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# What's Missing? Mentee Training Seminars for Students of Interpreter Training Programs

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**Professional Project**  
**What's Missing? Mentee Training Seminars**  
**for Students of Interpreter Training Programs**

By  
Samantha J. Paradise

A Professional Project presented to  
Western Oregon University  
In partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of:  
Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies

July 2013

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EVALUATION PAGE

The undersigned members of the Graduate Faculty of Western Oregon University  
have examined the enclosed thesis entitled:

**What's Missing? Mentee Training Seminars For Students of Interpreter Training  
Programs**

Presented by: Samantha J. Paradise

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

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

Signatures removed for privacy

Date: 7/30/2013

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ABSTRACT

**What's Missing? Mentee Training Seminars  
for Students of Interpreter Training Programs**

**By**

**Samantha J. Paradise**

**Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies**

**Western Oregon University**

**July 30, 2013**

The purpose of this professional project was to identify what current practicum students of Interpreter Training Programs know and understand about the Mentorship process. This study aimed to collect information regarding their current knowledge of the terms Mentorship, Mentor, and Mentee, and what their experiences with mentorship were like. The larger and overarching question that led to this research study was, *Would a training session on Mentorship be beneficial for our students prior to beginning a mentored relationship?* An online survey was sent to two ITPs and had a total of 21 participants.

The findings show that students receive little to no training about the mentorship process, and the majority of participants do believe that prior training would have been helpful. The findings also show that mentorship is viewed as a relationship between the mentor (experienced

interpreter) and the mentee (less experienced interpreter, student). Embedded in the data are a variety of factors that promote and hinder the success of the mentorship.

This research was then used to develop a training seminar designed specifically for interpreting students about to enter their practicum or internship courses. Mentorship is a way to bridge the gap between student and professional status, and ease the transition into the interpreting field (RID, 2007). The goal of this training is that with a full understanding of what and how the relationship between mentor and mentee is developed and fostered, both the student and the professional interpreter are able to engage in the mentorship process effectively.



PART I:  
INTRODUCTION

**Background**

As a professional ASL-English Interpreter of 4 years and a graduate of an interpreter training program (ITP), mentorship and the ability to gain real-world experience in a supportive environment is something I am passionate about providing for future interpreting students. It was not until I began my journey towards completing my master's degree that I realized how strongly I believe in mentorship, and how much of an impact a successful or unsuccessful mentored experience can have on a young interpreter.

During my two practicums in my ITP (a required course in ITPs similar to an internship, where students are paired with a mentor and work under their supervision to observe and gain hands on experience in a variety of interpreted settings), I was fortunate enough to have had two mentors who worked in completely different interpreting environments. Both of these interpreters provided me support and encouragement, while also challenging me to think about interpreting and my skill set on a deeper level. I was afforded opportunities that I otherwise would not have had; observing interpreters in the post-secondary environment, and experiencing the unique role and demands associated with being a staff interpreter at a health research organization focused on promoting health and preventing disease in deaf and hard-of-hearing (D/HOH) populations (NCDHR, 2010). It is because of these experiences that I developed a love for post-secondary interpreting, particularly graduate-level coursework, and designated interpreting (a unique sub-field of interpreting in which a Deaf professional is paired with an interpreter to carry out the duties of their everyday work). Above all else, I learned about my

process as an interpreter, how to trust my instincts (in relation to linguistics, cultural mediation, and conceptual accurateness), and when to ask for guidance and help.

Unfortunately, my experiences are not representative of all practicum/internship students. As an interpreter in a densely populated interpreting community, it is not uncommon for people to discuss their backgrounds and experiences with one another, and consequently stories about trial and error are shared. From the interpreters I have worked with and the community I am affiliated with, it is not out of the ordinary to hear these types of stories, and I have noticed that many interpreters associate their stories with being a badge of honor. After I began my path in teaching, I started to hear more and more about interpreters, and current students, who wished that their experiences with mentorship had been different, or they wished they had been better prepared to fully engage in a mentored experience and reap the full benefits of working with a more experienced interpreter. Herein started my interest on what mentorship looks like in our field, with the focus on how mentees are trained and what their experiences are like.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The term ‘mentoring’ is typically used to describe the relationship between an experienced practitioner and a protégé, and is considered to be useful for the development of entry level professionals in a variety of fields. Mentoring is a widely adopted practice of learning in the education and nursing fields, and is becoming a standardized practice in the field of signed language interpreting as a way to bridge the gap between graduation from Interpreter Training Programs and entrance into the profession (NCIEC, 2009; RID, 1996; Winston, 2006; Gunter & Hull, 1995; Frishberg, 1994). As mentioned in Cherian (2007), “Isolation is the enemy.” For entry level professionals, guidance and support are necessary for matriculation into

the field as well as for exposure to professional norms. Mentorship is noted as a viable option to ease this transition and encourage skill development.

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to define what constitutes a successful mentor-mentee relationship because mentorships are highly unique relationships in that every person involved has different goals, wants, and needs. As Cherian (2007) states, research is needed to identify what it is that mentors are envisioned to do, what they actually do, and how novices are impacted as a result. The National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (2009) noted that there is a lack in current literature about what constitutes effective mentoring in the signed language interpreting profession in regards to improved performance of practitioners, and expressed the need for empirical research. In addition, there is a lack of professional development and training opportunities for mentors and protégés. Russell & Russell (2011) mention that even though perspective mentors may understand what is expected of them as a mentor, this does not necessarily mean they know how to mentor or how to be an effective mentor.

### **Purpose of this Project**

Throughout their schooling, ITPs provide students with the necessary foundation and skill set to begin entry-level interpreting. However, for students to reap the full benefits of their mentored experiences, some sort of training or education on the mentorship process should be included so that students are prepared to take on this endeavor. Two guiding questions lead to this professional project; what do current BA/BS students in the fourth year of their ITPs know about mentorship, and what is their understanding of the mentorship process? Second, would a

training seminar about mentorship be beneficial for students of ITPs to take prior to beginning their mentored experiences?

### **Theoretical Basis and Organization**

In order to answer the two guiding research questions, literature on mentoring across a variety of fields, including education, medicine, and signed language interpreting were reviewed to assess the qualities and characteristics that are known to foster effective and successful mentorship. This information was used to recognize themes among different fields in how mentoring is used and applied, which can then be useful in informing change among existing mentorship programs, and/or invite new approaches toward providing effective mentorship.

Additionally, a survey was sent to two BA/BS Interpreter Training Programs in the United States. The survey was disseminated to current fourth-year practicum/internship students, or fourth-year students who had recently completed their practicum/internship. The survey was used to gather qualitative data that focused on the content knowledge these students had about mentorship prior to beginning their mentorship, what their experiences were like with their own mentorship experience, and to gain insight into what was successful and unsuccessful for these students.

The literature review and data collected from the two surveys lead to the development of the training seminar included in this professional project.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In all professions, good preparation of the upcoming generation by experienced colleagues is central to the continuing progress in one's field (Veronneau, Cance, Ridenour, 2012). The mentoring process in the practicum of student teachers constitutes a critical factor in their professional development (Leshem, 2012), and is considered to be one of the ways in which to acquire professional knowledge and competence in one's chosen field. In mentoring of signed language interpreters, when the relationship involves a more experienced interpreter working with a novice interpreter, the novice interpreter may experience a smoother entry into the interpreting field (RID, 2007). Mentorships (both formal and informal) take place in a variety of fields, such as education, medicine and signed language interpreting, as a way for pre-professionals and existing professionals to develop their skills and knowledge while in a safe, comfortable and supervised environment. The literature selected for this review focuses on what makes a mentorship relationship successful for both parties involved, the mentor and the mentee (protégé). In sum, the literature provides three overarching themes to explain what is needed to have an effective mentor-mentee relationship. These include mentoring as a bi-directional, reflective practice, desired qualities, and professional development. Lastly, a previous research study on mentoring of signed language interpreters was reviewed.

### **Terminology**

Before these themes can be discussed, a review of the terminology is necessary. Throughout the literature, there are two schools of thought regarding mentorship. In both sets of definitions, it is interesting to note that formal definitions of mentoring or mentorship often

include the terminology for the people involved in the relationship as well. It seems that it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the definition of mentorship from the people involved in the relationship.

