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Real-world shock: transition shock and its effect on new interpreters of American Sign Language and English

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Evaluation Page

We the undersigned have examined the enclosed thesis entitled:

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A candidate for the degree of: Masters of Arts, Interpreting Studies

And hereby certify that in our opinion it is worthy of acceptance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for this masters' degree.

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ABSTRACT

Real-world shock: Transition shock and its effect on new interpreters of American Sign Language and English

By

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Masters of Arts in Interpreting Studies

Western Oregon University

June 3, 2013

Real-world shock has historically been defined as a form of transition shock experienced during the transition from the academic to the professional world. It is marked by distinct phases and causes both emotional and physical stress. Previous research has found that real-world shock is experienced by new members of a variety of fields, especially training-intensive service professions such as education and medicine. However, even though the profession of American Sign Language/English interpreting is also a training-intensive service profession, there is no research that indicates

whether or not new members of the profession experience similar shock to their

counterparts in other professions. As such, this thesis shall attempt to determine if real-

world shock is experienced by new interpreters of American Sign Language. To do so,

a survey was electronically distributed to American Sign Language/English interpreters

throughout the United States of America. The resulting data collected was analyzed to

determine if new interpreters experience real-world shock and, if so, what the root

cause of it is. It was found that interpreters of American Sign Language and English do

experience real-world shock upon entering the profession. Furthermore, the shock is a

result of the profession rather than from intercultural interactions with the d/Deaf

community.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The year was 2010. Though I had begun working as an interpreter of American Sign Language prior to my graduation, this marked the end of the first year that I was working as a full-fledged interpreter. Also for the first time, I would no longer be the newest interpreter working for my alma mater. Many of my underclassmen were following a similar path to mine and were hired by the college upon their completion of the interpreter training program. Yet it was not long before I began to hear some very surprising comments from the new graduates. When we would talk in the break room, I would often hear comments like "Interpreting sure isn't what I was expecting," "The program never prepared me for *that*!" or "Why can't Deaf people be like the ones in our videos?" While I had experienced some feelings of unpreparedness for certain situations, I had always found that the actual work matched my expectations fairly well, in part because I was working as an interpreter while undergoing training. When we would discuss skills or settings in class, I was able to immediately apply it to my life. However, this was not the case for many of the new interpreters who had not worked during their training. Such a difference caused me to wonder why they were experiencing a much larger learning curve than I had.

It just so happened that around that time, I was working to earn my bachelor's degree in international and intercultural communication studies. In the course of my studies, I was introduced to the concept of transition shock, also called reality shock or real-world shock, and learned about how it applies to every day experiences. As time went on, this knowledge coupled with my experiences began to cause a thought to fester

in the back of my mind. Could the differences between my own new experiences and those of my new colleagues be the result of transition shock? The more new interpreters I met as the years progressed, the more certain of this I became. However, it was not long before I found that there was a lack of research to support my theorizing.

Statement of problem

I propose two research questions to be examined over the course of this thesis. Firstly, do new American Sign Language/English interpreters experience transition shock upon entering the profession? Secondly, is that the transition shock is caused by the responsibilities of the interpreting profession or is it because of the increased exposure to Deaf culture?

Purpose of the study and theoretical basis

The purpose of this study is to provide information for educators of ASL/English interpreters. Regardless of the outcome, the data collected will be useful for those who work to prepare new interpreters for the field because it can be applied to existing programs to ensure that the new interpreters are the best equipped that they can be. Furthermore, this study will develop foundational research upon which further research can be based. This is because there is currently no research examining whether or not new American Sign Language/English interpreters experience transition shock or why such shock, if any, occurs. That said, there is a significant body of research about transition shock in both the fields of education and nursing. The research in these fields provide evidence of transition shock experienced by new members upon entering the profession, even though the new members had already undergone real-world hands-on experiences prior to the completion of their training. As such, the theoretical basis for the

research question and the hypotheses of this study were directly reliant on the theories and research developed by the fields of nursing and education, respectively. The theories and research of the nursing and education fields as they pertain to the experience of transition shock by new members of the fields are discussed in depth in the review of literature.

Definition of terms

It is recognized that some may understand certain terms and/or phrases in a multitude of ways. Therefore, for the sake of this study, the following terms will have the meanings assigned below.

- "Signed language interpreter" (alternately, "interpreter of American Sign Language and English" or "interpreter"): an individual who professionally interprets between the languages of English and American Sign Language.
- "Participant" (alternately, "respondent"): an individual who agreed to participate in the research portion of this thesis.
- "Culture:" a learned and shared system of collectively held set of values, beliefs and traditions (Bennett M. J., 1998; Martin & Nakayama, 2012; Mindess, 2006).
- "Transition:" a major change in lifestyle, including career changes and shifting from student to professional.
- "Deaf" or "d/Deaf:" a person or persons who, to whatever extent, cannot hear and identifies with the recognized Deaf culture.
- "Hearing:" the mainstream culture.
- "The real world:" the post-training professional field.

- "Fieldwork" or "practicum:" a time period, typically at the end of a training program, during which students can apply what they learned in the classroom in a real-world environment, often under the guidance of a mentor.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To date, there has been a dearth of research about how new American Sign Language/English interpreters experience their first few years in the profession. However, that does not mean that the idea that new interpreters experience transition shock is entirely without support. Both the fields of education and nursing have researched real-world shock experienced by new members of their professions. Furthermore, both fields determined definitively that transition shock is a bona fide challenge for new practitioners. It is reasonable to use both of these professions as analogues for the profession of signed language interpreting. This is because the three professions are very similar in that new members must all go through a practicum of sorts prior to entering the workforce. Also, practitioners of all three can be expected to encounter a wide range of unique and unexpected challenges and situations originating from their clientele. It is no mere coincidence that, given the nature of the professions, the experiences of new members are similar. Yet to truly grasp how such an experience is possible and what it is like, the concept of transition shock must first be understood in its entirety.

Even though multicultural interactions have been occurring for millennia, the idea of culture shock is relatively new. In 1954, Oberg described culture shock as "the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" (p. 1). Similarly, as J. M. Bennett (1998) explains, culture shock occurs when "what was once a coherent, internally consistent set of beliefs and values is suddenly overturned by exterior change" (p. 218). Not only does the loss of familiarity cause stress, but the ability to cope with said stress is altered by how an experience is

perceived (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994). It has even been called "a form of alienation" (Adler, 1975, p. 14). Furthermore, culture shock can be explained as being experienced as a series of stages of adjustment. During the first of these, the honeymoon stage (Oberg, 1954, p. 2), the person retains a feeling of elation but does not fully understand the difficulties that come with adapting to a different culture. Yet as the person continues to experience the different culture, the anxiety caused by the aforementioned loss of familiar interactions creates stress. This progresses until the person experiences fight or flight sensations that determine whether or not the person will remain in the situation. From there, the person either withdraws from the situation or continues through to reach the point where they "operate within the new milieu without a feeling of anxiety although there are moments of strain" (p. 9). It is in such a way that people integrate themselves into a new culture.

In the modern era, the concept of culture shock is relatively common knowledge, especially for those who have frequent intercultural interactions. These people often find themselves needing to adapt to the new culture, going through the process "whereby one's worldview is expanded to include behavior and values appropriate to the host culture" (Bennett M. J., 1998, p. 25). In other words, since culture shock is caused, at least in part, by the feeling that values or normal behaviors are markedly different in the new culture, getting over culture shock necessitates the development of understanding the culture of the new situation or location. For this reason, intercultural training programs have been created to help people understand the different behaviors and values associated with other cultures. Doing so permits the individuals going through the training to develop coping mechanisms for the stress caused by the culture

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shock (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994). Such a benefit has been shown to be true by numerous researchers (Befus, 1988; Deshpande, 1992; Gudykunst, Hammer, & Wiseman, 1977; Mitchell, Dossett, Fiedler, & Triandis, 1972; Puck, Kittler, & Wright, 2008; Steinkalk & Taft, 1979). In other words, it is possible to prepare for and learn to cope with the stresses caused by shock.

Culture shock is not alone in its impact on the human psyche. Rather, it is just the tip of the iceberg. J. M. Bennett (1998) suggests that culture shock is a mere portion of a much larger experience which she dubs transition shock. Any new life step can cause an individual to become disoriented enough to cause shock.

> "…experiences involve loss and change: the loss of a partner in death or divorce; change of lifestyle related to "passages"; loss of a familiar frame of reference in an intercultural encounter; or reshaping of values associated with rapid social innovation. The reaction to loss and change is frequently "shocking" in terms of grief, disorientation, and the necessity for adjustment" (p. 216).

Naturally, no human can go through life entirely devoid of experiences. Furthermore, even joyous events such as marriages and the birth of a child bring with them the challenge of adapting to the new situation. Because of this need for adjustment, anything can trigger transition shock. The process mirrors that of people going through culture shock (pp. 217-20). Along the same lines, it is not unreasonable to assume that a transition such as entering a profession would also cause a certain level of shock.

Other than the newness of location, what could there possibly be which would cause a person to experience transition shock upon entering a profession? Research shows that organizations, and, by extension, professions, have their own culture. Like

other, more traditionally understood forms of culture, the culture of a profession is the result of shared knowledge and identity (Schein, 1990). Schein further explains that "If the organization as a whole has had shared experiences, there will also be a total organizational culture" (p. 111). O'Reilly and Chatman (1996) further explain, saying that the culture of an organization "can be thought of as the normative order, operating through informational and social influence, that guides and constrains the behavior of people in collectives" (p. 106). Simply put, the norms of the organization or profession have a direct impact on how members of said organization or profession act. However, since new members must undergo enculturalization, the process of learning this culture is what causes transition shock.

Teachers and educators experience definite feelings of real-world shock when they make the jump from being a student to being a teacher. Owen Gaede (1978) found that first-year teachers, when asked to assess their own skills, rated themselves significantly lower than both those still in training and those who had been working for a while. Gaede theorizes that this occurs because "Not only does the first-year teacher compare himself with a different norm than the pre-service teacher, but perhaps also finds that he faces *unanticipated* gaps in his professional competencies—gaps which were not recognized by him during pre-service training as being important to the teaching task" (pp. 407, emphisis in original). In other words, it is not merely a case of the new teacher now comparing him or herself to more experienced teachers rather than peers and classmates. Rather, the new teacher also finds that there are areas for which they feel completely unprepared. Moreover, the sudden absence of a safety net comprised of peers and professors increases the sense of isolation felt by the new

teacher, further exasperating the impact of unexpected difficulties (pp. 407-9). As such, Gaede suggests that a period of post-graduation supervision be implemented during new teachers' first year or so to help them learn to deal with the unexpected problems as well as functioning as a support system. However, it is still warned that doing so would only reduce the amount of real-world shock experienced and should not be expected to eliminate it completely.

Ellen Corcoran (1981) agrees with Gaede that the uncertainty new teachers face is a huge contributing factor to the level of transition shock experienced. Moreover, she says that there is no way for any form of training program to completely eliminate uncertainty because there will always be unknown factors (p. 20). This shock is completely natural, however, and is a normal part of the transition phase. (p. 23) The issue lies, according to Corcoran, in that the transition shock is ignored because of the need to appear competent immediately. The result of this need to appear both competent and confident is that "It is as if one is caught in a double bind between the beginner's feelings of insecurity and tentativeness on the one hand and the teacher's need to act decisively and be in control on the other" (p. 20). As a result, the transition shock remains unresolved and lingers longer than it should. Furthermore, it commonly causes new teachers to be "unable to transfer previously mastered concepts and skills from university to public school classroom" (p. 20). Such an idea is supported in additional research as well. For instance, Veenman (1984) also indicates that skills often remain untransferred between universities and classrooms. He claims that "[…] the impact of teacher education courses is "washed out" by everyday experience in the

schools" (p. 147). Additional research (Allen, 2009; Ewing & Smith, 2003; Grudnoff, 2011; Grudnoff & Tuck, 2003) has arrived at the same conclusion.

Haggarty and Postlethwaite (2012) further found that the transition from classroom to student teaching to professionally teaching often left new teachers more concerned about managing the classroom than the actual teaching pedagogy. This seemed to be the result of the differences between student teaching and doing so professionally. One person they studied even compared being a student teacher to "being a baby sitter who could give the child back at the end of a successful or problematic evening, whereas being a teacher was akin to being the parent who had the ultimate and long-term responsibility" (p. 254). Another difference between student and professionally teaching was a fundamental change in the support networks built around each individual. While engaged in student teaching, the study's participants had a formal support network comprised of their own school as well as that of the school they were working in. However, when they began to teach professionally, the amount of support given was drastically reduced (pp. 252-256). It is not that there was no support at all, just that it was not as overt. Yet this caused the participants to not be "able to recognize it as useful" (p. 256). Such findings directly mirror the struggles of new teachers described in other research discussed above. As such, even though Haggarty and Postlethwaite do not directly say it, it is obvious that the new teachers they studied were also suffering from transition shock.

The idea of transition shock affecting new members of a profession is not exclusive to teaching. There is also a good deal of research about the transition shock experienced by new nurses. Boychuk-Duchscher (2009) claims that the transition

shock experienced by nursing graduates is the most accute stressor experineced during the shift from student to professional. As with the experiences of new teachers, the transition shock of nurses appears to also be a result of a mismatch between expectations and reality. In full, the shock is experienced because of the "apparent contrast between the relationships, roles, responsibilities, knowledge, and performance expectations required within the more familiar academic environment to those required in the professional practice setting" (p. 1105). O'Kane's (2012) research found the same to be true. Another feature of the transition shock Boychuk-Duchscher noted was that the new nurses wanted and attempted to conceal the shock from their more experienced colleauges (2009, p. 1107). By doing so, they were preventing anyone from helping them get over it. However, such secrecy also implies that the new nurses thought that it was unacceptable or a form of weakness to admit to feeling overwhelmed. Similarly, Khoza (2005) found that new nurses typically tried to fit in with the organizational structure of their assignment. Yet at the same time, Khoza found that new nurses felt that "they were not encouraged to reveal any differences of opinion which they might have with their seniors" and over half of the new nurses surveyed believed that there was a lack of "trust and openness" within the organization (p. 52). Suresh, Matthews and Cyone (2013) further confirmed that new nurses, as well as nursing students who were in their last year of training, felt powerless, isolated, and unsuported by other nurses (pp. 774-5). Such feelings could easily explain why Boychuk-Duchscher found that new nurses were highly uncomfortable sharing their shock-caused frustrations within the context of their employment.

