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The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Signed Language Interpreting

Brenda Puhlman
Western Oregon University

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The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Signed Language Interpreting

By

Brenda Puhlman

A thesis submitted to Western Oregon University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:

Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies

December 2017
WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE GRADUATE FACULTY OF WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY HAVE EXAMINED THE ENCLOSED

☑ Thesis
☐ Field Study
☐ Professional Project

Titled:
The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Signed Language Interpreting

Graduate Student: Brenda Puhlman

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

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

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ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence in Signed Language Interpreting

By

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A thesis submitted to Western Oregon University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:

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December 2017

The focus of this research is on the role of emotional intelligence in the profession of signed language interpreting. The impact of Goleman’s (1995) five attributes of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills and how those attributes impact the way interpreters reflect on and discuss their work will be explored.

An online survey was administered and two focus groups were convened. A total of 177 participants met the criteria and completed the online survey. The results showed evidence that interpreters with higher emotional intelligence levels tended to reflect on their work more frequently when compared to those with lower emotional intelligence levels.

A total of five interpreters participated in the focus groups. The findings of the focus groups indicated that interpreters who were more emotionally intelligent demonstrated through
discussion of their work Goleman’s (1995) five attributes of emotional intelligence. These attributes were less evident in individuals who had lower levels of emotional intelligence. Reflection and discussion of interpreting work allows professionals to be more aware of additional options that can be employed in their work and better prepare them for their future work (Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2013).

*Keywords: signed language interpreters, emotional intelligence, supervision*
Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Background

During an apprenticeship as a new interpreter, I found myself reading Goleman’s (1995) book Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ for Character, Health and Lifelong Achievement. This book came up as a recommended book after I finished reading The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (Covey, 1991). I was working at a large university with many interpreters. While reading Goleman’s work, I found myself looking for aspects of emotional intelligence in the colleagues with whom I worked.

I noticed throughout many conversations, that the interpreters talked about their work in different manners. Some interpreters would speak passionately about their work, and, even if it was challenging, they found benefits. However, other interpreters would become fixated on their mistakes and only speak of the negative aspects of their work. I often spoke with other interpreters about their interpreting practice through work, professional social events, and weekly colloquiums. I was never able to pinpoint exactly what changed the way these interpreters talked about their work, but I had some speculations. How interpreters reflect on their work could be related to experience, education, personality, or many other factors. While reading Goleman’s (1995) work, I became more aware of how the role of emotional intelligence is applied to the work of signed language interpreters.

I was not sure for what exactly I was looking or how I was going to go about it. I began to search for prior literature on how emotional intelligence impacts interpreters,
but was unable to find any in this discipline. The lack of results led me to search in broader terms and other professions, specifically in practice and helping professions. After my experience working at this large university, I decided that I was most interested in how interpreters reflect on their work - through their own self-reflection and through discussions with other interpreters. I was curious about the impact of emotional intelligence on how signed language interpreters reflected and discussed their work.

**Statement of the Problem**

There is limited information available about emotional intelligence in the signed language interpreting profession. Previous work has only focused on attributes of emotional intelligence as it relates to interpreting (see, for example, Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2011; Pugh & Vetere, 2009). This research will be used to further the body of knowledge surrounding the impact emotional intelligence has on the profession of signed language interpreting, specifically how it impacts the way interpreters reflect on and discuss their work. Codier, Muneno, and Matsuura (2010) explain that extensive research “has demonstrated correlations between measured emotional intelligence and important workplace and workforce outcomes such as performance, leadership effectiveness, job retention, stress management, job satisfaction, burnout prevention and positive conflict styles” (p. 940). There have been several studies done in relation to emotional intelligence in the workplace (see, for example, Ann, 2008; Ingram, 2013; Morrison, 2007).

How does emotional intelligence level impact the way interpreters reflect on their work? In this research, how interpreters’ emotional intelligence level impacts the
frequency of reflection on their interpreting work and the way they talk about their work will be explored.

**Purpose of the Study**

Goleman (1995) shares five attributes of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, internal motivation, and social skills. The purpose of this exploratory mixed-methods study is to broaden the body of knowledge about the impact emotional intelligence has on how signed language interpreters talk about their interpreting work, specifically, how emotional intelligence impacts the frequency of interpreters’ reflection on their work.

This study represents initial research on the impact that emotional intelligence has on working signed language interpreters. How interpreters talk about their work and how they reflect on the work they have done in the past will be examined. In this research, the common trends that come up relating to interpreters’ emotional intelligence levels and how they discuss previous work experience in the profession will be identified.

**Theoretical Bases**

How does emotional intelligence level impact the way interpreters reflect on their work? Due to the limited current research on emotional intelligence of signed language interpreters, this research was based on other, similar, practice professions - primarily social work - as a foundation. The focus of this research is twofold: emotional intelligence and reflection. Mayer and Salovey (1990) explain four branches of emotional intelligence: identifying emotions, using emotions, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. However, this research is founded on Goleman’s (1995) adapted version of their work, because it contains five attributes of emotional intelligence: self-
awareness, self-regulation, empathy, internal motivation, and social skills, that seem to align with the work of the interpreter.

Dean and Pollard (2013) introduce Demand-Control Schema as an approach to reflect on, discuss, and learn from the work of interpreters. Supervision is a form of professional development used in practice professions as a process to reflect on the workplace (Driscoll, 2007). Maffia (2014) writes “to make effective practice decisions, one must be a ‘reflective practitioner’ (Schön, 1983, 1987, p. 23)” (p. 13). He continues by explaining that “Reflective practitioners critically analyze and reflect when confronted with the complexities of the job in addition to reflecting on their actions and the impact of those actions” (Maffia, 2014, p. 13).

**Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of this research was that the qualitative data collected from two focus groups yielded responses from only five participants. This cannot be generalized to the population of interpreting as a whole; there are currently 15,185 members of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (2016), the limited number of participants in the focus group allowed individuals to feel more comfortable in being able to share their stories and experiences and allowed for a greater depth of data from the limited number of participants. Though the interpreting profession is a female-dominated field (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2016), there were no males that participated in the focus group. Therefore, how emotional intelligence impacts the way interpreters discuss their work can only represent a small set of the female population of signed language interpreters.
The collection of data was done through self-reported responses in an online survey and narratives through two focus groups. With the information being personal, the respondents may have adjusted their answers to feel more comfortable in a small group. However, the analysis of the data proceeded as if each participant responded honestly.

Some errors occurred with the online platform used to develop the survey and some responses were submitted multiple times - this was confirmed through duplicate responses by people who identified themselves when they indicated their willingness to volunteer to be contacted for the follow-up focus group. Confirmed duplication of responses were deleted to the best of the researcher's ability.

Access to the survey, the amount of time the survey was available, and when the focus groups occurred were other possible limitations to the research. The survey remained open for just over two weeks during August of 2017. The survey was disseminated through online social networking sites. This limited the number of participants to those with access to said sites. The focus groups were set up for two separate times in early September of 2017 and was available for those who volunteered to participate and were available to attend either of the timeslots for the focus group sessions.

**Definition of Terms**

Some recurring terms will appear in this paper. For purposes of this study, these terms will be defined as follows:

- *Assignment* - the job/environment where the interpreter goes to work as a professional.
• Emotional intelligence - one’s ability to perceive, integrate, understand and manage their emotions (Zeidner, Roberts, & Matthews, 2004).

• Interpreters - signed language interpreters whose working languages are American Sign Language and English unless otherwise noted in this research.

• Practice profession - professions that require theoretical knowledge and technical skills (Trimble, 2014).

• Reflection - an interpreter’s ability to analyze and consider previous work done as a professional signed language interpreter. This can be done through activities, such as journaling, art, thought-process, or discussion with others.

• Supervision - an interactive reflective practice strategy used to discuss work done mostly in practice professions. Supervision involves identifying demands and brainstorming possible controls (Karasek, 1979; Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2013). This research will focus on Dean and Pollard’s approach of Demand Control Schema (DC-S) supervision. It is also sometimes referred to as case-conferencing or dialogic work analysis. Other terms found in the literature on supervision are:

  • Demands - challenges that come up in the work or aspects that might need to be addressed (Karasek, 1979; Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2013).