From the business/organization perspective, mentored relationships provide career development and psychosocial support to the protégé (Kram, 1985). Within this definition, a mentorship exists between a senior person and a junior person. In regards to career development, a mentor offers professional guidance and helps the protégé to “learn the ropes” of their profession. There is also a focus on understanding hierarchy within the organization the senior and junior person work for, and upward mobility and how one can further their career within the organization. Psychosocial support refers to the mentor offering acceptance and confirmation of the protégés accomplishments, providing counseling, and friendship.

The second school of thought encompasses emerging perspectives on the meaning of mentoring. Mentorship is a way to guide novices (mentees) in learning new pedagogies and to socialize them to new professional norms (Shulman, 2004). These emerging perspectives are beginning to recognize the meaning of mentoring from a holistic point of view. Research now recognizes that mentorships exist on a continuum which includes positive and negative experiences, processes, and outcomes. Of particular interest in regards to this research study, is that mentoring scholars are now examining both sides of the relationship, and are taking a broader perspective that incorporates the affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of the relationship, as well as how individual attributes, such as personality, developmental stage, and emotional intelligence affect and are affected by mentoring relationships (Ragins & Kram, 2007).

In essence, Daloz (1986) stated that a mentor is “one who engenders trust, issues a challenge, provides encouragement and offers a vision” (as cited in Resnick, 1990). As mentioned in the previous chapter, mentoring is used in the field of signed language interpreting as a way to bridge the gap between student and professional interpreter (NCIEC, 2009; Winston, 2006; RID, 1996; Gunter & Hull, 1995; Frishberg, 1994). Graduates of interpreter training programs often have a difficult time transitioning from their black-and-white understanding of the code of ethics they learned in the classroom, to the shades-of-gray world in which they now work as professional interpreters and how the RID Code of Ethics applies in real-life situations (Gunter & Hull, 1995). In regards to this field, a mentor is considered the experienced interpreter and the mentee is either a current interpreting student or recent graduate.

This professional project is realized from the educational perspective of mentoring. For the purpose of this project, which focuses on students as the mentees (as opposed to professional interpreters seeking mentorship to expand their skills into another sub-field of interpreting), the interpreting profession uses mentoring as a way to guide students into the field with support. It is from this perspective that the survey questions were developed, findings were addressed, and project development ensued. The terminology of mentoring/mentorship, mentor, and mentee used throughout this paper are consistent with definitions from the educational perspective. However, it is important to note that the literature addresses the term ‘mentee’ with several synonyms, including novice (which is also used to identify a newer interpreter in the field), and protégé. The literature also uses several synonyms to discuss BA/BS programs that teach signed language interpreting, including interpreter training program (ITP), interpreter preparation program (IPP), and interpreter education program (IEP). ITP will be used throughout this paper, unless a different term was used in a direct or paraphrased quote.

## **Mentoring as a Bi-Directional, Reflective Practice**

Mentoring can be defined as a nurturing relationship that leads to the development and professional growth of both the mentor and mentee (Russell & Russell, 2011). Many of the research studies alluded to the finding that successful mentorships resulted from a bi-directional flow of knowledge and information. In Cherian's 2007 research study with teacher candidates, many of the participants noted that effective mentoring occurred as a duet, where discussion took place about the successes and problems that each other faced. In this study, Cherian observed 6 teacher candidates (student teachers) in order to assess their experiences in a mentored relationship. Data was collected via field study notes and individual/group interviews. The interviews proved to be the most valuable source of information and emerging themes were identified. Cherian's findings showed that those students who had a successful practicum experience noted that there was a collaborative effort between mentor and mentee. In this instance, both mentor and mentee have the opportunity to learn and grow from one another. However, other students expressed to have had a negative experience, which stemmed from a feeling of inferiority and a clear struggle for power. The findings showed that numerous students felt as though they were left to fend for themselves, and that their mentor placed them in that specific situation in order to learn from their mistakes.

Along with a bi-directional flow of information, the literature identifies that an effective mentored relationship is one that encourages self-reflection and provides an opportunity for discussion of one's strengths and weaknesses. Pearce and Napier analyzed the potential for a mentoring program for signed language interpreters in Australia in their 2010 research study. Their study followed an action research approach; the program was established and measured for its effectiveness. There were 14 Mentor-Graduate pairs involved in this study, and data was



collected from individual journaling, a questionnaire, and face-to-face interviews. Their findings showed a typical evolution of discussion between the mentors and mentees in this program that has been identified to occur in other mentored relationships. This evolution is that the discussions between mentor and mentee in the beginning of the relationship focused more on skill development and technical issues, where, as time went on, the conversations became philosophically and ethically driven. This transition to self-reflection and self-analysis is a key lifelong learning tool (Pearce & Napier, 2010).

Sign Shares, an interpreter service agency serving the greater Houston and Texas/Gulf coast region implemented their own mentorship program as a way to bridge the gap between being a student and becoming a professional, thus improving one's interpreting skills as well as self-reflection skills. The agency pairs mentees with several mentors with whom they team assignments. In *Mentoring Essentials*, an article written in 1995 by Gunter and Hull, and included in the Proceedings of the Fourteenth National Convention of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), it is noted that interpreters will often work in a variety of fields in a given day. "The professional interpreter must be able to assess the situation, identify the specific needs of any one of these consumers, have a working knowledge of industry specific terminology, and adapt the product being delivered to meet those needs." By engaging in a mentorship, the mentee will experience real-life interpreting assignments at the guidance of a mentor, and further develop their skills. Along with skills development, Gunter and Hull mention that a mentorship is unique to the mentor and mentee pairing. The experiences of one mentee that occurs during a real-life assignment cannot be exactly duplicated, and each mentee's strengths and weaknesses will directly influence the assignment and learning curve of that particular mentee. Imbedded in

Sign Shares process is the ability to receive tailored, individual feedback and discussion, which in return allows for the mentee's needs and goals to be met during the mentorship.

Just as this is a significant time for improvement, development, and self-reflection for the mentee, research also states that there are benefits for professions as a whole, as well as for mentors. According to the standard practice paper on mentoring by the RID, the interpreting profession as a whole benefits from mentoring relationships by having more well-rounded professionals in the field and opportunities for collaboration between interpreters and the Deaf community members (1996). Many of authors of the studies used in this professional project articulated that a benefit to the mentors was the ability to analyze, critique and evaluate their own skills and knowledge (Veronneau et al, 2012; Leshem, 2012; Russell & Russell, 2011; Napier and Pearce 2010; Cherian, 2007). Mentors have reported satisfaction when observing protégés succeeding in their career field, and thus they fulfill their need for generativity; that is, sharing their knowledge and experience to prepare the new generation (Leshem, 2012). Leshem studied 15 mentor-student teacher pairs to gain insights on what these specific pairs believed to be the roles of a mentor and a mentee, in order to identify common themes. Mentors identified that when intellectual dialogue occurred, it forced them to step back and analyze their own skill sets and reflect on their own practice.

Resnick (1990) further illustrates this point in her article for the Conference of Interpreter Trainers. She discusses that there is a gap in quality between students graduating from interpreter preparation programs and qualified working interpreters. The article makes the suggestion that mentoring may be the answer for eliminating or reducing this gap. When discussing the relationship between mentor and mentee, she states “This relationship involves a certain amount of personal chemistry, a meshing of personalities, dreams and hopes....It is a

powerful relationship and offers significant benefits to all involved.” These benefits for the mentor include gaining new insights about their work and the profession, giving back to the profession by way of passing down their knowledge and information to a new generation of interpreters, and by taking pride in helping their mentee succeed and accomplish their goals.

### **Desired Qualities**

Two of the research studies used in this literature review focused directly on the qualities and characteristics of mentored relationships. Although these two particular studies are grounded in the medical field, their findings are a true representation of all the articles chosen for this review.

Cho, Ramanan, and Feldman (2011), aimed to identify characteristics of outstanding mentors in the academic health sciences field. This study conducted a review of 53 letters of nomination for the University of California, San Francisco’s (USCF) Lifetime Achievement in Mentorship Award in 2008. Professors in the academic health sciences field at UCSF are nominated for this prestigious award based solely on the letters written by their former/current mentees. This study has a unique perspective, in that it is analyzing the success of the mentored relationship from the key stakeholder in the relationship, which is the mentee. Their findings showed 5 overall themes: exhibit admirable personal qualities, act as a career guide, commit an enormous amount of time and energy, support personal/professional balance, and leave a legacy through role modeling. Some of the key personal qualities that this study identified were: selflessness, compassion, and honesty. Professionally, some of the desired qualities identified by mentees were that their mentors be collaborative and enthusiastic. Mentees identified in this study that not only are they looking for their mentor to have the professional skills and

knowledge, but that the mentors are also invested in the mentee's future abilities. The amount of time, energy, and quality of the time that the mentor contributed to the mentee was also noted as a highly desirable characteristic of outstanding mentors. Lastly, mentees noted that outstanding mentors provided both personal and professional guidance and support while also leaving a lasting impression or legacy on the mentee. Those professors that received letters of nominations were identified as people/professionals that the mentees' wish to emulate when they become future mentors.