Further effecting the amount of shock experienced by new nurses is the need to acclamate to their new roles within a professional environment. Chang, Mu, and Tsay (2006) found that new nurses must go through stages of role transition before they can truly be comfortable in the profession. Furthermore, experienced nurses also underwent difficulties acclamating to new roles when changing the type of nursing in which they were involved (Chang, Mu, & Tsay, 2006; Ellis & Charter, 2012). The primary source of the difficulties or shock was the need to "face the gap between their idealized role and the reality of their new position" (Chang, Mu, & Tsay, p. 88). Such gaps may be entirely unexpected by the new nurse since, as Doody, Tuohy, and Deasy (2012) found nursing students, prior to graduation, typically felt like they were prepared for their role as nurses and believed that they would receive formal support from their future colleagues. When this was not provided or not provided with any semblance to consistencey, role ambiguity and transition shock occurred (Chang, Mu, & Tsay, 2006). Moreover, such role ambituity has been shown to impact the nursing profession's retention rate (Karlowicz & Ternus, 2009; Suresh, Matthews, & Coyne, 2013; Waite, 2006).

Much research about real-world shock experienced by new nurses is based on the groundbreaking work of Marlene Kramer. Kramer (1975) discovered that new nurses experience transition shock because of the differences of what they were led to expect during their schooling and what they encountered upon beginning to actually work. "Many of the school-bred values transmitted to student nurses are untried and untested by the student while she is in school" (p. 63). The lack of being able to apply and defend the academicly-based values caused students to be unable to reconcile what

they knew should be and what they saw actually applied. Furthermore, when the new nurses were trying to determine how to handle the differences, the amount of reality shock they experienced made it nearly impossible for them to process the information that more experienced nurses were trying to impart to explain the 'new' way. "For many of the nurses, the involvement in the reality shock experience was so great that they could not perceive, hear, or assimilate many of the socialization messages sent their way" (p. 145). Unsurprisingly, Kramer found that the shock had a negative impact on the quality of client care and led to attrition from the field. To aleviate the shock and thereby improve quality and retention, Kramer suggests "informing and discussing with nursing students the reality shock process they are likely to encounter upon graduation" (p. 226) so that they would be better mentally prepared for the upcoming challenges. She also found that it was helpful for the new nurses to work one-on-one with a mentor who could show them the ropes in a non-threatening manner. Yet perhaps the most influential suggestion was to establish transition programs or practicuums as part of the nurses' training as this suggestion was implemented by a great many of such programs.

Cleary, Matheson, and Happell (2008) claim that "successful transition programmes should be supportive of career development and foster reflective practice and the realisation of professional goals" (p. 845). They make this claim because previous works showed that quality transition programs might decrease attrition rates by increasing new nurses' confidence in their own skills. Therefore, they argue that professional success and academic soundness is another measure of success. They concluded from their research that the focus of their study, Austrailia's Transition

Program into Mental Health Nursing, is successful due to graduated participants'
professional satisfaction and feelings of academic achievement. Watt, Murphy, Pascoe,
Scanlon, and Gan (2011) found similar results when they tested the effectiveness of a
practicum which was part of an unnamed Australian university's bachelors of nursing
program. Moreover, they found that participation in the practicum resulted in
"producing a statistically significant reduction in the participants' anxiety" (p. 2291).
However, it should be noted for each program that shock-enduced anxiety was only
reduced, not completely eliminated.

There are definite similarities between the ways in which reality shock is
experienced by new teachers and nurses. The most notable of these is the desire to
appear confident and competent and thereby not let others know about the shock being
experienced (Corcoran, 1981; Boychuk Duchscher, 2009). Also similar is that both
require their new members to go through some sort of real-life training prior to being
allowed to professionally practice. Yet in both cases, the experience does reduce the
overall amount of transition shock experienced. Given that the nature of the nursing
and education professions and training programs are so similar to that of signed
language interpreters, it would not be unusual to assume that new interpreters would
experience similar feelings and situations as new nurses or new educators.
Unfortunately, there is no research that examines whether or not this is true within the
context of transition shock. However, there is some research that shows that the
experiences of new interpreters may mirror those of new teachers and new nurses.

Ott (2012) found that there were strong feelings of distrust between new and
more experienced interpreters. This resulted in the occurrence of horizontal violence, a

form of peer-to-peer hostility. To a somewhat lesser extent, she also found that there was a general lack of support among interpreters, regardless of the length of practice. What is more is that she found that interpreters feel "pressure to constantly appear as if one knows everything, and […] that interpreters behave as if they know everything" (p. 58). This closely mirrors the desire to appear perfectly competent which was expressed by both new nurses (Boychuk Duchscher, 2009; Khoza, 2005) and new teachers (Corcoran, 1981; Gaede, 1978; Haggarty & Postlethwaite, 2012). Another similarity between the fields is that there is definite support for the idea that interpreters can be trained to cope with the stresses that are inherent to the job. Dean and Pollard (2000) indicate that "there is a need for an extended period of supervised practice for signed language interpreters, of a length and nature similar to the internships common in other professional occupations" (p. 13). Of those internships, often called practicums, the ones that have been studied have found that the pre-graduation interpreters have occupational expectations that are very similar to those of pre-graduation teachers and nurses. This was especially true for pre-practice confidence levels and expected post-graduation support (Shaw, Grbic, & Franklin, 2004). As such, it would not be unreasonable to assume that, should their reality exhibit disconnect from their expectations, new interpreters would also experience transition shock.

As the research has shown, transition shock is a real part of teachers' and nurses' entry into their respective professions. It is much more than not having the skills to do the job. Rather, it is the issue of needing to adapt to the culture of the profession. However, what the new members expect the profession to be and what it actually is may be two different things, causing cognitive disconnect and resulting in shock. This

holds true for both new teachers and new nurses. At this time, though, it is unknown if

such disconnect and such shock hold true for new signed language interpreters. Ergo,

this paper shall attempt to fill the current gap in knowledge.

Summary of Literature		
Development of the Transition Shock Theory	**Education and New Teachers**	**New Nurses**
Culture shock • Oberg (1954) and J. M. Bennett (1998) define culture shock • Brislin and Yoshida (1994) and M. J. Bennet (1998) describe the experience of culture shock • Culture shock can be prepared for prior to exposure (Befus, 1988; Bennett, Aston, & Colquhoun, 2000; Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; Deshpande, 1992; Gudykunst, Hammer, & Wiseman, 1977; Mitchell, Dossett, Fiedler, & Triandis, 1972; Puck, Kittler, & Wright, 2008; Steinkalk & Taft, 1979)	*Transition shock* • New teachers experience transition shock (Corcoran, 1981; Gaede, 1978; Tait, 2008; Veenman, 1984) • Transition shock is a normal part of the teaching experience (Corcoran, 1981) • Skills often remain untransfered between universities and the classroom (Allen, 2009; Corcoran, 1981; Ewing & Smith, 2003; Grudnoff, 2011; Grudnoff & Tuck, 2003; Veenman, 1984)	*Transition shock* • New nurses experience transition shock (Kramer, 1975) • Transition shock directly effects attrition rates from the profession (Boychuk Duchscher, 2009; Kramer, 1975) • Transition programs may decrease the amount of shock experienced (Cleary, Matheson, & Happell, 2008; Watt, Murphy, Pascoe, Scanlon, & Gan, 2011)
Transition shock • J. M. Bennett (1998) defines the theory of transition shock • Organizations have their own "culture" (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996; Schein, 1990)	*Experiences* • New teachers experience unanticipated gaps in knowledge and compare themselves to more experienced teachers (Gaede, 1978) • Teachers feel the need to appear competent immediately and do not want to appear	*Experiences* • New nurses want to hide their transition shock from others (Boychuk Duchscher, 2009; Khoza, 2005) • New nurses feel unsupported by others and the organizations for which they work (Khoza, 2005; Suresh, Matthews, & Coyne,

	otherwise (Corcoran, 1981) • New teachers become more worried about other responsibilities, such as classroom management, than they are about teaching (Haggarty & Postlethwaite, 2012)	2013)

New Signed Language Interpreters	
What is known • Interpreters experience horizontal violence, indicating a potential lack of support networks because of the need to always appear competent (Ott, 2012) • Structured transition phases between the classroom and real world are both suggested (Dean & Pollard, 2000) and implemented (Shaw, Grbic, & Franklin, 2004) • Pre-graduation interpreters have much of the same expectations as pre-graduation teachers and nurses (Shaw, Grbic, & Franklin, 2004)	*What is not known* • Do interpreters experience transition shock? • If new interpreters do experience transition shock, how does it effect their practice? • If new interpreters do experience transition shock, what can lessen the amount felt?

METHODOLOGY

Research methodology

     Study Design. The design consists of a mixed-method study, combining both quantitative and qualitative research with the intent of better understanding the whole. The results of both research types are then compared and contrasted to determine the nature of the results. Doing so allows for the determination of, firstly, whether or not new interpreters experience culture shock as the result of working between hearing and d/Deaf cultures; secondly, whether or not new interpreters experience transition shock. It also seeks to determine if there are any obvious underlying factors which influence any shock experienced.

     Data collection. A survey was disseminated to the interpreters in the sample. As part of the distribution and self-selection process, the participants were provided access to a consent form[1] that detailed the survey requirements, researcher contact information, assurances of both anonymity and confidentiality, and so forth. A link within the consent form led the participants to the survey which was hosted on SurveyMonkey. The survey consisted of two parts[2]. The first part was intended to collect primarily quantitative data while the second part was intended to collect qualitative data. It was developed using Mumford's (1998) culture shock questionnaire as a model and guide. The first part consisted of classification questions (age, gender, location, etc.) as well as questions that are more directly related to the study. Questions were frequently Likert-like in their composition and included such things as "I felt accepted by the Deaf community" and "I felt powerless about my identity" where

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[1] This consent form is available in Appendix A
[2] The parts of the survey are available in Appendix B and C, respectively

response options ranged from "Almost never" to "Almost always." A "Prefer not to answer" option was also included. This section separated participants into two groups: those who had received formal interpreter training and those who had not. Those who received formal interpreter training were designated Group A while those who had not received formal training designated Group B. The participants who had chosen the option of "Other" when asked about their training were also included in Group B. This separation occurred solely to ensure that those who had not had formal interpreter training did not need to answer questions about past experiences with formal interpreter training. All 112 participants completed this segment.

The second half of the survey was an optional continuation of the survey described above. At the end of the first part, participants were asked if they would be willing to answer more in-depth questions about their early interpreting experiences. It did not matter if the participants had undergone any formal interpreter training and so they were not separated. This section consisted of five open-ended interview-like questions. The participants then answered the questions by typing their responses into the spaces provided for them. They were allowed to skip questions if they did not feel comfortable answering or did not want to answer. Eighty-four of the participants completed at least part of this segment.

Participants

 Research Population. The population studied is comprised of signed language interpreters residing in the United States of America as well as Canada. This includes both traditional interpreters as well as Deaf interpreters. Those included in the

population have a wide range of educational, career, ethnic, and geographic backgrounds and come from every walk of life.

Sampling Method. This researcher decided early on that the largest representative sample of ASL/English interpreters would be derived by contacting interpreters electronically. Since it would be infeasible to attempt to contact every interpreter directly, it was decided that the chapters of the Registry of Interpreters of the Deaf (RID) would be the prime means by which to initiate contact. Using RID's website, this researcher proceeded to contact as many of the chapters as possible. This meant that the chapter had both a functioning website and a means by which to contact the members of the board or other governing body. To each chapter that agreed to be a part of this study, a survey, discussed below, was sent for the board to then be distributed to their members. Doing so meant that the survey was made available to approximately 5,700 people (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2012). The participants were able to self-select into the study.

A total of one hundred and twelve individuals agreed to participate, hailing from twenty different states. Such a number represents approximately two percent of those who might have had access to the survey. A great majority of the respondents were from California (22), New Mexico (17), and Oklahoma (13). One hundred (89.3%) of the respondents were female, ten (8.9%) were male, and two (1.8%) declined to state. Eighty-seven (77.68%) had no d/Deaf family. Seventeen (15.18%) had a d/Deaf family member in their extended family. Fifteen (13.39%) had a d/Deaf family member in their immediate family. Three (2.68%) of the participants were d/Deaf while one (0.89%) identified as hard-of-hearing. When it came to formal interpreter training,

seventy-nine (70.5%) of the participants had received formal training, twenty-three (20.5%) had not, and ten (8.9%) had a small amount of training, self-study, or training as a minor in college. For thorough demographic information, please see Appendix D.

Risks and confidentiality. As mentioned above, no participant was required to participate. Along the same lines, they were not required to complete the survey if they felt uncomfortable with answering the questions. Furthermore, the participants were assured within the content of the consent form (found in Appendix 1) that their answers would remain confidential. Another safeguard to assure that any possible risk to the participants would be minimized is that the survey tool was reviewed and approved by Western Oregon University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). In doing so, the participants were also given a way by which they can contact appropriate personnel if there is any dissatisfaction with how their responses were used or if there were any concerns regarding the survey or the resulting reporting thereof.

Analysis

Section 1. The data collected in the Likert-like questions were analyzed to determine any significant difference between the two groups. This was done to determine, should any evidence of any type of shock be found, if formal training impacted the shock experienced. The data was further analyzed to determine if there was any evidence of stress or discomfort caused by various social markers which are common triggers for such feelings.