  • Controls - skills and resources that can be used to respond to the demands (Karasek, 1979; Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2013).

In this paper, some of the literature that is currently published regarding emotional intelligence will be reviewed. In addition, the findings of a two-part, mixed-methods exploratory, study will be reported. The first part was an online survey that was
based on Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (2002) and interpreters’ reflection on their decision-making. There were a total of 177 responses that were analyzed for that section. The second portion of this research were two focus groups, in which close attention was paid to the way that professional signed language interpreters discussed their interpreting work. There were five participants between the two focus groups. This research used a mixture of quantitative data analysis and qualitative grounded theory research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
Chapter Two

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, literature pertaining to emotional intelligence will be explored. This chapter will specifically focus on how emotional intelligence impacts professionals working in practice professions. Currently, no research exists regarding the role of emotional intelligence in the way signed language interpreters reflect on and discuss their work. Therefore, primarily literature from other fields, such as social work and nursing, are used as a foundation for this research.

What is Emotional Intelligence?

Gardner (1983) proposed the idea that there are multiple intelligences. This is likely a factor that contributed to the development of emotional intelligence. This research will focus on interpreters’ emotional intelligence level, assessed through self-reported survey responses adapted from the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (2002). The test was adapted from a study done by Mayer and Salovey (1990, 1997) who proposed that there were four branches of emotional intelligence: identifying emotions, using emotions, understanding emotions, and managing emotions (seen in Figure 1).

![Emotional Intelligence Diagram]

Figure 1. Four Branches of Emotional Intelligence

Mayer and Salovey (1990) *Four Branches of Emotional Intelligence*
Goleman (1995) defines emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage our own emotions as well as the ability to recognize, understand, and influence the emotions of others. Emotionally intelligent people are aware of their emotions and the impact that it could have on other people, positively and negatively, and they can manage the emotions that they feel (Mayer & Salovey, 1990).

Goleman (1995) explains characteristics of high emotional intelligence as “abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one’s moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope” (p. 34). These attributes seem to align with how interpreters work as professionals. Goleman (1995) also labels five attributes of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, internal motivation, and social skills as seen in Figure 2. Each of these attributes will be discussed below.

Goleman (1995) *Five Attributes of Emotional Intelligence*

*Figure 2. Five Attributes of Emotional Intelligence*
**Self-Awareness.** Mayer and Stevens (1994) explain that self-awareness is being “aware of both our mood and our thoughts about that mood” (p. 351). Humans experience two levels of emotions: conscious and unconscious. When the human becomes aware of the emotion, it is conscious and is registered by the frontal cortex (Schwartz, Snidman, & Kagan, 1996). Otherwise, the emotion is unconscious and can later be discovered through reflection or discussion (Kahneman, 2011). Self-awareness is identifying emotions and the impacts of the emotions.

Individuals who lack self-awareness, might also identify with what psychiatrists call alexithymia, or someone who lacks words for their feelings or emotions. This term was coined by Harvard psychiatrist, Dr. Peter Sifneos. It is not that alexithymics do not have emotions, but rather they lack the ability to express them. Alexithymics do not lack emotional intelligence, but they lack the self-awareness of it (Goleman, 1995).

**Self-Regulation.** Individuals with high ability to self-regulate, as Goleman (1995) explains, are thoughtful, practice reflection, accept change, and demonstrate integrity. Self-regulation is evident in signed language interpreters who reflect on their work through discussion with other interpreters (Dean & Pollard, 2013). The integrity of the interpreter is seen when the interpreter is asked to make professional decisions, often based on language (Llewellyn-Jones, & Lee, 2014).

**Empathy.** Goleman (1995) provides three different kinds of empathy that are seen in highly emotionally intelligent people: cognitive empathy, emotional empathy, and empathic concern. Cognitive empathy is the ability to see things as other people see them, or seeing things from another’s point of view. Emotional empathy refers to being able to feel the emotion of other people in the environment. Empathic concern is not just being
able to feel what others feel, but in addition feeling the need to help them. One kind of empathy “alone seems insufficient” (Goleman, 1995, p. 97).

**Internal Motivation.** Individuals who demonstrate internal motivation are eager to learn new things and explore new approaches to their work (Goleman, 1995). Individuals with high self-awareness and high levels of internal motivation often stretch themselves, but are aware of their limits in their work (Goleman, 1995).

**Social Skills.** Social skills are more than being able to hold up a conversation with other people (Goleman, 1995). Professionals who demonstrate high levels of social skills are able to understand another person’s feelings, be a team player, and negotiate with others when necessary (Goleman, 1995). Interpreters often work as a team along with other professionals, including other interpreters, educators, or lawyers (see, for example, Llewellyn-Jones, & Lee, 2014; Perez & Wilson, 2007).

When these skills are combined, the attributes contribute to high levels of emotional intelligence. There are many positive outcomes of emotional intelligence (Grant, Kinman & Alexander, 2014). Highly emotionally intelligent people tend to have a higher quality of life and greater job satisfaction (Mhalkar, George, & Nayak, 2014). George (2000) completed a study of organizations’ leadership teams and found that a high level of emotional intelligence was linked to confidence, cooperation, and trust within the team. Slaski and Cartwright (2003) studied stress in UK managers and found that managers that received emotional intelligence training had more effective stress management strategies. Hart and Kinman (2008) researched prison officers and found that those with a higher emotional intelligence level engage in more positive health behaviors. Schutte et al. (1998) completed a study of 346 first year college students and
found emotionally intelligent people tend to be more physically and psychologically healthy. Karim and Shah (2013) studied emotional intelligence and quality of life. They found that higher levels of emotional intelligence correlated with fewer tendencies of suicidal behaviors.

**Application to Professionals**

Emotions have a function for professionals -- ranging from alerting people of danger to helping build social relationships (Grant et al, 2014). Individuals who work in helping professions tend to be more emotionally intelligent than those working in other professions (Rasoal, Danielsson, & Jungert, 2012; Smith, 2006). Research in nursing and social work has shown positive impacts of emotional intelligence in practice professions, such as higher quality of life, improved job satisfaction, better coping strategies, and limited impact on the environment in which they work (Ann, 2008; Ingram, 2013; Morrison, 2007). Professionals should not allow their emotions to impede on their professional judgement and decision making (Biestek, 1961; Butrym, 1976).

Social workers experience situations that may result in strong emotional reactions, “such as working with abused and vulnerable children and adults, witnessing service users’ accounts of trauma, and experiencing catastrophic events such as client suicide” (Grant et al, 2014, p. 875). Social work students are trained in reflective practice to be able to experience the mentioned situations and be able to improve on their work (Ingram, 2013). Working in these scenarios could be more taxing on students who have not yet developed a strong sense of emotional intelligence and thus not yet developed their coping strategies (Litvack, Mishna, & Bogo, 2010). The Professional Capabilities Framework for Social Workers in the UK has an expectation that social workers will be
emotionally literate to assist in doing their work effectively (College of Social Work, 2012). This expectation is met by providing emotion training to students throughout their time in the university. The University of Bedfordshire, for example, implemented the “emotional curriculum” into their studies where students are taught to manage uncertainty, and promote wellbeing (College of Social Work, 2012).

Individuals who feel emotions fall into one of three categories: self-aware, engulfed, or accepting (Mayer & Stevens, 1994). Individuals who are self-aware are mindful, and they do not easily become stuck in extreme moods (Mayer & Stevens, 1994; Goleman, 1995). This would be beneficial in the profession of interpreting because people who fall into this category tend to have limited impact on the environment they are in. Individuals who are engulfed often feel stuck within their emotions with little to no control of their emotional life; they often feel overwhelmed (Mayer & Stevens, 1994; Goleman, 1995). They often lack self-regulation. This would not be beneficial to interpreters, because it could render their ability to convey a message effectively. Individuals who are accepting of their emotions often have little motivation to change those emotions, even if they are negative emotions. This is often seen in people with depression (Mayer & Stevens, 1994; Goleman, 1995). Goleman (1995) explains

All emotions are, in essence, impulses to act, the instant plans for handling life that evolution has instilled in us. The very root of the word emotion is ‘motere,’ the Latin verb ‘to move,’ plus the prefix ‘e-’ to connote ‘move away,’ suggesting that a tendency to act is implicit in every emotion. (p. 6)

Emotions often elicit action. Interpreters are required to make decisions in the moment. Their emotions can influence the decisions that they make. The researcher predicts that
individuals with higher emotional intelligence levels will reflect on those emotions after their work and have a broader vocabulary to discuss the emotions.

