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# Changes in community contact characteristics in interpreter education

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**Changes in Community Contact Characteristics  
in Interpreter Education**

By  
Vicki Darden

A thesis submitted to  
Western Oregon University

In partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of:

Master of Arts, Interpreting Studies

June, 2013

EVALUATION PAGE

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

**Changes in Community Contact Characteristics in Interpreter Education**

Presented by: Vicki Darden

A candidate for the degree of: Master of Arts, 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

Date: June 6, 2013

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Changes in Community Contact Characteristics in Interpreter Education**

by

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June 6, 2013

In this study, changes in the amount and type of student contact with the Deaf community outside of classroom hours were examined at three bachelor-level degree programs for American Sign Language (ASL)/English interpreting. Research was conducted in three phases: by survey, examination of program syllabi, and interviews. Institutional demographics from a sample comprising 40% of the 40 bachelor-level ASL/English interpreter programs in the United States were gathered by survey in the first phase. From that initial sample, a smaller sample of three institutions (7.5% of the total initial population of 40) was established for the next two phases of research. Requirements for both virtual and in-person contact with the Deaf community were documented in course syllabi from three programs for the academic years 2002/2003 – 2011/2012 and examined for evidence of change. Interviews with program faculty expanded on data found in syllabi. Findings show that requirements for students' association with the Deaf community, in person, at Deaf events, have declined over a ten-year period. An increase in virtual modes of contact between programs and Deaf community, as well as an increasing use of technology in programs generally, was documented. Indications of fewer opportunities for in-person community contact and a change in approach by programs for facilitating community

contact and opportunities to gain cultural competence for their students were identified. Findings are presented to encourage further research and to inform ASL/English interpreter educators seeking to promote cultural and communicative competence among their students.

# INTRODUCTION

## Background

The profession of signed language interpreting in the United States is relatively young. Its official beginning is often cited as the 1964 meeting that founded the organization that is known today as the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID) (Humphrey & Alcorn, 1996; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). Research in the field is also nascent. The field's short history and its sparse canon of research are accompanied by a lack of pedagogical agreement in the field of interpretation in general, both spoken and signed. The Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (CCIE) defines interpreting as

...the art and science of receiving a message from one language and rendering it into another. It involves the appropriate transfer and transmission of culturally based linguistic and nonlinguistic information. The goal of interpreting is to transfer a message from a source language into a target language without skewing it while keeping in mind the linguistic needs of the recipients of the message. Interpreting serves a diverse population in a variety of settings across a broad range of fields and therefore requires professional interpreters to possess a breadth and depth of knowledge. (Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education, 2010, p. 1)

The Commission has developed standards that provide broad guidance for interpreter education programs in terms of mission, philosophy, and curriculum design. The standards are not explicitly detailed, but leave it up to the individual institutions to route their own paths to achieve the recommended standards.

Within the field of interpreter education, there are a multitude of opinions whether translation and interpretation can even be taught (Davies, 2005; Nida, 2001; Pöchhacker &

Shlesinger, eds., 2002), and a lack of standardization in interpreter training curricula (Roy, 2000; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). Educators looking to ground their curriculum decisions in research-based best practices are confronted with a patchwork of approaches, from differing process models to debate over whether, when, how, and how much theory to introduce to practitioners and students.

Certain themes have begun to emerge, however. One theme coalesces around several concepts, including the importance of cultural and communicative competence (Lane, 1999; Mindess, 1999; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005), the ideal of approaching the work of interpreting from a cognitive, rather than conduit, model of interpretation (Wilcox & Shaffer, 2005), a desire to help ASL/English interpreting students come to a thoughtful understanding of the interpreter's eventual "place" in the Deaf community (Monikowski & Peterson, 2005; Rowley, Kraft & Dyce, 2008), and the value of opportunities to apply theory to authentic "real world" experiences (Bentley-Sassaman, 2009; Kiraly, 2000; Roy, 2000). What these concepts have in common is "community contact," that is, contact with the Deaf community as it naturally congregates, rather than with "ambassadors" from the community in artificial, classroom settings (Monikowski & Peterson, 2005).

Against this backdrop of discussion around emerging standards, cultural and communicative competence, and interpreters' professional and cultural role in relation to the Deaf community, the Deaf community itself has become a moving target. As technology creates new communication options, interpreters have witnessed the Deaf community adopting – and have adopted right along with them – the use of teletype machines, closed captioning, facsimile (fax) machines, personal computers, web cameras, video phones, smart phones, and tablet

computers with embedded cameras. The Deaf community, long defined by location or place, among other characteristics (Padden, 1998), has become as mobile as the rest of the modern world.

There are those who argue technology has not been the driving force behind the perceived decline of Deaf fellowship (Padden, 2007). Nonetheless, there are signs that the Deaf community is diminishing, in numbers and in geographical footprint. Factors that have an impact on the community include the decline in the incidence of congenital and childhood deafness worldwide (Johnston, 2004); a decline in attendance at, and in the number of, residential Schools for the Deaf (Moores, 2004); and as acknowledged “early adopters” of technology (Leigh, 2009), the Deaf community no longer needs to congregate to leverage the traditional “Deaf grapevine” (Cokely, 2008) to spread or receive news of the community and the world at large.

Further, there has been ongoing debate in the Deaf community itself about what it means to be a Deaf person (Bauman, ed., 2008; Ladd, 2003) and how to (or how not to) integrate the many voices of d/Deafness<sup>1</sup> within the culture (Leigh, 2009). The Deaf community has experienced a groundswell of research around identity-building, specifically d/Deaf identities, in the last decade or more. Research and conversation continue over the ways deaf people come to identify as culturally Deaf. Scholars have coined new terminology and expanded our understanding of concepts such as *Deafhood*, the process in which people who are auditorily deaf integrate the cultural aspect of their Deaf identity and free themselves from mainstream oppression (Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1999); and *audism*, the forms that oppression takes, implicitly and

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<sup>1</sup> Following the convention in scholarly writings about the culturally Deaf community (see for example Harris, 2005), the lower case term *deaf* refers to the physical condition of deafness. The capitalized term *Deaf* refers to those deaf people who identify as members of Deaf culture. The term *d/Deaf* is used to denote inclusion of all people who identify themselves as either or both.

explicitly, within the mainstream hearing culture (Lane, 1999; Humphrey and Alcorn, 1996).

The very concept of what it means to be deaf or Deaf is changing. The percentage of deaf babies – over 95% of whom are born to hearing parents and culture (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004) – who receive cochlear implants is well over 50% and continuing to rise (National Public Radio, 2012). These children may not learn ASL or Deaf culture until later in life, if at all.

These factors point to a future of continued changes in the Deaf community. The interpreting profession will need to adapt accordingly. Working intimately with members of a culture who are so deeply engaged in the process of defining themselves and their position in and relationship to the larger world requires sensitivity and empathy. Community contact can serve to incur and hone these traits (Monikowski and Peterson, 2005).

The need for cultural competence and sensitivity on the part of interpreters working between the oppressed minority culture of the Deaf and the privileged hearing mainstream culture has never been more topical. Just after the data collection phases of this thesis were completed, a controversy erupted in the field of signed language interpreting in the United States. The national certifying body for ASL/English interpreters, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), is confronting issues related to the place of interpreters with Deaf parents within the organization, as well as the organization's and profession's relationship with the Deaf community. The Board had announced that a vote of the membership to establish a Board seat to represent interpreters with Deaf parents, who hold a distinct place in the profession, had passed. Not long after, the Board had to rescind the announcement when it was found that the vote did not conform to the organization's by-laws requirements (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2013, March 21).

Shortly after this, in an unrelated incident, two Deaf members of the Board resigned. In their explanations, they spoke of a perceived lack of DEAF-HEART<sup>2</sup> in the organization, and possibly oppressive behavior (Merkin, 2013; Sheneman, 2013). The Board responded with their own statement (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2013, April 24). Debate and discussion ensue in social media.

Clearly, the issues of cultural competence and sensitivity are of great importance to the Deaf community, the hearing community, and the interpreting profession that serves them both. There is a need for effective approaches in interpreter education to foster cultural competence among students. To add to an understanding of the current situation and to provide a background for good decision-making going forward, this study was developed to document past and current community contact practices in interpreter education.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The demand for American Sign Language (ASL)/English interpreters in the United States has expanded dramatically in the last half century. The need for students of ASL/English interpreting to attain cultural competence has never been more apparent. Recent turmoil in the profession and the leadership of its professional organization, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, indicate a cultural breach that has not been adequately spanned. Interpreters working within the Deaf community historically came from the community. As need outpaced supply, programs to train new interpreters who had no previous connection to d/Deaf people began to operate without much input from the Deaf community (Cokely, 2005).

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<sup>2</sup> For purposes of conveying a transcription of American Sign Language in written English, the convention of glossing the sign in capital letters will be followed in this paper (Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1991).

In an effort to reincorporate the Deaf community, some institutions have focused on ways to “recenter the Deaf community in interpreter education” (Shaw & Roberson, 2009), by establishing programs for community contact, including service-learning. The initial program assessment of this model demonstrates positive outcomes for students; however if, as appears to be the case, the Deaf community is not physically coming together as they used to (Padden, 2007; Valentine & Skelton, 2008), where are those who are new to the culture but aspiring to become interpreters to achieve cultural competence? As technology and Deaf culture have evolved, in what ways and by what means do ASL and interpreting students acculturate to that community? Has this changed over the last decade?

This study examines data from universities with Bachelor-level degrees in American Sign Language interpretation for evidence of change in the amount of, and kinds of, community contact with the Deaf community required by ASL language and ASL/English interpreting courses over the academic years 2002/2003 to 2011/2012.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine how ASL/English interpreting students are and have been required to interact with the Deaf community outside of classroom hours, whether those requirements have changed over time, and in what ways. Requirements for both virtual and in-person contact with the Deaf community were documented in course syllabi from the academic years 2002/2003 – 2011/2012 for evidence of change. Interviews with program faculty expanded on data found in syllabi. Final findings are presented here to encourage further research into this area and to inform interpreter educators seeking to promote cultural and communicative competence among their students.



## **Theoretical Bases and Organization**

This research design integrates a sociolinguistic model of interpretation emphasizing a discourse-level approach, informed by the works of Colonomos (1992), the Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (2010), Mindess (1999), Roy (2000), Wilcox and Shaffer (2005), Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2005), and others. This approach to interpreting necessitates a complex array of skills, aptitudes, knowledge, and interpersonal characteristics encompassing a deep understanding of each of the languages and cultures represented in the interpreted event, as well as broad knowledge of the world at large.

The inherent complementary value in both quantitative and qualitative research informs this work. When used in tandem, each may provide a form of “checks and balances” for the potential weaknesses of the other. A mixed method utilizing quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques is combined with a grounded theory approach that does not seek to prove a preconceived theory, but springs from a curiosity about a perceived phenomenon and allows the data revealed to offer up its own story (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012).

The current study explicitly utilizes a social-constructivist approach to teaching and learning – and by extension, research – as described in the work of Kiraly (2000), and embodied in the co-constructivist approach and environment of the Interpreting Studies program at Western Oregon University. This approach operates under the belief that meaning is constructed as collaboration between the facilitator and the learner, between the interpreter and the consumer, between the observer and the observed.

This research is strengthened by elements from the field of anthropology, including an appreciation of the value of participant observation and an understanding of the concept of cultural relativity in developing cultural sensitivity, or competence. The discipline of

anthropology also emphasizes the importance of immersion within a community as a path to understanding that community's worldview. This approach complements study of the current subject. Observations of data from ASL and ASL/English interpreting programs indicate that cultural immersion – to the greatest degree possible – has been emphasized as a critical element for students of ASL wishing to become fluent.

Grounded theory research springs from a personal experience or observation. The catalyst for this study was my own experience in the fields of interpreting and interpreter education. As an interpreter coming into the maturation of her abilities at the same time the digital revolution was transforming the nature of interpreting work, particularly in terms of acquisition of skills and delivery of service, I am curious to know how the field of interpreter education, by choice or by chance, is responding. While I intuit that opportunities for virtual contact with the Deaf community have increased exponentially and opportunities for in-person contact with the Deaf community have declined or changed in recent years, I make no judgments about the value of either approach from a best practices standpoint. Though suggestions for further research and recommendations for the field of interpreter education are shared, this study aims to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. It seeks mainly to document “what was and what is” in terms of requirements for and characteristics of community contact in interpreter education over the last decade.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

The Phase I data sample comprise a significant number, 40% of the total population. This yielded a representative group from which to select the Phases II and III sample sites. The Phase II and III sample was intended to comprise four sites, or 10% of the Bachelor-level ASL/English interpreting programs in the United States. However, data was not collected from

one of the sites chosen and it was dropped from the sample, which resulted in a smaller sample than was originally anticipated. Findings may not be representative of all programs, nor widely generalizable. The small sample did allow for depth of data collection and analysis and the ability to ensure an “apples to apples” comparison among programs.

