

2018-06-01

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Recommended Citation

Carpenter, Royce, "Let's Bridge the Gap! Cross-Cultural Mentoring" (2018). *Academic Excellence Showcase Proceedings*. 149.
<https://digitalcommons.wou.edu/aes/149>

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Let's Bridge the Gap!

Cross-Cultural Mentoring



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Statement of the Problem

The lack of educational systems teaching of Black cultural narratives and the dearth of Black signed language interpreter mentors has left a void of support, knowledge, and examples for incoming Black interpreters in this field.

Research Question

Can looking at ways to build mentor/mentee relationships between two culturally diverse groups (Black and White), that have not historically shared cultural information in the field of signed language interpreting, bridge the cultural knowledge gap left by interpreting educational systems and increase the number of Black interpreters persisting in the field of signed language interpreting?

Theoretical framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) looks at the subtle, methodical technique of discrimination that is not recognized in America because it is a standard of behavior; it is not as obvious and therefore not labeled actual racism (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT was an outcry against what was perceived as the American legal system's masked ways of deprecating marginalized people and the continuation of implicit racism (Jain, 2014).

Review of the literature

Deaf education

Racial discrimination and forced separation of the times influenced linguistic signing differences for Black Deaf people called Black ASL (Aramburo, 1989 and (McCaskill, Lucas, Bayley, & Hill, 2011). During the separation of Black and White Deaf people, the sharing of Black ASL with White Deaf people was limited at best across the country.

Power and oppression

Majority of interpreting educator are White and the need to hire Black educators to include narratives and for Black students to see someone like them for support is necessary (West-Oyedele, 2015) showing where the power lies in the interpreting education system.

Mentorship

Mentoring across cultures must be done with intention and adapted to the life experiences of someone who may not share the same worldview, race, or many other life factors (Shea 1992). Cross-cultural mentorship pairs need to find common ideas that are important to both mentor and mentee, which can allow them to bond and have a successful partnership. The bonding process will not be easy and it will require time and patience, but the benefits are immeasurable (Crutcher, 2014).

Findings

A void in ITPs regarding teachings on the Black Deaf and Black hearing communities is evident.

Participants in the Black and white focus groups struggled to remember what, if any, information on these communities they learned during their time in their respective ITPs.

The two groups had different outlooks on that void at the time or soon after graduation.

The Black interpreters acknowledged they felt the void but the White interpreters said they did not feel a great impact, as it was not something they thought much about unless specifically interpreting for a Black consumer.

Both groups want more knowledge on the Black Deaf culture now and most have learned more information since their time in their ITPs.

Recommendations

1. Interpreters and educators must recognize there is an imbalance of cultural education and cultural understanding
2. Educators need to desire and pursue educate themselves on the diverse consumers in their areas
3. Invite the Black Deaf and hearing communities to the table
4. Communication forums
5. Continued research

When one advances we all advance!

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