paul being a Black Deaf instructor in an ITP, he would pay close attention to the Black students in the class. Typically, the Black students would feel isolated. Being a person that

looks like them, he would show his support by listening and encouraging them to continue. He would take the Black males under his wing because statistically the numbers are lower for Black males. That would be his contribution to the Black ITP students. As a Black Deaf interpreter, Angel, who did not attend an ITP mentioned that race is not noticed as much within the Deaf community. Although it is not obvious often, it is something about being around “my people.” The comfort level is different.

3) Recruitment/Retention

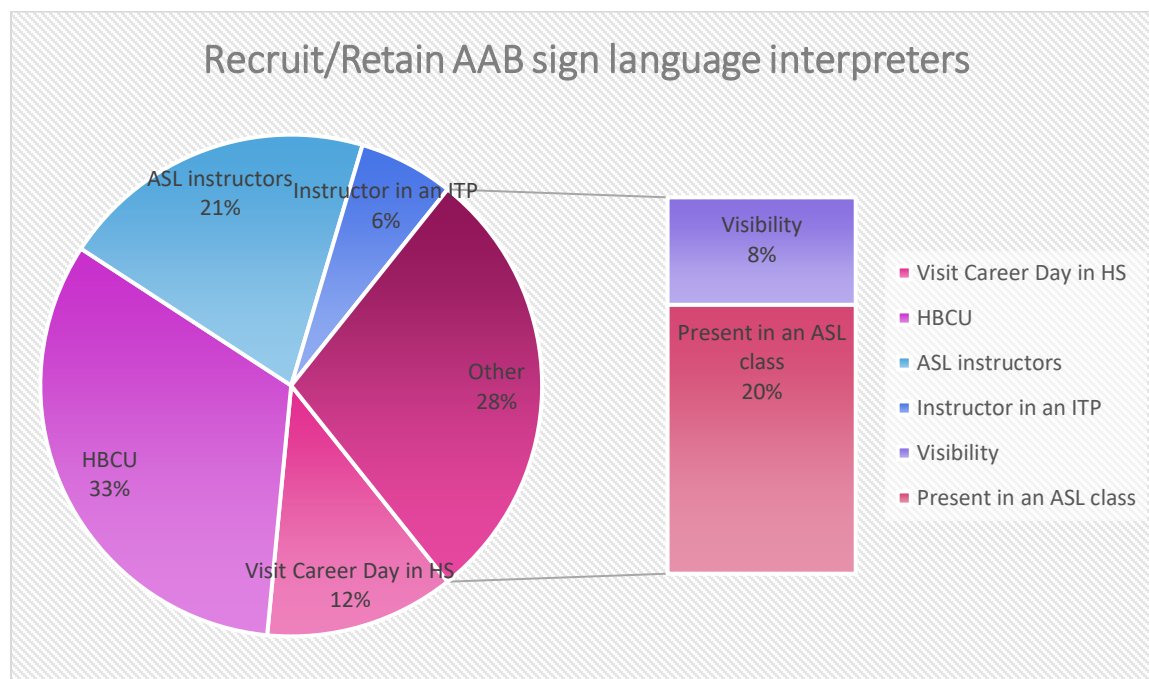


Figure 12. Recruit/Retain AA/B sign language interpreters

Based on focus group discussions, I encourage interpreter training program educators to include discussions of groups and individuals connected to the Black Deaf communities and AA/B interpreting communities such as: NBDA, Black Deaf literature (videos, books, art), Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC), AA/B interpreters in the community, graduates from your

program, and/or members of an Affiliate chapter of NAOBI, Inc. to serve as a presenter, member of your advisory board, or mentor for your students. ITPs should consider joining the social media pages of these organizations to help navigate their students to the appropriate resources and/or events hosted by these groups. Non-melanin interpreters should be open-minded, develop relationships with members of the Black Deaf community, and be respectful of their language and culture.

Focus group attendees also mentioned AA/B sign language interpreters need to be more visible in the community. They suggested that AA/B sign language interpreters participate in high school career days, or volunteer to teach a sign language class. Also, take a member of the Black Deaf community to assist in these efforts. They also stated the need for these interpreters to obtain advanced college degrees in order to teach in the ITPs. Another idea is to network with others in the field to assist with establishing ITPs at HBCUs. Some of the Black Deaf interpreters proposed teaching Deaf culture classes at a local school, church, or public library. These are some of the recommendations from participants of the focus groups.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study will bring awareness and enlighten others of AA/B sign language interpreters' needs, motivations, values, and challenges. Through this method we will increase the knowledge from the AA/B interpreters and Black Deaf community on how we can continue the quest of expanding the number of qualified, certified, and/or licensed AA/B sign language interpreters. Black Deaf and AA/B interpreters are becoming more transparent in how the deaf and interpreter field has treated them and are planting seeds of wisdom, confidence, and encouragement to the next generation.