It is possible that not all change is evident in the archival data I collected from institutional syllabi. There may be community contact that was not documented. The courses selected may not be the most representative of community contact requirements. Syllabi were selected and provided by program staff. Guidance was provided to ensure the study used consistent parameters to collect and analyze equivalent data.

The research design utilized a mixed methodology that collected data through a variety of means, including a confidential online survey addressed to program coordinators, examination of a decade’s worth of archival documents, and interviews with program faculty. The informants or authors in each phase of data collection were, for the most part, different people with little overlap between phases. A variety of informants with diverse backgrounds were sought to provide a breadth of data. Each phase’s findings were compared to the other phases’ for congruency or dissimilarity. This added to the depth and reliability of the findings and conclusions.

### **Definition of Terms**

The terms *Deaf community* and *Deaf culture* appear throughout this paper. They are used somewhat interchangeably, though they are not exactly the same thing. Padden describes the Deaf community as

...a group of people who live in a particular location, share the common goals of its members, and in various ways, work toward achieving these goals. A deaf [sic]

community may include persons who are not themselves Deaf, but who actively support the goals of the community and work with Deaf people to achieve them.

(Padden, 1989, p. 5).

The meaning of *Deaf culture* is still being explored and defined, but most definitions include foremost a norm of using signed language as the primary mode of communication, as well as a view of Deafness as a rich linguistic, cultural, and social heritage rather than the medical paradigm of *loss* or *lack*: of hearing, of ability, of connection with community (Harris, 2005; Ladd, 2003; Leigh, 2009; Padden, 1989). An aspiring hearing interpreter may become accepted as a member of the Deaf community, but not of Deaf culture. Even so, she or he must have a comprehensive enough understanding of Deaf culture to effectively facilitate communication and understanding. This requires contact with the culture and community.

*Community contact* is defined as students' exposure to members of the Deaf community outside of classroom hours, individually or in aggregate, in person or by video or other virtual means, utilizing signed language, in real time or asynchronously (e.g., through films or video weblogs, known as "vlogs").

## REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

### Interpreters and Their Relationship with the Deaf Community

The Deaf community's relationship with interpreters is complex, as one might expect in a professional relationship that can cross very personal boundaries (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005; Mindess, 1999). Before laws were enacted in the United States to ensure the communicative rights of the Deaf community, there were no professional interpreters. Interpreting needs were handled by family members (often the children of Deaf adults), friends, and professionals such as the clergy or social workers (Cokely, 2005). With the passage of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1965 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, professional interpreters as a communicative accommodation began to be provided in certain venues. More legislation followed, and the Deaf community began to have greater and greater access to interpreters (Humphrey & Alcorn, 1996). Because most interpreters initially were still personally connected to the Deaf community in some way, the community had a great deal of influence in screening would-be interpreters and maintaining a level of quality in the pool of interpreters. Interpreters were seen as being "*of the community*" rather than "*for the community*" (Cokely, 2005).

The new laws resulted in educational interpreters being provided in elementary and secondary classrooms, as well as at the post-secondary level. With this development, more parents opted to send their children to the neighborhood school rather than the state school for the Deaf, where children were usually required to reside during the week. Since 1817, when the first school for deaf children was founded in America, the Deaf community has a proud history of growing up in residential schools for the Deaf (Lane, 1999, Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989, Wilcox, ed., 1989). Since 95% of deaf children are born to hearing parents, the school for the

Deaf was where a deaf child typically learned American Sign Language, became enculturated into Deaf culture, and in turn transmitted both to the next generation. School was where the children had unrestricted communicative access with others like themselves. School was where a Deaf child became just another normal child. The school “family” became more important to many than their families of origin (Lane, 1999; Padden & Humphries, 1988; Wilcox, ed., 1989).

This changed as more children became “mainstreamed” in local classrooms. The need for interpreters soon outstripped the number of recruits available from those connected to the Deaf community. Interpreter education programs were established all over the country to help produce more interpreters. Increasingly, these were people who had little to no prior connection to Deaf people, their language, or their community (Cokely, 2005; Humphrey & Alcorn, 1996). Over time, academia took over the screening, education, and certification of signed language interpreters, and the Deaf community’s involvement in the process became marginal (Cokely; Monikowski & Peterson, 2005).

One study of the entry-level competencies interpreters new to the profession should be expected to possess began with conversations with Deaf community members and stakeholders about their views on interpreters and those entering the profession (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). Those conversations confirmed that the relationship between interpreters and Deaf people is complex. The interpreting relationship requires trust; interpreters become privy to intimate details of their clients’ lives. In the past, access to the Deaf community and its language was conferred by birth or merit, with the community acting as gatekeepers. As an oppressed minority that has often been manipulated or disempowered by the hearing majority (Lane, 1999; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005), Deaf people have traditionally been wary of those who seek to “help” them or to become connected to their community. As more interpreters have entered

the profession without any prior connection to the Deaf community, members of the community have expressed the desire to resume a greater role in interpreter education. (Cokely, 2005; Witter-Merithew & Johnson 2005).

### **Current Standards for Cultural Competence**

The profession has codified the need for intercultural competence through its Code of Professional Conduct. This Code applies to and guides the professional conduct of students and practitioners of ASL/English interpreting, as stated under Applicability. “This Code of Professional Conduct applies to certified and associate members of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc., Certified members of the National Association of the Deaf, interns, and students of the profession” (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2005, p. 2). The Code adopts as its overarching philosophy that

The American Deaf community represents a cultural and linguistic group having the inalienable right to full and equal communication and to participation in all aspects of society. Members of the American Deaf community have the right to informed choice and the highest quality interpreting services. Recognition of the communication rights of America’s women, men, and children who are deaf is the foundation of the tenets, principles, and behaviors set forth in this Code of Professional Conduct. (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2005, p. 1)

The need for cultural and communicative competence inheres throughout the seven tenets, but Tenet 2 specifically addresses this topic.

#### **2.0 PROFESSIONALISM**

Tenet: Interpreters possess the professional skills and knowledge required for the specific interpreting situation.

Guiding Principle: Interpreters are expected to stay abreast of evolving language use and trends in the profession of interpreting as well as in the American Deaf community.

Interpreters accept assignments using discretion with regard to skill, communication mode, setting, and consumer needs. Interpreters possess knowledge of American Deaf culture and deafness-related resources. (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2005, p. 3)

To use discretion in accepting assignments, an interpreter needs to have a linguistic and cultural understanding of the parties involved. Staying current with the language use of a community involves contact with that community in some form.

Interpreter educators may be guided by the standards developed by the Collegiate Commission on Interpreter Education. It states as its objective, in part,

The Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education Standards (CCIE Standards) identify the knowledge, skills, and perspectives students need to gain in order to enter the field of professional interpreting. The Standards give students, faculty, curriculum developers, administrators, employers, and consumers a common set of expectations about what basic knowledge and competencies interpreting students should acquire.

(Collegiate Commission on Interpreter Education, 2010, p. 1)

The importance with which it holds cultural competence is evidenced by its presence in the standard for program philosophy under the Commission's Standard 5: Curriculum. This Standard provides guidance for programs' mission, philosophy, curriculum design, instruction, pre-requisites, and knowledge and competencies. The Standards advocate that,

The statement of philosophy of the program shall reflect:

1. A sociolinguistic view of Deaf and hearing communities. Efforts should be made to establish and maintain an open and continuing dialogue with the various members of the



Deaf community representing the diversity within the communities. Diversity within the deaf community must be recognized as an evolving factor. The opinions and information gained through the dialogues should guide the development of the curriculum, instruction, and practicum. (Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education, 2010, p. 5)

The Commission directly addresses the need for cultural and linguistic competence as desired outcomes for students of interpreter training programs in several of the subsections throughout Standard 5, such as this statement encouraging a curriculum design that will, “Represent cultural competence that is not limited to simple recognition and mention of diverse cultures and groups” (p. 5). Specifics for how to accomplish this are left to the individual programs’ discretion.

### **Language Acquisition and Cultural Competence**

The concept of successful meaning transfer between two languages by interpreters and translators presumes fluency with both languages on the part of the professional. The field of language acquisition has identified that, in order to truly be fluent in a language, the learner must acquire a level of communicative competence (Byram, 1997; Mindess, 1999; Moore & Levitan, 1993; Senghas & Monaghan, 2002). This requires cultural competence, which is acquired through contact with the community that uses the language under study. One ASL researcher has indicated that for students of above-average aptitude, for languages such as Spanish or French, 720 hours of language instruction are considered necessary to achieve fluency. This is much less than the typical ASL/interpreting student receives in the classroom (Jacobs, as cited in Monikowski & Peterson, 2005). Many people, such as Jacobs, feel that ASL is actually more difficult to learn than the Romance languages for English speakers. However, if one assumes that ASL is at least as difficult for adult native English speakers to learn as French or Spanish,

the average student training to become an ASL/English interpreter will require far more exposure to the language than they can expect to receive in the classroom.

Interpreting requires linguistic knowledge in a variety of topics (business, medical, legal, technical), particularly community or liaison interpreting, which is often the type of interpreting ASL/English interpreters are called to do. Students who intend to become interpreters need to encounter all their working languages in diverse settings to acquire both background knowledge of the culture and the range of communicative competence interpreting necessitates (Wilcox & Shaffer, 2005).

Cultural knowledge empowers people by providing them with tools for sense making and adaptive, flexible problem solving. Culturally competent individuals make use of these tools in intercultural interactions, and there is evidence that multicultural experiences foster the ability to use cultural knowledge flexibly in intercultural contacts. (Chiu & Hong, 2005, p. 498)

According to the most recent annual report of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, through which ASL/English language interpreters in the United States become nationally certified, as of 2010 nearly 88% of responding members identified as “Euro-American/White” (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2012). On the topic of language acquisition and socialization in children, Senghas and Monaghan note, “For multilingual children (deaf or hearing), not only must they learn each language, but they must also learn when to use these particular languages and how to switch among them effectively” (2002, p. 82). We can assume this is also true of adults learning a second language, and an important skill for people who interpret between two languages. The ability to switch flexibly between languages and cultures is a skill that bicultural people acquire incidentally, but one that monolingual, monocultural

people, as many ASL/English interpreting students are prior to beginning ASL studies in high school or college, must work to attain (Chiu & Hong, 2005).

Interpreting and American Sign Language students are often required to attend Deaf community events as course requirements. Within the last decade, the idea of “service learning” has been employed as an approach to increase students’ cultural competence and knowledge of the community. Monikowski and Peterson (2005), in describing the establishment of one such program at their institution, define service learning not as a more powerful or privileged group doing something “for” an impoverished community, but rather an opportunity for the students to be in service to the good of the community. This approximates the former norm of interpreters being *of* the community rather than *for* the community as well as provides an opportunity for the student to engage in the Deaf culture norm of reciprocity, which is valued and well regarded. Through regular community contact and reflective journaling, this becomes “a recursive phenomenon wherein students learn the significance of membership in a community while reflecting on the importance of reciprocity and the symbiotic nature of learning and living” (Monikowski & Peterson, 2005, p. 195). Using students’ voices and summations of the impact of their experiences in service, the authors illustrate the students’ self-perceived benefits of participation and growing awareness of the community and culture.

Looking to isolate factors that contribute to success in interpreter training programs, Petronio and Hale (2009) had a unique opportunity to study one program that operated two sites over a ten-year period. Site A was the original site, based at a university. Site B was a satellite campus where the program was also offered for a period of ten years. While the program components were the same, the faculty were different at each site. Site B also differed in other ways, such as a geographically scattered layout of program classrooms, offices, and facilities,

and a part-time attendance option for its students. Site A experienced better graduation rates and greater success in terms of numbers of graduates passing national certification examinations than Site B. Though many factors were examined, those believed to influence the students' success the most were the number of Deaf faculty and staff; a requirement that students attend the program full-time as a closed cohort, as opposed to part-time attendance in a mixed cohort; and possibly most important, the close proximity of offices, classrooms, and language labs. This provided a hub where a mix of working interpreters, interpreting students, Deaf students, and Deaf and signing faculty and staff contributed to an immersive experience for the students. Taken together, this indicates that exposure to a signing, Deaf-normed environment has a positive effect on interpreting student's linguistic and cultural competence and later professional success. Yet the perception is that these environments are becoming more rare (Padden, 2007; Valentine & Skelton, 2008).