Some emotions are so hard to articulate that interpreters talk their way around them, and it strikes them when someone, a counselor or colleague, gives them words to describe those feelings (Kahneman, 2011). Interpreters may not always be able to identify their feelings immediately. Occasionally, there are no words to express emotions (Kahneman, 2011). When interpreters discuss their work, they may avoid emotional language until another person guides them through their thoughts to find the words to match their emotions. This can be done when interpreters sit and discuss their work, as in DC-S supervision (Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2013).

Supervision, or case conferencing, is an approach that some signed language interpreters currently use to discuss their work (Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2013; Maffia, 2014). Supervision is also seen in other professions (Driscoll, 2007). Dean and Pollard (2001) base their research on Karasek’s (1979) demand-control theory. Supervision, a dialogical work analysis, is a structured approach that allows interpreters to identify different aspects of a previous interpreting assignment and brainstorm different approaches to apply to future work. Interpreters may engage in DC-S dialogic work analysis supervision. In that approach, participants are introduced to work challenges and learn how specific factors in interpreting work environments can affect them, their consumers, and their translations (Dean et al., 2004). The challenges are referred to as demands. Controls are decisions, skills, or resources that the interpreter might bring to the assignment, or could engage in after the assignment.
Dean and Pollard’s (2001) dialogical work analysis supervision has several participants involved. The *supervision leader* will guide the discussion of the interpreting assignment or *case*, the story being told. The *case giver* will be presenting on something that happened, typically while they were at an interpreting assignment. The *participants* will listen to the case. There is typically one participant who is assigned to taking notes of the case, making it visible for everyone to see. They will categorize the demands in four different categories: environmental, interpersonal, paralinguistic, and intrapersonal. They will also write down *controls employed*, or things done to respond to demands. The participants will look over the notes and confirm that everything is correct. Once confirmed, the supervision leader and case giver will identify the *main demand*, or the demand that the case giver would like greater insight on. The main demand will be highlighted, and the participants will typically begin brainstorming *control options*, or things that the interpreter can do to respond to the main demand. The supervision session can end there, if the case giver feels content with the options provided or the session could continue on in several different ways (see Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2013, for additional information).

Exploring possible control options for interpreting work allows for a broader insight for future assignments. The researcher predicts that the higher level of emotional intelligence, the more likely the interpreter is to reflect on their work – specifically in a manner which encourages the interpreter to improve on their work. This prediction was investigated in the current study.
Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study was to broaden the body of knowledge of the impact emotional intelligence has on how signed language interpreters reflect on and talk about their interpreting work. The target population were current working signed language interpreters. The first portion of data collection, the online survey, had an emphasis on quantitative data, while the second portion of data collection, focus groups, was based in qualitative data. Qualitative interviews, in this case, focus groups, “gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale, 1983, p. 174).

Participants

Participants volunteered to participate and could withdraw or exclude answers with no negative effect. However, any responses that were not completely filled out, aside from the optional demographics section, were eliminated from the data analysis procedure. Participants were recruited by sending out the survey through online professional interpreting networks. Participants voluntarily joined the study. Participants were given the option to provide contact information if they were interested in being involved in a follow-up interview/focus group. Participants for the interview/focus group were selected based on availability. The interviews/focus groups were recorded for transcribing and data analysis purposes. The consent form for participants can be found in Appendix A.
Design

**Online survey.** The first portion of the data collection was through an online survey using Google Forms. Participants were asked to respond to various demographic questions to provide an understanding of the population of the responses. Demographic questions were left open-ended so participants could freely respond to age, gender, and race. Participants were also asked to provide information regarding their highest degree level and the number of hours of interpreting work they engage in on average each week.

After the demographics, participants responded to general questions to determine one’s emotional intelligence level. These questions were adapted from the larger scale emotional intelligence inventory, the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) (2002).

The first section of the survey measured the emotional intelligence level of the participants. The questions required responses on a Likert scale, 1 (*strongly disagreeing*) to 5 (*strongly agreeing*), to a

![Figure 3. Emotional Intelligence Inventory](image-url)
statement. For this research, there was a total of 50 points possible. If responses totaled
50 points, it would represent the individual with the highest emotional intelligence level.
This section of the survey can be seen in Figure 3.

In the final portion of the online survey, data on the frequency of interpreters
reflecting on their work and their decision-making process was analyzed. This section
was also analyzed using a Likert scale, 1 (never) to 5 (always). This section of the survey
can be seen in Figure 4. The highest frequency that could be represented in this section
was 30 points. The rating of 30 means that the participant responded always to all of the
self-reflection questions. The complete list of questions used during the online survey,
including the demographics, the emotional intelligence inventory, and the self-reflection questions, can be found in Appendix B.

The survey was disseminated through various professional Facebook groups. Studies have shown that the best time to post on social networking sites are Tuesday through Thursdays during the late morning/early afternoon Eastern time (People Pulse, 2017). The link to the survey was disseminated during those times. When the link for the survey was shared, it also included the requirements for participating – currently working signed language interpreter – as well as a blurb about the research and an estimation that the survey will take five minutes.

The survey was piloted with individuals who matched the criteria to gain insight on how long it would take for individuals to complete. The research process had not yet received approval from the university or the Institutional Review Board (IRB) when the survey was being piloted; therefore, results from the pilot survey were deleted before the actual survey was sent out.

**Focus group.** The second portion of the data collection was through two focus groups via Google Hangouts. At the end of the online survey, respondents were asked to provide contact information if they wanted to be contacted for a follow-up interview/focus group. The focus groups were determined based on availability of participants. Once the survey portion was closed, a follow-up email was sent out to the volunteers with a link to a survey determining availability. After one week, and a significant number of the participants (40 of the 68 it was sent to) filling out the availability survey, the researcher decided on two times when the most volunteers were available for one-hour to do the focus group.
Individuals were asked to respond to different questions regarding their work as signed language interpreters. Because the approval of the IRB was needed in advance, the researcher provided an extensive list of possible questions for the focus group to be approved. However, when it came time to do the focus groups, the questions narrowed down to what the researcher found to be the five most relevant questions based on the results from the online survey and the review of the literature of previous research. The five questions asked in the focus groups can be seen in Figure 5. The complete list of questions that were approved through the IRB can be found in Appendix C. Data was initially analyzed using a table similar to that in Figure 5. Transcripts for each focus group participant was added into the cell of the table that it corresponded to. Data was coded confidentially. During the data analysis portion of this research, the five focus group participants were labelled \(P_1, P_2, P_3, P_4\), and \(P_5\). This was representative of their

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about a positive interaction you have had with a colleague.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about a negative interaction you have had with a colleague.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What contributes to effective teaming experience?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about a time when you were satisfied with your interpreting work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about a time when you were not satisfied with your interpreting work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5. Focus Group Data Analysis*
emotional intelligence rating. \( P1 \) representing the lowest emotional intelligence, and \( P5 \) representing the highest.

Focus groups were done through Google Hangouts. This allowed the participants to see each other’s faces and to be able to feel more comfortable with each other. The researcher, a signed language interpreter, facilitated the focus groups to add an additional level of comfort for the participants in sharing their responses. Brunvand (1998) explains, “The closer the collectors are to blending in… as participant-observers themselves, the better and less self-conscious the performance will be” (p. 28). The focus groups were casual, and participants only needed to respond to the questions they wanted to respond to. There were no penalties if participants declined to answer. However, each participant responded to each of the questions asked during the focus group.