Recommendations

The topic of the demand is high (need more AA/B sign language interpreters) and the supply is low (shortage of AA/B sign language interpreters) is not a new topic in this profession when it comes to AA/B sign language interpreters. In the previous years, studies have been done from the AA/B perspective, but I hope one day data is collected from ITP educators and the cause of their lack of resources to have intense discussions involving other intersectionality's. Another future research could be on the rationale of not having an ITP at HBCU's. Thirdly a study on Black CDIs/DIs where are the talented Black Deaf interpreters hiding and how can hearing AA/B sign language interpreters can be of better support. It could involve Deaf and Hearing team.

Closing Thoughts

When we look around the world, very seldom do we see social justice happening for the Deaf community especially for the Black Deaf community. The Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies and Communication Equity (MAISCE) program perfectly fits my character and personality because I want to be an agent of change. Brandon Arthur interviewed me at the 2019 Street Leverage Conference, where I mentioned of the lack of ITPs in Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs) and the need to increase the visibility of great AA/B sign language interpreters. For change to occur, it will require systemic change and proactive thinkers.

Unpacking the good (the justifications that lead AA/B sign language interpreters to stay in the field); bad (the low number of AA/B sign language interpreters in the field); and the ugly (the racist experiences endured by AA/B sign language interpreters) unveiled was powerful.

Each participant shared the experiences of their journey becoming a sign language interpreter while reliving the trauma of that experience during the focus group meetings. They provided recommendations for changes to prevent the next generation of AA/B sign language interpreters from having the same kind of negative experiences.

To ITP educators grow your pool of resources and know who lives within your communities. Assist your students in making connections with the Black Deaf community. It will allow the students to become well-rounded practitioners.

To White allies, continue to have an open mind and an open heart for all mankind. Understand your privilege and how it impacts the communities where you interact. Allow those who live within the AA/B community to lead and educate.

To AA/B sign language interpreters and members of the Black Deaf community who have been in this fight or feeling like giving up; begin networking and finding people who fill your cup. The field of interpreting needs each of you and you all have something great to offer. Find your niche, perfect your craft, but know giving up is not an option.

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Appendix A: Survey Flyer

Flyer for recruitment

Disparities in social capital: the shared journeys of African American/Black sign language interpreters



https://youtu.be/b_2kryqYokU

About the Researcher

I am Valerie McMillan; I am an Oh Coda (Only Hearing Child of Deaf Adults) and a Black professional sign language interpreter. I have worked as an interpreter professionally over 25 years. I am conducting this research as a partial fulfillment for a master's degree in Interpreting Studies and Communication Equity at St. Catherine University under the supervision of Dr. Erica Alley, NIC-Advanced.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this research to take a closer look at qualified professional African American/Black sign language interpreters:

- Outline the recommendations of recruitment and how to retain;
- Analyze their motivation/intent;
- Identify the struggles/challenges they face.

In order to qualify for study participation, you must:

- Must identify as an African American/Black sign language interpreter;
- Must currently live and work in one of the following southern states: Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida;
- OR lives and work in a state where there is a National Alliance of Black Interpreters (NAOBI) affiliated chapter outside of the Southern states such as Chicago, New York, California, St. Louis, and Detroit;
- Be at least 18 years old.

If you volunteer to participate, you will:

- Complete a questionnaire, which is estimated to take no more than 30 minutes;
- Review and sign a consent form;
- At the end of the questionnaire, you may volunteer to participate in a focus group to talk more in depth about your perspectives and experiences.

If you meet the above criteria, and are interested in participating,

click here: http://stkate.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6Wh2Cf9jEz2VcKp

Know of someone who may meet the above criteria?

Please forward this flyer to them.

Questionnaire responses will be collected until March 15, 2020

THANK YOU for your interest in participating in this questionnaire about disparities in social capital: the shared journey of African American/Black sign language interpreters.

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of the research is to outline strategies for increasing the pool of qualified professional sign language AA/B interpreters. While gathering the ways to increase the pool of qualified professional African American/Black interpreters, I will be analyzing the intent and motivation of the current qualified professional sign language African American/Black (AAB) interpreters as well as their struggles and challenges in this field.

Your responses will be confidential, and you will never be asked to identify yourself.