Section 2. The data collected from the open-ended questions was analyzed to determine patterns in answering within each question. The process followed the methodology for conducting a content analysis of open questions as described by

Gillham (2000). The answers were read with pertinent data highlighted at this time. If similarities were noted within answers, these answers were grouped together on a separate chart. The groupings were then analyzed to determine if there was any distinguishable overarching idea that was shared by the answers. Where such a result was found, the idea was determined to be a theme for the concept that the question was analyzing. This process was repeated for each question.

Limitations

There are several limitations caused by this methodology. For one, the sample does not represent interpreters who are members of chapters not included in the survey distribution. Also, it requires that participants both be members of an RID chapter and have access to the internet. Furthermore, allowing participants to self-select into the study may skew the data towards those members of the population who are more likely to answer online surveys. However, given the sample size, the impact of that limitation is not considered to be consequential to the results of this study. That said, the small percentage of respondents in comparison to those who had access to it is a definite limitation in that the results may not be indicative of the experiences of a majority of ASL/English interpreters. The small percentage of respondents may be the result of the method of contact given that in California, where this author could contact potential respondents directly through listserves, a greater number of people responded in comparison to those contacted.

Another limitation is that Groups A and B were not separated for the entirety of data collection. This lack of separation means that the groups were unable to be compared in terms of experience, age, and whether or not they have any d/Deaf family.

It also means that the Groups A and B were not able to be compared in Section 2 and therefore any differences between the two groups were unable to be analyzed. During the creation of this study, the possibility of the usefulness of such data was not considered. However, hindsight shows that knowing these differences between Groups A and B could have been beneficial.
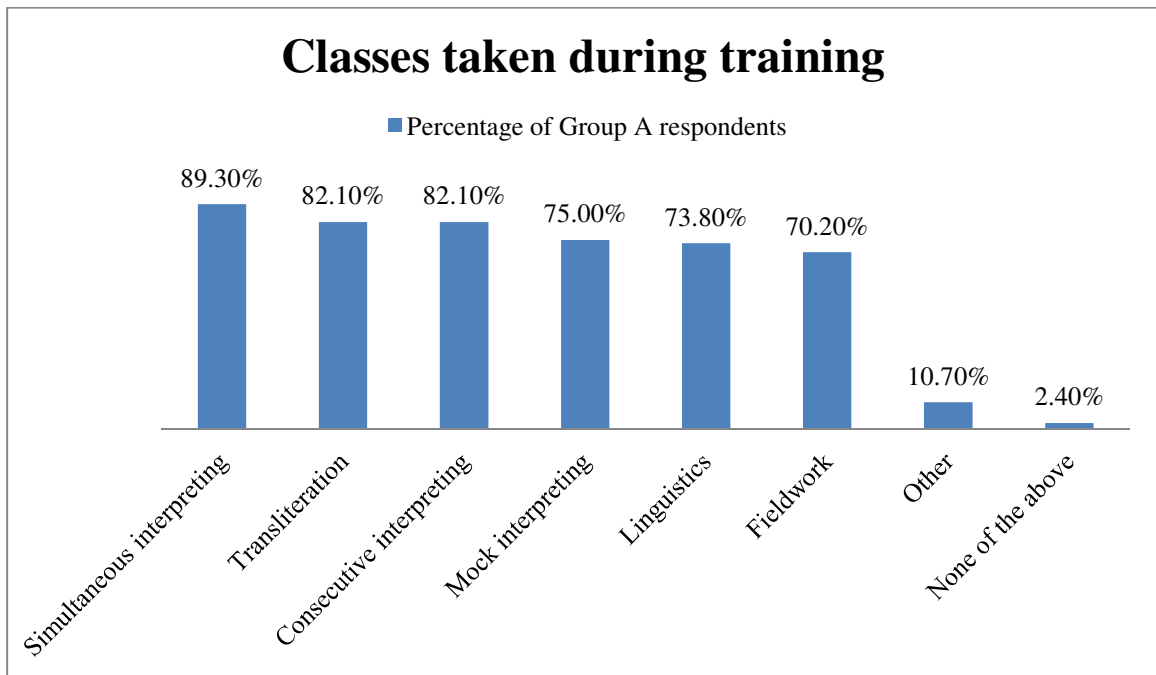
RESULTS

Section 1

  The first part of the survey was designed to collect data on five major themes that were deemed relevant to the purpose of this study. These themes are based on the previous research of Oberg (1960) who described several aspects of culture shock that are routinely experienced by those entering a new culture. The collected data, therefore, has been analyzed and categorized based on their respective themes. As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, the participants were separated into Group A and Group B based on whether or not they had undergone formal interpreter training. In comparisons between the responses of Group A and Group B, percentages are used to compensate for the unequal sample sizes. However, it should be noted that some of the seemingly larger differences between Group A and Group B's percentages were caused by Group B's smaller sample size. A single response in Group A counts for 1.16% whereas a single response for Group B counts for 5.00%. This fact was taken under consideration as the data was analyzed.

  Classes taken during training. Members of Group A were asked about the classes that they had taken during their training programs. Specifically, they were asked to indicate on a list of common interpreter training program classes which classes they had taken. The purpose of this question was to ascertain if the presence or lack thereof of certain skill sets taught during these classes would impact how new interpreters experienced working in the real world following the completion of training. That said, it appears as though many of the respondents in Group A had similar training experiences. No less than 70% of Group A took each of the class-types listed.
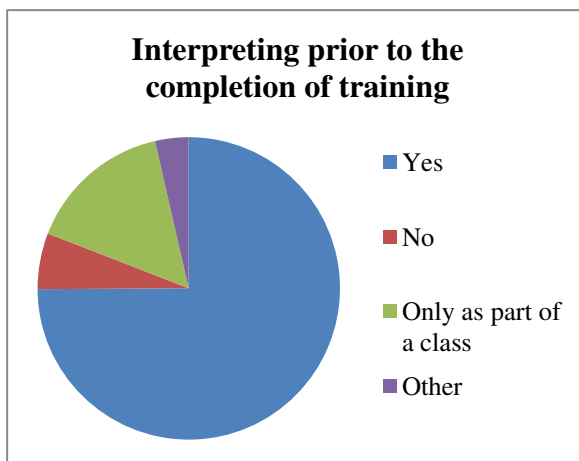
Unsurprisingly, simultaneous interpreting was the most common class, with nearly 90% of Group A saying that they had had training in that area. Fieldwork was the least common with only a touch over 70% of Group A reporting that type of experience. Those who included "Other" in their response listed specialty interpreting classes such as medical interpreting, K-12 interpreting, and religious interpreting.

Table 1

Classes taken during training

■Percentage of Group A respondents

Class	Percentage
Simultaneous interpreting	89.30%
Transliteration	82.10%
Consecutive interpreting	82.10%
Mock interpreting	75.00%
Linguistics	73.80%
Fieldwork	70.20%
Other	10.70%
None of the above	2.40%

*Working prior to the completion of training.* Another question which was asked only of Group A was whether or not they had interpreted, either professionally or as a volunteer, prior to completing their training. A great majority, exactly 75%, said that they had done some sort of interpreting prior to the completion of

Table 2

Interpreting prior to the completion of training

- ■ Yes
- ■ No
- ■ Only as part of a class
- ■ Other

their training. However, only 15.5% said that they did interpreting only as part of their class work.

   Acceptance. Respondents were asked about how they felt the d/Deaf community, hearing community, and interpreting community accepted them as they entered the field. In all three cases, Group B tended to feel more accepted by various communities than Group A did. When it came to being accepted by the d/Deaf community, the responses of Group A and Group B were fairly similar. As can be seen in Table (below), both groups were most likely to respond with "Almost Always," though Group B was more likely than Group A. Also, both groups had about the same percentages of responses that said they felt accepted by the d/Deaf community "Sometimes."

Table 3
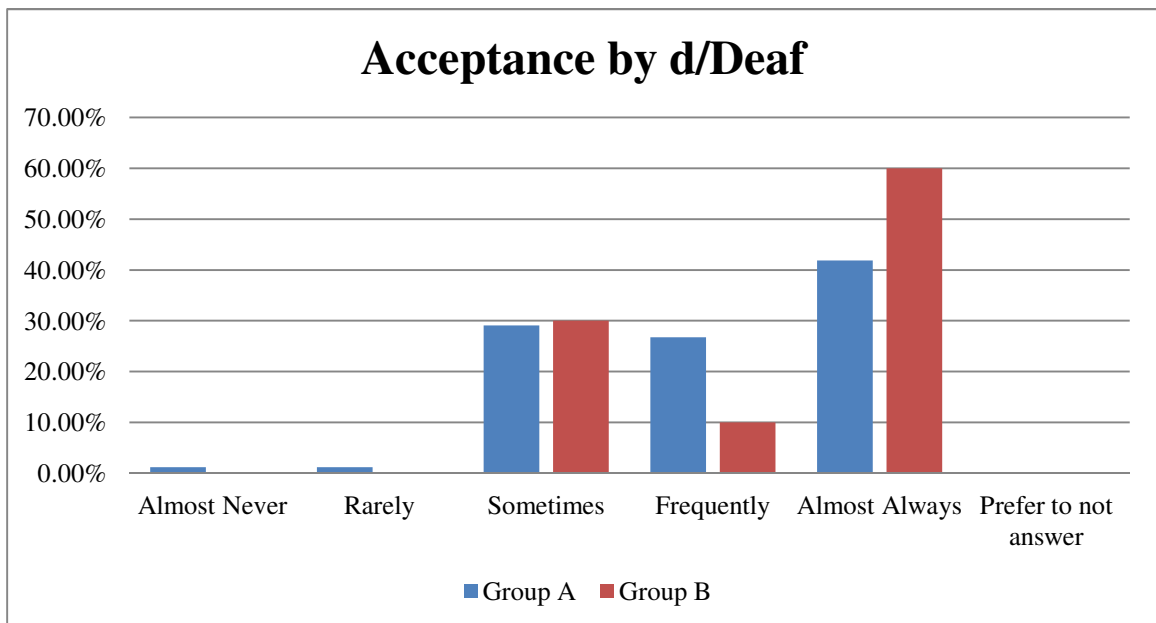
   The largest difference was that Group A was more likely to feel accepted "Frequently" than Group B. While for both groups "Frequently" was the third most common response, the percentage of those in Group A who chose that answer was more

than double that of those in Group B. Overall, the data suggests that while both Group A and Group B generally felt accepted by the d/Deaf community, Group B felt somewhat more accepted than Group A.

Much like with the feelings of acceptance by the d/Deaf community, most respondents tended to feel generally accepted by the hearing community. Group B believed itself to be accepted by the hearing community "Almost always" 75% of the time. However, Group A believed the same in only 58.14% of the responses. On the whole, Group A reported feeling less accepted than Group B did.   While "Frequently" responses were relatively close (29.07% and 20.00%, respectively), Group A was twice as likely to feel accepted only "Sometimes" or even "Rarely."
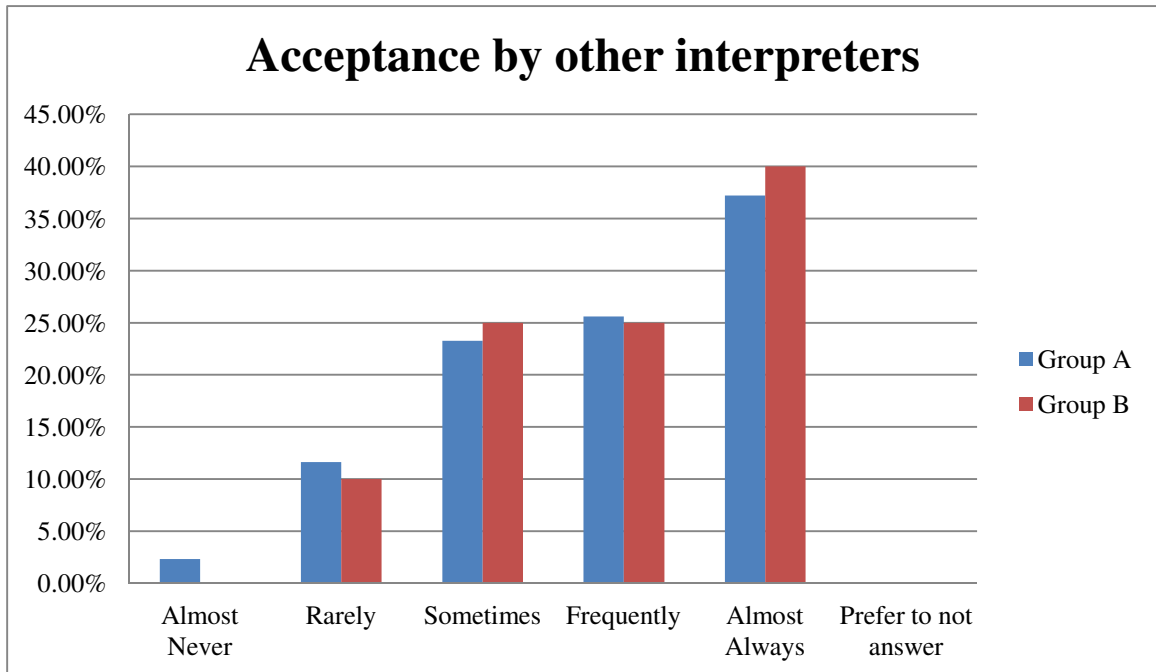
Table 4
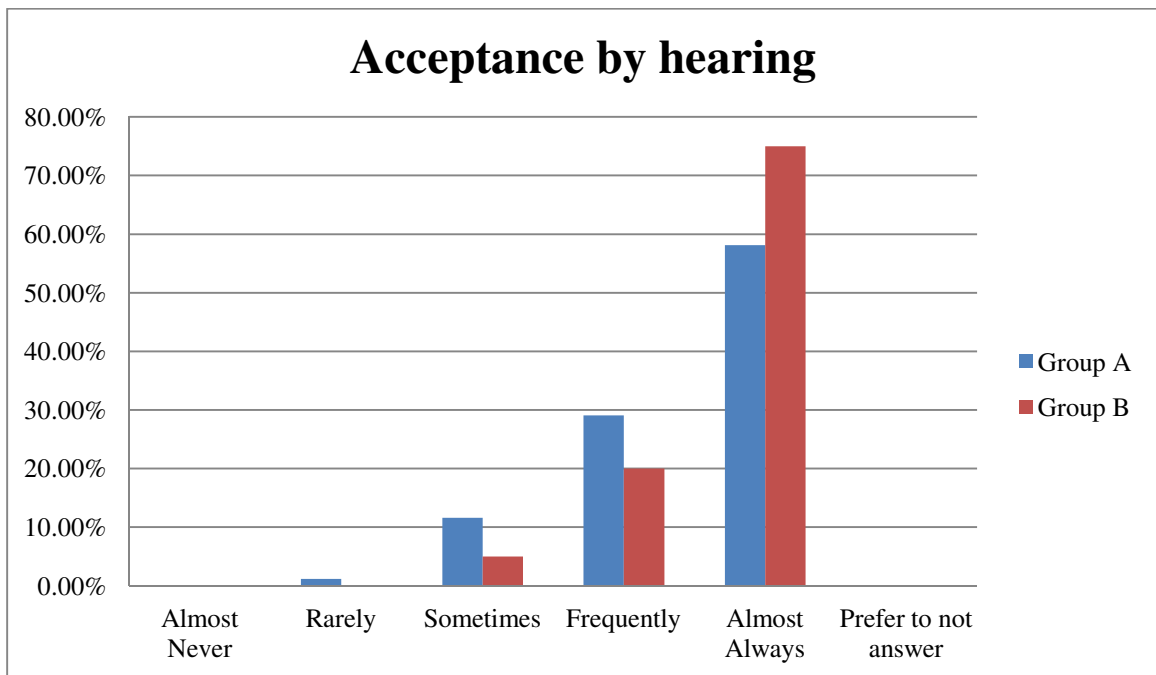
Unlike the previously discussed communities where the data was heavily skewed towards "Almost Always," the data collected for how well respondents felt accepted by other interpreters was much more evenly distributed between the possible