### **The Transformation of Deaf Space**

Like every culturally distinct group, Deaf people have been drawn to one another throughout history. In America, they met in schools for the Deaf and continued to meet and form fraternal and professional organizations such as the National Association of the Deaf, and to socialize in local Deaf clubs (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). The decline in the number of Deaf clubs and residential school programs for the Deaf has been much remarked on in the media and within the Deaf community itself. Research is beginning to catch up with the phenomenon. The decline in schools for the Deaf is related to factors discussed above, including the increased mainstreaming of D/deaf children, though there are certain to be many more factors in such a complex process. Whatever the cause, the traditional locations where the Deaf community has gathered are decreasing (Padden, 2007), as well as the population of the community itself

(Johnston, 2004). Coming together to sign and socialize has long been a pillar of Deaf culture, yet technology has evolved to the point where Deaf people no longer need to come together in one space to communicate in real time using their native language, or to learn the news and pool their knowledge. This indicates changing norms for this culture.

Prior to the emergence of the internet, Deaf communities were socially embedded in Deaf clubs. The rhythms of the Deaf club dominated Deaf people's weekly routines because this was the main (and for some the only) space where they could communicate in sign language with other Deaf people and access information in their own language. Now both functions can be fulfilled by the internet. (Valentine & Skelton, 2008, p. 476)

Free from the constraints of geography, Deaf people now congregate wherever they desire, in the same spontaneous way the hearing mainstream has long enjoyed. "Deaf space" has now become dynamic, recreated in a multitude of venues. "By performing their identities in these spaces through the use of sign language Deaf people in effect produce parts of these venues as Deaf space" (Valentine and Skelton, 2008, p. 477).

If students have been traditionally encouraged to associate with and become involved in the Deaf community, in what form are they currently doing so? These changes within the Deaf community create a challenge for students acquiring a signed language and wishing to engage in an acculturative process with Deaf culture, as it appears there are fewer and less obvious places one can find the Deaf community congregating in large numbers.

A critical eye has been cast on the work of some anthropologists of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, whose efforts to document vanishing cultures have been referred to as *salvage ethnography* (Gruber, 1970). At times these efforts resorted to reconstruction of vanished or vanishing cultural norms or events for the purpose of documentation. Arguably, encouraging

ASL and interpreting students to attend Deaf events is a bit like encouraging them to do salvage ethnography on a way of life that is drastically changing, if not disappearing. To use one cultural norm as an example, because collectivism and information sharing have traditionally been highly valued in Deaf culture, one is expected to let people know where one is going when leaving the room and when one can be expected to return (Lane, 1999; Mindess, 1999). In the past when a Deaf person said they were leaving the room to make a phone call, it was a polite, if subtly ironic way to say they were going to the restroom. It is possible that knowing bits of Deaf arcana such as this has no relevance in a world where, through the innovations of modern technology, the Deaf person may very well be making a phone call!

Perhaps technology is having such a profound effect on Deaf culture and even how ASL is produced and articulated that there actually needs to be more of an emphasis on virtual means of community contact (Keating, 2003; Valentine and Skelton, 2008). Perhaps, as Melissa Malzkuhn stated at the 2012 convention of the Conference of Interpreter Trainers' plenary session, the Deaf community is itself becoming more virtual (2012, October 19).

Despite this ever-increasing upsurge in technological engagement by the Deaf community there is little in the literature to date about the use of technology by signed language interpreter education programs for contact with the Deaf community. Though it seems nearly impossible to keep up with technology's rapid evolution, the field would benefit from an analysis of what types of community contact have been and are being utilized by interpreter education programs, and by what means.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

In the current study, I utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data. I approached collection and analysis of that data from a grounded theory perspective (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012). Grounded theory research begins with curiosity about a personally observed phenomenon. In this case, the phenomena I observed were the changes that technology has mediated in the Deaf community's norms of communicating and congregating. This led to curiosity about how those changes impact the acculturation activities of students of signed language interpretation and what it may mean for interpreter education and general interaction between the interpreting and Deaf communities. In accordance with a grounded theory approach, data was collected from diverse sources through a variety of methods and assessed for patterns or themes that may facilitate understanding of said phenomena and its impact.

The research began with a review of relevant literature, which continued throughout the study as findings indicated new avenues of investigation. Once the research design was established, data was collected from subjects in three phases. Participants were advised that their information would remain confidential. The research design did not allow for anonymous respondents. The Phase I population of 40 yielded a sample size of 16. This sample was initially reduced to four for Phases II and III, but data was actually collected from three institutions.

### **Literature Review**

As far as could be ascertained, no research had previously occurred on this exact topic. In searching for information on how contact between students and the Deaf community may have changed over the last ten years, with an eye to technology's influence, I started by looking for information related to the Deaf community's use of technology, research that would support

or refute my sense that opportunities for Deaf fellowship have declined, how communicative competence develops for second language learners, and the importance of communicative and cultural competence for interpreters. These were broad themes I hoped would guide me. In the course of the entire project, my literature review followed other trails, such as identity building processes in Deaf culture; a possible lack of cultural competence in the interpreting profession as perceived by the Deaf community; and elements training programs have identified as leading to success for interpreting students.

At times, the articles and books I identified and read had a driving influence on how I conducted the research. For example, there were studies I found early in the project that were related to the topic of service-learning in interpreter education. These articles informed both my Phase I survey question design and the development of the Phase III semi-structured interview questions. At other times, the research I uncovered caused me to look at my project's data from a new perspective, such as the discovery of Valentine and Skelton's 2008 article that introduced me to the concept of *Deaf space* about the time I was conducting the Phase III interviews. This article led to an awareness of a whole host of revelations evident in the data about the ways in which interpreter educators are working to provide opportunities for their students to experience Deaf space and culture. Thus, the literature review process continued throughout the entire thesis project, rather than being a separate step in the process.

### **Phase I**

In Phase I, a link to a confidential online survey (Appendix A) was sent to the program coordinators for the 40 institutions listed on RID's website as having Bachelor-level ASL/English interpreting programs (Appendix B), inviting them to participate in the study.



Responses were received from 16 programs. From this initial sample of 16, four institutions were invited to join the smaller, purposeful sample for Phases II and III.

**Participants.** The participants for this phase of the study were program directors from the 40 entities in the United States offering four-year degree programs in signed language interpreting, as listed on the website of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf as of November 2, 2012, (see Appendix B). Each institution was invited to complete a survey about characteristics of their program.

**Instrument.** The survey instrument (Appendix A) was conducted over the Internet. Survey questions were piloted with a group of 18 interpreters and interpreter educators, and modified according to feedback received. The questions were intended to elicit information about each institution's program and its history, Deaf and hearing faculty ratios, size of the local Deaf community, and requirements for in-person and virtual contact with the Deaf community by its students. Sites were selected based on the program's answers to these questions, and their apparent willingness to share data from their institution.

**Selecting the Phase II sample.** Of the sixteen programs that responded to the Phase I survey, six were eliminated as candidates for the sample. These six had either indicated they did not want to participate past Phase I, or their programs had been in existence for less than ten years – the period the research is designed to investigate.

Ten programs were viable candidates for the sample sites. One program, Site A, was selected because it provided full access to its files, program information, and faculty members. Because the research involved a significant request for archival documents and access to faculty members for interviews, having cooperation from program coordinators was crucial and was a factor in all the sites selected. The program director at each site selected was someone with

whom I, or my thesis advisor, had made previous professional contact and had reason to believe would be willing to accommodate such a time-consuming request for program files, referrals, and interviews.

Two other programs were selected based on their similarities to Site A and for their geographically diverse locations, as indicated by their Phase I survey answers. The programs each reported a medium-sized Deaf community within a 50-mile radius of their university, students accepted to the program in their junior year, and a full-time cohort program. I wanted to maintain some homogeneity in the sample in terms of the relative size of the local Deaf community, and program characteristics to improve the likelihood that equivalent and comparable data were collected.

Selecting the fourth site for the sample was a bit more difficult. None of the remaining candidates were entirely similar to the first three. After some comparisons of the remaining candidates, a program was chosen to provide additional geographic variety to the sample group. Ultimately, however, data was not collected from this site, and it was dropped from the sample group. Phases II and III were completed with a sample of three institutions.

## **Phase II**

**Collecting the syllabi.** Once the programs had been selected, syllabi were requested for the academic years 2002/2003 through 2011/2012. . I decided to request the first term of the second year of American Sign Language and the first “interpreting” course in the program. I had considered what types of courses were likely to be offered at all institutions and might show evidence of community contact requirements. After collecting and examining Site A’s syllabi, I devised the following criteria to guide program coordinators. Programs were requested to provide the following syllabi:

- The first term of the second year of American Sign Language.
  - Years to be collected (Total of 5 syllabi):
    - 2002/2003
    - 2004/2005
    - 2006/2007
    - 2008/2009
    - 2010/2011
  
- The first “interpreting” course in the program. (This was to be an interpretation or translation course, as opposed to a professional content knowledge course.)
  - Years to be collected (Total of 5 syllabi):
    - 2003/2004
    - 2005/2006
    - 2007/2008
    - 2009/2010
    - 2011/2012

To guide selection of syllabi, program coordinators were advised:

If your university offers more than one section of a course per term, and there is no standard “template” syllabus that all faculty follow, please select one syllabus per academic year requested, according to the following criteria:

- If there is a “lead” faculty person who teaches the course, please select that syllabus. (For example, at [Site A], the ASL Department has a Program Coordinator who oversees the Department and faculty, but that person doesn’t typically teach the ASL 201 course.)

- If there is no template and no “lead,” but a faculty person who has taught the course over a long period of time, please select syllabi from that person’s courses.
- If none of the above applies, please use your judgment to select the syllabi that are most representative of your program.

You can mask the names of the instructors if you’d like (though all information will be kept confidential), but please indicate if the instructor is Deaf or hearing (Appendix C).

Sites were assigned labels by the order in which they provided their syllabi. I was unable to collect syllabi from the exact years I was asking for from any of the universities, as explained below.

**Coding the syllabi.** Site A had agreed to be involved in my research early and provided full access to its syllabi almost immediately upon completion of the Phase I survey. As a result, I was quickly able to collect a nearly complete set of syllabi from this institution, the most complete of the three sets I collected. I had requested the “even numbered” academic years 2002/2003 to 2010/2011 for the first term (in this case, fall quarter) of the second year of ASL instruction. I was able to access all sections of the years requested from 2004/2005 to 2010/2011. The year 2002/2003 was not available, but I was given syllabi for an extra year, 2012/2013. This was a complete ten-year period, but missing the first year requested and including an additional year after the target research period. I requested the “odd numbered” academic years 2003/2004 through 2011/2012 for the first interpreting course, and I received all of these.

I received and reviewed these syllabi first. I began with open coding on this group of syllabi, 23 documents in all. There was one section each of the interpreting class, equaling 5 syllabi. The remaining 18 were ASL courses spanning a ten-year period. Coding this large

number of documents helped me formulate the instructions to guide the program coordinators for Sites B and C in choosing which course section syllabus to provide, and in developing categories and codes to use on the next sets of syllabi I received. All syllabi were coded over several rounds. Once I had developed the selection criteria, I applied it to Site A's ASL course syllabi and chose five to stand as official representatives for the sample.

My research questions were developed to investigate cultural contact of two types, face-to-face and virtual. Accordingly, syllabi were initially broadly and loosely coded for any evidence of elements related to Deaf culture or the Deaf community, and for any evidence of the use of technology. From those broad categories, subcategories were developed and coded. This coding and responses to the questions asked in the Phase I survey helped guide development of codes for types of contact (see Table 1). The opportunity to look at syllabi for several sections of the same course also allowed for some interesting revelations about the use of technology that were peripheral to the scope of this thesis, but which I will touch on as prospects for further study.