This questionnaire, consisting of approximately 25 questions, should take you no more than 30 minutes to complete. The questions are multiple choice, fill in the blank, and open-ended. You may stop this questionnaire at any time; however, any completed answers will be tabulated into the aggregated data and cannot be removed. There are no incentives associated with this survey. At the end of the questionnaire, you will be invited to participate in an interview to talk more in depth about your perspectives and experiences. Ten -sixteen respondents will be chosen using a random number generator and will be asked to participate in a focus group.

Discomfort and Risks:

This project will require you to answer questions about your professional and possibly personal experiences. This may cause discomfort as you recall sensitive issues, personal experiences, and/or feelings related to be a qualified professional African American/Black sign language interpreter.

Benefits:

The findings in this study will contribute to our understanding of the interest into the interpreting profession by qualified professional African American/Black interpreters, their challenges they have faced, and the recommendations to retain and recruit more qualified professional African American/Black sign language interpreters. The information could be used as part of a sensitive training to the professors in the ITPs, fellow peers/colleagues, and consumers.

Who will see the information?

The survey instrument will not collect any identifying data. The primary researcher will see your responses, and the data will be shared in a graduate thesis with no identifying information.

Confidentiality

If you provide identifying information, it will be held in confidence under password protection and all publications associated with this study will use pseudonyms in place of names. If you choose to participate in the focus group, be assured that your name and contact information will only be seen by the researcher and will be held in confidence under password protection.

Sharing of Study Results and Findings

No individual will be identifiable in any publication of the results of this study. It is important to note, however, that some anonymized quotes or transcribed examples of comments may be used when sharing the research findings from this study in future publications or presentations. The

findings will also be available to participants through a published Master's thesis or by contacting the researcher, Valerie McMillan at vmcmillan816@stkate.edu, directly.

Who can I contact for questions?

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please contact Valerie McMillan at vdmcmillan816@stkate.edu. If you have any additional questions and would like to talk to the faculty advisor, please contact Dr. Erica Alley at 651.690.6018 (v) or 612.255.3386 (vp) or elalley@stkate.edu. You may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine Institutional Review Board, at (651) 690-7739 or jsschmitt@stkate.edu.

Consent:

Your participation is completely voluntary, and no compensation is available for your participation. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationships with the researcher or St. Catherine University. If you decide to stop at any time you may do so. You may also skip any item that you do not want to answer.

Clicking “I consent” at the bottom of this screen will start the questionnaire and indicate your consent to participate in this study.

Thank you for your participation!
~ Valerie McMillan, NAD IV~

Appendix C: Survey

1.) Do you identify as African American/Black?

- a. Yes
- b. No

****If you answered no, then please stop here. This questionnaire is for African American/Black sign language interpreters****

2.) What is your hearing status?

- a. Hearing
- b. Hard of hearing
- c. Late Deafened
- d. Deaf

3.) What is your gender?

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. Non-Binary
- d. Prefer not to say
- e. Other

4.) Which state do you live? _____

5.) Is there a NAOBI affiliated chapter in your state?

- a. Yes
- b. No

6.) If you answered yes for number 5, which chapter?

7.) Are you a Coda?

- a. Yes
- b. No

8.) If you answered yes to number 7, then who in your family is Deaf?

9.) How did you learn ASL?

- a. Family
- b. School
- c. Friend(s)
- d. Church
- e. Other

10.) What is your age range?

- a. 18-24
- b. 25-35
- c. 36-45
- d. 46 -55
- e. 56- up

- 11.) What is the highest level of education?
 - a. High school
 - b. Some college courses
 - c. AA /AS degree
 - d. BA/BS degree
 - e. Some grad courses
 - f. MA
 - g. Started working on my PhD
 - h. PhD
- 12.) Did you graduate from an Interpreter Training Program (ITP)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Started but didn't finish
- 13.) If answered a/c on number 12, did you attend a two year or four-year ITP program?
 - a. Two year
 - b. Four year
 - c. Didn't complete my two-year program
 - d. Didn't complete my four-year program
- 14.) If you answered c/d number 13, at what point did you stop? Why?
 - a. Beginning (within the first semester), Why?

- b. After the first semester but during the first year. Why?

- c. During the 2nd year. When during that year and Why?

d. During the 3rd year. When during that year and Why?

e. During your 4th year (last year). When during that year and Why?