27

answers. In other words, when it came to being accepted by other interpreters, both groups, overall, felt less accepted. While both groups reported feeling accepted "Almost Always" the most, the percentages were significantly smaller than those of either the aforementioned questions.

Table 5

As Table 6 shows, approximately a third[3] of the responses for Group A and Group B indicate that the respondents felt unaccepted by other interpreters more often than not as indicated by a "Sometimes," "Rarely," or "Almost Never" response. While this is approximately the same percentage as that found in acceptance by the d/Deaf community, the distribution of responses is quite different. The concentration of more negative responses for acceptance by the d/Deaf community was found in the "Sometimes" response. However, when it came to feeling accepted by other interpreters, both Group A and Group B were ten times more likely to say that they felt

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[3] 37.21% of Group A and 30.00% of Group B

accepted only "Rarely." Group A was also twice as likely to say that they "Almost
Never" felt accepted by other interpreters.

Understanding Role. Participants were asked about their understanding of their
role as an interpreter as well as how they felt others understood the role of an
interpreter. In regards to their understanding of their own role as an interpreter, Group
A's responses were skewed towards "Almost Always." However, the skew has a thick
tail and over 50% of the responses[4] were either "Frequently" or "Sometimes." Group
B's responses were much more strongly skewed towards "Almost Always." Even so,
there was a secondary spike at "Sometimes." The secondary spike was only 60% of the
size of the most popular response. Even so, it appears that both groups felt that they
understood their role as interpreters when they entered the profession.

Table 6: Understanding the role of interpreters
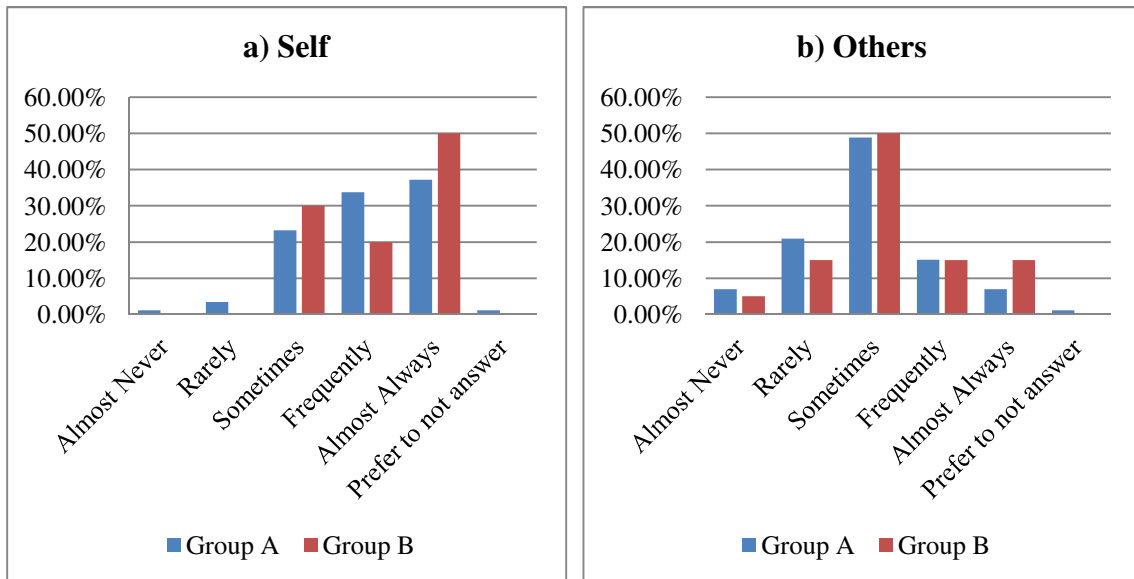
The reported perception of how others understood the role of interpreters is a
stark contrast to the self perceptions discussed above. As can be seen in Table 6, both

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[4] 56.977%

Group A and Group B felt that others understood the role of an interpreter only

"Sometimes." In fact, this was the sentiment of around half[5] of all the respondents.

The remainder of the data was spread fairly evenly between the less frequent and more

frequent. Group A was somewhat more likely to say that others understood the role of

an interpreter "Almost Never" or "Rarely" whereas Group B was somewhat more likely

to say that others understood the role of an interpreter "Frequently" or "Almost Always."

However, this difference is negligible.

Comfort levels. The data collected from both groups indicated that upon entering

the interpreting profession, they tended to be fairly comfortable with the norms of Deaf

culture. In fact, as can be seen in Table 8 on the next page, a great majority of

respondents "Rarely" or "Almost Never" felt discomfort with most of the cultural

differences which are associated with the linguistic differences between American Sign

Language and English. This was true for both Group A and Group B. The only

exception was with the politeness norms of the d/Deaf community. While both groups

were still most likely to experience discomfort "Rarely," the second most common

response was "Sometimes" rather than "Almost Never." This indicates more

discomfort with the politeness norms than differences in eye-gaze or facial expression.

When it came to interactions with others, the results were slightly different. Meeting

new people caused both groups to be more likely to feel uncomfortable "Sometimes."

Yet approximately forty percent of the remaining data was still shared between "Almost

Never" and "Rarely." As for discomfort with cultural mediation, Group A was evenly

split between "Rarely" and "Sometimes" while Group B leaned slightly more towards

"Rarely."

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[5] 48.84% of Group A and 50.00% of Group B

Table 7: Feelings of discomfort with…

a) d/Deaf politeness norms

b) Eye-gaze Duration

c) Facial Expressions

d) Meeting New People

e) Cultural Mediation

Table 8

a) Discomfort with hearing politeness norms

Group A
Group B

Categories: Almost Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Frequently, Almost Always, Prefer to not answer

b) Feeling the need to change oneself to match expectations

Group A
Group B

Categories: Almost Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Frequently, Almost Always, Prefer to not answer

c) Confusion about identity

Group A
Group B

Categories: Almost Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Frequently, Almost Always, Prefer to not answer

d) Feelings of Isolation

Group A
Group B

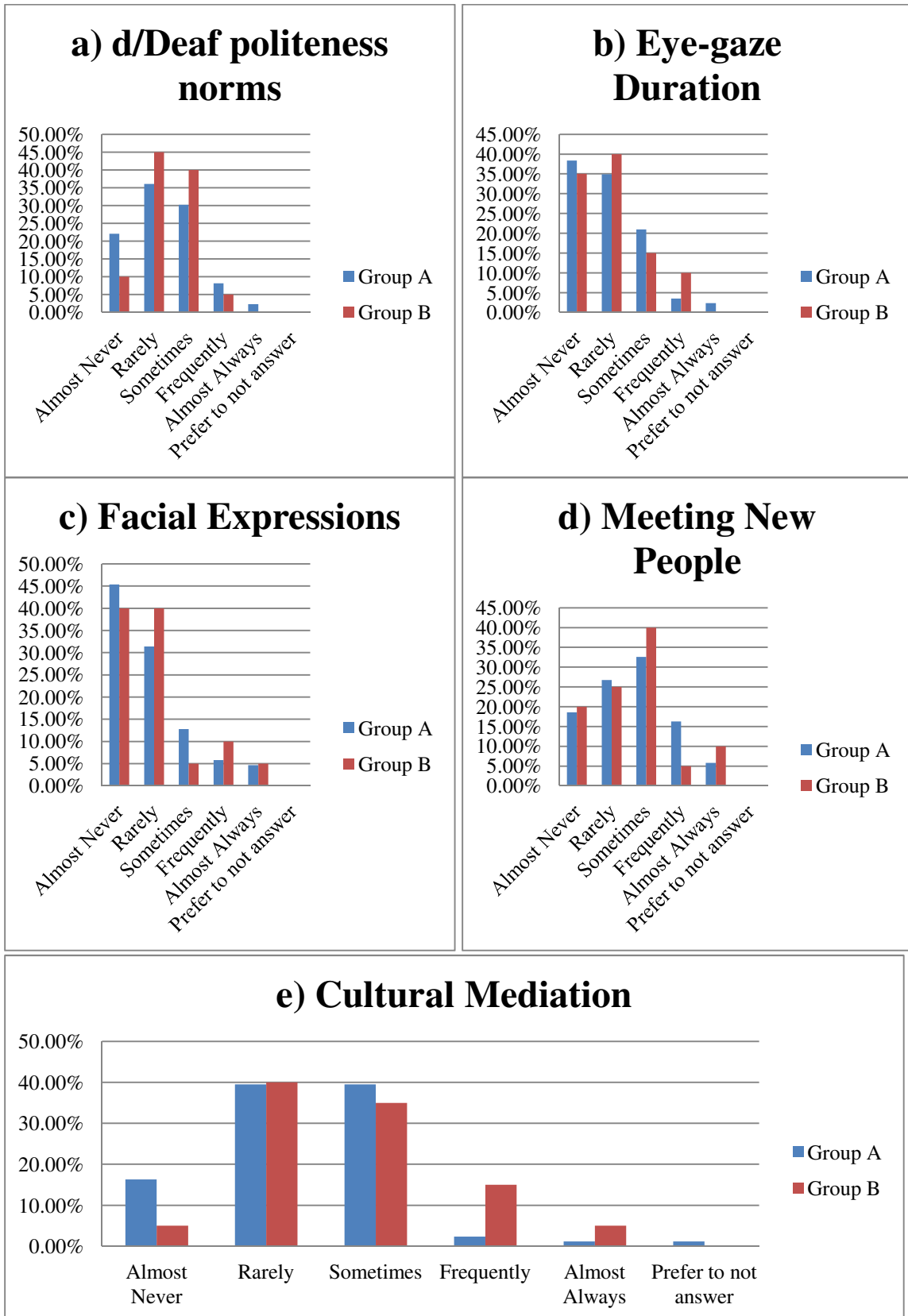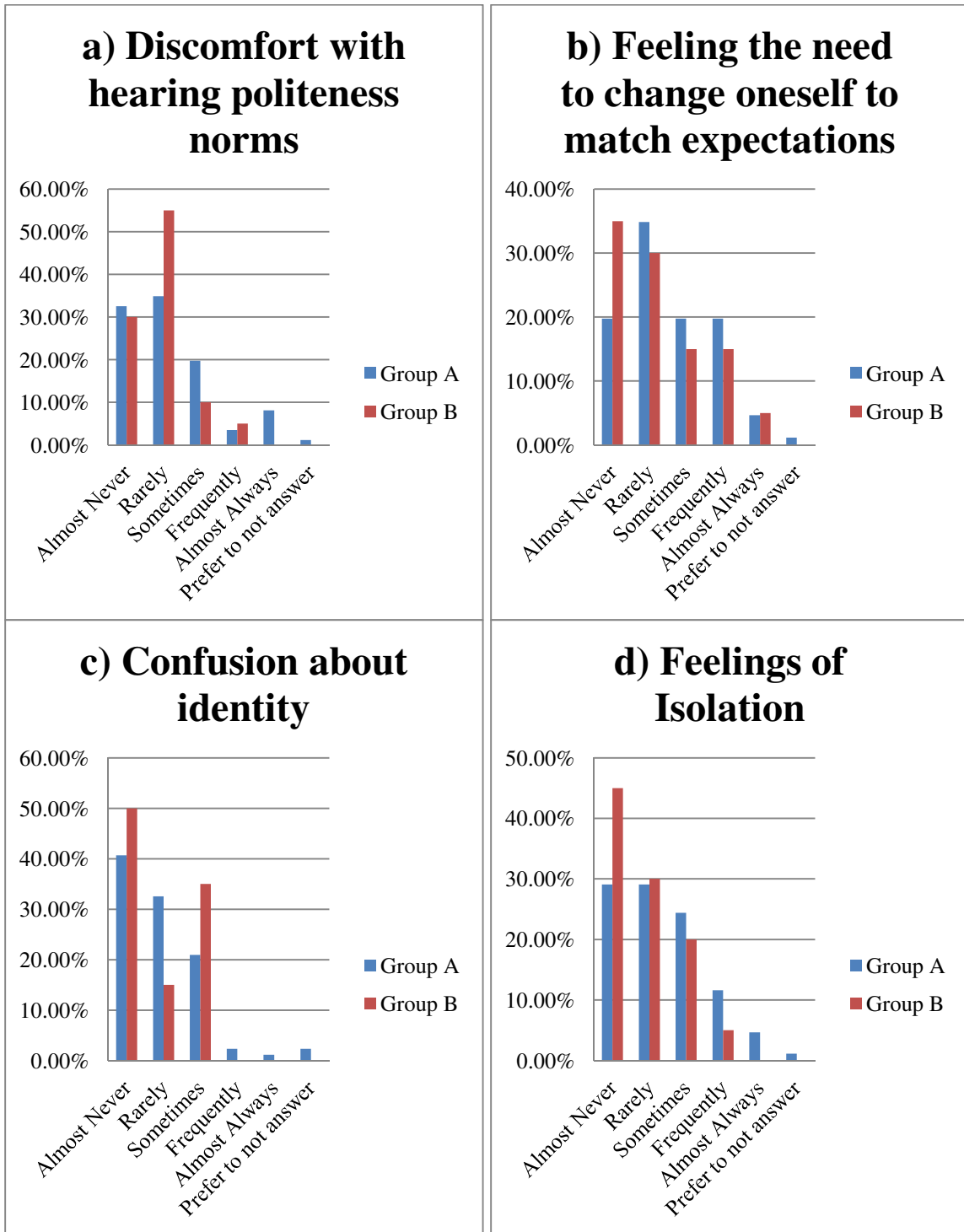Categories: Almost Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Frequently, Almost Always, Prefer to not answer