**Data Analysis Procedure**

The survey was disseminated using Google Forms, the data was analyzed by looking for common themes in the responses. All responses for the survey were categorized from one to five as mentioned before. Responses were grouped based on responses to the questions focused on emotional intelligence and analyzed based on the average responses for interpreter reflection. An open coding method, “the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data,” was used to analyze the survey responses (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101). Responses were grouped into four categories by their emotional intelligence level: high, average, below average, and low. This classification was based on the model of previous emotional intelligence research done by Mhalkar, George, and Hayak (2014); however this research used a smaller scale. Mhalkar, George, and Nayak utilized the
Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (2002) while measuring the relationship between nursing students’ emotional intelligence and their coping strategies.

The online survey was then analyzed by rating the frequency of reflection in interpreters. This was done through calculating the sum for each participant individually. Once individual ratings were determined, the average score from each category of emotional intelligence was determined and compared to each other.

The focus group portion of the research was recorded for transcription purposes. After the first focus group, the video was transcribed. While transcribing, notes were taken of general observations and common themes that came up throughout the discussion (McMilan & Schumacher, 2009). Personal identifiers were also removed from the transcript to protect the identity of participants. After completion of transcribing the first focus group, the second recording was sent through an online computer software to be transcribed. Once the second transcription returned, a general read-through was done to ensure accuracy and to take notes of common themes that came up – some that aligned with the first focus group and some that were new trends (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The initial read through also began to identify any indicators of Goleman’s (1995) attributes of emotional intelligence. Transcripts were stored in table form, seen in Figure 5. Comments were made on the document to highlight instances where the attributes came up in the narratives.

During the initial read through, personal identifiers were removed from the transcript. Participants were labeled P1-P5, representing Participant 1 through Participant 5 during the data analysis process. After the data was analyzed and the writing process began, the focus group participants were referred to as Annie, Sophie, Beth, Kate, and
Rebecca, respectively. During the focus group, the participants were asked to share of their experiences as a working interpreter. The stories were recorded and transcribed. The use of qualitative research is “exceptionally suited for exploration, for beginning to understand a group or phenomenon” (Gay & Airasian, 2003, p. 163). Due to the limited prior research on the topic of emotional intelligence in practice professions, this exploratory study provides beginning trends that arose in the data.
Chapter Four

FINDINGS

There were a total of 177 responses to the online survey that were reviewed for the purposes of this study. Participants volunteered to take the survey which was disseminated through several online social media interpreting Facebook groups, including Silent Weekend 2017 @ WOU, Signed Language Interpreting Mentors Garden, Professional American Sign Language Interpreting, and Discover Interpreting. At the conclusion of the survey, participants were given the opportunity to provide contact information if they were interested in being involved in a follow-up focus group or interview. There were a total of 68 participants who volunteered to be contacted for a follow-up. Two focus groups were administered based on the availability of individuals who volunteered to be contacted. There were a total of five participants in the follow-up focus group.

Online Survey Findings

The original number of responses for the online survey totaled 192 participants, but the total reviewed for this study was 177. There were six responses removed from the data analysis due to duplication of submissions, perhaps an error resulting from the site used to collect the data. The researcher discovered through the coding process that there were several duplicate responses and verified with the names of the participants who left contact information for a follow-up. An additional nine responses were removed, because they did not match the eligible criteria for research participants. The research was focused on current working signed language interpreters. Therefore, responses from
educators, students, and retired interpreters were removed from the data. From here on, *participants* will refer to the 177 individuals who met the criteria for the online survey.

**Demographics.** Of those who met the criteria described in the consent form, ages varied from 22 years old to 73 years old. There were 156 respondents who identified as female, 14 identified as male, and seven identified as other. There were a total of 135 participants who responded that the race they most identified with was Caucasian, 11 responded with Lantinx (Latino/Latina), eight respondents identified as African American, and five participants responded with Asian. Participants were also asked to declare their highest completed level of education; results were as follows: eight responded that they have a high school diploma, 30 have an Associate’s degree, 93 have a Bachelor’s degree, 42 have a Master’s degree, one has a Doctorate degree, and three have Professional diplomas.

Female-identified participants made up 88.1% of the responses. This is a fairly accurate representation of the gender-identities of Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf

![Figure 6. Comparison of Current Study and Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Member Identity](image-url)
members (2016). Individuals who identified as Caucasian represented 76.3% of the participants. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf reported that 86.9% of its members identify as Caucasian. Latinx in this research represented 6.2% and represents 5.1% of Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf members. African-American-identified participants represented 4.5% of respondents in this study, Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf reports 4.9% of their members identifying as African American. Asian-identified participants made up 2.8% of this research, but only represents 1.8% of Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf members. The comparison of race identity between this study and the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf can be seen in Figure 6.

**Emotional Intelligence.** The lowest emotional intelligence level from the responses was 28, and the highest was 50. The average emotional intelligence level from the responses was 40.5. Responses were grouped into four categories by their emotional intelligence level:

- high (44 and above),
- average (39-43),
- below average (36-38), and low (35 and below). This classification was based on the model of a previous emotional intelligence study in

![Emotional Intelligence Levels in Interpreters](image)

*Figure 7. Distribution of Online Survey Participants by Emotional Intelligence Category*
The final portion of the online survey included items about how interpreters reflect on their work and their decision-making process. This section was constructed using a 1-5 Likert scale, 1 (never) and 5 (always). The results from this portion of the survey generally showed that interpreters, as a whole, reflect on their work and decision-making. The responses always and often made up a majority of the responses for each of the six questions in this portion of the survey. Table 1 and Table 2 below represent the percentages of those who responded to the demographic section separated by emotional intelligence levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional Intelligence Level</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Multiracial</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Latinx</th>
<th>African-American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Gender and Race by Emotional Intelligence Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional Intelligence Level</th>
<th>High School Diploma</th>
<th>Associate’s Degree</th>
<th>Bachelor’s degree</th>
<th>Master’s Degree</th>
<th>Doctorate Degree</th>
<th>Professional Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Highest Education by Emotional Intelligence Level*

Overall, individuals who scored a 44 or above on the emotional intelligence responded to the self-reflection questions more positively - providing evidence that individuals with higher emotional intelligence reflect on their work and discuss it more...
frequently. There were 45 individuals who scored a 44 or higher in the emotional intelligence level. The average age for this group was 37. There were 40 individuals in this group who identified as female, two identified as male, and three identified as other. Of the 45 respondents with a high emotional intelligence level, 36 of them identified as Caucasian, five as multi-race, one Asian, and five preferred not to answer. There were nine participants in this category with Associate’s degrees, 23 had Bachelor’s degrees, and 13 had Master’s degrees.

The highly emotionally intelligent group responded always and often in 92.2% of the responses. Sometimes and seldom only accounted for 7.8% of responses in this group. The responses are a sum of all six reflection questions for the 45 respondents for a total of 270 responses. The highly emotional intelligent group had an average frequency of reflection of 26.56 out of a total of 30 possible points.

Individuals who scored between 39 and 43 on their emotional intelligence inventory were grouped into the average category. The average age for this group was 42. There were 70 individuals in this group who identified as female, nine identified as male, and three identified as other. Of the 82 respondents with average emotional intelligence level, 68 of them identified as Caucasian, two as multi-race, six as Latinx, one African American, and seven preferred not to answer. There were four participants in this category with a High School diploma, 13 with Associate’s degrees, 42 had Bachelor’s degrees, 21 had Master’s degrees, one had a Doctorate’s degree, and one did not respond to their highest education completed.

There were 491 total responses for the six reflection questions of the 82 respondents that scored in this category. These individuals also had a majority of always
and often. These responses made up 86.1% of the total responses to the self-reflection questions. Sometimes and seldom represented 13.9% of the total for individuals with average emotional intelligence. The average emotional intelligence group had an average frequency of reflection of 25.95 out of a total of 30 possible points.

There were 33 individuals who scored below average emotional intelligence, between 36 and 38 on the emotional intelligence rating. The average age for this group was 41. There were 30 individuals in this group who identified as female, two identified as male, and one identified as other. Of the 33 respondents with a below average emotional intelligence level, 26 of them identified as Caucasian, two Asian, two Latinx, one African American, and two preferred not to answer. There were three participants in this category with a High School diploma, seven with Associate’s degrees, 14 had Bachelor’s degrees, seven had Master’s degrees, one had a Professional degree, and one preferred not to respond to their highest level of education completed.