Dimitriadis et al. (2012) focused on the characteristics of mentored relationships that are fostered between medical students and their faculty at the Munich Medical School. The aim of this study was to identify what happens in these mentored relationships so as to influence the mentoring program offered at the school as well as provide empirical data specific to medical students. Data for this study was collected in several ways: through an online survey, through qualitative feedback given by the mentees during and after their one semester obligation to the program, and through quantitative means by comparing board examination scores of those students involved in mentoring with non-participating student's board scores. The results identified that the students involved in the program reported that their motivation was increased and that having a mentor provided them with the opportunity to discuss personal goals as well as research/thesis ideas. Mentors were also identified as being a "provider of ideas" and offered networking opportunities. Mentees commonly described the role of their mentor as a person who provides personal support, role models professionalism, and someone who offers career advising.

## **Professional Development**

Lastly, and probably the most notable theme throughout the articles in this review, is the need for and lack of professional development and training opportunities for mentors and mentees. Russell and Russell (2011) states that the internship is a critical milestone for the pre-service teacher and may well serve as a primary determinant of how effective the prospective teacher will be in the classroom during the first few years. However, in their conclusion, they state that participants in the study expressed that mentoring workshops and other training opportunities are necessary so they are better prepared to work with their interns. It was also mentioned that workshops should be offered ongoing and required of all teachers who choose to mentor student interns. Pearce and Napier (2010) also found that participants in their inaugural mentoring program for signed language interpreters in Australia desired more training for the mentors involved. Not only did the mentors request more training, but both mentors and mentees expressed a need to interact with other mentors and mentees in the program to gain insights and ideas, increase motivation, and feel connected to one another.

Leshem (2012) also supports the notion of providing training sessions for both mentors and mentees. Although there is a lack of evidence to support that mentor-mentee training improves the effectiveness of the relationship, it can provide both parties with a wealth of knowledge prior to undertaking this relationship. One suggestion made in this study was for mentors to gain insights into effective mentoring by analyzing different case studies to illuminate beliefs, reflective practice and strategies for challenging higher levels of thinking. Additionally, mentees should receive training on the different definitions, roles and a belief associated with what a mentor is and does, as well as the roles and responsibilities of themselves as a mentee.

In 2009, the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) published their findings regarding effective practices in mentoring of ASL-English Interpreters. This

publication, *Towards Effective Practices in Mentoring of ASL-English Interpreters*, is a culmination of a review of literature on mentoring of signed language interpreters, mentoring projects funded by the RID, and the results of national surveys collected from mentors and mentees by the NCIEC. From this review of information, domains, or associated best practices in mentoring, were identified in relation to program design (domain 1), program management (domain 2), program operations (domain 3), and program evaluation (domain 4). One best practice in mentorship identified in this publication is to orient and train mentors and mentees (Domain 3.2). In doing so, the program offering the mentorship can provide an overview of the program, clarify roles, responsibilities and expectations, provide theoretical foundation and other tools for interaction, and to discuss how to handle a variety of situations. In addition, Domain 3.5 identifies the provision of on-going support, supervision, and monitoring of mentoring relationships. Within this domain, it is suggested that programs offer continuing training opportunities to program participants, both mentors and mentees. The above domains are also supported by the 2006 publication by Weisman and Forestal in the Proceedings of the 16<sup>th</sup> National Convention of the Conference of Interpreter Trainers. The article discusses effective practices for establishing mentoring programs. In regards to training, Weisman and Forestal suggest to train mentors and mentees simultaneously to ensure that the mentoring participants begin with a similar base of knowledge, expectations, and understanding of the philosophical approach to mentoring. Their overarching philosophy stems from the quote “*Give me a fish, I eat for a day. Teach me to fish, I feed myself (and others) for a lifetime.*”

The idea of establishing and requiring documentation for the mentored relationship can also be classified under the need for professional development and training. Veronneau et al. (2012) electronically surveyed 97 participants in regards to the roles and responsibilities of

mentors and mentees (protégés), as well as including 4 open-ended questions in relation to their own mentoring-mentored experiences. Their findings showed that one potential solution for the ambiguity that can happen between mentor and mentee is to create a formal mentoring contract, which would identify and detail the roles and responsibilities of each person. This contract would also describe the goals and expectations of the relationship, being that mentoring is unique in that no two mentored interactions will look or feel the same. Training can be offered to both mentors and mentees on how to create a contract and what that implies for their individual relationship.

### **NCIEC-Mentee/Protégé Survey Results**

Among the literature on mentoring in the signed language interpreting field is a series of surveys conducted by the NCIEC and their initiative “Towards Effective Practices in Mentoring of ASL-English Interpreters.” One of the surveys focused on collecting responses from mentees/protégés regarding their experiences with mentorship. The survey results were published in December 2007. The survey consisted of 74 questions, and there were a total of 138 respondents. The survey was conducted through an online survey platform called Zoomerang. Out of the 138 respondents, 125 participants answered the “most meaningful” questions, and 48 answered the “least meaningful” questions. These questions are of particular interest and provided guidance for my research study. In response to the question asking for the Most Meaningful Type of Mentoring, 43% reported programs that were structured and had clear goals, followed by 32% who indicated that less structure and more flexibility lead to a more meaningful mentorship. Forty four percent indicated that no structure lead to a less meaningful

mentorship, followed by 38% saying that less structure and more flexibility hampered their experience.

Several of the statistics from the NCIEC (2007) survey results are of great importance, indicating the need for further research on mentorship, and are supported by the research I have done for this professional project. Of the respondents, only 36% reported that objectives and expectations of the mentorship were clearly understood and lead to a meaningful mentorship, whereas 48% of the respondents indicated that their mentorship was least meaningful due to a lack of understanding of expectations (2<sup>nd</sup> highest response after lack of motivation by their mentor, 55%). Lastly, and possibly the two most notable statistics, 83% of the total respondents feel that the concept of mentorship is not universally understood, and 47% answered that one reason for not obtaining a mentor is the lack of understanding of the mentorship process by the mentee/protégé (3<sup>rd</sup> highest response).

### **Research Importance**

The focus of this literature review was to identify and assess the qualities and characteristics that are known to foster effective and successful mentorship. Literature was collected from a variety of fields, including education, medicine and signed language interpreting and three emerging themes were identified.

First, mentoring is best thought of as a bi-directional flow of knowledge. Successful mentored relationships noted the need for collaboration and mutual respect and support. The cooperating teachers all expressed that they were both eager to collaborate and desired to learn and share their knowledge with the student interns (Russell & Russell, 2011). In conjunction with a collaborative approach, reflective practices should be incorporated and is shown to be



beneficial for both mentors and mentees. Pearce and Napier (2010), and Cherian (2007) identified that mentored relationships followed a specific pattern in regards to their discussions. When the relationship first begins, conversations between mentors and mentees tended to focus on technical skill development. As the relationship grew and a layer of trust was developed, discussions shifted to discuss philosophical and ethical concerns.

Second, there are desired qualities and characteristics of effective mentors despite the field in which the relationship is occurring in. Cho et al. (2012) and Dimitriadis et al. (2012) identified those relationships that were successful occurred when the mentor exuded qualities such as supportive, nurturing, and guiding. A desirable mentor is one who is able to commit their time and energy while providing professional and personal support to their mentee, and is someone that the mentee wants to emulate in some way. Lastly, and possibly requiring the most attention for future research, is the need for mentor-mentee training, support and professional development opportunities.

Each of the studies in one way or another identified the need for increased training and support on the mentorship process. Although the approach to and process of mentoring may be field specific, the research here shows that the qualities and characteristics of successful mentoring relationships is not field specific. Further research is needed to identify if increased training opportunities for mentors and mentees positively affects the mentored relationship.