Similarly, respondents indicated that they generally felt comfortable with their own newfound identities as interpreters. In fact, a majority of respondents indicated

that they "Almost Never" felt confusion about their own identity as an interpreter. Moreover, the respondents tended to feel isolated "Rarely" or "Almost Never." Such responses were even stronger for Group B. However, when it came to feelings of needing to change oneself to meet the expectations of others, the responses were much more evenly distributed. For Group A, "Rarely" was the most frequently chosen option. Furthermore, "Almost Never," "Sometimes," and even "Frequently" each made up 19.77% of the responses, for a total of 59.31% of the replies. In other words, even though respondents typically did not feel confused about their identity, there were situations when a great many felt the need to change said identity to suit the situations or expectations of others. A final note of interest is that, for Group A, this was the section most often chosen to remain unanswered. Unlike any of the previous sections, all of the questions received at least one "Prefer to not answer." The reason for this difference is unknown.

Socialization with others. Another question asked was how much the respondents socialized with professional interpreters and with d/Deaf while they were still in training and/or during their first five years as a professional interpreter. Overall, Group B typically socialized with both other interpreters and d/Deaf more than Group A. In both groups, it was the most common to socialize with others several times a week, even though it was more common for Group B.

Table 9
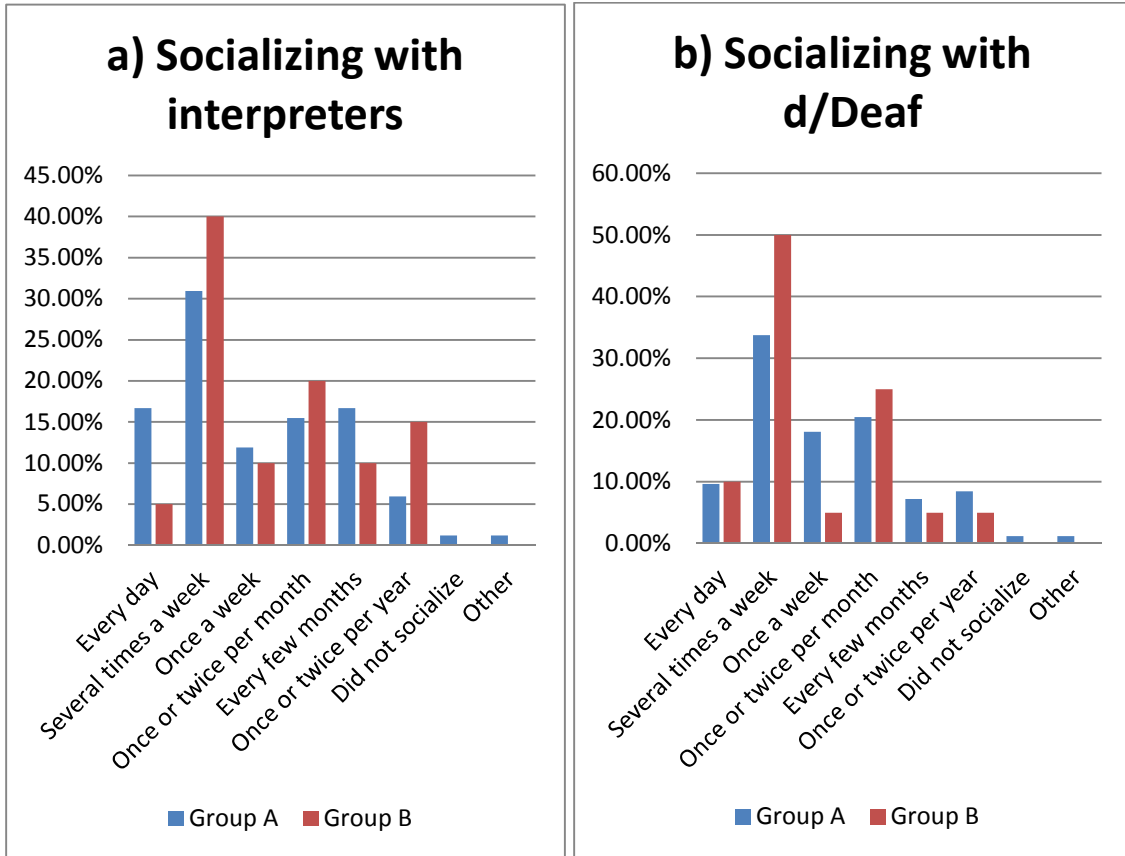
The fact that Group B spent more time with interpreters and d/Deaf during their early years is not surprising as it is in that way that Group B would have learned how to interpret as they did not learn through formal training. Also, the small spike at once or twice per month is unsurprising as it is this author's experience that many d/Deaf events or socials are held only once or twice per month.

Mentoring. Finally, respondents were asked about how much, if any, mentoring they had during their first five years as an interpreter. This included both professional mentoring and peer mentoring.

Table 10
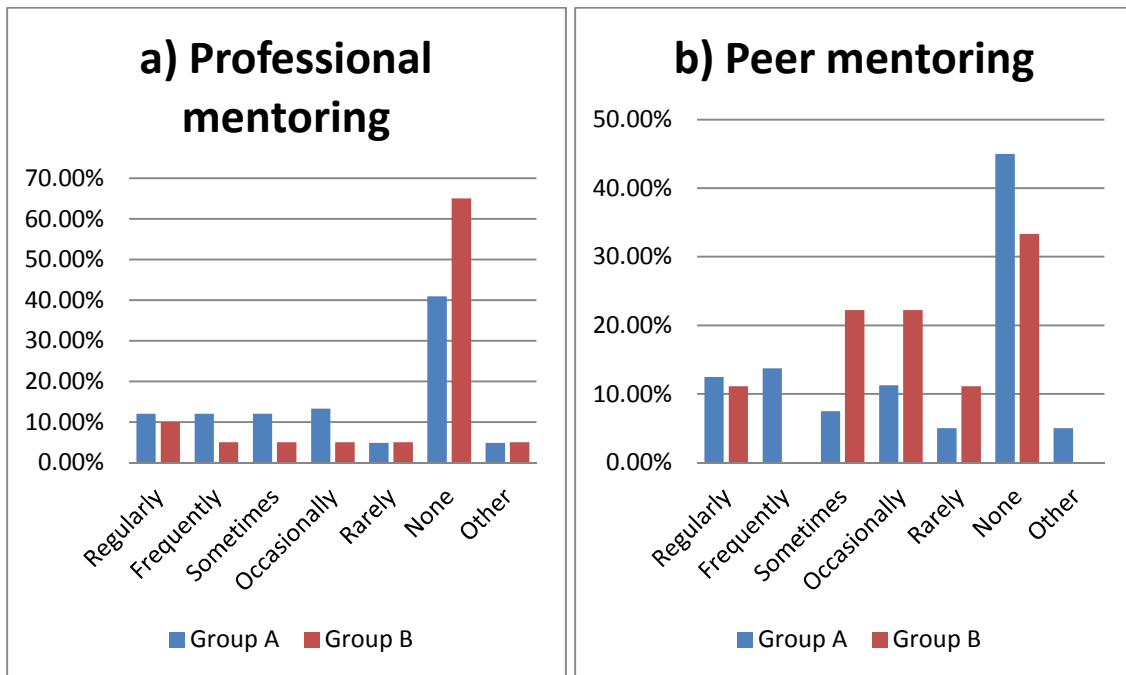
In both groups, most of the respondents indicated that they had not had any mentoring of any sort during their first five years as an interpreter. Group A tended to have more professional mentoring than Group B. Conversely, Group B was mentored by peers more than Group A was. Even so, it was more common for new interpreters to not have any mentoring – or at least any recognized mentoring – during their first five years in the field.

Section 2

The second half of the survey consisted of five questions. The responses for each question are discussed individually below.

Question 1: How did you first become involved in interpreting?

There were several ways by which respondents indicated that they became involved with interpreting. The first theme was that people needed or wanted to be able to communicate with a d/Deaf person. In some instances, they wanted to use more

direct communication than through an interpreter. However, most of the responses

indicate that having an interpreter was not an option so the respondent decided to learn

signed language so that they could communicate. The most common response of the

latter type was where the participant became involved with signed language, and

eventually interpreting, because they had/have a d/Deaf family member. In this

situation, it is reasonable to conclude that initial interpretations for many of these

respondents occurred because they were called upon to provide interpretation for those

in their family who needed it. Similarly, others became interpreters because of d/Deaf

friends. These friendships were often said as to have been formed during childhood or

high school. Still others had interactions with d/Deaf in the workplace. Most

frequently, it was as a teacher or professor meeting a d/Deaf student and wanting to be

able to communicate clearly. As one person wrote "I was appalled at my supervisors

[sic] statement that we would have to write back and forth to the parents about the

growth and development of their child." A great majority of those who either learned

or went on to learn signed language because of interacting with d/Deaf seemed to do so

because they were placed in a position where communication was necessary but not

always provided.

There was also a small group who said that they became involved in interpreting

because of their church. Much like with those respondents who learned because of a

d/Deaf family member or friend, communication was again the reason for becoming

involved. In some instances, the respondent saw or was in a situation where there was

a need and they happened to know some signed language. In other situations, they

learned by hanging around the d/Deaf and interpreters at the church and began to pick it up along the way.

The most common theme to emerge was those who had taken ASL either as a high school student or a college student. In fact this response occurred 52% of the time, which is more than all the other reasons combined. Of those respondents who became involved in interpreting through school, there were a few different paths travelled. While there were some exceptions, most of these respondents described their path in one of three ways. The first of these were those who fell in love with the language and culture. From there they decided to become interpreters. The exact phrase, "fell in love with the language" was used eight separate times to describe the respondents' experience of learning signed language. There were also several other respondents who used similar terminology to describe why they decided to become interpreters. Another group explained that they had taken American Sign Language to satisfy their foreign language requirement. Their teachers or professors then suggested that they continue on to take interpreting classes. What was interesting about this group was that in every instance the respondent noted whether the teacher or professor was hearing or d/Deaf. The final group is comprised of those who "stumbled into the profession." Members of this group indicated that they had taken American Sign Language, usually during college, and thought that interpreting would be something interesting to do. It is noteworthy of a great majority of those respondents who entered interpreting through schooling that there is a predominant focus on the usage of signed language. Interaction with the d/Deaf community or the desire to facilitate communication was rarely mentioned.

Q2: What was your first interpreting experience? Did you feel prepared or unprepared for it in any way? Why?

Unsurprisingly, the answers to this question were, predominantly, separated into prepared and unprepared. In both cases, the respondents frequently included signifiers such as "very," "extremely," and "completely." Furthermore, the responses tended to be very strongly prepared or, conversely, not prepared at all. Yet in both instances, the result seemed to stem most often from how well the respondent felt their training had prepared them for real-life experiences.

On one hand, many respondents did not feel at all prepared or ready when they actually started interpreting. For some, the lack of preparedness stemmed from the actual or perceived lack of skill using signed language. Many of these had become interpreters in the years before formal interpreter training was available. However, more respondents indicated that they had felt unprepared upon arriving at the job and finding that it did not meet their expectation. Such individuals frequently reported things like "The classroom and real life are two different situations. I felt lost and underqualified for about two years after leaving my program. School tried to prepare me, but when I entered the real world, it was nothing like my professors taught us." In other words, there was a definite dissimilarity between the way expectations derived through training and the actual experiences upon becoming a practicing professional. Furthermore, these responses were often coupled with complaints of a lack of support by other interpreters or by interpreting agencies. Some even indicated that they had felt prepared for the job itself, but were not prepared to deal with the hostility shown to

them by other interpreters. Moreover, it was almost never the clients who were described as hostile, only other interpreters.

Yet on the other hand, there were also many respondents who indicated that they did feel prepared when they first started interpreting. Those who felt prepared reported that their ITPs had given them "the tools to do the job." It was not uncommon for the reason for such preparedness to be because of internships and mentorships either at the end of a training program or when first beginning to interpret. Such supported training led respondents to describe the experience as "having that safety net" or "my mentor was right there with me." Others mentioned having very supportive teams during their first assignment or feeling prepared because they were familiar with the subject matter. There were even a few who felt over-prepared for their first assignment because of all of the preparatory work they had done prior to that job. Yet even for those who felt prepared, there tended to still be the feeling that there was a limit to how prepared they could be without doing any actual, professional work. As one person explained, "I felt prepared from an academic standpoint but I feel the only way to really become prepared is to get out in the community and start interpreting."