- 15.) Did you have an African American/Black instructor in your ITP?
 - a. Yes, deaf/hard of hearing AAB instructor
 - b. Yes, hearing AAB instructor
 - c. Yes, deaf/hard of hearing and a hearing AAB instructor
 - d. No
 - e. N/A
- 16.) Why did you decide not to go to an ITP?
 - a. It wasn't required for my state credentials or RID.
 - b. It is because of financial reasoning.
 - c. I wanted to attend a Historically Black College/University (HBCU).
 - d. I had family obligations.
 - e. Other
- 17.) Prior to becoming an interpreter, had you ever seen an African American/Black sign language interpreter?
 - a. Yes, and where _____
 - b. No
- 18.) How many times did you take your state exam?
 - a. Once
 - b. Twice
 - c. Three times
 - d. Four times or more

- e. N/A
- 19.) How many times did you take the national certification?
- a. Once
 - b. Twice
 - c. Three times
 - d. Four times or more
 - e. N/A
- 20.) How many years of interpreting experience do you possess?
- a. 1-5 years
 - b. 6-10 years
 - c. 11-15 years
 - d. 15-20 years
 - e. 21+
- 21.) Are you nationally certified/state credentials?
- a. Yes, Nationally certified: _____
 - b. Yes, Nationally certified and hold state credentials _____
 - c. Not Nationally certified but hold state credentials _____
 - d. Not Nationally certified nor hold state credentials _____
 - e. Hold EIPA credentials _____
- 22.) Check all that apply: Your main source of income or work full time in which setting(s)?
- a. Educational
 - b. Mental Health
 - c. Post-secondary
 - d. Religious
 - e. VRS
 - f. VRI
 - g. Medical
 - h. Governmental
 - i. Platform
 - j. Other
- 23.) Have you been a mentor in the interpreter community?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 24.) Currently do you have a mentor?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 25.) Check all that apply: In my professional work as an interpreter, I have been discriminated against by:
- a. Colleagues
 - b. Consumers
 - c. Interpreting students
 - d. Interpreter trainers
 - e. Agencies that employ interpreters

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my research, Disparities in social capital: the shared journey of African American/Black sign language interpreters. Focus group participants will be selected by a randomizer. Click or copy and paste the link below into your browser, If selected you will be contacted by email to confirm.

Focus Group Interest Survey

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/129rqeOwnGVqpYjxFmayrbEhyfstuFPyqZbHU7z4CNsI/viewform?edit_requested=true

Appendix: D Focus Group Interest Form

Disparities of social capital: shared journey of African American/Black sign language interpreters

Focus Group Interest

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my research, Disparities in social capital: the shared journey of African American/Black sign language interpreters. Focus group participants will be selected by a randomizer. If selected, I will contact you by email to confirm.

Your name:

Email:

Videophone number:

Cell number: (call) _____, (text)

To maintain confidentiality of all participants, we assign pseudonyms to deidentify data.

Preferred pseudonym:

Appendix: E Consent for focus group and video recorded**Consent for focus group and to be video recorded**

I (insert Participant name here) agree to be video recorded as part of my participation in the study *Disparities in social capital: the shared journey of African American/Black sign language interpreters* work performed by Valerie McMillan.

I understand my participation is completely voluntary, and no compensation is available for my participation. My decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationships with the researcher or St. Catherine University. If I decide to stop at any time I may do so.

I understand that the video recording will be labeled using a chosen pseudonym I have provided. My identity will not be given.

I understand that all files will be kept secure on a password protected computer, backed upon a password protected hard drive stored in a locked safe in the researcher's office, and on a Box folder.

I understand that the video recording will be kept by the researcher and used for research purposes. I understand that the research advisors, Dr. Erica Alley and Dr. Leandra Williams, may have access to the video recording as part of this research study if needed. The video recording will not be shown to others. The risks of this study are minor as the researcher and advisors will be the only viewers of the video data and participants will be referenced when necessary by the pseudonym they choose.

All video recordings part of this study will be destroyed on or by December 25, 2020.

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F: Follow up email**Follow up email once selected to be a part of focus group**

Thank you for submitting your consent and video release forms for the research study. The study is called *Disparities of social capital: shared journey of African American/Black sign language interpreters*. This study is being done by Valerie McMillan, a master's candidate student at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota.

You are invited to be a part of the focus group part of the research study. We will meet on [insert the date and time] via zoom. The zoom link is [insert the zoom link]. I look forward to meeting you. Thank you in advance for invaluable participation.

Gratefully,

~ Valerie McMillan, NAD-IV (Advanced) ~

Appendix G: Focus Group(s) Questions**Focus Group(s) Questions**

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
 - a.) Years of experience
 - b.) State credentials/Nationally Certified
 - c.) ITP graduate
 - d.) How did you get into interpreting?
2. If attended an Interpreting Training Program (ITP), were there other African American/Black students?
 - a.) Did you ever experience discrimination while a student? Explain
3. Have you ever experienced discrimination as a professional sign language interpreter?
Explain
4. What do you think would help recruit/retain more African American Black sign language interpreters?
5. What keeps you moving forward after experiencing some negativity in the field?