## METHODOLOGY

### **Research Focus**

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, this study aimed to build an understanding of what signed language interpreting students currently know and understand about the mentoring process, identify what the participants perceive as the roles of a mentor and a mentee, and what their experiences were like while being mentored as required for partial completion of their undergraduate coursework in an ITP. Qualitative means to collect and interpret the data were used.

Secondly, this data, in conjunction with an extensive review of the literature published about Mentorship across a variety of fields, as well as signed language interpreting, was used to influence and guide the development of a training seminar specifically designed for signed language interpreting students (mentees). The anticipated application of this training seminar is that it will be used to educate students prior to participation in a mentored experience. The intended benefits of this type of training is that with a solid understanding of mentorship as it applies to signed language interpreters, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the participants (mentor, mentee, supervising faculty, etc.), students will be more likely to have a fulfilling and successful mentored experience.

### **Data Collection**

With the intended audience of this research study being students currently enrolled in an ITP, two universities housing interpreter education programs were for this study. Both universities offer a Bachelors degree in ASL-English interpretation. Participants of this study

were currently or recently enrolled in a practicum/internship course at the time of surveying, which allowed the research to gain insight from students currently experiencing a mentored relationship. The second reason for choosing fourth-year students as the audience for this study is because the intended purpose of the training seminar is for it to be delivered to fourth year students prior to entering their practicum/mentored experiences.

A survey was developed in January 2013, disseminated to both universities in March 2013, however data collection from the first university was briefly put on hold soon after and until April 2013, due to a delay in obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. The survey platform used was surveymonkey.com, and was anonymous. Two survey URL's were used to keep the data separate. The survey reached the students several different ways. First, for both universities, the researcher contacted the practicum coordinator at the respective university and asked for the survey to be sent to their practicum students. Secondly, for the first university, the researcher contacted a student with the survey link and asked for it to be posted on their cohorts' private Facebook page. A total of 51 students were sent the email invitation at the first university, and a total of 23 students were sent the email invitation at the second university.

Through the survey platform, students at both universities received the same survey. Students were supplied an informed consent form which identified who the researcher was and university affiliation, purpose of the survey and what it entailed, as well as approval information and contact information for the Institutional Review Boards, researcher and research advisors. Students were also notified that completion of the survey identified their consent to be a participant of the study (see the Appendix for the consent form). There were a total of 15 survey questions; 3 yes/no questions and 12 open-ended questions. The questions were divided into 3

categories; Experience with Mentorship (yes/no format), Role Definitions (open-ended) and Looking back on your Experiences (open-ended).

This survey used a qualitative research approach to allow students the freedom to answer the questions with as much information as possible. According to Gay, Mills, and Arisian (2005), qualitative research seeks to probe deeply into the research setting to obtain in-depth understandings about the way things are, *why* they are that way, and *how* the participants in the context perceive them (p. 13). Gay et al. continue to explain that the central focus of qualitative research studies is to provide understanding of a social setting or activity as viewed from the perspective of the research participants (p.169). In the context of this study, the goal is to identify what interpreting students knew about mentorship prior to beginning their practicum, and what they now know after experiencing mentorship. The idea is to gather data, through qualitative means, about the thought-worlds of current interpreting students regarding mentorship as well as identify misconceptions or gaps in their education regarding mentorship. To define thought-worlds, this study is interested in learning the attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and understanding of mentorship by this particular group, fourth year students enrolled in a BA/BS interpreting program.

The data collected from the participants' responses was analyzed using an open-coding approach. Walker and Myrick (2011) explain that qualitative data analysis seeks to organize and reduce the data gathered into themes or essences, which in turn, can be fed into descriptions, models, or theories (p. 549). With this approach, the researcher examines the open-ended responses and goes through a process of reading and re-reading in order to create a system of codes, which represent the data and then organizes the codes into categories and finally, into themes. It is critical to remember that coding is a process of constant comparison and that

“categories emerge upon comparison and that properties emerge upon more comparison” (Glaser, 1992, p. 42). Qualitative coding analyzes bits of information to identify similarities and differences. In grounded theory, coding and data analysis is the “fundamental process used by the researcher” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 12) to “transport the researcher and their data from transcript to theory” (Walker & Myrick, 2011, p. 549). Keeping in mind the purpose of this study, which is to understand the thought-worlds of practicum students of interpreter training programs regarding their knowledge and understanding of mentorship, open-coding made the most sense as the method for analyzing and interpreting the data collected.

### **Methodological Strengths**

There are several strengths and advantages to using a web-based survey for data collection. As mentioned by Greenlaw and Brown-Welty (2009), the design, dissemination, data storage, and data analysis of web-based surveys is efficient and is becoming more user-friendly with the introduction of multiple survey Web sites (p. 464).

A major strength of this research study was the confidential and anonymous nature in the collection of data. Participants of this study were not asked to identify who they were, or who their mentors were. This allowed the participants the freedom to answer the questions as freely as they wished, therefore, speaking openly and honestly about their understanding of and experiences with mentorship. The qualitative nature of this study aimed to gain an understanding of the thought-worlds of current practicum students regarding mentorship. Responding to the survey anonymously allowed the participants’ time to reflect on their experiences and express their opinions and thoughts in a non-judgmental fashion. As noted by Wharton et al. (2003), the internet creates a sense of social distance. Furthermore, research

indicates that online anonymity may increase response rates and encourage more honest answers, as participants feel more comfortable in responding to sensitive information (Hunter, 2012, p. 13). In addition to the anonymous nature of this survey, another strength of using a web-based survey as the method of data collection is the ability to access a unique population and/or a hard-to-reach population (Sue & Ritter, 2007; Wright, 2005). With the sample population of this survey being fourth year students currently or recently enrolled in their practicum, the use of a traditional face-to-face interview (whether that be through an online-mediated format or in-person) would have been difficult to schedule, which could have resulted in less participants.

A second strength of using an online survey platform is the cost-saving element of time for both participants and the researcher. In using a web-based survey, participants were allowed the freedom to respond to the survey at the most convenient time for their schedule. As for the researcher, the ease of creating an online survey today allows for the survey to be made and disseminated to the target population efficiently. Once the survey is disseminated, participants can respond at their convenience, and the researcher can track the data collection process solely through the survey website. There, responses are organized and maintained, and can later be downloaded into a variety of formats, such as PDF and Excel. The electronic reply eliminates the data input process, which further reduces the time element as well as decreases the potential for transcription errors (Hunter, 2012; Greenlawn & Brown-Welty, 2009; Wright, 2005). Lastly, by knowing where and to whom the survey was sent to electronically, the researcher can quickly and easily send a reminder email or notification to the intended population regarding the survey.

### **Methodological Limitations**

There were several limitations to this study. One limitation is the qualitative nature of this study. The information received from this data is influenced by the program the participants attended, and their experiences with mentorship in the region their program is located. Due to this, the data collected is informative but cannot be generalized to all students enrolled in other interpreter training programs.

A second limitation of this study is the small sample size of participants. For this study, only 2 programs were chosen to be involved. A total of 14 out of 51 students (27.45%) from the first university participated, and 6 out of 23 students (26%) from the second university participated in this study. In reviewing the data collected, several questions in no particular pattern were left blank or were marked "N/A" by a number of participants from both data sets. Available research regarding online survey methodology does indicate that the likelihood that not all questions will be answered may increase (Velez et al., 2004).

As noted in the research regarding the disadvantages of this method, self-selection bias is a major limitation of online survey research (Wright, 2005; Wittmer et al., 1999; Stanton, 1998). In regards to self-selection bias, students may have chosen to participate or not to participate due to the nature and description of the survey. One can ascertain a multitude of reasons behind their decision, but it is important to consider why students may have chosen not to participate in this study. One of those reasons could have been an inability to commit to the time frame stated in the consent form, as many of these students are currently enrolled in their practicum classes as well as other courses in their program. A second reason, which became evident in some of the responses received, is that after reviewing the consent form and gaining an understanding of the researcher and purpose of her study, students may not believe there is a value in creating a

training seminar regarding mentorship and therefore chose not to participate. These are just two of the possible reasons students may have decided not to participate.

A third limitation of this methodology is the inability to gauge the exact number of participants the online survey reached. One of the reasons for this, as identified by Whitehead (2007), is the lack of interaction between the researcher and respondents. In this particular survey, potential participants were contacted by email from their respective practicum coordinators to their university provided email accounts. With this approach, the amount of emails received by the participant on the given day the invitations were sent, and the frequency with which the user accesses their account are two factors that may have impacted the response rate. Also, Wright (2005) identifies that there is a tendency of some individuals to respond to an invitation to participate in an online survey, while others ignore it, leading to a systematic bias.