The total responses for the six reflection questions of the 33 participants in the below average emotional intelligence group was 197. This category of responses represents the only never response in the reflection part of the survey. It was in response to the question ‘I consider how others will perceive me when I make decisions while interpreting.’ The results show that always and often represents 78.2% of total responses in this category. Sometimes, seldom and never represented 21.8% of the total responses in the below average level of emotional intelligence. The average emotional intelligence group had an average frequency of reflection of 23.82 out of a total of 30 possible points.

The final category represented individuals who scored less than 36 on the emotional intelligence rating scale, this category is low emotional intelligence. There
were 17 respondents who rated as low emotional intelligence. The average age for this group was 41. There were 15 individuals in this group who identified as female, one identified as male, and one identified as other. Of the 17 respondents with a low emotional intelligence level, 10 of them identified as Caucasian, two as Latinx, one as African American, and four preferred not to answer. There was one participant in this category with a High School diploma, one with Associate’s degrees, 14 had Bachelor’s degrees, and one had a Master’s degree.

There were a total of 17 participants in this category resulting in 102 responses from the self-reflection section of the online survey. In this category, always and often represented 73.5% of responses, while sometimes and seldom represented 26.5% of the total responses. The average emotional intelligence group had an average frequency of reflection of 22.86 out of a total of 30 possible points.

Figure 8 represents the frequency of reflection of interpreters based on their emotional intelligence levels.

The next section will focus on

Figure 8. Frequency of Reflection Based on Emotional Intelligence
the findings from the focus groups. There were two focus groups with a total of five participants.

**Focus Group Findings**

The focus groups were determined based on availability of participants. Once the survey portion was closed, a follow-up email was sent out to the 68 participants who volunteered to determine when the majority were available for one-hour to do the focus group. Two time slots were chosen with the highest level of availability and sent to those who responded. A total of 22 volunteers were available between the two time frames. However, when it came time to do the focus group, the first one had three of the four participants that confirmed, the second focus group had two of the five participants that confirmed they could attend. All five participants from the focus group were female. The participants varied in background, location, and interpreting settings primarily worked in. All five participants have at least five years of interpreting experience.

When coding the transcripts, the researcher referred to the participants as \( P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 \) - representing Participant 1 through Participant 5. These represented the emotional intelligence level of each participant in the focus group - \( P1 \) rated as the lowest emotional intelligence, and \( P5 \) rated as the highest emotional intelligence. A general synopsis of the responses from the focus groups can be found in Appendix D. Henceforth, \( P1-P5 \) will be referred to as Annie, Sophie, Beth, Kate, and Rebecca, respectively.

Annie scored the lowest level of emotional intelligence of the participants in the focus groups. She has a bachelor’s degree. She also reported that she attended an Interpreter Training Program, and eventually received a master’s degree. She holds a
National Interpreter Certification and has passed an interpreter screening administered by her state of residency.

In the online survey, Annie responded sometimes to three of the self-reflection questions, and often to the other three self-reflection questions. She rated 22 out of 30 in the frequency of reflection portion of the online survey. From the researcher’s original notes during the first read-through of the transcript of the focus group, Annie’s responses demonstrated evaluative language, wanting attention from others, lack of understanding of other’s emotions, and negative self-talk. Occasionally self-awareness, self-regulation, and internal motivation came up in her responses.

Sophie rated the second lowest emotional intelligence of the participants in the focus groups, or below average in the online survey category. Sophie has a bachelor’s degree. She has been involved in the Deaf community through several different avenues – job coach, advocate, interpreter. She has a passing score for her state requirements in the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment. She also has passed a Quality Assurance Screening for her state of residency and has passed the knowledge portion of the National Interpreter Certification.

In the online survey, Sophie responded often to four of the self-reflection questions, and always to the other two self-reflection questions. She rated 26 out of 30 in the frequency of reflection portion of the online survey. Sophie’s responses in the focus group demonstrated competition between colleagues, role confusion, and concerns of consumer needs. Self-awareness was evident in three responses, self-regulation in one response, and internal motivation in two responses.
Beth rated in the middle of the participants in the focus group of emotional intelligence level; she has an average emotional intelligence rating from the online survey. She completed an Interpreter Training Program and then completed her bachelor’s degree. She also holds a certification from the Board for Evaluation of Interpreters.

In the online survey, Beth responded *often* to one of the self-reflection questions, and *always* to the other five self-reflection questions. She rated 29 out of 30 in the frequency of reflection portion of the online survey. She represented the highest frequency level of the five focus group participants. Involvement of the consumers in the interpretation process, evaluative language, and concern of Deaf consumers’ best interests were demonstrated in responses to the focus group questions. There was evidence of empathy in response to three questions, social skills in response to four questions, and self-awareness and self-regulation were evident in responses to one question each.

Kate responded with the second highest emotional intelligence level, or an average rating of emotional intelligence in the online survey rankings. She has a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree. Kate went to an interpreting certificate program. She holds a Certification of Interpretation and Certification of Transliteration. She has the highest number of years of interpreting experience from the participants of the focus groups.

In the online survey, Kate responded *often* to three of the self-reflection questions, and *always* to the other three self-reflection questions. She rated 27 out of 30 in the frequency of reflection portion of the online survey. Commitment to the profession and
non-competitive behaviors were demonstrated through Kate’s responses in the focus group. Social skills were demonstrated in two responses; self-awareness was demonstrated in four responses; self-regulation was demonstrated in three responses; four responses demonstrated internal motivation; and two responses demonstrated empathy.

Rebecca responded with the highest level of emotional intelligence and ranked in the high category through the online survey. She has two bachelor’s degrees. She did not go through an Interpreter Training Program, but has a parent who is involved in the Deaf community. Thus, Rebecca has also been involved in the community for her whole life. She pursued the interpreting profession through self-study, mentorships, and attending workshops. Rebecca has passed the knowledge portion of the National Interpreter Certification. She has been in the profession for the shortest number of years compared to the other focus group participants.

In the online survey, Rebecca also responded *often* to three of the self-reflection questions, and *always* to the other three self-reflection questions. She rated 27 out of 30 in the frequency of reflection portion of the online survey. She rated the same as Kate in the frequency of reflection rating. Openness to continue learning, support of the Deaf community, and perseverance were demonstrated through Rebecca’s responses in the focus group. Social skills were demonstrated in two responses; self-awareness was demonstrated in three responses; self-regulation was demonstrated in three responses; three responses demonstrated internal motivation; and two responses demonstrated empathy.

While coding the two transcripts from the focus groups, the researcher took notes of evidence, or lack thereof, of attributes of emotional intelligence. Those attributes
included self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, internal motivation, and social skills. The researcher also took notes of common trends that came up between the responses (see Appendix D).

**Application to the Interpreting Profession**

Due to the fact that there has yet to be research published on the impact of emotional intelligence on interpreter reflection, the focus groups provided a snapshot for the ways that emotional intelligence is demonstrated through interpreter dialogue. However, there has been research done on how social work students talk about their work after participating in emotional intelligence training; the results showed improvement in the ability of students to reflect on their work and develop better coping strategies for future work (Grant & Kinman, 2014).

Looking at the total responses for the reflection questions, individuals who represented higher emotional intelligence levels also represented higher frequencies of

![Figure 9. Self-Reflection Frequency Based on Emotional Intelligence Levels](image-url)
reflecting on their work as interpreters. The frequency of interpreters reflecting on their work gradually decreased as the level of emotional intelligence decreased. As seen in Figure 9, participants with a high level of emotional intelligence reflected on their interpreting work and decisions after a job 92.2% of the time.

The responses gradually decrease down to 73.5%, representing the frequency that individuals with low emotional intelligence reflect on the decisions and interpreting work. The sometimes and seldom responses decreased as the emotional intelligence levels increased. This shows the increase of reflection for individuals with high emotional intelligence levels. Litvack, Mishna, and Bogo (2010) discuss the benefits of social work professionals who reflect on their work. Ingram (2013) shared of the training that the social work students receive in reflective practice to be able to better serve their clientele. Likewise, when signed language interpreters reflect on their work, they are able to better understand their decision-making and apply that to their future interpreting work.