Syllabi were examined for evidence of both virtual and in-person contact. The ASL class syllabi had evidence of both types of contact requirements across all sites. The syllabi for the interpreting major courses for all sites were coded, but eliminated from the findings at this point. While most of them showed some evidence of connecting with the Deaf community virtually, in the form of videotexts, there were no requirements evident for in-person contact outside of classroom hours.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, the data from the interpreting courses was not included in the

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<sup>3</sup> One syllabus noted "clinical hours required." At the point of time in the research process when the syllabus was coded, it was not clear what "clinical hours" entailed. During Phase III interviews with faculty at Site B, this term was elaborated to show that it is, indeed, in-person contact with the Deaf community outside of classroom hours. Therefore, it was only in retrospect, after the decision was made to eliminate the interpreting course syllabi from the

findings after an initial round of coding of all sites yielded no evidence of required contact with the Deaf community in person, outside of class hours. The syllabi for the ASL courses, however, were rich with data.

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findings, that any of the syllabi were found to have such evidence of in-person contact requirements.

Table 1

Phase II Coding Categories:  
Types of Contact With the Deaf Community Outside Classroom Hours

<u>In Person Contact Codes</u>		<u>Virtual Contact Codes</u>	
Code	Type of contact	Code	Type of contact
DCE*	Deaf Cultural Event Attendance	VLOG*	Viewing vlogs created by Deaf persons
IE*	Interpreted Event Attendance	VID*	Viewing Instructional videos on ASL and Deaf Culture
DT*	Tutoring/Mentoring by a Deaf Person	VDT*	Tutoring or mentoring by a Deaf Person via video
SL*	Service Learning	VLL*	Participation in Video Language Lab
I**	Internship	VP**	Use of Videophone
SSP**	Support Service Provider for Deaf-Blind Persons	VDRL**	Virtual Deaf-related links
CLUB**	ASL Club		
PRES**	Presentations for class, outside of class sessions		
CONV**	Conversation		
IVW**	Interview		
LL**	Language Lab with Deaf Staff <sup>4</sup>		

<sup>4</sup> : \*These were categories of contact included in questions on the Phase I survey.  
\*\*Phase I respondents offered these categories in response to a prompt for “other” types of contact.

There was no uniformity in how sites defined a “Deaf Culture Event” or what constituted successful attendance. For example, some programs simply required students go to an event and write a paper about it, making no mention of time requirements; while others detailed specific numbers of hours required for Deaf event attendance.

Site B provided syllabi for its second year of ASL courses for the four academic years:

- 2003/2004
- 2006/2007
- 2008/2009
- 2009/2010

It provided syllabi for a first year interpreting course for two years, 2008/2009 and 2012/2013.

This program admits a cohort every other year, so the number of syllabi produced and available for the interpreting course was expected to be less.

Site C disclosed, upon being approached for consent to become a site, that their program had been placed on moratorium for a period of time, and that they would not be able to provide syllabi for each year requested. They indicated the gap occurred in the middle of the research period, however, so after consultation with advisors, I decided to keep this site in the sample.

This site provided syllabi for ASL courses for academic years 2002/2003 and 2010/2011, and for interpreting courses for the years 2009/2010 and 2011/2012.

Once the sites in the sample group had been selected, general information about the institution and the interpreter education program was obtained from the public websites maintained by those entities. Syllabi were coded for the items listed in Table 1, as well as for evidence of use of technology by the program in general. Syllabi were analyzed through several rounds of open and exclusionary coding.



### **Phase III**

**Participants.** Participants were recruited for Phase III by asking the Phase II sites' program coordinators to recommend faculty members to participate in interviews. A mix of Deaf and hearing faculty from the ASL studies and interpreting program majors were recommended and selected. In all, six interviews were conducted. These included four hearing females, one of whom has Deaf parents and is a native signer; one hearing male who has Deaf parents and is a native signer; and one Deaf woman. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained for all participants (Appendix D).

**Instrument.** Semi-structured interview questions were developed for this phase (Appendix E). Questions were asked about the use of technology in the program, how the program is involved with the Deaf community, and how the Deaf community is involved with the program. Questions were asked about the cultural events hosted by the Deaf community and how those events may have changed over time.

Interviews were conducted over the phone and in person. They ranged in length from 40 minutes to nearly an hour and a half. Interviews were not recorded, but notes were taken and used for coding responses.

**Coding and analysis.** Interview notes were coded using a similar approach as that used to code the syllabi. First they were coded for evidence of use of technology, and evidence of in-person contact with the Deaf community. As these categories were coded across sites, some themes began to emerge. The two categories were then subdivided. Because one of the aims of this research is to understand how the use of technology may have changed how community contact occurs in interpreter education, references to technology were categorized as:

- Evidence of use of technology = increase

- Evidence of use of technology = decrease
- Evidence of use of technology = connecting to the Deaf community virtually

Responses that made reference to in-person contact with the Deaf community indicated contact occurred through a variety of events and activities. As these events were compared across sites, it became evident that those events fell into two categories, represented by the first two bullet points, below. Those responses coded as evidence of connecting to the community in person were noted if they seemed to show a trend of increase or decrease in contact, represented by the last two bullet points, below:

- Connecting to the Deaf community = going into the Deaf community
- Connecting to the Deaf community = bringing the Deaf community to campus
- Connecting to the Deaf community = increase of in-person contact
- Connecting to the Deaf community = decrease of in-person contact

In addition to these categories, responses were coded for the contact types shown in Phase II, Table 1, and used in the Phase II coding of syllabi, not exhaustively, but enough to establish that the three sites incorporated most, if not all, of the types of contact reported by the larger Phase I sample. Responses were further coded for evidence of an increase or decrease of Deaf community activity, and for evidence of a change in, or comparison of, technology over time.

## RESULTS

### Phase I Results

The Phase I population and sample were larger than those of subsequent phases. A total of 16 program coordinators responded from the 40 programs that were invited. This represents 40% of the total population, a significant sample.

The first question, “What year did your institution establish its Bachelor degree for American Sign Language/English interpretation?” elicited responses ranging from 1974 to 2008.

Table 2

Phase I Findings:  
Decade Respondents’ Programs Were Established

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<u>Decade Established</u>	<u>Number of programs</u>
1970s	1
1980s	2
1990s	8
2000s	5

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Total	16
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This would appear to correspond with events occurring politically, judicially, and socially within the United States and its Deaf community over time. The demand for interpreters has grown as increasing numbers of laws have been passed requiring reasonable accommodations. These figures seem to indicate the same phenomenon in the demand for interpreter education programs.

The number of students admitted to the major cohort per year ranged from “less than 10” students to “more than 25” with the programs spread fairly evenly among the options provided, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Phase I Findings:  
Number of Students Admitted Annually

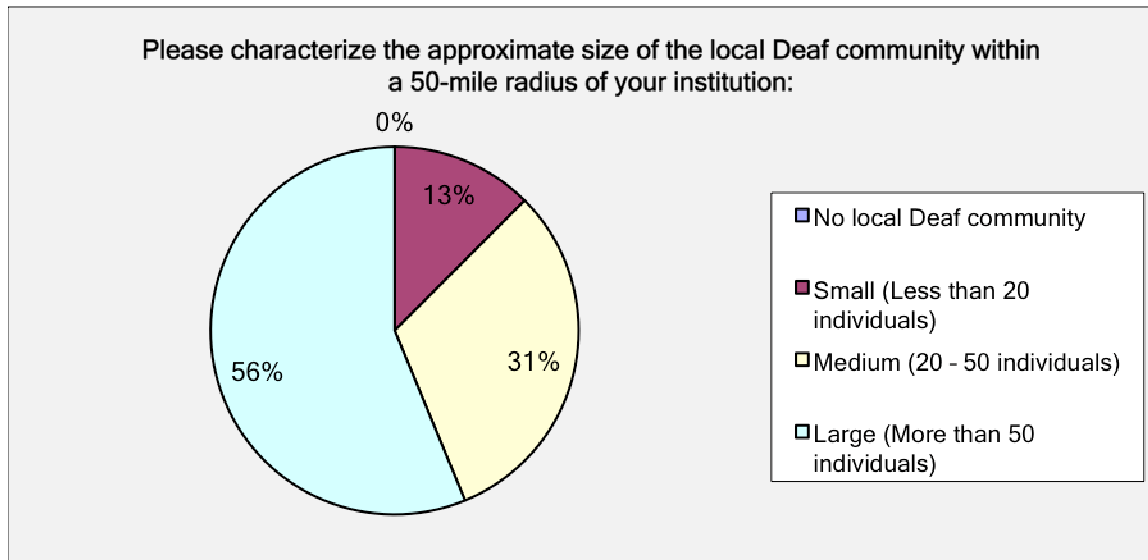
<u>Admitted annually</u>	<u>Number of programs</u>
Less than 10 Students	3
11 – 15 Students	4
16 – 20 Students	3
21 – 25 Students	3
More than 25 Students	4
Total	16

Six programs accepted students to the interpreting major program in their freshman year. Four programs accepted students at the sophomore level, and six at the junior. No programs accepted students into the major in their senior year. The institutions were equally divided between full-time closed cohorts and non-cohorts.

One survey question asked the responder to characterize the size of the local Deaf community within a 50-mile radius of their campus. More than 50% of programs indicated their local Deaf community was large, described in the survey as greater than 50 individuals. A total of just under half of all programs reported small (less than 20 individuals) or medium (20 to 50 individuals) local Deaf communities.

Figure 1

### Size of Local Deaf Community



All programs required students to have contact with the Deaf community outside of classroom hours, except one. That one program is what is known as a “two plus two” program, a university that has partnered with a two-year interpreter training program to grant Bachelor level degrees in ASL/English interpreting. There are a number of two-year interpreter training programs in the United States, many of them established to quickly respond to the increased need for interpreters that developed in response to laws mandating language accommodations for d/Deaf people. As of April 4, 2013, the RID website lists 79 Associate-level degree programs, nearly twice the number of Bachelor-level degree programs listed (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc., n.d.). In 2003, the certified membership of RID voted at their biennial conference and business meeting, to require a Bachelor-level degree to qualify to sit for their national certification exam, beginning June, 2012 (Moose, 2011). Thus, some two-year programs have established relationships with Bachelor degree granting institutions to allow students to complete their major coursework at the community college level and their general education courses at the

four-year institution.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the institution responding did not actually provide any interpreting courses to its interpreting majors.

Sites were asked about the types of in-person and community contact their programs required of students. As shown in Table 1 from the Phase II Methodology, some of the types of contact were offered as pre-set options on the survey. The programs were also welcome to add types of contact that were not listed, but in which their students engage.

The Phase I survey asked institutions to provide information about their faculty. They were asked how many part-time and full-time faculty were employed by their ASL and interpreting departments, and the ratio of those faculty, Deaf to hearing. Because of the varied ways answers were given, elements of this data are problematic. However, the answers are illustrative of the makeup of faculty in programs, if not definitive.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Portland Community College has articulation agreements with Marylhurst University and Portland State University (Portland Community College, n.d.).

Table 4

## Faculty Characteristics in ASL and Interpreter Education

Program	Full-time Faculty		Part-time Faculty	
	Number of full-time faculty	Ratio of Deaf to hearing	Number of part-time faculty	Ratio of Deaf to hearing
1	2	1:1	N/A	N/A
2	2	1:1	3	2:1
3	5	3:2	9	6:3
4	4	2:2	1	1:0
5	4	1:3	7	1:6
6	3	2:1	3	1:2
7	2	1:1	9	2:7
8	2	0:2	26	14:12
9	2	2:0	N/A	N/A
10	7	3:4	15(14) <sup>6</sup>	11:3
11	5	2:3	13	8:5
12	3	1:2	9	3:6
13	2	1:1	1	1:0
14	11	5:6	N/A	N/A
15	4	2:2	8	4:4
16	1	0:1	4	3:1
Total	59	27:32	107	57:50

<sup>6</sup> This institution reported 15 part time faculty, but when reporting the ratio, 14 were counted. The decision was made to use 14 as the number for purposes of this table. Responders who gave a range (i.e., 4 to 6 part time faculty) were documented at the higher number.

It seems that for full time faculty, the hearing professors outnumber the Deaf. For part time faculty, the reverse is true.