## FINDINGS

### **Quantitative Results**

This research survey was projected to reach a total 51 potential respondents in data set 1, and a potential total of 26 respondents in data set 2. Of these totals, there were 15 participants in data set 1, and 6 participants in data set 2. Of the 15 participants in data set 1, all 15 answered questions 1-3. A unique phenomenon in the data did occur; 3 participants chose only to answer questions 1-3 and skipped the rest of the survey, which occurred early in the data collection process. After this, 11 of the 15 participants (73.3%) responded to every question, and 1 participant responded to every question except question 14. In data set 2, 4 of the 6 participants (66.7%) answered all 15 questions, 1 participant answered 13 of the 15 questions (skipped question 7 and 14), and 1 participant answered 9 of the 15 questions (skipped questions 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15).

The first set of questions were used to identify if the participants received any formal training on the mentoring process, if they shared their goals with their mentors, and if mentee and mentor established ground rules for the duration of their mentored relationship. Table 1 shows the responses to these 3 questions.

TABLE 1

*Experience with Mentorship*

<b>Survey Questions 1-3</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Maybe</b>
(1) Have you ever received formal training on Mentorship?	Data 1: 1 (6.7%) Data 2: 4 (66.7%)	Data 1: 14 (93.3%) Data 2: 2 (33.3%)	
(1a) If not, would it have been helpful?	Data 1: 9 (81.8%) Data 2: 2 (100%)	Data 1: 1 (9.1%) Data 2: 0	Data 1: 1 (9.1%)
(2) Did you Discuss/Establish Goals with Mentor?	Data 1: 13 (86.7%) Data 2: 6 (100%)	Data 1: 2 (13.3%) Data 2: 0 (0%)	
(3) Did you Discuss/Establish ground rules for mentorship?	Data 1: 8 (53.3%) Data 2: 3 (50%)	Data 1: 7 (46.7%) Data 2: 3 (50%)	

There are several interesting findings to note from the data listed above. Regarding data set 1, 93.3% of the participants reported not having any formal training on the mentoring process, and 81.8% (9 out of 11) of the participants who answered the question “Would it have been helpful?” responded that it would. 13 of the participants (86.7%) responded that they did discuss and establish their goals with their mentor; however, only 8 out of the 15 (53.3%) responded that they discussed and established ground rules for the mentorship. In response to question 1a, one participant did indicate that training would not be beneficial because “each mentorship is different... Everyone is on a different skill/knowledge level so formal training wouldn’t work for everyone.” Another participant from this data set responded that, “I think it depends on the individual and training might not have been beneficial.”

From data set 2, what is statistically significant is that 66.7% of the participants responded that they have received formal training on mentorship. The 2 participants that indicated no formal training did respond enthusiastically that prior training would have been beneficial. All of the participants reported having discussed and established goals for their mentorship; however, only 3 of the 6 participants (50%) reported discussing and establishing ground rules for the mentorship.

For the purposes of this study, the data collected does indicate statistically that those participants who reported not having received formal training (16 out of 21 participants) on the mentoring process, 11 of those 16 participants (68.75%) did express that formal training would be beneficial. This data supports the idea that training on the mentoring process is lacking from mentored relationships, as noted in the literature (Leshem, 2012; Russell & Russell, 2011; Pierce & Napier, 2010). This data also supports the need for the qualitative portion of this research study.

## **Qualitative Results**

Questions 4-15 of this survey were open-ended responses to gather information regarding the participants understanding and definitions of the terms Mentorship (mentoring), Mentor, and Mentee. Furthermore, these questions asked participants to identify the strengths and limitations of their mentored experiences, express their current understanding of mentorship, and provide advice for future interpreting students. As identified in the methodology section, the data was analyzed using open-coding (Glaser, 1992; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). As I read through the data, which was downloaded into a PDF file from the survey platform to reduce transcription error, utterances and phrases were given codes. During the analysis process, categories were identified

and themes emerged. In the end, one central theme emerged from the data. This theme centers on the idea that mentorship is a relationship that needs to be fostered in order for the experience to be successful.

### Mentorship is a Relationship

When asked to define the term Mentorship in their own words, 100% of the responses directly or indirectly expressed that mentorship is a relationship between someone with experience and someone with less experience. The most common term that was used in defining mentorship was guidance. This is evidenced by statements such as, “Guidance from an experienced individual,” “The mentor helps to guide the mentee,” “A more experienced interpreter guides a less experienced interpreter,” “The mentor is able to guide [a less experienced interpreter],” and “guide an individual to reach certain goals or objectives.” These statements not only indicate that a pertinent action associated with mentorship is guidance, but also that the mentor is the one providing that guidance. Another term that frequently appeared when defining mentorship is the term relationship. One participant described mentorship as:

A professional relationship between an interpreting student and a professional seasoned interpreter who cares deeply about educating and encouraging the future generation of interpreters.

Here, the terms educating and encouraging are qualifying words that describe how the mentor fosters the relationship, and the mentorship experience. Another participant describes mentorship as, “a relationship between two individuals. A more experienced person will support a less experienced person.” Again, this response supports the idea that a mentorship requires there to be a relationship between mentor and mentee. Another participant used a unique analogy to describe the relationship between mentor and mentee:

The mentee should be the driver of the relationship, dictating what they would like to work on while the mentor acts to help the mentee in those select areas.

To further describe this relationship, participants were asked to identify characteristics of mentorship. The term *characteristic* was not defined in the survey, and respondents were free to answer the question as they saw fit. It is important to remember that these characteristics are being defined solely from the mentee’s perspective. Table 2 highlights the findings.

TABLE 2

*Characteristics of Mentored Relationships*

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b># of Responses</b>
Teaching/Learning	19
Supportive	13
Openness/Communication	11

After reviewing the data, the most important characteristic of mentorship identified by the participants is that there is teaching and learning happening at the same time. It is important to note that participants also expressed that both mentor and mentee can learn from this relationship, therefore indicating a bi-directional flow of information occurs. This finding is supported by previous literature that both the mentor and the mentee benefit from being involved in the mentorship (Veronneau et al, 2012; Leshem, 2012; Russell & Russell, 2011; Napier & Pearce 2010, Cherian, 2007; Resnick, 1990). Participants also felt strongly that a mentorship needs to be supportive to one’s learning needs and style. The participants qualified the word supportive by expressing notions of being able to bring their experiences to the table with their mentor, being able to talk to their mentor after a bad day, and having the mentor ask them

questions. Lastly, responses also indicated that a mentorship needs openness, both in terms of not feeling judgment, and in communication. Often words such as trust and respect were paired in the responses that discussed the characteristic of communication.

An interesting pattern appeared when defining the term mentorship. In their responses, the participants could not define the term mentorship without also indicating those who are involved, further supporting the theme that mentorship is a relationship between two or more individuals. One participant responded:

A mentorship is a relationship between a person with experience in a given field and a person starting out in the field (ie novice). The mentor helps to guide the mentee in the development of their skills and knowledge of the subject matter.

Another participant responded:

I would define mentorship as an opportunity for less-experienced interpreters to be able to work with interpreters who may have more experience or a wealth of knowledge that is beneficial in developing the less-experienced interpreters' knowledge of the field and repertoire in the field.

These two responses parallel one another in that participants of the mentorship are identified, as well as describing who they are and what their role is. The data supports that when defining the term Mentorship, it is difficult to write a definition without identifying the people involved. In analyzing the data, there were numerous terms used to identify and define the players involved, which the table below summarizes. The terms “more experienced” and “less experienced” are expressed in bold lettering due to the frequency that the terms appeared in the data. When defining mentorship, 73% of the responses indicated that one person (the mentor) has more experience and/or knowledge, while the other person (the mentee) has less experience and/or knowledge. This occurrence in the data can be supported by the previous work of Leshem (2012), Pearce and Napier (2010), and Gunter and Hull (1995). The latter two are specific to the signed language interpreting field.