There have been benefits of students having training in emotional intelligence found in other practice profession. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and National Association of the Deaf (NAD) established a Code of Professional Conduct that interpreters should follow. Tenet 2.5 states “Refrain from providing counsel, advice, or personal opinions” (RID-NAD, 2005). A study in social work found that individuals with high level of emotional intelligence are able to limit their influence, especially emotional influence, on the environment (Myers, 2008). Emotionally intelligent individuals are more capable of handling their emotions and stress level in demanding situations (Mhalkar, George, & Nayak, 2014). This is a skill that is beneficial to interpreters.
Kate, with an average emotional intelligence level, demonstrated self-awareness when she shared, “I know my personality is direct and strong even in my regular life.” Kate demonstrated in multiple responses throughout the focus group that she is aware of how her personality and emotions may impact the interpreted event. Interpreters also use their emotional intelligence to align themselves appropriately in the interpreted setting. The characteristics of the interaction determines the appropriateness, but the interpreters “make active choices about managing the myriad of factors that foster successful interactions” (Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2011, p.1). The awareness and regulation of self in the interpreted interaction can have a positive effect if done appropriately, but could have a negative impact if not done appropriately (Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 201).

Goleman (1995) shares that “Flow is a state of self-forgetfulness… people in flow are so absorbed in the task at hand that they lose all self-consciousness” (p. 91). Goleman also shares that “flow is emotional intelligence at its best; flow represents perhaps the ultimate in harnessing the emotions in the service of performance and learning” (p. 90). Hoza (2016) similarly explains that interpreters can be in the zone:

That is the key to interpreting in the zone: Interpreters can create, and engage in, their own interpreting-related challenges, either by the situations in which they put themselves or by fully engaging in the challenges before them when they are interpreting (p. 51).

Kate, with an average emotional intelligence, shared of her experience of interpreting with a colleague with whom she works frequently in a specific setting. She described this work as “fun,” “smooth,” “easy,” and “connected.” She described that when working in
this situation, things move effortlessly, because they can just “go with it.” Kate’s experience demonstrates flow.

A study of social work students describes that “emotional responses to practice situations will inevitably influence their professional judgement, and develop the reflective skills required to interrogate and, if necessary regulate their emotional reactions” (Grant et al, 2014, p. 876). Sophie, with a below average emotional intelligence, demonstrated her self-regulation skills when sharing a story during the focus group about how she had to adapt to the setting she was working in. She shared, “I had to become a little bit more proactive about my role and kind of doing a little bit of additional work ahead of an assignment to make sure that I wasn't put in that kind of position again.” Sophie learned from an experience that was difficult and applied that to her future work as an interpreter.

Sophie and Beth (below average and average emotional intelligence, respectively) both commented on how supervision/case conferencing has improved their work as interpreters (Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2013). After Sophie explained her story, she explained that she discussed her options with trusted colleagues to have a better understanding of what she could do to make her work more effective. She was able to improve her future work. Beth, with average emotional intelligence, shared a story of not feeling content in her decisions that she had made while interpreting. She shared that she carried the baggage of a specific interpreting assignment with her until years later when she was introduced to supervision (Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2013) and able to share her story and finally find peace in the decisions that she had made. Discussing an interpreting
job, even years after it had happened, improved Beth’s confidence in decision-making through supervision.

Self-regulation allows interpreters to monitor their work and the impact that they would have in the environment. Psychologists have found that individuals can utilize their emotional intelligence to enhance their decision-making skills (Damasio, 1999; Schwarz, 2000). They are able to use self-regulation to minimize how their emotions will impact the environment based on the decisions that they make. Professionals with higher emotional intelligence can better utilize their professional judgement while working (Morrison, 2007).

Annie, with a low emotional intelligence level, demonstrated a lack of self-regulation skills when she reflected on taking work that she knew she could not handle. She shared, “I told them [the signed language interpreting agency] this is not the right job for me. I actually cannot do this, but I took the job.” This would demonstrate self-awareness as Annie recognized that she was not the best fit for the interpreting job. However, she went ahead and took the job she knew she could not do justice.

Professionals can also demonstrate interpersonal skills through their emotional intelligence and their professional relationships (Grant, 2014). A certain level of empathy is needed to build productive relationships with clients in the interpreting profession, like in the social work profession (Grant et al., 2014). The use of empathy has been studied by spoken language interpreters and seen to have a positive impact on interpreted events in clinical mental health settings (Pugh & Vetere, 2009).

Beth, with an average level of emotional intelligence, provided an example of how empathy has supported her role as an interpreter. She shared during the focus group
in regards to what makes working as a team effective, “Talking to someone how you would want them to talk to you and assuming the best - assuming they are just unaware of the small thing.” She demonstrated understanding of others. Beth demonstrated social skills when she indicated, “I think what's made some of my experiences effective with teaming was really clear communication.” In multiple responses to focus group questions, she demonstrated the importance of empathy in her work as an interpreter. She shared stories of how empathy has played a role in working with other interpreters and also working with clients.

While discussing empathy, Goleman (1995) shares approaches to providing effective feedback. Sophie, Beth, Kate, and Rebecca discussed their relationship with feedback while working with other interpreters. Sophie, below average emotional intelligence) mentioned that colleagues are “free to give me feedback, and I hope that I'm free to give you feedback, and this is a safe place, and it's going to stay between the two of us” when discussing positive interactions she has had with other interpreters. Sophie also described her relationship with feedback as being “able to accept feedback that is constructive in a way that you can use that effectively to polish your work.” Beth, with middle rating of emotional intelligence for the five focus group participants, shared “I always ask for any feedback, anything you see please tell me. Please write it down, I'll have a notebook if you don't. And then I always have something specific I'm working on” in response to Sophie’s comments regarding feedback.

Rebecca, with a high emotional intelligence, had commented that she believes working with other interpreters is effective when they do not provide unsolicited feedback. Kate, with average emotional intelligence, shared “I give unsolicited feedback
all the time. I will tell you why: not everybody wants to hear it, but some people need to hear it. And sometimes those people don’t know to ask” in response to Rebecca’s statement.

Levinson (as cited by Goleman, 1995) provides advice for the art of critique when giving feedback. Similarly, Witter-Merithew (2001) provides advice when giving and receiving feedback for signed language interpreters. Levinson starts with being specific. Witter-Merithew suggest that the person providing feedback should focus on specific things that can be improved. As Beth had mentioned during the focus group, she is always working on something specific and will discuss that with her colleague before they work together.

Next, Levinson (as cited by Goleman, 1995) shares that offering a solution is helpful when providing feedback. Likewise, Witter-Merithew (2001) suggests that professionals explore alternatives together. Sophie, with the second lowest emotional intelligence in the focus groups, shared of using feedback to “polish your work” and that can be improved by providing other options while giving feedback.

Levinson (as cited by Goleman, 1995) advises professionals to be present while giving feedback. Witter-Merithew (2001) advises interpreters to give their attention to the colleague they are providing the feedback to. This could be meeting with another interpreter and discussing work after an assignment where you worked together. Beth, with an average emotional intelligence level, shared how she likes to keep her schedule open after interpreting assignments, as much as possible, to be available to debrief with her colleague afterwards.
Lastly, Levinson (as cited by Goleman, 1995) suggests to be sensitive when providing feedback. Witter-Merithew (2001) provides two pieces of advice for being sensitive when providing feedback. First, she shares that the giver should check-in often to be sure that the communication is clear. Witter-Merithew also suggests being aware of the emotional response. Sophie shared that when working with colleagues she explains that it “is a safe place, and it's going to stay between the two of us.” Goleman (1995) suggests that providing feedback is an opportunity for individuals to work together and to continue learning.

Rebecca, with a high level of emotional intelligence, shared multiple times about her internal motivation for the profession. She shared about her eagerness to work with Deaf interpreters because her “eyes were open to so many nuances of the language that only a native could do.” She shared several times about her eagerness to learn from other interpreters with each new interpreting job that she went to.