Table 5

Percentages of (D)eaf and (H)earing Faculty

Site	Full-time Faculty	Part-time Faculty
1	D=50%, H=50%	N/A
2	D=50%, H=50%	D=67%, H=33%
3	D=60%, H=40%	D=67%, H=33%
4	D=50%, H=50%	D=100%, H=0%
5	D=25%, H=75%	D=12.5%, H=87.5%
6	D=67%, H=33%	D=33%, H=67%
7	D=50%, H=50%	D=22%, H=78%
8	D=0%, H=100%	D=54%, H=46%
9	D=100%, H=0%	N/A
10	D=43%, H=57%	D=79%, H=21%
11	D=40%, H=60%	D=62%, H=38%
12	D=33%, H=66%	D=33%, H=66%
13	D=50%, H=50%	N/A
14	D=47%, H=53%	N/A
15	D=50%, H=50%	D=50%, H=50%
16	D=0%, H=100%	D=75%, H=25%
Average	D=46%, H=54%	D=53%, H=47%



## **Phase II Results**

The population for Phase II consisted of the 16 responding programs from Phase I. The sample for Phase II consisted of three sites. A brief description of each institution and its interpreting program is provided below as background to the sample sites. The descriptions are based entirely on information contained within each institution's official website and information collected in Phase I. Websites are not publicly cited in order to maintain the confidentiality of the sample sites.

### **Site A.**

*Site Description.* Site A is a public liberal arts university with approximately 6,200 undergraduate and 400 graduate students. The university is over 150 years old and has a strong history and reputation as a teacher's college. It is transitioning to a broader, liberal arts focus. It is not far from a small city of about 150,000 and is about 65 miles from a large metropolis. The university identifies three themes in its mission: effective learning, an accessible and diverse campus, and sustainability at all levels.

The university has several programs dedicated to serving the d/Deaf population's communication, rehabilitation, and educational needs, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. It has had a Bachelor-level degree program in English-ASL interpreting since 1993. The interpreting program's pages on the university website reference desirable elements of cultural competence to which applicants and students should strive. Potential applicants to the interpreting program are explicitly encouraged to interact with and be involved in the Deaf community. The program admits 16 to 20 students per year.

The use of technology within the program is also evident. One page of the website is dedicated to an explanation of the technology requirements for the program, including bandwidth

requirements, the types of hardware and software one should be familiar with, and minimum skill level necessary to be successful in the program.

**Data from syllabi.** An examination of Site A syllabi indicates that requirements for the amount of in-person community contact has decreased by 50% in ASL classes over the last ten years. In the current academic year, it appears that use of virtual Deaf-related links for access to the Deaf community and their culture has decreased by 60%, though that could be an anomaly and not the beginning of a trend. Overall, and within the ten-year period this study proposed to examine (2012/2013 is technically outside of the study period but was included in order to give 10 years of data, since 2002’s syllabus was unavailable), use of virtual means of learning about the Deaf community appears to have remained stable.

Table 6

Phase II Findings: Site A ASL Syllabi					
Academic Year:	2004/2005	2006/2007	2008/2009	2010/2011	2012/2013
Code	Number Required				
DCE <sup>7</sup>	2	2	1	1	1
VID	1 (Text)	1 (Text)	1 (Text)	1 (Text)	1 (Text)
VDRL	5	5	5	5	2

The Site A syllabi did not quantify “Deaf Events” in numbers of hours. In a 2004 syllabus, a Deaf event “is defined as a Deaf adult or group of Deaf adults implement an activity that is open to the public, for example, Holiday party, or a performance given by Deaf actors. Movies with closed caption, or performances with interpreters provided are not Deaf Events.” In

<sup>7</sup> DCE=Deaf Cultural Event; VID=Video; VDRL=Virtual Deaf Related Link

later syllabi this definition is not used, but all syllabi reference a list of suggested events that is posted outside an instructor's door.

One interesting requirement of this course from the 2004 syllabus was for the students to “submit a 3 or 4 page paper on the Internet activity.” This required students to research and find five “Deaf-related links” and write a paper about them. By the 2010 syllabus, the assignment had evolved to finding information on “Hot Topic/Deaf Culture” articles, vlogs (video weblogs produced in sign language), or other items from the Internet and making a presentation on them to the class. This seems to indicate a growing use of technology to access the Deaf community. It is unfortunate that the syllabus for 2002 was not available to see if this requirement was included at that time, or if it was a new innovation for 2004. By 2010, vlogs had become not just something Deaf people produced and students watched and learned from, but class assignments for students to produce as well. In fact, the written paper required for the Deaf event assignment changed to a signed student vlog by 2010.

### **Site B.**

*Site Description.* This university describes itself as a regional public school with general and liberal arts programs, and pre-professional and professional programs. It too, has a long history – over 100 years – as a teacher's college. About 14,000 undergraduate and 2,000 graduate students attend Site B. It is located a little over 100 miles from more than one large metropolis. The school identifies its over-arching foci to be high-quality instruction, scholarship, and service.

The university offers Bachelor-level degrees in Deaf Studies and English-ASL interpretation. The combined program strives to create an immersion experience for their students, with the use of ASL as the primary mode of communication expected and encouraged

within the department’s area. An emphasis on fostering cultural competence is explicitly evident via their website. The program admits 20 – 30 students every two years.

**Data from Syllabi.** The syllabi for the second year ASL class, again, contained a great deal of relevant data.

Table 7

Phase II Findings: Site B ASL Syllabi				
Academic Year:	2003/2004	2006/2007	2008/2009	2009/2010
Code	Number Required			
DCE	2	1	1	2
VID	1 (Text)	1 (Text) 3 (other)	1 (Text) 4 (other)	1 (Text) 4 (other)
Lab	15 times	20 Hours	15 times	15 times

In the seven years’ time that these syllabi cover, it appears that community contact requirements in the form of attendance at Deaf events dropped, then increased back to the previous level. Lab hour requirements appear to have held fairly steady. Use of assigned videos, all of which had strong cultural components [e.g., “Audism Unveiled” (Bauman, 2006)] appears to have increase from none to four.

At this point in the examination, an interesting similarity emerged. There were other interesting items to note within all the syllabi related to cultural awareness. It seems nearly universal that ASL curricula will suggest, and syllabi for ASL classes will include as a requirement, that students not use their voice, or that the classroom is an ASL-only environment.

In the case of Site B, this was true in the 2003/2004 syllabus. The 2006/2007 syllabus includes a bit more of an explanation why this is a helpful approach for students – a no-talking approach encourages one to learn the language faster. In 2008/2009, similar information was couched under a “Tips for Success” section. In 2009/2010, an entire section is included in the syllabus about the cultural value within the Deaf community of collectivism, the importance of working together for the good of the entire community, one’s responsibility to the collective, and the syllabus explicitly states that speaking is considered rude and disrespectful in the presence of “Deaf/Hard of Hearing” people.

This mirrored a similar phenomenon I had noted within Site A’s syllabi for the ASL course. The somewhat standard “no voices allowed in class” rule was included in the 2004/2005 to 2008/2009 syllabi. In 2010/2011, there is a statement that the classroom will be “a complete immersion into American Sign Language.” There is a detailed explanation of what “voicing” includes, information about the Deaf norm of flashing the lights to call everyone’s attention, as well as an explicit statement that speaking in the company of Deaf people is disrespectful. The same information was included the following year.

Though not directly related to my research question, which is concerned with cultural information gained outside of classroom hours, this could indicate there may be more cultural knowledge being made explicit within the classroom, perhaps in response to a lack of interaction with the community where such things might be learned through association. It could also indicate a greater awareness of and sensitivity to cultural norms on the part of classroom teachers. Another possibility is that institutions of higher education may be including more information in their syllabi in general, perhaps as an effort toward transparency or completeness.

### **Site C.**

*Site description.* The third site in the sample is a comprehensive public university. It too has a long history, nearly 150 years. For much of that time it has had a specialty in the area of teacher education. It is located in the county seat, a town of about 15,000, with small cities within a fifty-mile radius and much larger ones within two hours' travel. The university's website states that it enhances academic excellence through co-curricular learning, service, engagement, and collaborative learning.

The university offers a Bachelor-level degree in American Sign Language/English Interpreting, and undergraduate courses and graduate degrees in education of the Deaf. The interpreting program emphasizes the rigorous nature of the course of study and explicitly states its expectation for student/candidate involvement with the Deaf community. The program admits 21 – 25 students per year.

*Data from Syllabi.* As with Sites A and B, the syllabi from the interpreting course evidenced an awareness of and sensitivity to Deaf cultural knowledge and its relevance for meaning transfer work. These syllabi evidenced use of videotexts as sources.

Following the same pattern as the previously examined sites, the interpreting course syllabi did not explicitly require Deaf community contact. The syllabi for the ASL classes did have community contact requirements.

Table 8

Phase II Findings: Site C  
ASL Syllabi

Academic Year:	2002/2003	2010/2011
Code	Number Required	
DCE	20 Hours	6 Hours
VID	1 (Text) 20 Hours (other)	1 (Text)

Because this site was not able to provide more of a picture of their community contact expectations, it is hard to generalize with a great deal of confidence. However, though there are only two years to compare, these syllabi seem to support the trend noticed in other sites' syllabi for ASL classes, that there has been a decline in the amount of direct community contact in terms of attendance at Deaf events from 20 hours to six. In this set of syllabi spanning a period of nine years, the 2002/2003 course required 20 hours of watching videos outside of class. This was not mentioned in the 2010/2011 course's syllabus.

The two syllabi from the ASL course also follow the apparent growing trend toward including more detailed or explicit cultural information in syllabi. The earlier syllabus established the rule for no talking in class. The syllabus for 2010/2011 also included information on interacting with interpreters, warnings of state prohibitions against interpreting when unqualified, and justification for formally learning ASL.

**Phase III Results**

Findings from Phase III supported those of Phases I and II. For example, coding of interviews revealed that the types of contact identified in the Phase I survey were consistently referenced in the interviews, such as attendance at Deaf community-hosted events, viewing

videotexts of Deaf people, use of Deaf tutors, to name a few. In fact, the interviews referenced in greater detail more of a variety of these types of contact than the syllabi did.

One interview question asked respondents to describe the technology resources available to their students. This question was asked with the intent of discovering how students may be accessing the Deaf community through technological means. Responses below indicate that such contact is occurring in various ways. However, answers also illustrate the variety of ways that students are accessing mainstream culture, program faculty, and each other through technological means. Table 9 shows all responses that detailed types of technology, from hardware to software programs, to special personnel provided by the school. The list is separated by type of resource, but items are listed in no particular order.



Table 9

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Technology Resources Utilized by Faculty and Available to Students

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Hardware

- Videophone
- iMac
- iPad
- Laptops
- Flipcams
- Smart phones (students provide)
- Dedicated Server for ASL Department
- High Definition Cameras
- Professional video studio with appropriate lighting and backdrops

Software

- Skype
- Google (including Hangout)
- Adobe Connect
- Camtasia
- Moodle
- BlackBoard
- Dartfish
- GoREACT
- VoiceThread
- iMovie
- QuickTime 10

Curricular Materials

- Videos
  - Amateur (e.g., YouTube)
  - Professionally produced
  - Faculty produced

Personnel

- Dedicated Technical Specialist for ASL/Interpreting Department

More and more virtual contact is occurring in interpreter training and ASL classes, among all parties involved. This parallels changes in society in general. Although the focus of this research was community contact outside of classroom hours and current practices in how technology is used to achieve that contact, the interview phase allowed for a more free-flowing

collection of data. Some of it was slightly outside the scope of this research design, but interesting and significant.

For example, some of the educators mentioned software programs such as GoREACT, which was originally designed to help coach people in public speaking, but has been modified for use in educational settings, including a specific application for signed language studies (SpeakWorks, n.d.). A similar product, Dartfish, was mentioned. Dartfish is software that was originally developed for sports coaching ("Dartfish - Video software solutions," n.d.). Educators explained that they require students to record work samples that are viewed and analyzed using these programs. The programs allow feedback to be shared with students by embedding it into their work sample. One professor explained that the faculty had previously required students to upload videos to YouTube, and feedback would be given referencing the timestamp of the section under review. The faculty learned that students would just read the feedback, but not actually go to their original video to watch the work that was being critiqued. Using these programs for feedback, the student must go to the section of the video being critiqued to get the feedback, creating a greater chance that they will re-evaluate their own work. The professor who uses GoREACT said that it was also possible to provide video comments on that system, with corrective modeling by the teacher embedded. Another educator shared information about their program's grant-funded work to create a content management system that is more "video-friendly than text-friendly."