TABLE 3

*Terminology of Players*

<b>Mentor</b>	<b>Mentee</b>
Mentor Interpreter Practitioner Professional Seasoned Party Individual <b>More Experienced</b> <b>More/Different Experience</b> Wealth of Knowledge Passenger	Mentee Interpreter Practitioner Interpreting student New Party Individual <b>Less Experienced</b>  Novice Driver

Another important aspect to note from the data is that the Mentor and the Mentee are not the only two people involved in a mentorship. The responses also indicated that an important player in this relationship is the practicum course they are enrolled in while being involved in a mentored relationship. This was evidenced by comments including “hour requirements from practicum” and “mentorships during practicum.” Students are required to complete a certain amount of observation, interpretation, and supervision hours during their mentorship in order to pass their practicum course. According to the data, this imparts a great deal of stress on the students.

Successes of Mentored Relationships

All of the responses collected indicate that there are certain things that lead a mentorship to be successful, as well as factors that hindered or limited the success of the mentored

relationship. These factors can be analyzed by looking at the individual players' involvement, contributions and perceptions, as well as external factors, such as time.

For the mentee, their mentor's personality and professional demeanor was highly important in leading to a successful relationship and mentored experience. This was also found by Cho et al. (2011). In describing the positive/desired personality traits of their mentors, terms such as caring, honest, humble, trustworthy, passionate, open/welcoming, flexible, accessible, and committed were used. Mentees identified that they wanted their mentors to be open and accessible in terms of communication, as evidenced by one participant who expressed the benefit of having "flexible ways to communicate via phone, skype or email." Openness was also a term used when describing the supervision or discussion sessions that took place between mentor and mentee. By being open and accessible, mentees expressed that they felt their mentor was invested in their development as interpreters, and therefore the mentees had more trust in the relationship. Cho et al. (2011) noted the same finding in their research on mentors in the academic health sciences field, in that a desired characteristic of mentors is that they exhibit interest and investment in the mentee's future. One participant noted that "we [mentor and mentee] have had a good relationship where I feel comfortable asking any and all questions, and feel comfortable going to different assignments to observe." Another mentee responded, "It was very open and there was no judgment, which meant that all interpreting experiences (good and bad) were discussed." In addition, one mentee wrote, "She [mentor] said encouraging, positive things about my personality; she told me that I could do it and that be believed in me. I gained so much confidence working with a mentor!"

The mentors' professional demeanor also had an impact on the successfulness of the mentored relationship. Mentees described that effective mentors were experienced, supportive,



neutral, and knowledgeable. Cherian (2007) described similar findings. Mentees noted that it was important and helpful when their mentors provided a push, and challenged their thinking patterns in order to widen their perspectives. This is evidenced by the response, “They did not let me cruise through the experience, which allowed me to learn more than I would have if they had not challenged me.” Mentees also identified that their supervision time was an invaluable experience when their mentors provided constructive feedback and brought their experiences to the table for discussion. In describing what worked well, one mentee wrote:

Constructive feedback tailored toward my goals.... Introducing me to new interpreting experiences with preparation and supported guidance, observing my interpreting work during my own assignments and provided constructive feedback on my work performance.

In another response, one mentee explained that their mentor “Always had insight to share for my interpreting experiences and encouraged me to try new things.” The idea is that during their supervision time, mentees wanted to receive feedback that was tailored both to their strengths and weaknesses, while also having a mentor who was able to share their background and experiences when applicable to the discussion.

Mentees also noted that they were responsible for bringing and contributing a lot to the mentored relationship. Mentees expressed that either they did know or now know that they are the driving force behind the mentorship. This means that mentees need to be curious and motivated during this experience, that they bring their knowledge of self and that it needs to be explained to their mentor, and that they need to have established goals for their mentorship in order for the relationship to be effective. Without doing this, the relationship has no starting point, and therefore cannot progress as quickly and effectively as when these things were discussed early in the mentorship. Mentees also noted that there are important qualities related to being a mentee. These qualities include: being committed, being respectful (of their mentor

and the time being dedicated), being eager to learn, and being honest and humble. In regards to a mentee's role, one participant responded:

Be active, you get from the experience what you put into it. Be willing, try new things and allow the mentor to aide you in that. Be open, about both your triumphs and failures.

Among the responses, a general sense of obligation was reported. This is in terms of asking questions, being active and doing the work, accepting of challenges, acting professionally, discussing their experiences with their mentor, and to observe their mentor and other interpreters. Going back to the idea that the mentee is the driver of the relationship analogy, mentees need to be open to new experiences, listen to the mentors, and put in the effort necessary to reap the benefits of this type of relationship. Also noted in the responses is that mentees also bring their own knowledge to the relationship and should not be afraid to express their knowledge to their mentor. One mentee expressed:

They [mentees] should also keep in mind that they have knowledge and insights the Mentor may not, and therefore should share what they have and what they're gaining with their Mentor.

### Limitations of Mentored Relationships

There were several noted factors throughout the two sets of data that proved to limit the success of the mentored relationship. The responses indicate that one limitation is the external factor of time. Time was described as scheduling conflicts, personal and work commitments outside of the mentorship, and other coursework. Of the total responses to the questions regarding what was frustrating about their mentored experience, and what was lacking from their mentored experience, 50% indicated time was a factor. Mentees discussed that time was a hindrance for a variety of reasons, and that both mentor and mentee were at fault. Several responses showed that mentees were busy with other classes and coursework, while their mentor

was busy with their work schedule and what often happened is that one person was busy while the other person was free. One participant answered, “Schedule Conflicts; my mentor and I never have compatible schedules so it became difficult to meet up at times.” Another participant stressed this idea of time in relation to other coursework by responding, “Sometimes my other classes had to take a hit because the mentorship added so much more work.” To further stress this point of time as a limitation:

More time! This was impossible due to both of our schedules, but I wish the universe worked it out so that we weren't so busy.

Due to these scheduling conflicts, mentees further identified that lack of time meant that there was less opportunities to discuss their work with their mentor and receive feedback. This finding supports previous research conducted by Pearce and Napier (2010). Several of the responses indicated that scheduling conflicts often lead to missed opportunities to debrief about their assignments, because either the mentor, mentee, or both had other commitments after the assignment. The issue of time constraints was also discussed in terms of not being able to team with their mentor due to scheduling conflicts, or not being able to team with their mentor in assignments due to a variety of reasons, such as the mentee had not yet assessed with a local agency and therefore could not team assignments with their mentor.

Another factor that hindered the success of the relationship was personality conflicts and other relationship issues. This was also found by Cherian (2007). In their responses, mentees identified that differences in beliefs and differences in their approaches to the mentored relationship often caused conflict and damaged the relationship. In response to what was frustrating, one mentee wrote, “Lack of flexibility, lack of feedback or lack of constructive feedback, negative attitude or clashing personalities.” Mentees shared that having different

expectations for the mentorship than their mentor was another factor that caused the experience to be frustrating and less effective. In addition, only having a professional/working relationship was another aspect that caused the mentored relationship to be less successful. As one mentee wrote:

I understand the importance of having a professional working relationship, but with a Mentor, it would have been nice to also know more about them and their thought worlds to help build the respect and trust and help me feel more comfortable sharing my work and process with them.

To build off of this response, another mentee shared the desire to have had “more social time to get to know my mentor without feeling awkward due to age differences or a ‘strictly business’ attitude.” Several responses also supported this idea that having a personal relationship with their mentor was not considered acceptable, either by one or both parties involved. Without this personal connection, mentees expressed that it was difficult to develop a trusting relationship with their mentor.

#### Advice for future mentees

The last question of the survey asked participants to identify any additional information that they would like to share with future mentees. This advice also centered on the central theme of mentorship as a relationship, and the advice was applicable for how to develop the relationship.

Of the total responses, 65% indicated that preparation is an essential component in order to have a successful mentored relationship. This finding is also found in the literature (see Veronneau et al., 2012). The mentees discussed being prepared in terms of having a list of goals for the mentorship, meeting with the mentor beforehand to discuss expectations, knowing what you want out of the relationship, and networking with other interpreters besides their mentor. In

addition, several of the responses indicated that mentees need to trust their mentor's intentions, and trust that if their mentor puts them in an assignment or situation, that it is because the mentee is ready for that challenge. One mentee explained:

Meet with your mentor before your mentorship begins. Establish an open and honest relationship with your mentor. Be sure to discuss your goals and expectations. It is important that you communicate your needs.

Also evident in their responses is the idea that you get out of the mentorship what you put into it. This relates back to one of the qualities identified as necessary in a mentee, and that is motivation. In order for the relationship to succeed and be beneficial for both parties involved, mentees identified that attitude is very important. Mentees suggested that future mentees come to the table with an open mind and ready to learn. Another piece of advice that was shared by the mentees is taking charge of the mentorship. This is evidenced by the number of responses that suggested mentees ask as many questions as possible, to have a clear list of goals for the mentorship and to communicate those goals with their mentor, and that mentees need to take this experience seriously. One mentee shared,

Make sure you take it seriously and make sure not to waste your mentor's time. There is still a lot of information to learn so make sure you take advantage of that.