Beth, with an average emotional intelligence level, also shared of her experience of working with Deaf interpreters. She shared about an interpreting job where she arrived and knew she was going to need additional support for the work that she was going to be doing. Tenet 2.4, in the Code of Professional Conduct for interpreters states “Request support (e.g., certified deaf interpreters, team members, language facilitators) when needed to fully convey the message or to address exceptional communication challenges” (RID-NAD, 2005). Beth called the interpreting agency that sent her to the job and requested additional support and was able to get a Deaf interpreter to support her in that specific interpreting assignment.
This research has provided evidence of emotional intelligence positively impacting signed language interpreters. Kate demonstrated how her self-awareness allows her to work more effectively with other people because she is mindful of how her personality can impact others while she works. Beth and Sophie shared their firsthand experience of improving their work through supervision and reflecting on the decisions that they had made. Beth indicated her use of empathy when working with others. Sophie, Beth, Kate, and Rebecca shared their experiences giving and receiving feedback. Lastly, Rebecca shared her experience working with Deaf interpreters and allowing her vocabulary and interpreting skills to develop.
Chapter Five

CONCLUSION

This study was developed to explore the role that emotional intelligence plays in signed language interpreting. Data was collected through an online survey and through two focus groups. The data was coded and analyzed for common trends, how often participants reflected on their work, and the frequency of Goleman’s (1995) five attributes of emotional intelligence – self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, internal motivation, and social skills – in the discussion of their work.

The researcher found that individuals who were more emotionally intelligent reflected on their work more frequently when compared to those with lower levels of emotional intelligence. This was found in the self-reported responses to questions via an online survey regarding how often interpreters reflected on their work. Interpreters with a lower level of emotional intelligence responded that they reflected on their work less frequently 18.7% of the time. No significant correlation was found in the online survey between age, gender, or race in regards to frequency of interpreters’ reflection on their professional work.

In the focus groups, all participants were asked to share on their experiences as working interpreters. The focus group provided evidence that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence demonstrated Goleman’s (1995) five attributes of emotional intelligence more frequently while engaging in discussion of their interpreting work when compared to those with lower emotional intelligence levels.
**Supervision**

One approach that two of focus group participants described as being beneficial to their work was supervision/case-conferencing, or dialogical work analysis (Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2013). This is done by recalling a specific interpreting experience with a group of trusted colleagues and identifying different aspects of that work (Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2013). During supervision, after the details of the interpreting assignment have been outlined, the colleagues are able to work through other possible options that could have been done during that interpreting job. This provides the interpreters with the advantage of having more options readily available the next time a similar event or demand comes up.

In a study done in 2003 on supervision, faculty who participated in the post-survey for the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education project were interviewed and reported that “students decision-making skills benefitted from infusing DC-S into the curricula (Institute for Assessment and Evaluation, 2003)” (as cited by Maffia, 2014, p. 14). Jenkinson (2009) found youth workers to utilize supervision as supportive and educative. Jenkinson also found supervision to have a managerial and mediation aspect between coworkers.

Richmond (2009) emphasizes the importance of professionals feeling valued and supported in their work through supervision and other avenues of reflective practice. Richmond found supervision is helping staff feel good about themselves, this positively influences their ability to learn and develop. In the counselling profession, regular supervision is not only seen as necessary but as an ethical requirement of practice (McKay, 1987).
Aside from dialogical work analysis, providing and receiving feedback can improve the work of interpreters. Four of the five participants in the focus group discussed the importance of feedback in their work as signed language interpreters. Levinson (as cited by Goleman, 1995) shares four parts of providing feedback: 1) be specific, 2) offer a solution, 3) be present, and 4) be sensitive. Goleman (1995) emphasizes that highly emotionally intelligent people utilize this approach, albeit subconsciously at times. Developing a high emotional intelligence could be beneficial for interpreters to nurture the giving and receiving of feedback from their colleagues.

**Recommendations**

Previous studies have shown improvement in students training in practice professions through courses focused around emotions (Ann, 2008; Jdaitawi, Taamneh, Gharaibeh, & Rababah, 2011; Mhalkar, George, Nayak, 2014). The researcher recommends emotional intelligence training as part of Interpreter Training Programs. Incorporating emotional intelligence training in educational programs will cultivate the development of confidence, cooperation, and trust (George, 2000), effective stress management strategies (Slaski & Cartwright, 2003), engagement in more positive health behaviors (Hart & Kinman, 2008), physical and psychological health improvements (Schutte et al., 1998), and an overall better quality of life (Karim & Shah, 2013) for students training to become interpreters.

Emotional intelligence appears to be a trainable attribute (Freedman, 2003; Wasseveld, Overbeeke, & Derksen, 2007) and providing training could be beneficial if incorporated into Interpreter Training Programs. This could be done through intentional practice of supervision (Dean & Pollard, 2013) and reflective practice (Richmond, 2009).
If the students practice supervision throughout their education, they could be more likely to utilize it in their work after graduation.

Another approach to engaging students in emotional intelligence training is “self-science” (Goleman, 1995). Goleman explains that self-science is the study of feelings, specifically “your own and those that erupt in relationships” (1995, p. 261). He writes of several examples of schools that have incorporated self-science into their education; simple activities are woven into different class curricula (Goleman, 1995).

Goleman explains these activities encourage students to learn how to improve their self-awareness, their ability to manage emotions, and increase their empathy. Self-awareness is taught by learning vocabulary and students reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses (Goleman, 1995). Managing emotions is practiced by exploring the feelings behind emotions, and learning different approaches for handling specific emotions (Goleman, 1995). Empathy is encouraged through learning relationship skills, such as listening skills, assertiveness (opposed to anger or passiveness), conflict resolution, and negotiating compromise (Goleman, 1995).

**Further Research**

This research was the first of its kind in the signed language interpreting field. Future research questions recommended by the researcher include:

- How does the educational background of interpreters impact their view on the profession?
- How does the educational background of interpreters impact their dialogue about the profession?
• How do individuals with higher emotional intelligence levels compare to those with lower emotional intelligence levels, specifically related to achieving National Interpreting Certification?

• How do emotional intelligence levels impact interpreters’ eagerness to engage in continuing education/professional development?

• How do Goleman’s (1995) attributes of emotional intelligence individually impact the work of signed language interpreters?

This research has limitations; therefore, there could be benefits in repeating this research. The most important limitation is a result of the fact that sample size is not an accurate representation of the interpreting profession as a whole, specifically the focus group that recorded how interpreters talk about their work. Due to the fact that the sample size was so small, providing responses from only five participants, a study with a larger population could yield different results.

Conclusion

This research contributed to the limited literature available in regards to emotional intelligence and practice professions - more specifically to the signed language interpreting profession. This study provided applications for pre-professionals as well as current working signed language interpreters and interpreter educators. Highly emotionally intelligent people tend to have a higher quality of life and greater job satisfaction (Mhalkar, George, & Nayak, 2014). It could be beneficial for interpreters to have a high quality of life and greater job satisfaction to avoid burnout and stress from the work (Humphrey, 2015).
Signed language interpreters can utilize reflection to increase their emotional intelligence levels. Through understanding the impact of emotional intelligence on the way interpreters talk about the profession and reflect on the work, educators can more accurately prepare and train pre-professional signed language interpreters to join the profession. Working interpreters can challenge themselves by considering the way they reflect on and engage in discussion of their interpreting work. Self-reflection and discussion of the work is becoming an increasingly vital factor in signed language interpreting (Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2013). From this research, it is evident that high levels of emotional intelligence are a factor that contributes to self-reflection and discussion of the work. Students who receive emotional intelligence training are more likely to reflect on their work and decision-making, thus are able to better improve their future work (Litvack, Mishna, & Bogo, 2010).
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

Dear Colleague,

I am a student in the Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies program at Western Oregon University working under the supervision of Dr. Elisa Maroney. The purpose of this survey is to further the body of knowledge related to emotional intelligence and dialogue from interpreters about their profession.

The survey will take approximately 5 minutes. At the conclusion of the survey you will be invited to submit your e-mail address if you are willing to be contacted for a follow up interview and/or focus group which would be recorded for the researcher’s use only.