There were very few responses that suggested a middle ground. Of those who did respond moderately, there was a tendency to indicate that they felt mentally prepared prior to the assignment and then realized that they were not as prepared as they first thought. Again, the feelings of preparedness were directly related to prior training. For example, one respondent said "Educationally, I felt prepared. Real world interpreting was more complex and at times I felt I was really doing 'on the job training'." Much like those who did indicate feelings of preparedness, there was a

general feeling of disconnect between interpreting within the context of a training program and interpreting in the real world. The training programs did prepare them to have the skills to do the job, but they were on their own for dealing with things like uncertainty anxiety, interpersonal skills, and business skills. As such, they explained that they would have been prepared if not for other factors causing additional stress and situations that they did not know how to handle.

Another similarity of both sides was that respondents reported that one of the biggest challenges was that they lacked confidence in their own abilities. This response seemed to occur independently of feelings of preparedness and did effect how the respondents viewed their first interpreting experience. Those who were nervous but had confidence in their own skills were more frequently positive about their first experience than those who said that they were not confident. "I felt I had the tools to do the job," explained one person, "[I] just did not have the confidence to believe in myself." "[I] felt nervous that i [sic] would not be good enough," recounted another. Responses of this nature occurred more often than those who reported that they did feel confident in their initial ability to function as an interpreter.

Q3: Did you experience a learning curve while first starting out? If so, what was it like?

A learning curve is a period during which an individual must initially struggle with a given task before becoming competent in completing said task. This applies to many skill sets, including those needed to function as a professional interpreter of American Sign Language. When asked, a great majority of respondents affirmed that they did, indeed, experience a sort of learning curve when they began working as a

professional interpreter. In fact, only two of the seventy-five answers indicated that the respondent thought that they had not experienced a learning curve of any sort.

Of those who affirmed that they did experience a learning curve when they were first starting to work as interpreters, there were six areas that were mentioned the most frequently as being the source of the learning curve: interpreting and language skills, boundaries, ethics, dealing with other interpreters, technology, and business savvy (knowing how to run a business). These can be further classified as "skill sets" and "professionalism" with skills and technology belonging to the former while boundaries, ethics, dealing with other interpreters, and business savvy fit into the latter. While many respondents mentioned how they had needed to further develop their skill sets upon entering the field, the greater need for professionalism was emphasized repeatedly as being a more challenging hurdle. As one individual explained, "[T]here are nuances of learning to administrate the business end of being an interpreter." In other words, it is tricky to develop the type of professional behaviors that are expected of an interpreter. Furthermore, many respondents attested either that they had not learned professionalism during their training or that they were unable to apply what they had learned. "I felt like most of my experience was done "on the job" even though I went through an ITP," wrote one respondent. Yet as another explained, "We don't understand the practical application of theory and process, etc until we actually do the do." To wit, this person believes that, *even with the presence of professional training*, there is no way for new interpreters to fully understand all the aspects of the profession until they actually begin interpreting.

Another experience which factored into the learning curve of many of the participants was challenges to previously held expectations. Once again respondents described a disconnect between their training and their experiences of actually interpreting. However, it was rarely expressed overtly as being the cause of the learning curve. Rather, the results of being exposed to situations that were different than expected or required different skill sets was more frequently noted. A poetic description of this was "you are kicked from the nest and forced to pick yourself up and fly." Part of the role that expectations seemed to play was the changes between others' expectations about the new interpreter and how those changed with the transition. Many of the respondents found that they could no longer function in a role as a student and were expected to be as fully competent as more experienced interpreters. "In classes," explained one, "you were only expected to know what you had been taught. In real life, you are expected to know everything." Moreover, such expectations seemed to make new interpreters compare themselves to more advanced interpreters rather than to their peers. "I left [sic] like I was behind and struggled to catch up. But the big question was, catch up to whom??" It is unlikely that there was a desire to catch up to peers who would assumedly be of a similar skill level. Instead, the expectation that new interpreters should be just as good as more experienced interpreters may be internalized and used in self-comparison. As such, the new interpreter goes through a learning curve while trying to become like those to whom they compare themselves.

Q4: What was your relationship with the d/Deaf community prior to beginning your work as a professional interpreter?

The data collected for this question was much more meager than that of other questions. For whatever reason, the answers provided tended to be much shorter than those of any of the other open-ended questions. While there were some vague answers, most of the responses were based on the amount of interaction time the respondents spent interacting with d/Deaf. Some said that they spent a lot of time with d/Deaf prior to becoming an interpreter. Such time was often spent with family, friends, through social events or obligations, or through work. Interestingly enough, with the exception of those who had d/Deaf family, most respondents mentioned that they had not begun their interactions with the d/Deaf community until they had begun taking signed language classes. The experience of one, "My instructors in my ITP encouraged us all the time to get involved with the Deaf community," was repeated by many other respondents. Those whose responses seemed to indicate less time spent also discussed socialization that was required for their academic coursework or interactions at their place of employment. Often feelings of intruding or a lack of confidence in signing abilities were expressed. "I would attend different events but was scared to join in on conversations right away because I did not feel confident with my signing" one respondent attested. "I was incredibly shy, so even though I had opportunities to associate with the Deaf community, I missed many chances" another agreed. In other words, there was a desire to become more involved, but often a fear of doing so.

There was a definite mix of how the respondents felt like they fit in with the d/Deaf community. Some of the responses were negative while others were positive.

There were several people who mentioned feeling as though they were being "tested" by the Deaf community and that they often felt like a "hearing person in a Deaf world." This seemed to also impact how the respondents interacted with the d/Deaf community prior to their becoming interpreters. "There were times when I was more involved than others," one person explained, "based upon the Community's desire to have 'hearing' people included." Furthermore, it took effort for the Deaf community to accept them, some longer than others. However, most of the recounted experiences were positive. Statements like "I was warmly welcomed by them as a member of their community" and "I was very involved and developed good relationships" were quite common.

Q5: Is interpreting what you originally expected it to be? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

Interestingly enough, respondents tended to understand the question in one of two ways. The first way seemed to be the closest to the original intent of the question which was asking about the respondents' prior expectations towards the profession of interpreting. Of these, there were "No," "Yes and no," and "Yes" answers.

For those who said that interpreting was not what they expected, there were both positive and negative responses. There were a few who said that interpreting is so much better than they ever expected. However, most of the "no" responses were caused by negative experiences. Several individuals cited feelings of not being respected by either their clients or their peers. The lack of respect from clients tended to be manifested by situations where the interpreter felt exploited by either the hearing or d/Deaf consumer(s). Such responses usually were related to difficulties in collecting payment for services rendered. As for those who mentioned a lack of respect from

peers, they said that they felt like other interpreters were highly judgmental and critical, especially to newer or educational interpreters. "I didn't expect it to be such a competitive, back-biting, even downright negative group of people" and "Many have the "I am better than you since you are new..."" were both sentiments which were expressed by numerous respondents. Another issue that was mentioned several times was that the respondents had not expected to have so much trouble staying neutral during emotionally charged situations. As one person noted, "It's frustrating to be put in the middle and not be able to have a positive influence." Also, they emphasized that there is much more than bilingualism involved in interpreting. Prior to either becoming an interpreter or going through training to become an interpreter, they "didn't realize the cultural mediation and analyze for meaning between two languages, extra linguistic knowledge, etc... that was required." Their expectations had not led them to believe that there was anything more than dealing directly with the language. Since there is so much more to interpreting beyond just changing communication modalities, the actual work ended up being different than what was originally expected.

Many said that while many things about interpreting were as expected, there were also many aspects that were not. As was mentioned above, there were several respondents who had not expected the attitude problems of other interpreters. This was in spite of the fact that they did indicate that the actual work of an interpreter did match their expectations. Similarly, there was an expectation that there would be more support from other interpreters. One person described it as needing "to be more "bonding" activities, or supervision/mentor activities to discuss assignments (of course while maintaining confidentiality), and bounce feedback off of each other." Some said

that they had been expecting more work to be available. "I thought there would be tons of jobs," "The demand is too seasonal," and "I am finding it impossible to earn a living as an interpreter" were all from respondents who expressed their frustration at not being able to find enough work. One result of this was the further indication that the lack of work or the difficulty in finding it causes interpreters to want to leave the field in favor of a different profession. Yet another area of met and unmet expectations was when their academic training had led them to believe that the world was much more dichotomous than the real world that they encountered was. In the classroom, situations were presented as having black-and-white answers; yet in the real world, respondents "found out that things are not black and white, it's mostly gray." As with the previous questions, they would have felt prepared if the real-world mirrored the classroom. Such responses for this question were few, though.

Unlike those who explained how their expectations about interpreting were different than reality, most of those who said that actual work of an interpreter was as they expected did little to elaborate on their meaning or experiences. It was not uncommon for this type of response to be just "Yes" with no further explanation of any sort. Of those respondents who did elaborate, a number said that the reason that interpreting was as they expected was because of what they learned in their ITPs and thus felt ready for the job. Another handful of respondents said that they knew what to expect because of their previous experiences where family members had used interpreters. However, it was rare for respondents to claim that they had known what

they were getting themselves into prior to actually interpreting. In fact, they made up fewer than 12%[6] of responses to this question.

The second understanding of the question appears to have been if the respondents had originally expected to become interpreters. Of these responses, a majority reported that they had not originally intended to become interpreters. In fact, several of these respondents explained that they had not even known that the job of signed language interpreter existed prior to taking their foreign language class. Additionally, it was not uncommon for the respondent to either already be working in another field or to have had their initial academic training in an unrelated field. Only a small number of respondents said that they had been working in fields such as Deaf education and social work which are often considered to be closer to an interpreter's line of work. There were a few, however, who reported that they had, indeed, intended to become interpreters. When timeframes were included in the answers, respondents said that they had been wanting to become interpreters either from their time in high school or from very early on in their college careers. Overall, it appears as though both the actual work of interpreting and being involved in the interpreting profession were not expected by many of those who eventually found themselves in the field.

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[6] Nine of the seventy-seven responses fell into this category.

DISCUSSION

The data collected in both sections indicates that any shock experienced by new interpreters would be unlikely to be culture shock from delving into the d/Deaf community. It was necessary to determine this to eliminate it as a possible alternate reason for the results. By the time that the respondents had become interpreters, a great majority of culture shock had worn off. This result is hardly surprising as it was not abnormal for the respondents to have become involved in the d/Deaf community prior to their becoming interpreters. Furthermore, culture shock experienced by entering the d/Deaf community seems to have occurred prior to the interpreters' early work experiences. This may be for several reasons. For instance, students of American Sign Language, long before the prospect of interpreting, are often encouraged to socialize with d/Deaf as part of their class work so that the students can learn Deaf Culture from the community itself. Furthermore, it is also common for interpreters who have gone through an ITP to receive training in d/Deaf culture and the cultural norms associated with it. Moreover, those who did not go through an ITP typically were trained almost entirely by d/Deaf individuals and therefore became familiar with the culture. This is probably the main reason why Group B felt more accepted by the d/Deaf community than Group A. While some new interpreters might have felt culture shock of this sort upon beginning their professional career, a great majority did not. As such, using culture shock experienced by entering the d/Deaf community would not adequately or accurately describe the experiences of new interpreters.

Similarly, it is unsurprising that new interpreters were highly comfortable with hearing culture. In fact, most new interpreters would naturally be comfortable with

dealing with hearing culture, regardless of how they felt treated by members of said culture or the nature of their interactions. Such a reaction is because nearly all those who interpret between ASL and English are, themselves, hearing. It would, therefore, be a safe assumption that they are intimately familiar with mainstream hearing culture. Even those interpreters who grew up surrounded by d/Deaf family and friends are well versed in the ways of the dominant hearing world. It would be highly unlikely that any interpreter would be completely unfamiliar with the "hearing" (i.e. mainstream) culture given the pervasiveness of said culture in all areas of life. The understanding of the culture itself is independent of how the respondents felt treated as interpreters. In fact, that is a whole different issue which shall be discussed later. That said, it is unlikely that new interpreters experienced much if any shock from dealing with hearing consumers of interpreting services.

Actually, it appears as though new interpreters go through much of the same sort of transitional experiences as new nurses or new teachers. The chief and foremost similarity is the lack of continuity between expectations about the field held before entering it and the actual experiences of the real world. Yet much like with new nurses or teachers, the actual work was generally what was originally expected. The additional factors – such as logistics, billing, interactions with uncooperative clients or colleagues, and so forth – were what caused the most problems. The parts of the job that were not the direct transfer of meaning were either different than what new interpreters originally expected or were aspects that were completely unexpected. As such, it threw new interpreters for a loop. New nurses struggled when they found that their roles and responsibilities differed from when they were in training (Boychuk

Duchscher, 2009; Chang, Mu, & Tsay, 2006; Khoza, 2005). The same held true for new teachers (Corcoran, 1981; Gaede, 1978; Veenman, 1984). Apparently, new signed language interpreters are no different.

One of the primary areas of difficulty for new interpreters is the business skills needed to function as an interpreter. Like most professions, there is also a business side to interpreting which involves such things as finding work, billing, and logistics. In each of these cases, soft skills or people skills must be used for the interpreter to be able to continue to get work and function peacefully within the interpreting profession. However, new interpreters were often unprepared to handle this side of the profession. Some of the work was unexpected in its difficulty while other work was not known to exist prior to the new interpreter's needing to do such work. It is entirely probable that when the respondents went through training, the primary focus of the curriculum was on developing the interpreting skills needed to transfer the message between clients while very little attention was given to the business side. If this was the case, then it would not be surprising that new interpreters, especially those who did not socialize much with other interpreters, would not be expecting this work. It was much the same for nurses who found that paperwork was a much larger and more time consuming part of the job than they originally expected (O'Kane, 2012; Suresh, Matthews, & Coyne, 2013). Similarly with teachers, paperwork and class management became much more work than the actual teaching (Haggarty & Postlethwaite, 2012). In both situations, the training involved focused on the work that directly affects others, medical training and instructional training respectively. However, the busywork was presented as a secondary part of the occupation. As such, the new nurses and teachers experienced

additional stress which has been shown to be a part of the transition shock they go though.