Respondents were asked to characterize the types of events hosted by the Deaf community, and their opinion whether those events had increased or declined in number, frequency, and/or attendance over the last decade. One respondent declined to answer. One respondent felt the events had neither declined nor increased in number, but believes attendance

has increased because ASL and interpreting students are attending them. Two respondents did not answer directly, but made comments that indicated a perception of limited opportunities to congregate with the Deaf community: one citing limited opportunities to send students to interact with the Deaf community and the other one noting that the nearest school for the Deaf had moved its high school to a different campus, hours away, and that it has impacted the number of events the school hosts. Two people said they felt these events had declined. One of these respondents was the Deaf faculty member who seemed quite convinced of the decline and offered an explanation that it was due to the community's ability to connect over technology. None of the respondents indicated that they felt the Deaf community was hosting more events now than in the past.

This corresponds with the Phase II finding that requirements for students to attend Deaf community events appear to have declined. In fact, the Deaf faculty member gave a very detailed explanation of how this has played out in ASL classes. This professor has been teaching at the same institution since 2008. In just that short time, the professor explained, requirements have changed drastically. In the past, students in the first two years of ASL study were required to go to a total of five Deaf events and third year students were required to attend a total of seven events per academic quarter. A significant percentage of the required events consisted of attendance at the campus ASL club, which typically has a larger number of second language learners than Deaf community members. The students complained at the number of events they were required to attend. The third year students complained that the ASL club was "too basic" for them and a waste of their time. A reduction was made to four and five events, respectively. The students continued to complain about the number of events. Due to a combination of fewer events being hosted and students' lack of enthusiasm for the requirement, the department has

decided to require attendance at three events per term at all levels, a reduction of over 50% for the advanced ASL level courses.

Faculty referenced a variety of Deaf-hosted events or Deaf-normed environments students were welcomed to attend or visit, such as

- Assisted living home for Deaf residents
- Social, artistic, academic, and sporting events at residential schools for the Deaf
- Deaf church congregations
- National and regional Deaf organization conferences hosted nearby
- Captioned or ASL movies
- Coffee socials

Faculty also referenced ways students interact with the Deaf community virtually, such as

- Vlogs and videotexts
- Videoconferencing through programs like Skype or Adobe Connect

This corresponds with and expands on Phases I and II findings regarding the ways students are interacting with the Deaf community

Asked to characterize the local Deaf community, many of the respondents said theirs was small, despite all program responders for Phase I having described the local Deaf community as medium-sized. Some of the descriptive comments indicated a lack of cohesiveness within the greater community, and the existence of smaller sub-groups. The one Deaf faculty member interviewed said that the Deaf people local to that community “hide” and are less active than the Deaf community in the nearest large city. One educator said, “Our Deaf community is so small that sometimes it’s hard to connect with them.”

When asked if and how the local Deaf community is involved in their program, four of the six respondents' first response was to mention the program's own Deaf faculty members. In fact, one respondent's answer was, "We have to hire them," meaning they provide a large contingent of Deaf faculty and staff to foster an immersion experience for their students. One of the two who did not mention their Deaf faculty immediately did reference those faculty members a bit later in their response to the question. This led to an interesting realization about the data. Data collected from each site show evidence of programs attempting to provide an experience of the Deaf community to their students by bringing the Deaf community to campus, or to recreate a Deaf community on campus.

Every program spoke of hosting events for the Deaf community. These included such formal events as state Associations of the Deaf conferences, retreats for persons who are Deaf-blind, hosting a "signing professionals" job fair, and creating a "Deaf city" for hearing and Deaf community members to attend to enhance awareness and understanding of the Deaf community. Less formal activities include hosting monthly spaghetti dinners for the Deaf community and fundraisers to benefit a Deaf person or cause.

Several responses indicate an attempt to create or recreate Deaf space on campus. Two of the programs specifically referenced an ASL club on campus. Two programs mentioned they have an ASL "Live-Learn" community on campus, which is a floor or section of on-campus housing that has primarily Deaf students and ASL students as residents. All programs in the Phase II and III sample had an approximately equal number of Deaf and hearing faculty. Two of the programs reported relatively large departments, with Deaf faculty and staff numbering up to 10 or more. One program was explicit in their description of elements that foster an immersive experience, with facilities and offices located close to each other, faculty – hearing or Deaf –

who use ASL to communicate within that zone as an example for the students to follow, and many hearing faculty who acquired ASL as their native language from Deaf parents.

In addition to referencing Deaf faculty when asked about the local Deaf community, every person interviewed spoke of the program's relationship with the nearest school for the Deaf. Though schools for the Deaf have been declining in population, if not closing entirely, each program was sited within an hour's drive from an operating school for the Deaf. Students from the university attend sporting events, homecomings, special events, performances, and fundraisers at the schools for the Deaf. Some programs incorporate service-learning projects at the school in the form of tutoring or volunteering.

Though all programs mentioned that their students act as Support Service Providers (SSPs) to Deaf-Blind persons, one program is deeply involved in a large Deaf-Blind community despite it being 5 hours away. This program has many students who, after several months of formal preparation and volunteer experiences during the school year, volunteer as SSPs and interpreters at a weeklong camp for the Deaf-Blind each summer that is held in another state.

## DISCUSSION

All phases of this thesis research provide data of interest, both within and beyond the scope of the study's research questions. The goal was to gather information about the ways interpreter training programs foster students' knowledge of and experience with the Deaf community through contact outside of classroom hours and how that may or may not have changed over time. Evidence of current approaches and change over time was documented for frequency of attendance at Deaf community events; the change in frequency of use and types of technology used in interpreter education in general, as well as to access the Deaf community; and program approaches to fostering community contact opportunities for their students.

In addition to the institutional demographics that Phase I collected, some commonalities and differences were noted. All of the responding programs that teach ASL and interpreting courses (a total of 15 programs) require community contact and have instituted some form of service learning. No programs accept students into the major program after the junior year, but the year of acceptance varied among programs from freshman to junior years. No standard was indicated for full-time, closed cohorts; this survey item received responses that showed about half the programs had this requirement and half did not.

The coding process for Phases II and III began with broad coding of any data that indicated use of technology and any data that indicated something related to Deaf culture or the Deaf community. Because of this, information was collected and noted about the use of technology for any purpose, not just for accessing members of the Deaf community. This yielded a great deal of information about how students are interacting, not just with the Deaf community but also with faculty and each other, through technology. This data became apparent

in both Phases II and III, and included information somewhat tangential but still of interest, such as changes in how to produce and submit work assignments.

There is a clear progression toward the use of digital methods for submitting work of all kinds to faculty. Another development is the ease with which faculty and students can create and share videos. This has led to the possibility of requiring students to produce “papers” in American Sign Language for ASL and interpreting classes. While students have been required to produce work samples of their ASL skills on video for some time, they are now also being required to submit videotexts in ASL that they previously would have produced in written English, such as a reflective account of their attendance at a Deaf event. Programs appear to be taking advantage of this opportunity to reinforce the students’ language acquisition.

Other interesting information emerged as well. For example, the analysis of syllabi during Phase II showed the progression of changes in technology, not just in the types being utilized in the classroom, but in the everyday lives of the people behind those syllabi. The first set of syllabi, collected from Site A, included all available syllabi for all sections of the ASL course for the five even-numbered academic years spanning a time period ten years, a total of 18 syllabi. These courses were taught by a variety of Deaf faculty. During coding, contact information for the professors reflected the leveraging of newer forms of technology by the Deaf community. One could follow a sequence from the need to communicate with the professor by leaving a message at a “message phone number,” presumably registered to a hearing person; to a professor sharing their TTY (teletype) phone number, accessed through a text relay service; to detailed instructions for how to contact the professor through an early version of video relay service, which required the student to use two ten-digit phone numbers; to the most recent practice of faculty listing an email address only for contact. It was also noted that hearing



professors of the interpreting courses also seem to have dropped phone numbers and currently list only email addresses for contact.

There is evidence of what are typically thought of as elements of online education being utilized in onsite courses. In interviews, faculty referenced online course interfaces, or Course Management Systems, such as Moodle and Blackboard that are used with students enrolled in onsite classes. Two programs spoke of having a dedicated computer server to house their videos, both those assigned or used as language resources and those produced by the students and uploaded for faculty assessment. While somewhat tangential to the focus of this study, those findings are interesting nonetheless. It appears that virtual or digital means of communicating and interacting are increasingly being utilized in ASL and interpreter education, just as they are in the Deaf community and society at large.

Phase II involved collecting and analyzing syllabi for two courses over ten years at each institution. The main topic of inquiry for this phase was “community contact requirements,” and syllabi were coded accordingly. Although respect for and sensitivity toward Deaf culture was evident in the interpreting course syllabi across all institutions, there was little evidence that students in the interpreting courses were required to have contact with the Deaf community outside of class time. Perhaps this indicates that students are expected to have completed the acculturation process by the time they have been accepted into an interpreting program, or to have established enough contacts in the community and developed the internal motivation for continuing their acculturation activities without the necessity of monitoring by faculty. It’s also possible that the program may have community contact requirements as part of another co-occurring course within the program.

The ASL course syllabi that were analyzed showed evidence of both virtual and in-person contact requirements. Virtual contact with members of the Deaf community is not a new phenomenon. Videotapes of Deaf signing models have been commonly utilized in interpreter training courses for over three decades (E. McCaffrey, personal correspondence May 9, 2013), as well as materials produced to inform students about Deaf culture, such as Bienvenu & Colonomos' "An Introduction to American Deaf Culture" video series (1986). The game-changer has been the development of digital methods of creating and delivering video, which have allowed a greater variety of materials to reach a larger audience. Instead of waiting for one's turn to borrow the only available copy of a resource, today's internet-enabled students can immediately access an overwhelming amount of material produced by professionals and amateurs alike, from video logs to webinars to *Deaf Studies Digital Journal*, a peer-reviewed journal produced in ASL by Gallaudet University since 2009.

All programs used the same videotext and workbook as the primary text for the second-year ASL course for which syllabi were collected. Two programs have been using that particular model for the entire ten-year period of study. Supplementary videotexts were also mentioned in many of the syllabi. Requirements for virtual means of contact did not, however, clearly evidence increase or decrease in course syllabi.

While connecting to the Deaf community virtually is not new for interpreter education, the variety of ways to do so and the overwhelming number of resources, materials, and signing models available is new and ever evolving. The videotext and accompanying curriculum used in the ASL classes seems to be currently utilized as a national standard. For interpreter educators, however, already facing a lack of standardization in curricula and lack of consensus on approach,

it is challenging enough to develop lesson plans that incorporate the various professionally produced and marketed materials specific to the field of interpreting (E. McCaffrey, personal communication, May 9, 2013).

Phase III findings indicate that it is not only the Deaf community that educators are accessing virtually. Virtual models for the English language are also being incorporated into courses and assignments. The process of finding quality materials among the overwhelming surfeit of possibilities is a time-consuming process for both educators and students. For educators looking to infuse diversity into their curriculum and language model sources, searching for ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic diversity among the sources available, particularly open access sources, causes this process to take exponentially longer (E. Trine, personal communication, May 11, 2013).

The syllabi do clearly show a decrease in requirements for attendance at Deaf community events. This finding was supported by faculty interviews. Nearly all interviewees spoke of a decrease in the number of Deaf community event opportunities available for ASL students to attend. One faculty member spoke of students petitioning faculty to require attendance at fewer events. This may be a reflection of what Shaw, Grbic, and Franklin (2004) note in a study that compares experiences and perspectives of signed and spoken language interpreting students. Aspiring spoken language interpreters have perhaps an easier time arranging for extended immersion within a culture and language. For studying ASL, “immersion in language for these students requires a concerted effort to spend maximum waking hours in the presence of native sign language users in diverse locations (which most likely is encouraged by their faculty)” (Shaw, Grbic, & Franklin, 2004, p. 92). The authors go on to describe that the signed language

students “tended to expect sufficient language learning to occur during classroom time” (Shaw, Grbic & Franklin, 2004, p. 93).

Phase III respondents gave examples of the types of Deaf-hosted community events in which their students may participate. These events often required travel to other communities on the students’ part, sometimes several hours each way. Most events appear to last a short time, less than a day. These include coffee socials, church events, fundraising events, and sporting and other events or performances at the state school for the Deaf. A few opportunities for a longer immersion experience were mentioned, such as conferences held by the state’s Association of the Deaf or an annual weeklong camp for Deaf-blind persons.