The only foreseeable risks to your participation is discomfort in being asked to think about and respond to questions about what may cause you some stress related to work or to your own personal experience. If you are experiencing discomfort at any time, please feel free to withdraw from the survey. Your participation in any portion of this study is voluntary. There is no penalty if you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all data collected from you will be destroyed through deletion of files.

There is a possible benefit to participating in this survey from having the opportunity to share your thoughts. Another possible benefit is contributing to research on the topic of emotional intelligence for signed language interpreters.

You must be 18 or older to participate in this study, and a current or former signed language interpreter.

The online survey is anonymous unless you choose to leave your name and e-mail address for a possible follow-up interview. Your responses to the survey and interview (should you choose to make yourself available for an interview) will be confidential. I will remove any personal identifiers in coding 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/used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact Brenda Puhlman by phone at (503) 334-6433 (voice or text) or via email at: bpuhlman10@mail.wou.edu or my graduate advisor Dr. Elisa Maroney at (503) 838-8735 or via email at maronee@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 Institutional Review Board at (503) 838-9200 or irb@wou.edu.

Thank you.
APPENDIX B

ONLINE SURVEY

Do you agree to participate in this study?
What is your age?
What races do you identify with?
To which gender identity do you most identify?
What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
What is your current employment status as it relates to the interpreting profession?
In what settings do you currently interpret?
I wish to be contacted to complete a follow-up interview.
  • Yes
  • No

Likert Scale Questions:

Strongly Disagree ←→ Strongly Agree

  • Five-point scale.

  1 = Strongly Disagree
  2 = Disagree
  3 = Neutral
  4 = Agree
  5 = Strongly Agree

I am not offended when offered criticism.
I can stay calm under pressure.
I handle setbacks effectively.
I manage anxiety, stress, anger, and fear in pursuit of a goal.
I utilize criticism and other feedback for growth.
I try to see things from another’s perspective.
I recognize how my behavior affects others.
I can listen without jumping to judgment.
I can freely admit to making a mistake.
I can recognize my emotions as I experience them.
Likert Scale Questions:

Never $\leftrightarrow$ Always

- Five-point scale.
  
  1 = Never
  2 = Seldom
  3 = Sometimes
  4 = Often
  5 = Always

I consider the impact on others during my interpreting process (Others: includes interpreting teams, D/deaf consumers, and hearing consumers).

I consider how others will perceive me when I make decisions while interpreting.

I have made a decision while interpreting that I later reflected upon and realized it was not the most effective decision.

When I make decisions while interpreting, I tend to rely on my intuition.

When making a decision while interpreting, I consider various options in terms of a specified goal.

I reflect on my decision-making after interpreting work.
APPENDIX C

APPROVED FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Tell me about a positive interaction you have had with a colleague.

What was the most positive interaction you have had with a colleague?

Tell me about a negative interaction you have had with a colleague.

Tell me about a time when you were satisfied with your interpreting work.

When was a time that you were satisfied with your work as an interpreter?

Tell me about a time when you were not satisfied with your interpreting work.

Tell me about an interpreting experience that has shaped who you are as a professional.

What is one interpreting experience that has shaped who you are as a professional?

When was a time that you felt you needed to change your interpreting approach/style to match the consumers of the interpreted event?

What have you done in the past to adjust your interpreting approach/style to match the environment?

When was a time you changed how you were interpreting in response to the environment?

What contributes to an effective teaming experience?

What causes contribute to ineffective teaming experience?

What factors would make up an ineffective team?

What are some characteristics of an ineffective team?

What things do you take into consideration when accepting an interpreting assignment?

What factors contribute to declining an interpreting assignment?

Possible Follow-Up Questions:

- Tell me more about that.
• What happened before that?
• What happened after that?
• How did you feel?
• Tell me more about the people involved (e.g. Deaf, hearing).
• Please elaborate on [blank].
• Is there anything else that you would like to share?
• What other information would you like to add?
• Does anyone else have an additional response?
## APPENDIX D

### CATEGORIZED FOCUS GROUP RESPONSE THEMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tell me about a time when you were satisfied with your interpreting work.</strong></td>
<td>Self-awareness, but doesn't follow intuition. Take control/makes decisions for the deaf. Interpreting is about themselves.</td>
<td>Internal motivation. Role confusion.</td>
<td>Involvement of deaf in interpretation.</td>
<td>Internal motivation. Empathy.</td>
<td>Self-awareness. Self-regulation.</td>
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</tbody>
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# APPENDIX E

## FOCUS GROUP QUOTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Evident</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Awareness</strong></td>
<td>P1: I told them this is not the right job for me. I actually cannot do this,</td>
<td>P1: I'm a technical interpreter, I work with Deaf-blind people. Those are my avenues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>but I took the job.</td>
<td>P2: You are free to give me feedback, and I hope that I'm free to give you feedback, and this is a safe place, and It's going to stay between the two of us.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P2: Able to accept feedback that is constructive in a way that you can use that effectively to polish your work.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P4: I don't have an ego when it comes to my work</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P4: I know my personality is direct and strong even in my regular life.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P4: Being comfortable with who you are or where you're at a meaning within your own skill set in your environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Regulation</strong></td>
<td>P2: making sure that the consumers are getting exactly what they need and</td>
<td>P2: So that was a demand and a situation that I was prepared for going into it.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>want from the scenario.</td>
<td>P2: I had to become a little bit more proactive about my role and kind of doing a little bit of additional work ahead of an assignment to make sure that I wasn't put in that kind of position again.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P4: She was difficult to understand, but like a good interpreter, I thought it was me at first. Then I realized it was her so I had to do a lot of repairing when I got back up there.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P4: It is at those moments where I realize I have to monitor myself and I am doing a disservice. If I take a good break, it is like a new job. Be mindful, it is tempting, the work is there. But don't burn yourself out, it will be hard to come back to it. You will do yourself a disservice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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| **Empathy** | P1: She and I got in a little tiff about that. I will never work with that interpreter ever again because I had such a bad taste in my mouth. P1: You don’t care about the profession because you clearly don’t value it, or else you would have taken the test, you would have studied to become an interpreter. | P3: I appreciated how she communicated with me, we found things we had in common and how we worked together seamlessly. P3: That’s just the framework. Time, I think she came from a different time where that’s what interpreters did. They were helpers. P3: Talking to someone how you would want them to talk to you and assuming the best. Assuming they are just unaware of the small thing. P3: And it was a-- still to this day I can't even. I still cry. It hurts my heart. P4: But everyone does their fair share. So if you think about it in weight, if the most you can carry is 20 pounds, then you carry 20 pounds. If I can carry 50 then I carry 50 because I can. P4: When a Deaf person gets their due as if they were hearing - meaning there is no longer that extra layer/barrier that they went through the interpreter. P5: I would to say mutual respect to begin with is really a big deal - if you go in not respecting each other it can really go downhill fast. |
| **Internal Motivation** | P1: We always size ourselves up to everybody. | P1: Being able to learn from others. P1: I typically send prep and I call and voice prep. |
| **Social Skills** | P1: I know what we're talking about here. So don't try to feed me stuff when this is my house.  
P2: They go through a hazing process. And that can be a new interpreter as in someone very seasoned who's coming from just a different place or a novice interpreter who has come through the local ITP and is now trying to gain mentoring experiences.  
P2: I tend to read a lot into other people without necessarily know what their intent is. And it's where I've done one job with somebody again thought, "Oh, God, they hated." | P2: I really love my job. And I really love my community. And I really love the people that I work with. And it's a good feeling.  
P4: They open my brain in a way that I only get when I work with a Deaf interpreter.  
P5: My eyes were open to so many nuances of the language that only a native could do.  
P4: I just have to check because the community is valuable to me.  
P5: I was ready to learn, I wanted to learn from her.  
P3: I learned how to communicate with her, where if I asked her something, or I brought up something, I learned how to say it where she wouldn't be defensive.  
P3: I think what's made some of my experiences effective with teaming was really clear communication.  
P4: So every day I am happy to go to work. But when I get to go to work with my friends, they pay me to get to hang out with people I like.  
P5: We had an awesome teaming dynamic that just made me feel like I would love to team with this person every day of the week if I could because it was that awesome. |