Another sticking point for new interpreters is learning to work with other interpreters. Not only were new interpreters generally more uncomfortable around other interpreters, but they often had a hard time acclimating to working with others. This was true both for working with other interpreters as well as just being around other interpreters in general. It is interesting how many comments there were about how other interpreters had terrible attitudes towards their colleagues. It was, after all, not uncommon to see respondents describe other interpreters negatively while complaining about back-biting and dismissive attitudes. Yet at the same time, there was never a mention of how they, themselves, acted towards other interpreters. Such instances of attitude were always presented in a way where the respondent was the victim of the attitude. Furthermore, the feelings of not being accepted by other interpreters appear to belie a deeper problem than mere bickering. Rather, it appears that there is a feeling of needing to prove their skills to other interpreters. If this is indeed the case, then it would mark yet another similarity between the experiences of new interpreters and those of new teachers and nurses. New nurses also felt like there was a lack of respect towards them by their more experienced colleagues. Moreover, there was a definite feeling of a need to prove themselves and their capabilities. While teachers did not seem to have the attitude problem to such an extent, they did still feel the need to prove themselves to their colleagues and their institution.

Similarly, there was a constant need by new members of all three professions to appear like they knew what they were doing as a way to hide their own insecurities and

struggles from colleagues and clients. It was as if there was an unwritten rule that acute

stress should absolutely not be shown to anyone. The data suggests that the new

interpreters were trying to show that they were just as good as more experienced

interpreters. It is as though they feel a need to assume a role of a more experienced

interpreter despite the fact that they do not yet have the experience necessary to

function in that way. As such, the new interpreters experienced stress but did not want

to talk about it in a way that might have helped them to be able to realize that it is

perfectly normal to not be able to have the same skill set and skill level of a more

experienced interpreter until they have first gained more experience.

Given how similar the experiences of new interpreters are to new teachers and

new nurses, it is not unreasonable to conclude that new interpreters experience

transition shock as well. In fact, the data collected

about the experiences of new interpreters does

indicate that new American Sign Language/English

interpreters do experience transition shock and,

what's more, experience it in much the same way

and for the same reasons as new nurses and new

teachers. Simply put, the research does support the

hypothesis that new interpreters of American Sign

Language do experience transition shock upon

entering the field. Furthermore, the data combined

with comparisons to both the fields of nursing and

education indicate that it is the job itself which

> Research Question 1: Do new ASL/English interpreters do experience transition shock upon entering the field?
>
> - Yes, they do experience transition shock.
>
> Research Question 2: Is any transition shock which occurs caused by the responsibilities of the interpreting profession or is it because of the increased exposure to Deaf culture?
>
> - It is the result of the responsibilities of the interpreting profession.

causes the transition shock, not culture shock from interacting with the d/Deaf community.

A point of interest was how few interpreters took advantage of support systems that were already in place to help them. Furthermore, few took the initiative to set up their own support networks. Very few interpreters sought out mentoring, be it professional or from a peer, when they were entering the field. It is unknown if they did not know about the availability of mentoring, chose to not use it, or thought it unnecessary. Also, new interpreters did not seem to actively seek out the company of other interpreters. This might have a direct impact on the ability to have realistic expectations about the job. As they are not conversing with individuals who are out experiencing the field first-hand, the new interpreters are left to their own devices when it comes to imagining what the work looks like and what additional tasks are involved. Another reason why new interpreters might not socialize with more experienced interpreters and that the latter often does not impart their experiences to the former is because of perceived confidentiality requirements. However, the exact reason for this occurrence is unknown and is beyond the scope of this research.

Suggestions for the reduction of real-world shock.

Given that it seems that the shock experienced by new interpreters is the result of unexpected situations and responsibilities, it could be beneficial for training programs to work to prepare new interpreters to handle such situations and responsibilities. For instance, since there was a general struggle with learning the business side of being an interpreter – including billing, getting work, and logistics – it would be useful for this sort of information to be included in the program either as part

of the interpreting classes or as a separate business management class. Also, to help with inter-interpreter relations, an emphasis on working with a team should be included throughout the training and should include working with a variety of teams, not only the students' peers. This would be important because real-life situations involve working with a wide variety of people. Moreover, students would be able to develop interpersonal skills necessary for good teaming.

Unfortunately, given the lack of suggestions in other fields which have resulted in proven ways to effectively minimize or eliminate transition shock experienced by new members, there is little that this author can suggest that could drastically change the experiences of new interpreters as they begin their professional careers. This is an area which could be greatly improved by future research.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and conclusions. Research conducted in other fields such as nursing

and education indicated that new members of those professions experience transition

shock upon entering their respective professions. The shock made adjusting to their

new profession difficult and contributed to attrition rates. Moreover, the experience of

transition shock occurs regardless of time spent in practicums or fieldwork during the

new member's training period. Prior to this thesis, there was no evidence whether or

not new American Sign Language/English interpreters experience the same sort of

shock. The data collected through surveying interpreters across America showed that

new interpreters of American Sign Language and English do experience transition

shock as they begin working as professional interpreters. The shock manifested itself

in feelings of unmet expectations, strained interactions with colleagues, and feelings of

needing to prove oneself.   Furthermore, the data indicated that the shock experienced

was the result of the job rather than because of interactions with members of the d/Deaf

community. In other words, additional responsibilities such as running a business,

dealing with billing, finding work, and learning to work as a team were much more

stressful to new interpreters than the actual act of interpreting. Such a result is

consistent with the prior research on the experiences of new nurses and teachers.

In conclusion, it should really come as no surprise that new interpreters

experience transition shock as they enter the field. It would actually be a much more

surprising find if they did not. Yet what this means is that the first few months or years

of a new interpreter's professional life will be filled with stressors that are unexpected

by the new interpreter and thus could lead to attrition from the field or a sense of bitterness towards their career, colleagues, and even clients.

      Suggestions for future research. In addition to the possibilities of future research discussed previously, it would be beneficial for the entirety of the ASL/English interpreting profession to determine what factors have the largest impact on the amount of transition shock experienced. Doing so would allow training programs to develop methods to reduce (as it would be impossible to completely eliminate) the shock experienced by their graduates or provide said graduates with the means by which they can deal with the shock. One way to do this would be to conduct a comparative study between the graduates of different training programs. Such a study could attempt to ascertain if certain forms of preparation are more effective than others. Other research which could prove beneficial would be to see if having students wait until the end of their training to have real-world experience is the best method or if it would be better to encourage students to start earlier so that they can immediately apply what they learn in the classroom.

      It would also be useful to study new ASL/English interpreters as they are in the process of entering the profession. The data collected in the course of this thesis relied entirely on the memories of the respondents. It would be useful to see how transition shock affects new interpreters while said shock was occurring. This could make up for any gaps left by the data already collected and could also help to determine how new interpreters go about dealing with the shock they experience. Such data could be used to better equip new interpreters for dealing with the things which give them the most shock-inducing stress.

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APPENDIX A

The following appendix contains the text of the consent form distributed to the participants in the study via email. The participants were unable to access the survey without going through the consent form. It outlines the role of the participant as well as the recourse options should a participant have any questions or concerns.

Dear Colleague,

I am a master's degree student at Western Oregon University in the College of Education under the supervision of Dr. Elisa Maroney. I am conducting a research study seeking to understand the experiences of interpreters as they enter the field.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve taking an online survey that can be accessed directly through this link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LYXZTJY.

Participation in the survey will serve as your consent. The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There is no penalty if you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time. All data is untraceable to you or your computer. You must be 18 or older to participate in this study.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

The online survey does not allow me to identify participants and your responses will remain anonymous. Should you choose to provide any identifiable information, the information will remain confidential. I will remove any personal identifiers after coding is completed in order to maintain your confidentiality. The results of this study will be used in my master's thesis and may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be known or used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact me by phone at (916)365-1404 or via email at: smeadows11@mail.wou.edu or my graduate advisor Dr. Elisa Maroney at maronee@mail.wou.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the WOU Institutional Review Board at (503) 838-9200 or irb@wou.edu.

Thank you,
Stephanie Meadows, Ed: K-12
Masters student, College of Education
Western Oregon University

APPENDIX B

The following appendix contains a copy of the questions asked during the first part of the data collection. The survey itself was presented through SurveyMonkey so the actual form was slightly different in that the following questions marked with "(If "Yes" to the third question)" only appeared to respondents if they had indicated that they went through formal training. If the respondent marked either "No" or "Other (please specify)," then they were directed to a version of the survey that did not include questions about formal training. However, that does not change the overall quality of the data. Rather, it eliminates unnecessary non-data from clouding up the true data.

Instructions: Please answer these questions about demographics.

Which state do you live in? (Drop-down list)

What is your age? (Drop-down list of increments; i.e. under 20, 20-24, 25-29, etc.)

What is your gender?

- o Male
- o Female
- o Prefer not to answer

How long have you been a professional interpreter?

- o 0-5 years
- o 6-10 years
- o 11-15 years
- o 16-20 years
- o 21+ years

Did you receive formal training (i.e. Interpreter Training Program or Interpreter Preparation Program)?

- o Yes
- o No
- o Other (please specify)

(If "Yes" to the third question) Where did you receive your formal training?

Do you have any d/Deaf family members?

- o Yes, immediate family member(s)
- o Yes, extended family member(s)
- o No
- o I am d/Deaf
- o Other (please specify)

Instructions: Think back to your days as a beginning interpreter and how you felt during the first few years of practice. There are no right or wrong answers; just choose what you think best represents your feelings at the time.

Please choose one answer per row:

	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always	Prefer to not answer
I felt accepted by the Deaf community.						
I felt accepted by the hearing community.						
I felt accepted by the interpreting community.						
I felt like I understood my role as an interpreter.						
I felt that others understood my role as an interpreter						

Please choose one answer per row:

	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always	Prefer to not answer
I felt uncomfortable being stared at.						
I felt uncomfortable with the politeness norms of the hearing community.						
I felt like I had to change myself to match what was expected of me.						
I felt uncomfortable with the politeness norms of the Deaf community.						
I felt confused about my identity.						
I felt uncomfortable with facial expressions.						
I felt powerless when trying to cope with cultural mediation.						
I felt isolated.						
I felt awkward when meeting						

new members of the Deaf community.						

(If "Yes" to the third question) During interpreter training, I had classes in (choose all that apply):

- o Mock interpreting (real-world interpreting under the guidance of a mentor)
- o Fieldwork
- o Transliteration
- o Simultaneous interpreting
- o Linguistics
- o Consecutive interpreting
- o N/A
- o Other (please specify)

(If "Yes" to the third question) I interpreted either professionally or as a volunteer prior to finishing my training:

- o Yes
- o No
- o Only as part of a class
- o N/A
- o Other (please specify)

I was mentored during my first five years as an interpreter:

	Regularly (meeting once a week or more)	Frequently (meeting once or twice per month)	Sometimes (meeting between six and eight times per year)	Occasionally (meeting five or fewer times per year)	Rarely (meeting only once per year)	I did not receive mentoring	N/A
Professional mentoring							
Peer mentoring							
Other (please specify):							

During training and/or during my first five years as a professional interpreter, I socialized:

	Every day	Several times a week	Once a week	Once or twice per month	Every few months	Once or twice per year	Did not socialize	N/A
With interpreters								
With d/Deaf								
Other (please specify):								

Would you be willing to answer five more questions about your interpreting experience? The questions occur in an interview style where you would be asked to type your responses. The length of time it would require is dependent on you. If you would like to participate, please select "Yes". If you would like to end the survey here, please select "No".

- o Yes
- o No

APPENDIX C

The following appendix contains the second half of the survey. It was an optional part of the survey where respondents could choose to continue on or not. As they were long-answer questions, the online version provided text boxes in which the respondents could type their answers. Respondents were not required to complete all of the questions if they so chose.

How did you first get involved with the field of interpreting?

What was your first interpreting experience like? Did you feel prepared or unprepared for it in any way? Why?

What was your relationship with the d/Deaf community prior to beginning your work as a professional interpreter?

Did you experience a sort of learning curve while first starting out? If so, what was it like?