Every interview respondent spoke of collaboration with the state residential school for the Deaf. For each program, the “local” school is actually in another town or city, between 30 minutes to an hour’s travel from the university. While many school districts across the United States operate a “Deaf day program” where Deaf and hard of hearing children who live in the district are placed together in a special program within a mainstream public school, none of the interviewees mentioned a relationship with those programs. Perhaps these programs are not seen as Deaf space or as places that perpetuate or foster Deaf culture in the same way that the residential schools for the Deaf represent. Schools for the Deaf continue to hold a special place in the Deaf community as evidenced in Phase II syllabi and Phase III interviews by the frequency with which they were referenced and the variety of activities they offer for collaboration with interpreting programs. Valentine and Skelton (2008) write of mobile technology enabling the Deaf community to recreate Deaf space anywhere the community now chooses to congregate. The community is no longer tied to a fixed location that is exclusively Deaf space, as was the case in the golden days of the Deaf club to which Padden refers (2007). Schools for the Deaf,

then, appear to be among the last fixed, geographically-bound manifestations of Deaf space and Deaf culture. They continue to have relevance and importance not just as tangible links for the Deaf community to their heritage, but also for ASL and interpreting students seeking cultural and communicative competence in signed language.

Despite program coordinators having characterized the local Deaf community as medium-sized on the Phase I survey, many respondents' comments appear to characterize their local Deaf community as small and elusive, including those who have the deepest connections to the Deaf community, the Deaf respondent and the two faculty whose parents are Deaf. The Deaf respondent indicated that the local Deaf community is small and that it "hides." This person specifically mentioned that because people can spontaneously contact each other easily and while on-the-go, the community makes plans in smaller groups that congregate in mainstream community spaces, rather than at large pre-planned events as was the norm in the past. Educators made comments such as, "We want to encourage people to be involved with the Deaf community, but where is it?" It is possible that the discrepancy between the subjective descriptors *Small* and *Medium* stem from a difference in perception between the survey writer, who defined *Small* as "less than 20 people" and *Medium* as "20-50 people" and the respondents' personal perceptions of what those descriptors indicate. In any event, interview responses indicate that program faculty are challenged to find opportunities for their students to learn from and about the Deaf community as it naturally congregates.

One of the interview questions asked, "Is the local Deaf community involved in your program? If so, how?" It is telling that of the six faculty interviewed, five of them replied by mentioning the program's Deaf faculty. For four of them, this was their immediate response. It is reasonable that Deaf faculty, as they are indeed members of the local Deaf community, would

be included in interviewees' answers. Other comments reveal the importance of these Deaf faculty and staff members, however. As noted earlier, when asked this question, one respondent answered with "We have to hire them." Others spoke of the mix of Deaf, hearing signers, and native signers with Deaf parents as being a positive for the students and noted that all of that program's language lab staff are Deaf. One program requires students to do a practicum in a university class that has no Deaf student registered. The program hires Deaf people (who are not taking the class for a grade) to act as consumers for those students' beginning attempts at post-secondary level educational interpreting. One program hires Deaf language tutors for their students.

These Deaf faculty and staff members not only act as language and role models, representing the Deaf community to students on campus, but also – along with the native signers – seem integral in bridging the gap between the students and the Deaf community off campus. Interviewees' responses indicate this. The Deaf respondent in the sample teaches ASL and is the faculty member who coordinates all the service learning projects for the ASL students at that university. This involves helping students find opportunities to be of service in the Deaf community. These opportunities at times overlap with the faculty member's personal life. One respondent spoke of a former Deaf faculty member who kept that program in closer touch with the larger, more active Deaf community residing in the nearest large city. This educator said it felt as though the program's connection with the Deaf community declined when that person moved to another state. Another respondent noted that there were many connections between the faculty at the university and the Deaf community; their students are welcome at Deaf events, but because those events are "few and far between" the faculty has had to create their own opportunities for students.

Perhaps the most striking finding that emerged from Phase III was related to the development of opportunities for acculturation by the program faculty. When asked what types of activities the Deaf community hosts, many of the respondents spoke of events that were actually hosted by the campus or interpreting program *for* the Deaf community. Each program plans events purposely designed to bring the Deaf community to campus outside the classroom, though the Deaf community is invited to present to classes, as well. Some campuses act as host for large Deaf events, such as Deaf-blind retreats, all-signing immersion week/ends, or Association of the Deaf meetings or conferences. All of the campuses host smaller events, such as monthly spaghetti dinners, ASL talent or comedy shows with students and Deaf performers, and seasonal or holiday parties. These activities qualify as satisfying requirements for community contact.

Programs also show evidence of attempting to create or recreate Deaf space on campus. Faculty at two programs specifically mentioned University sponsored ASL clubs that meet regularly and host activities on campus for ASL and interpreting students, when they were asked if there were requirements for students related to number of hours of contact with the Deaf community. The third program's respondent did not mention a formal club, but spoke of interpreting students working together frequently to host events for the Deaf community. Two of the programs have ASL Live-Learn Communities on campus. This is a special area of housing established specifically for signed language users, both those who are learning the language and those who use it as their primary language. This serves as another opportunity for language immersion outside of the classroom and has potential to approximate Deaf space.

## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The goal of this study was to examine community contact characteristics in interpreter education and identify changes that may have occurred over a ten-year period. In all phases of this research, information of interest to the field of interpreter education was identified. In Phase I, quantitative data were collected from a significant sample, 40% of the four-year ASL/English interpreting programs operating in the United States. Phase II examined archival documents, syllabi, for evidence of changes in community contact requirements during the ten academic years spanning 2002-2012 at three institutions. Evidence of change was found. The Phases I and II findings were supported and expanded upon by the Phase III interviews of six faculty members from the three institutions that comprised the final sample. Findings from Phases II and III also yielded their own unique indications. Not only did those findings support evidence of changes in the amount of in-person community contact required of ASL language and interpreting students at the sample institutions, but also appear to illustrate a shift in how that community contact is accomplished. Further research that replicates this design or uses a similar one with a larger sample would help to validate these findings across interpreter education programs in the United States.

The question for this study was not whether virtual contact or in-person contact with the Deaf community was more effective for student acculturation. The goal was to document evidence of change in how students encounter the Deaf community. Evidence for change was found in both types of contact, with in-person community contact on the decline and virtual contact on the rise. Evaluation of the effectiveness, benefits, drawbacks or limitations of each approach bears further study and would be of great benefit to the field of interpreter education.



The examination of institutional syllabi was intriguing. There is a great deal of the history of pedagogy in general and specifically interpreter education contained in them. It was a bit surprising that complete sets of syllabi were not able to be collected from any institution. In fact, one Phase I respondent declined to participate in subsequent phases, stating that their institution does not retain syllabi. Programs and individual educators are encouraged to be diligent in collecting and preserving this record. Research on any number of topics could draw data from these documents, from tracing the evolution of educational resources and materials, to changes in the types of information typically shared in them, to information about popular culture, as well as academia's expectations about student behavior, agency, and participation, to name a few possibilities.

Developments in technology are impacting the way people communicate and interact. Evidence of this impact was seen in each phase of this research, not just for how students access and interact with the Deaf community, but also how the Deaf and hearing communities, students, and faculty communicate within their own cohorts, between cohorts, and with the world at large. Virtual communication is becoming more and more common. Even classes that meet in person are utilizing virtual means of connecting and collaborating, in addition to their traditional onsite interactions.

While technological advances have opened up new worlds of possibilities, thoughtfully employing those possibilities is time-consuming. It is one thing to go to a Deaf event and interact with the local Deaf people who attend, or to invite a Deaf guest to address a class. It is entirely another to wade through even a small percentage of the approximately 109,000 possibilities that are returned by searching for "ASL story" on YouTube (YouTube, 2013, May 11), for example. This impacts both educators and students who may wish to use these types of

open access resources for school-related assignments. Even incorporating professionally developed materials can be challenging. Making use of these resources and integrating them into lesson plans or course assignments takes a great deal of time.

Comments from faculty and data from syllabi support the finding that the Deaf community is hosting fewer large events. Members of the Deaf community, themselves, note that the community is becoming harder to locate in person, and more virtual in nature. Educators wondering how to respond to this would benefit from further research. In discussing this phenomenon, an interpreter educator suggested,

As a field, interpreters and interpreter educators need to have a conversation about what contact with the Deaf community means, and why we do it? I think that...the older generation of interpreters says “you have to be involved in the Deaf community” and we know what that means, or think we do, but the new generation doesn’t know what that means. They think it’s about language learning. I don’t think that’s what the older generation means. Then the newer interpreters get accused of taking advantage of the community. (A. Smith, personal communication, April 18, 2013)

Research into interpreter educators’ expectations for community contact, as well as the Deaf community’s perspective on this issue could help guide interpreter training programs in the decisions they make about sending students into the Deaf community, bringing the community to the students, and criteria for selecting effective and appropriate virtual representations of the community for use with students.

The Deaf community must be welcomed into the discussion. The literature indicates that members of the Deaf community would like to have more of a voice in the training and vetting of interpreters (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005), to resume their former role as mentors and to

some extent, gatekeepers. This is a function that the entire community shared in the past. Something to consider is that much of the virtual contact that happens with the Deaf community is static, one way. It is not dialogic, not interactive. While the students may be able to learn something about the Deaf community through these experiences, the Deaf community is learning very little about the students who will soon become privy to some of the most intimate details of their lives. The profession would benefit from further discussion with the Deaf community about what they, as consumers, have to say about the interpreter's role and connection to the community, as well as their own perceived or aspired role in the acculturative process for ASL students and future interpreters.

Programs are encouraged to cultivate and support involvement with local Deaf entities, such as a school for the Deaf or other organization with a number of Deaf adults who can provide more connection for the ASL students to the Deaf community. These might include organizations such as an advocacy agency that is "of, for, by the Deaf," the state chapter of the National Association of the Deaf, or a Deaf sports league. These organizations are where the Deaf community still congregates in person and can provide students with opportunities for acculturative activities. A mutually supportive relationship will strengthen both the program and the Deaf organization in general ways, as well as provide for richer opportunities for community contact. These opportunities are becoming more rare in the community, as this study has shown. Strong relationships with the community will help programs keep abreast of what occasions may occur.

Deaf faculty are, therefore, vitally important to ASL studies and interpreter training programs for a number of reasons. They provide live models of ASL and Deaf culture, of course. They maintain connections between the program and the Deaf community. They can

evaluate not just students' signing skills, but also the appropriateness of their behaviors and their level of cultural competence from a native perspective, for assuming the complex, highly demanding roles of interpreter and cultural mediator expected of students upon graduation. However, it begs the question whether the relatively small number of Deaf people teaching at institutions, even those programs with balanced numbers of Deaf-to-hearing faculty, can assume the responsibilities of an entire community. It is expecting a great deal of these professionals to ask them to do so.

This question becomes even more relevant in light of the work faculty are doing to create events for their students to interact with the Deaf community. The data indicate a shift from programs encouraging or requiring students to attend a declining number of Deaf-hosted events in the community to the programs, themselves, hosting more events for the Deaf community to interact with their students and working to recreate Deaf space through immersive on-campus experiences such as language labs, ASL Clubs, and live-learn communities. Research in language acquisition, cultural competence, and interpreting indicate these efforts are beneficial to the students. They are also time-consuming and labor-intensive. Having a research-based, better understanding of the ways educators expect community contact to benefit students, and the Deaf community's perspective about the understandings they hope students will achieve through contact with their culture and community may allow educators to focus their efforts for maximum benefit and efficiency.

The fact that the syllabi from the interpreting classes did not seem to indicate requirements for contact with the Deaf community outside of the classroom does not necessarily mean that programs expect students' linguistic and cultural competence processes to be complete

when they enter the program. It is possible that other classes provide this experience. One way interpreter training programs could ensure that students are continuing to acculturate would be to require interpreting students to continue to take formal classes in ASL after admission to the program major. At least one of the sites in the sample requires three years of ASL coursework, thus giving the students more opportunity to develop language and cultural efficacy. Increased requirements for ASL acquisition classes would conceivably increase the number of Deaf faculty at an institution, thereby strengthening the ties between the university and the Deaf community as well as providing a larger Deaf community on campus and more role and language models with whom the students can associate for a longer period of study.