## CONCLUSION

This study is important to the field of signed language interpreters in that it had provided us with quantitative data regarding the lack of training on the mentorship process in ITPs, and qualitative data regarding the perceptions and understandings of mentorship by signed language interpreting students. This information will be beneficial for educators and researchers in our field, so as to meet the needs of our practicum students who are experiencing mentorship for the first time. This study began out of my own curiosity of what leads a mentorship to be successful. As a mentor, I invest a great deal of time and energy into fostering a relationship with my mentee, both professionally and personally, as a way of giving back to my community and the field of work I am so passionate about.

The focus of this study was to identify the understanding and thought world of interpreting students in regards to mentored relationships. After reviewing the available literature on mentorship, it became clear that there is little or no training provided to mentees prior to entering mentored relationships. In noticing this gap, I concentrated my efforts around collecting information from recent mentees enrolled in ITPs in order to analyze their experiences. This study was conducted using a survey method, which included yes/no questions, as well as open-ended responses. The data was collected using an online-survey platform, and which was then analyzed and coded for themes using a qualitative approach (Walker & Myrick, 2011).

The data collected in this study indicates that there is a lack of training for students entering their practicum and mentored experiences, and that there is a clear want for this training.

Responses indicated that mentees were unsure of how to navigate this new experience, and that while some had successful mentorships, others did not. In analyzing the data, it became clear that a relationship develops between the mentor and mentee, and this relationship plays a large part in how successful and effective the mentorship is. In other words, this relationship becomes the foundation for the mentorship to grow and develop. The responses indicated that the mentees view mentorship as a relationship between a person with more experience and a person with less experience. The identified goal of mentorship by the mentees involved in this study is for the mentor to impart their knowledge and experience on the mentee, while providing them a safe environment to grow and develop their skills in.

Among the data, mentees identified desired characteristics of their mentors, themselves as mentees, as well as characteristics of mentorship. In their own words, a mentorship is successful when there the environment fosters teaching and learning (for both parties involved), is supportive, and communication can occur openly. Successful mentorships were ones in which the mentor invested their time and energy, were professional and knowledgeable, as well as caring and supportive. Mentees identified the need to be motivated, to take charge of the situation, and to be actively involved and engaged. Time constraints and scheduling conflicts was identified as the factor that most hinders the success of the relationship. In addition, mentees noted that personality conflicts were another factor that caused the relationship to be unsuccessful.

## **Recommendations**

Future studies in this area should continue to focus on identifying characteristics of successful mentorships. Replication of this study with a larger audience will be helpful in

confirming the data from this study, and identifying how generalizable this data is to the population of signed language interpreting students as a whole.

Further research is also suggested in terms of identifying how the relationship between mentor and mentee can be developed and strengthened. Research can focus on identifying exercises, activities and other important strategies that aid in developing the relationship between mentor and mentee. Particular emphasis can focus on identifying what aspects need to be discussed, and how to discuss them prior to entering the mentored relationship. A second area that can be addressed in future research is to survey professional interpreters in the field who are mentors. As the focus of this research study was to understand the thought-worlds and knowledge current mentees have about mentorship, an additional study should be conducted to address the thought-worlds of interpreters who are serving as mentors. The importance of this additional research would be in identifying how current mentors approach providing mentorship, and what their mentorship philosophies are.

In regards to expanding the scope of this current research study, one idea has been discussed. It has been recognized that there is the potential to expand the training seminar (addressed in Part II), and instead, offer a training seminar that occurs in two phases. The first phase would include the training seminar included in this paper, and have it take place prior to starting their mentorships as a way to orient mentees. The second phase of training would occur after the mentorship has begun. Further research will be needed to identify what would be involved in this second phase of training.

After reviewing this data, it is my recommendation that students be encouraged to identify their goals and expectations for the mentorship, and to discuss them with their mentor



prior to beginning their mentorship. Secondly, I recommend that students meet with their mentor ahead of time to discuss their schedules, discuss how supervision will be conducted, and possible networking/observation opportunities with other interpreters. These items can be discussed throughout the mentorship, but it is recommended to begin these discussions prior to the start of the mentorship. Lastly, and most importantly, it is recommended that students begin looking for a mentor as early in their ITP as possible, in order to find a mentor with whom their interests and personalities align.

## **Part II**

The results of this study lead me to develop a professional project that would provide ITP students with mentorship training. Part II lays out the framework for such training.

## PART II: TRAINING SEMINAR COMPONENTS

### **Seminar Description**

A requirement of ITPs is the practicum or internship course, during which interpreting students are paired with professional interpreters to engage in mentorship. The purpose of this training seminar is to introduce students to the mentorship process prior to beginning their mentored experiences. First, students will receive an overview of common terminology, such as Mentorship, Mentor, and Mentee. Second, students will gain an understanding of communication and perceptions of power within the mentored relationship. Third, students will learn what hinders a mentored relationship and what leads to a successful mentored relationship. Lastly, students will learn what resources are available to them regarding mentorship.

The training seminar will be conducted using a co-constructivist approach. Students will participate in various activities throughout the training seminar. These activities will be conducted either in small groups, or as a whole group to foster discussion.

### **Seminar Materials**

The following materials will be utilized by the presenter:

1. PowerPoint Presentation (file available with online publication)
2. Training Seminar Outline (see Seminar Outline)
3. Large poster board for recording activity responses

The following materials will be given to the students:

1. Copy of the PowerPoint slides
2. Activity handouts (see Seminar Outline)

## **Learning Outcomes**

Student learning objectives:

- I. Understand the process of Mentorship.
- II. Identify the role/responsibilities of a Mentor.
- III. Identify the role/responsibilities of a Mentee.
- IV. Identify barriers to the Mentored Relationship.
- V. Understand how to succeed in a Mentored Relationship.

Upon completion of this training seminar:

- I. Students will have a solid foundation and understanding of the Mentorship Process.
- II. Students will be prepared to effectively engage in the Mentorship Process.

## **Seminar Outline**

The training seminar will be conducted using a PowerPoint presentation. The PowerPoint will support the outline described below:

### **Mentorship Training Outline**

#### **I. Introduction**

*“Welcome Aboard”*

1. Discuss Training Objectives
  - Understand the process of Mentorship
  - Identify the role/responsibilities of a Mentee

- Identify the role/responsibilities of a Mentor
- Identify barriers to the Mentored Relationship
- Understand how to succeed in a Mentored Relationship

## 2. Activity 1

Ask the students to take a few moments to answer the following 2 questions: 1) Who am I and what do I know about myself as an interpreting student? 2) Where am I at going into this mentorship?

This will help students to understand and recognize what they are bringing to the table and what their mindset is going into their practicum.

## 3. Activity 2

In the mentees' own words, describe the terms Mentorship, Mentor, and Mentee. This will be used throughout the workshop as a basis for comparison with what they already know, what their assumptions are, and what they have learned at the end of the workshop about mentorship. They can do this in small groups, pairs, or alone. The idea is to get them brainstorming about what these terms mean to us in general and as signed language interpreters. Mentoring is general concept but is carried out differently due to vocational variances. It also differs between students who are using mentorship to gain experience as they enter the field, and the professional interpreter who is using mentorship to specialize within the field. This is an important concept to understand.

## II. Mentorship/Mentee/Mentor Terminology

*"I'm about to do what?!"*

### 1. Discussion

Have the students discuss their responses to Activity 2 as a whole group. What are the similarities and differences among their responses? Foster this discussion.

### 2. Definition of terms

#### Mentorship

- a bi-directional process
- beneficial for both parties involved
- a way of increasing one's knowledge and experience
- a way of bridging the gap from student status to professional interpreter
- a highly unique because no two pairs have the same goals or relationship.

Mentor- more experienced person offering professional/personal guidance and support.

Mentee- less experienced person seeking professional/personal guidance and support.  
Has their own knowledge and experiences to bring to the table.

### 3. Questions:

Is the mentor the sole holder of knowledge and information?

Is the mentor the “expert?” Why/Why not?