Is interpreting what you originally expected it to be? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

APPENDIX D

This appendix contains charts that indicate the demographic information of the respondents. The data was collected as part of the survey and shows the following: in which state the respondent resides, the respondent's gender, how many years s/he has been interpreting, whether or not s/he received formal interpreter training, and if the respondent has any d/Deaf family members.
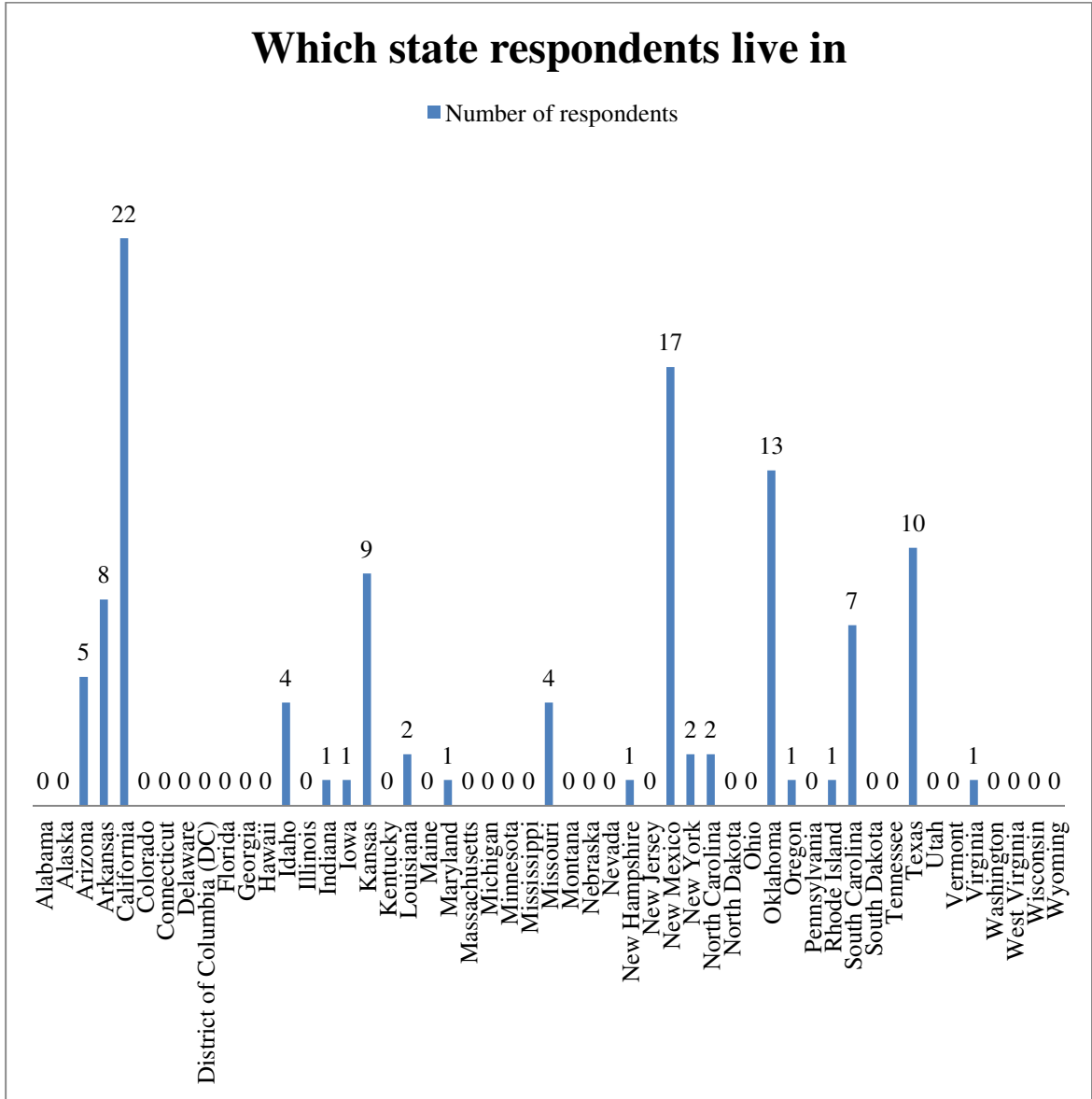
Table 11

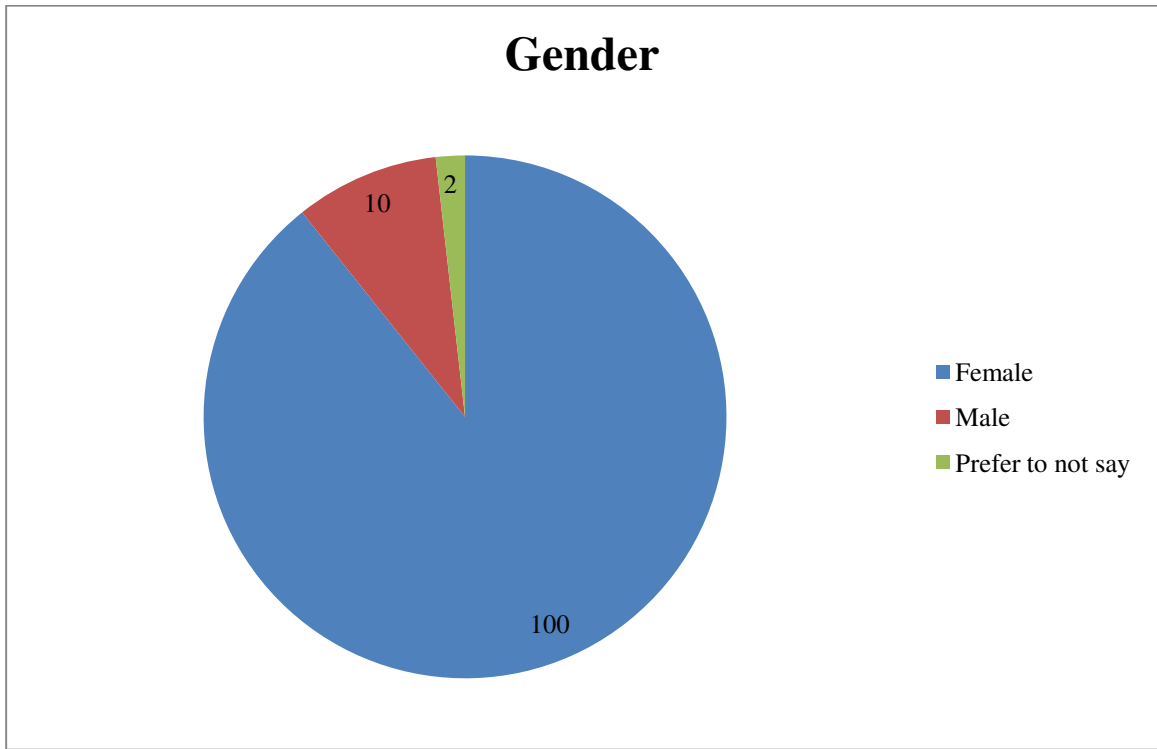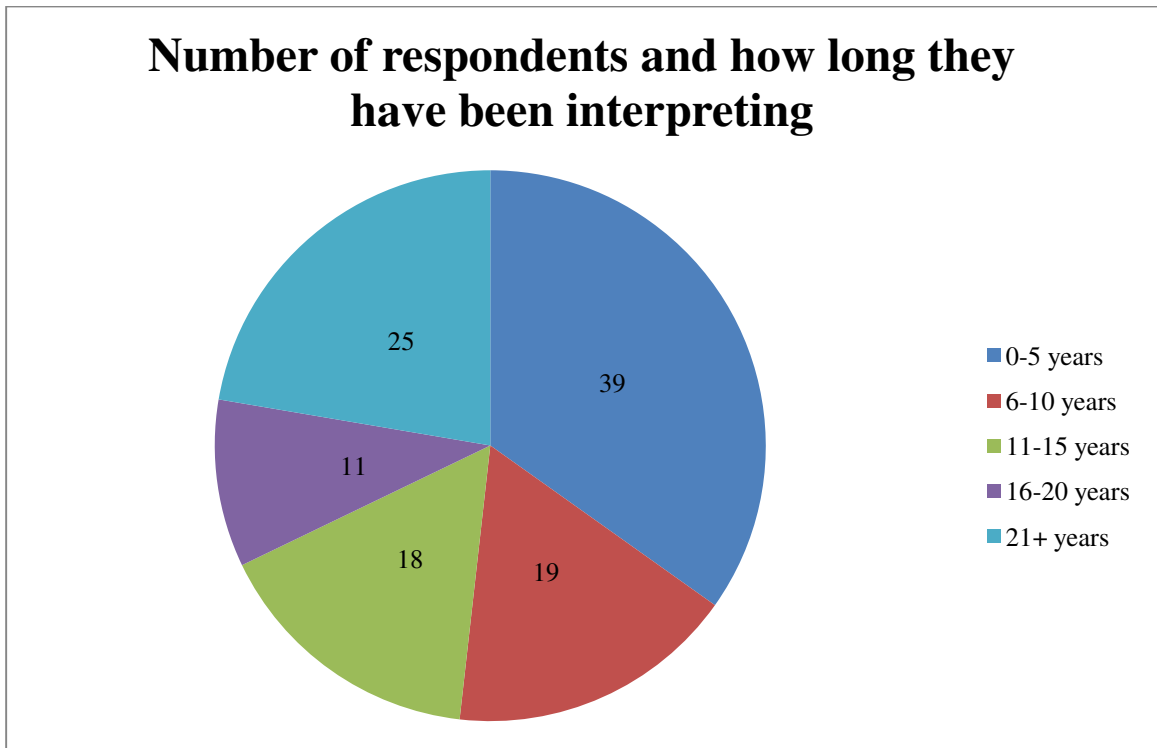Which state respondents live in

■ Number of respondents

Table 12

Gender

- Female
- Male
- Prefer to not say

Table 13

Number of respondents and how long they have been interpreting

- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21+ years

Table 14

Number of respondents who received formal interpreter training

Yes: 79
No: 23
Other: 10

Table 15

Do you have any d/Deaf family members?

- Yes, immediate family member(s): 10
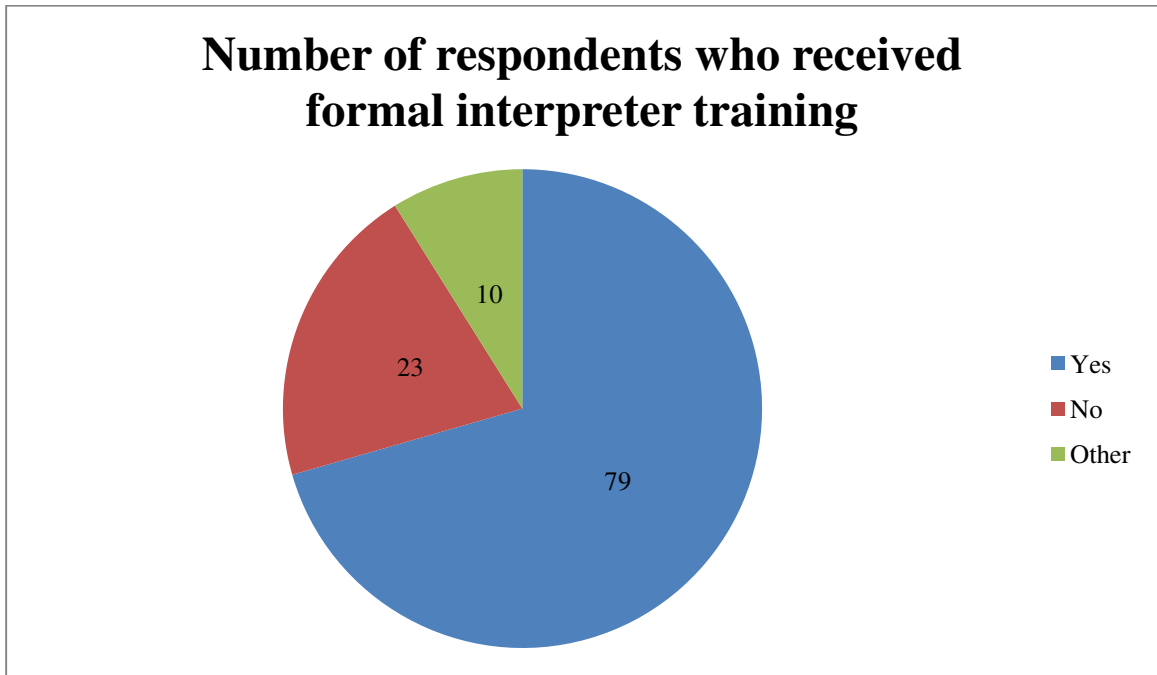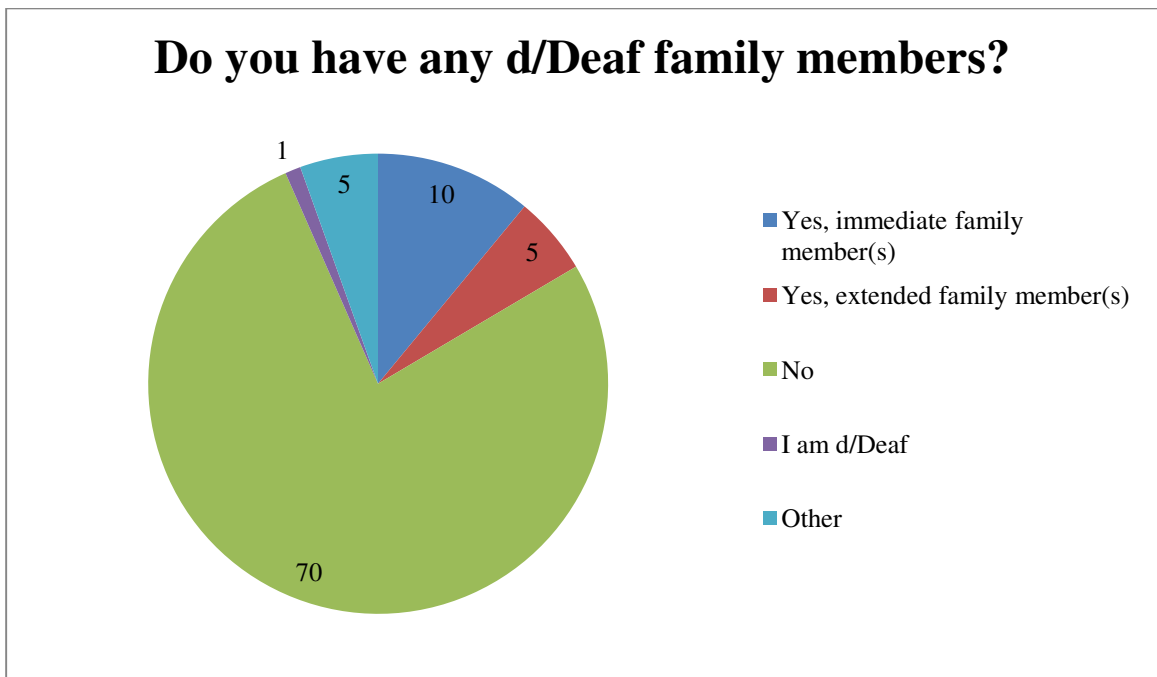- Yes, extended family member(s): 5
- No: 70
- I am d/Deaf: 1
- Other: 5

It should be noted that four of the five respondents who chose "other" explained that their husbands are d/Deaf while the remaining one listed a d/Deaf cousin.