Service-learning projects and events that bring the Deaf community to campus can be effective in bringing students in contact with the community they will soon serve as professionals. These can be structured in such a way that the Deaf community members are the ones to define the type of project or endeavor to be instituted. Students providing the human-power for the project have the opportunity to increase their understanding of the Deaf community's needs and goals while learning more about the culture and language. With the number of large Deaf events on the decline, these projects assume a greater importance. Future research that captures the views of the Deaf community and students as well as those of the faculty and institution is recommended.

Research into the effect of technological advancements on communication has been ongoing and has more recently begun to incorporate data related to the Deaf community's evolution in the way it communicates and congregates in the digital age. The Deaf community continues to examine itself and its processes, such as pathways to building a Deaf identity, each member's personal relationship with the culture, and the culture's place in the larger world.

Interpreter educators need to stay abreast of this expanding body of knowledge in order to apprehend changes in the Deaf community and make informed pedagogical decisions.

At the same time, understanding ourselves as we seek to understand others seems a wise course. More research across disciplines into the profession of signed language interpreting, perhaps related to the interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions of the profession, such as processes for building an interpreter identity and elucidating the complex relationships required with the hearing and Deaf communities they serve, as well as with each other as colleagues, could provide guidance for best-practices decisions about facilitating students' acculturative process with the Deaf community.

This study documents changes in student contact with the Deaf community outside of classroom hours. Findings show that student cohorts from three ASL/English interpreter education programs are associating with the Deaf community in person at Deaf events to a lesser degree now than they were ten years ago. They have gained more opportunities for exposure to the Deaf community through virtual means during that time period. Virtual modes of contact and communication in interpreter education programs have increased in general, not just between the hearing and Deaf communities, but also among and between students, faculty, staff, and community. Perhaps as a result of a decline in the number of Deaf community events, interpreting and ASL faculty appear to be making a greater effort to bring a more elusive Deaf community to their students and to create or recreate Deaf space on campus for the benefit of their students. Further study on this observed phenomenon is recommended to help students gain awareness of the options for establishing a relationship with the Deaf community, to inform

the Deaf community of current acculturation practices experienced by their future interpreters, and to provide guidance for educators making curricular decisions and for focusing their time, budget, and efforts for maximum benefit to all.

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## APPENDIX A

### Phase I Survey

Dear Program Coordinator,

This questionnaire is part of a larger study investigating changes in cultural contact requirements in interpreter education programs offered by institutions with four-year programs. It should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete. The information collected here will be kept confidential, and results will be shared with you upon request. It is being distributed to the 40 institutions within the United States offering 4-year American Sign Language/English interpreter education programs listed (as of 11/02/12) on the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf's (RID's) website: <https://www.rid.org/acct-app/index.cfm?action=search.ITP&OrgName=&ProgramTypes=3&City=&State=&SearchVar=1>

The results of this initial survey will be used to identify programs that may become cases for an in-depth study of changes in the amount and types of cultural contact requirements by interpreter education programs over time. Thank you for your consideration and willingness to help further research in best practices for the field of signed language interpretation. By completing this survey, you indicate that you received and understood the previously sent email describing the purpose of this research and your rights as a participant and that you are confirming your and your institution's willingness to participate in this research.

Thank you!  
Vicki Darden  
Nationally Certified Interpreter  
RID CI/CT; NAD IV  
Candidate for Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies  
Western Oregon University

1) What year did your institution establish its Bachelor degree for American Sign Language/English interpretation?

2) How many students does your institution accept into its American Sign Language/English interpretation major each year?

- Less than 10
- 10 - 15
- 16 - 20
- 21 - 25
- More than 25

3) What is the number of full-time faculty in your ASL and interpreting departments?

- 4) What is the number of part-time faculty in your ASL and interpreting departments?
- 5) What is the ratio of Deaf to hearing full-time faculty in your ASL and interpreting departments?
- 6) What is the ratio of Deaf to hearing part-time faculty in your ASL and interpreting departments?
- 7) What year are students accepted into your institution's American Sign Language/English interpretation major?
- Freshman
  - Sophomore
  - Junior
  - Senior
- 8) Do your students progress through the major coursework as a full-time cohort?
- Yes
  - No
- 9) Please characterize the approximate size of the local Deaf community within a 50-mile radius of your institution:
- No local Deaf community
  - Small (Less than 20 individuals)
  - Medium (20 – 50 individuals)
  - Large (More than 50 individuals)
- 10) Does your program require contact with the Deaf community outside of classroom hours?
- Yes
  - No
- 11) If the answer to Question 10 is yes, what types of in-person contact are required? (Please check all that apply.)
- Attendance at Deaf cultural events
  - Attendance at interpreted events
  - Mentoring or tutoring by single Deaf person
  - Service Learning (i.e., students required to complete volunteer hours in service to the Deaf community)
  - Other:
- 12) If the answer to Question 10 is yes, what types of virtual contact are required? (Please check all that apply.)
- Viewing vlogs (video blogs) created by Deaf persons
  - Viewing instructional videos on ASL and Deaf culture
  - Mentorship or tutoring by Deaf individual via video



- Participation in video “language lab”
- Other:

13) Please add any other information about your interpreter education program’s community contact hour requirements that was not covered by this survey, or that you would like to share:

14) If you are interested and willing to participate in the second and third phases of this research project, please provide your name, email, address, and telephone number below, or the contact information of the person who will be responding on behalf of your program:

**Appendix B**  
**Academic Institutions Invited to Participate in Study**

Retrieved November 2, 2012, from <https://www.rid.org/acct-app/index.cfm?action=search.ITS>

Augustana College  
Bachelor  
Sioux Falls SD

Goshen College  
Bachelor  
Goshen IN

Bethel College  
Associate  
Bachelor  
Mishawaka IN

Idaho State University  
Associate  
Bachelor  
Pocatello ID

Bloomsburg University  
Bachelor  
Bloomsburg PA

Indiana University  
Associate  
Bachelor  
Indianapolis IN

California State University at Northridge  
Bachelor  
Northridge CA

Kent State University  
Bachelor  
Graduate  
Kent OH

California State University Fresno  
Bachelor  
Fresno CA

Keuka College  
Bachelor  
Keuka Park NY

Columbia College Chicago  
Bachelor  
Chicago IL

LaGuardia Comm College via State  
University of NY  
Bachelor  
Certificate  
New York City/LIC NY

Distance Opportunities for Interpreter  
Training Center  
Bachelor  
Distance  
Denver CO

Maryville College  
Bachelor  
Maryville TN

Eastern Kentucky University  
Bachelor  
Richmond KY

Mount Aloysius College  
Associate  
Bachelor  
Cresson PA

Gallaudet University  
Bachelor  
Graduate  
Washington DC

National Technical Institute for the Deaf  
(NTID)  
Associate  
Bachelor  
Rochester NY

North Central University Bachelor  
Minneapolis MN

Northeastern University  
Bachelor  
Boston MA

Quincy University  
Bachelor  
Quincy IL

Seymour Joseph Institute of American Sign  
Language  
Bachelor  
Certificate  
Staten Island NY

Siena Heights University  
Bachelor  
Distance  
Adrian MI

St. Catherine University  
Bachelor  
St. Paul MN

Tennessee Temple University  
Bachelor  
Chattanooga TN

Troy University  
Bachelor  
Distance  
Troy AL

University of Arizona - Interpreter Training  
Program  
Bachelor  
Tucson AZ

University of Arkansas at Little Rock  
Associate  
Bachelor  
Little Rock AR

University of Cincinnati  
Bachelor  
Distance  
Cincinnati OH

University of Houston  
Bachelor  
Houston TX

University of New Hampshire  
Bachelor  
Manchester NH

University of New Mexico  
Bachelor  
Albuquerque NM

University of North Carolina - Greensboro -  
ITP  
Bachelor  
Greensboro NC

University of North Florida  
Bachelor  
Distance  
Graduate  
Jacksonville FL

University of South Florida  
Bachelor  
Tampa FL

University of Southern Maine  
Bachelor  
Portland ME

University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee  
Bachelor  
Certificate  
Milwaukee WI

Western Oregon University  
Bachelor  
Distance  
Graduate  
Monmouth OR

William Woods University  
Bachelor  
Fulton MO

Wright State University  
Bachelor  
Dayton OH

## APPENDIX C

### Syllabi Selection Criteria

Thank you for your interest in my Master's thesis research, "Changes in Community Contact Characteristics in Interpreter Education Programs." Based on your responses to my Phase I survey, I would like to include your institution as a case in the sample. Four institutions have been identified as potential cases, and I hope you will consent to participate in Phases II and III of this study.

Phase II involves collecting syllabi from each institution for two classes from the period 2002/2003 to 2011/2012. The courses I am analyzing are:

- The first term of the second year of American Sign Language.
  - Years to be collected: 02/03, 04/05, 06/07, 08/09, 10/11 (Total of 5 syllabi)
- The first "interpreting" course in the program. (At [Site A], it is called "theory and practice of interpreting" and is actually focused on translation.)
  - Years to be collected: 03/04, 05/06, 07/08, 09/10, 11/12 (Total of 5 syllabi)

If your university offers more than one section of a course per term, and there is no standard "template" syllabus that all faculty follow, please select one syllabus per academic year requested, according to the following criteria:

- If there is a "lead" faculty person who teaches the course, please select that syllabus. (For example, at [Site A], the ASL Department has a Program Coordinator who oversees the Department and faculty, but doesn't typically teach the ASL 201 course.)

- If there is no template and no “lead,” but a faculty person who has taught the course over a long period of time, please select syllabi from that person’s courses.
- If none of the above applies, please use your judgment to select the syllabi that are most representative of your program.

You can mask the names of the instructors if you’d like (though all information will be kept confidential), but please indicate if the instructor is Deaf or hearing.

## APPENDIX D

### Phase III Interview Consent Form

Dear Educator,

I am a nationally certified interpreter and graduate student at Western Oregon University in the Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies program under the supervision of Dr. Elisa Maroney. I am conducting research to investigate changes in cultural contact requirements in interpreter education programs offered by four-year universities. Your program has been selected and agreed to become a participant in this research.

I invite you to participate in an interview regarding academic activities related to your institution's interpreter education program. The interview consists of open-ended questions designed to expand on information found in syllabi for courses at your institution from 2002/2003 to 2011/2012 regarding cultural contact requirements for ASL and interpreting students.

The interview should take no longer than 60 minutes to complete. The information collected will be kept confidential, and results will be shared with you upon request.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There is no penalty if you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all data collected from you will be destroyed through deletion of files. You must be 18 or older to participate in this study.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact Vicki Darden by phone at 503-XXX-XXXX or via email at: [dardenv@wou.edu](mailto:dardenv@wou.edu) or my graduate advisor Dr. Elisa Maroney at [maronee@wou.edu](mailto:maronee@wou.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at (503) 838-9200 or [irb@wou.edu](mailto:irb@wou.edu).

By signing this consent, you agree to participate in this study. Thank you for your consideration and willingness to help further research in best practices for the field of signed language interpretation.

Sincerely,

Vicki Darden  
Nationally Certified Interpreter  
RID CI/CT; NAD IV  
Candidate for Master of Arts  
Western Oregon University

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby consent to participate in the research titled “Changes in Community Contact Characteristics in Interpreter Education Programs.” I have been informed of the purpose of this research and of my participation in it. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the project at any time without prejudice or effect on my professional standing.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I hereby certify that I have given an explanation to the above individual of the contemplated study and their right to decline to answer questions or to withdraw from the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of primary investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## APPENDIX E

### Phase III Interview Questions

#### Questions for Follow-up Interviews:

- Please describe your background in ASL, interpreting, and interpreter education.
- How long have you worked in the interpreter education program at your institution?
- Please describe the technology resources available to your students (i.e., media labs, videophones, language labs, etc.).
- How are these resources used?
- Are there requirements related to the number of hours of contact expected of the students? If so, have those requirements increased or decreased in the last 10 years?
- Please expand on that.
- Describe your local Deaf community.
- What types of events does the local Deaf community host?
- In your opinion, how have these events increased or declined in number, frequency, attendance over the last decade?
- Is the local Deaf community involved in your program? If so, how?
- Do you have a service-learning component to your program? If so, please describe.
- Is there anything else you'd like to share about your interpreter education program's community contact requirements or programs?