### 4. Discuss characteristics of Mentors and Mentees:

a) Ask the students to brainstorm what their desired characteristics/qualities are that a Mentor and a Mentee should have. These should be separate lists.

b) Discuss their list in relation to NCIEC’s data as well as my data

\*According to the NCIEC (2009), mentees most often choose mentors who give time and attention to the mentorship, and those who are known to be nurturing and supportive.

\*The data that I collected further supports NCIEC’s findings.

## III. Communication and Perceptions of Power

*“How can I contact my mentor?” and “Who’s really in control?”*

### 1. Acceptable forms of communication

a) A big concern for students is that their mentors are not approachable and/or accessible. Take the time to discuss this with your mentor. Agree on terms that satisfy both of your needs.

b) Discuss what methods of communication are acceptable--text, email, voice, VP,  
\*Facebook

### 2. Power-- What is it, Who has it and why?

a) Mentor- more experienced. Wealth of information. Knowledge and experience equals Power.

b) Mentee- is still a student, versed on new trends and literature in interpreting. Fresh and open perspective; not yet jaded by past experiences in interpreting. This is your time to shine and learn!

c) Each person brings different assets to the table. It is important to recognize what each person has to offer, and what the goals are for the mentorship.

d) Ultimately, the mentee is the driving force behind the mentorship.

### 3. Activity 3

To open the lines of communication, and to be able to communicate your needs clearly with your mentor, students need to be able to identify what their strengths and weaknesses are. Ask the students to identify 3 of their strengths and 3 of their limitations/where they can improve. These can be shared out loud or in small groups. Do this prior to goal setting; helps to pinpoint areas that can be addressed in their goals.

## VI. What hinders success?

*“It’s not all sunshine and rainbows”*

### 1. Time Constraints/Conflicts

We are all busy. Practicum, and the relationship, needs to be of priority in order to be effective. The best advice is to plan ahead, reduce other workloads if possible, and schedule time in advance to meet your required interpreting and supervision hours.

### 2. Overdependence or Underutilization of Mentor

a) Mentees might over depend on their mentor for guidance and support, or expect their mentor to lead the relationship. This will not only hurt the experience for both parties involved, the mentor might end up feeling insulted or used.

b) Mentees might underutilize their mentor out of fear of appearing needy or not independent. Your mentor is there to be a resource. If you do not ask, you will never get the answers or help you need.

### 3. Power differentials and Personality clashes (from the data I collected)

a) Mentees report often feeling “helpless” or “voiceless,” or that their Mentors “take over” the relationship and decide what the goals are for the mentee or what the focus of the practicum is.

b) It is important to recognize the power that each individual has and respect boundaries.

c) Think of your mentorship as a relationship between two individuals. Some people just do not get along.

## **V. How to be successful**

*“What can I do in order to reap the benefits of this mentored relationship?”*

### 1. Foster the relationship

- a) Meet with your mentor before practicum begins.
- b) Get to know your mentor as a professional and as a person (as long as they want that type of relationship). Meet for dinner, coffee, etc. to get to know one another both during and outside of assignment/supervision time.

### 2. Be the driver

- a) Motivation is key-- Ask Questions and Be Engaged in the process.
- b) Know what you want to get out of the relationship/mentorship.
- c) Communicate your needs/frustrations/successes with your mentor.

### 3. Activity 4

Ask the students to identify at least 3 goals they wish to work on during their practicum. This should be done privately, and then allow students to break into small groups or as a group discuss what some of their goals are. \*Share these with your mentor in advance!

### 4. Commitment

Be committed and ready to do the work. Take notes and/or keep an active journal of vocabulary and concepts addressed in your interpreting work and during your observations. Be prepared to discuss these during supervision.

## **VI. Resources**

### 1. NCEIC- Mentoring Toolkit

<http://www.interpretereducation.org/aspiring-interpreter/mentorship/mentoring-toolkit/>

- a) 5 regional centers and their resources/specialized training
- b) National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials

<https://ncrtm.org/moodle/course/view.php?id=246>

2. Professional Interpreters—Network, Network, Network!
3. RID and CIT publications (JOI, VIEWS, JOIE)



## Mentorship Agreement Sample

Mentor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Info: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Protégé Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Info: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **As a mentor, I will:**

- Act as a resource and support
- Assist in goal setting and clarification
- Utilize all my skill and experience in working with a mentee
- Provide honest and direct feedback
- Provide unbiased critiques and suggest activities for improvement
- Be willing to give time, energy and attention
- Challenge the protégé to take risks
- Provide this service in a professional and unobtrusive manner

### **As a protégé, I will:**

- Communicate with your mentor about goals, needs and feelings
- Be receptive to honest and direct feedback
- Be committed to the mentoring agreement and participation
- Follow through with outside work assigned
- Make arrangements, when necessary, with clients for on-site observations of my work, explaining in advance the role and responsibilities of the mentor
- Be prepared for mentoring sessions – have specific issues identified to discuss, or work completed from previous sessions
- Keep an open mind about the process and participate in a professional manner

Mentors and Protégés read the following statement and sign below:

The terms of this agreement as stated above are acceptable.

Mentor \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Protégé \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

<http://www.interpretereducation.org/moustk/>

**Activity 1**  
**Beginning Discussion**

1. *Who am I and what do I know about myself as an interpreting student?*

2. *Where am I at going into this mentorship?*

## Activity 2

How do we define these terms?

<p><b><u>Mentorship</u></b></p>	
<p><b><u>Mentor</u></b></p>	
<p><b><u>Mentee</u></b></p>	

**Activity 2, cont'd**

**What characteristics are important in Mentors and Mentees?**

❖ **Characteristics of Mentors:**

❖ **Characteristics of Mentees:**

### Activity 3

#### Areas of Strength and Improvement

1. *Identify 3 areas of Strength in your interpreting work:*



2. *Identify 3 areas needing improvement in your interpreting work:*



## Activity 4

### Goals for Practicum

*Identify 3 goals your mentorship/practicum. Your goals can be skill-based or knowledge-based, and should be specific and realistic enough to be accomplished during your practicum. Support your goals with evidence from your school/interpreting work.*



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## APPENDIX

### Survey Questions

#### Experience with Mentorship

1. Have you received any formal training on the mentoring process?
  - A. If not, would you have found training beneficial?
2. Did you discuss and establish a list of goals to accomplish during your mentorship with your mentor?
3. Did you discuss and establish a list of ground rules for the mentorship with your mentor?

#### Role Definitions

1. In your own words, give a definition of Mentorship (mentoring).
2. Regarding your definition, identify and prioritize your top three characteristics of Mentorship.
3. Consider your definition of a Mentor's role; identify and describe the top three aspects that come to mind.
4. Consider your definition of a Mentee's role; identify and describe the top three aspects that come to mind.

#### Looking back on your experiences:

1. What do you know now about the process of mentoring that you wish you had known before?
2. Having this new understanding, would you have done anything differently?
3. Describe what worked well for you during your mentored experiences.
4. What did your mentor(s) do or say to support you as a learner?
5. Describe some areas of frustration for you during your mentored experiences.
6. What more would you have wished that your mentor(s) had done to support you?
7. Is there anything that was lacking from your mentored experience that you wish was included?
8. What information would you like to share with future mentees?

### **Implied Consent to participate in research study:**

Hello,

My name is Samantha Paradise, and I am a student in the Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies program at Western Oregon University and am an interpreter in Rochester, New York. I am conducting a research study on the understanding of mentorship by signed language interpreting students.

I would appreciate your participation in this survey. The survey is anonymous, and your contribution will help add to the information known about mentorship as it applies to signed language interpreting, with particular focus on the thought-worlds of those who are being mentored. The survey is anticipated to take 10-15 minutes to complete.

You may exit the survey at any time and no data will be submitted. Completion of the survey by answering the questions it entails indicates your consent to participate in this research study.

If you have any questions regarding the survey, or research study, please feel free to contact me by email, at [sjp9124@gmail.com](mailto:sjp9124@gmail.com). Thank you for your time and interest in adding to available research on mentorship and signed language interpreters.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Western Oregon University. If you have any further questions about the review process, you may contact the IRB ([irb@wou.edu](mailto:irb@wou.edu) or 503-838-9200), or my research advisors, Amanda Smith ([smithar@mail.wou.edu](mailto:smithar@mail.wou.edu) or 503-838-8650) and Dr. Elisa Maroney ([maronee@wou.edu](mailto:maronee@wou.edu) or 503-838-8735).

Regards,

Samantha J. Paradise