Act like a lady: the impact of gender identity on American Sign Language – English interpreters

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Act Like a Lady:
The Impact of Gender Identity on American Sign Language – English Interpreters

By
Grace Beverly Artl
A thesis submitted to
Western Oregon University

In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of:

Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies

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Act Like a Lady: The Impact of Gender Identity on American Sign Language English Interpreters

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ABSTRACT

Act Like a Lady:
The Impact of Gender Identity on American Sign Language – English Interpreters

By

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In this study, trends in gender-related traits among practitioners of American Sign Language – English interpreting are investigated. The impact of gender identity on practitioners’ perceptions of their role and professional experiences is also explored. Limited research exists to address issues of gender within the American Sign Language – English interpreting field but is largely focused on differences in discourse among male and female practitioners. Data for this study was collected through quantitative and qualitative means: an online survey incorporating the Bem Sex-Role Inventory and interviews with five practitioners of American Sign Language – English interpreting. A review of related literature supported the notion that while societal views of gender have shifted over time, certain qualities and characteristics remain valued for men and women. Research on female-dominated professions shows men experience gender identity privilege in the workplace. While this study shows that male and female practitioners may value or possess similar traits and characteristics, female practitioners experience gender identity oppression in a manner that male practitioners do not, especially related
to their bodies and expressions of femininity. The experiences of female practitioners creates an additional layer of consideration that must be addressed prior to focusing on the myriad considerations inherent in the work of American Sign Language – English interpreters. Educators are advised to take current classroom practices into consideration for supporting all students, regardless of gender identity, and practitioners are encouraged to seek diverse communities of practice. These communities may provide the forum during which practitioners can engage in discussions of identity oppression and potential mitigating strategies.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

In 2005, my formal education to become an American Sign Language - English interpreter began. I immediately felt at home—whether in the classroom, engaging with people and activities within the Deaf Community, or otherwise developing friendships with peers. Though I had profound respect for the Deaf Community and American Sign Language, I realized part of my comfort and enjoyment was due to the large community of women that surrounded me. As I progressed through two-year, and later four-year, interpreting programs, I often heard remarks about the field of interpreting being “dominated by women.” However, at the time, I did not fully take in the impact of a predominantly female profession on the consumers I would work with or on my development as a professional.

Having also been passionate about the field of women’s studies for quite some time, I developed an early interest in noting and combating gender oppression and systems in society that operate to perpetuate it. As I have grown into deeper self-awareness over the course of my career, I have similarly come to a greater understanding of how my identity, including my gender, race, sexual orientation, and class, combines to impact who I am as a person and a professional, my potential impact on consumers, and how systems of oppression operate within the communities in which I work.
As I thought about my research for this project, I considered a variety of topics but none that seemed to truly call out to me. In the winter of 2014, I was fortunate to attend the International Symposium on Signed Language Interpretation and Translation Research at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. It was there that one of the presenters mentioned the very limited research on gender that has been developed within our field. That comment, however brief it may have been, is what planted the seed to develop this project.

As with all facets of identity, the field of American Sign Language - English Interpretation is in need of research that examines the impact of these dynamics on practitioners and consumers. Because of the limited research available, I decided to conduct quantitative and qualitative investigations of gender identity and how it impacts practitioners. With these two approaches, I hoped to be able to reach as wide a pool of participants with their varied perspectives and walks of life as possible. My initial goal for this investigation was first to determine if gender identity becomes a salient aspect of practitioners’ work and second to ascertain how that impact plays out in the professional realm.

**Statement of the Problem**

Very limited research currently exists that looks at overall trends of gender identity within the American Sign Language - English Interpretation profession or the impact of gender identity on the practitioners working within the profession. Yet, gender is a significant and salient aspect of identity that influences the development of an individuals’ worldview and life experiences. In this study, answers for two questions are sought: what gender-related trends, if any, are seen among female and male practitioners
of interpreting? How has gender identity played a part in impacting the role and experiences of American Sign Language - English interpreters?

With these two questions proffered, it is hypothesized that practitioners will likely possess traits that are typical of norms traditionally associated with their particular gender identity. It is also anticipated that there will be a noticeable difference in the impact of gender identity on the professional experiences of female and male practitioners.

Williams (1992) reports differences among male and female practitioners of traditionally female-dominated fields, such as nursing and elementary school teaching, in which practitioners experienced work-related advantages and disadvantages in vastly differing ways. Since female practitioners are the majority gender demographic in the field of American Sign Language - English interpreting (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2013), it is worth examining if these advantages and disadvantages are present in the work of all practitioners.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to add to the limited body of knowledge on gender identity and practitioners of American Sign Language - English interpretation. Since very limited research exists that discusses this topic specifically, this research was necessary in establishing a baseline understanding of what aspects of gender identity are prevalent among practitioners and how the possession of specific gender identities impacts professional experiences. Since we have long acknowledged gender inequity as part of our lived experience, it would be remiss to say that these gender inequities do not play a role in practitioners’ views of themselves and their approaches to their work.
Establishing the exploration and discussion of this topic within the field is vital since our perspectives, interactions, and beliefs are heavily influenced by the qualities that create our self-concepts. Having a greater understanding of how gender operates amongst practitioners and in professional settings will help us to further examine how our ability to provide effective services is impacted by external factors beyond the interpreting realm. Because the above-stated hypotheses are guided in large part by literature reviewed in the next chapter, it is my hope that the findings contained within will serve as a guide for the development of future identity-related research.

**Theoretical Basis and Organization**

Without a wide array of research into the demographic and gender-related characteristic makeup of the interpreting profession, relevant theories, concepts, and factors from literature are investigated. This investigation looked within the field of American Sign Language - English Interpretation and within similar disciplines comprised of practice professionals. These concepts include feminist theory, neutrality and invisibility of practitioners, and gender-related experiences in professional settings will be explored throughout the literature and findings of this research.

The goal in designing this study was to develop a methodology that would achieve both breadth and depth in its approach. Seeking a greater understanding of the perspectives and personal impact on the practitioners themselves, will lead to a wider understanding of characteristic trends within the field as well as personal accounts of practitioners’ experiences. When considering possible research methods, utilizing both a quantitative approach via a mass survey and a qualitative approach via one-on-one interviews seemed to meet the goal of achieving breadth and depth.
Limitations of the Study

One of the major limitations of this study is that it is one of the first of its kind to examine the impact of gender identity on American Sign Language - English interpreters in this manner. While limited exploration into the impact of gender identity on the field of interpreting has occurred (Wright 2007; Brück 2011), studies have primarily focused on language usage and production differences (Levine 2007; MacDougall 2007; O’Barr & Atkins, 1980). Because of this difference in focus, there is not a vast foundation of prior research and knowledge from which to pull for history or deeper understanding.

Another limitation of the study is the sample sizes of the quantitative and qualitative methods employed. While specific methodological limitations are explored later, it is necessary to note that the limited sample size of each method renders the findings applicable only to the group of individuals involved in the study and is not generalizable to the interpreting population at large. However, noteworthy common trends and themes from both the 336 survey respondents and the five interview participants were discovered.

A further limitation of this study, which is partially due to the sample size and partially due to the uniqueness of the study, is that some voices and perspectives were left out in order to create homogeneity amongst the sample as well as to create a foundation for further research. Though the field is largely comprised of cisgender practitioners, the limitations of the scope and size of this study did necessitate focusing solely on specific groups. Further research should take into consideration dynamic perspectives and gender identities.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As mentioned previously, female practitioners primarily dominate the field of American Sign Language - English interpretation (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2013). Currently, very few research studies exist that expressly examine the role of gender identity and its impact on the work and experiences of practitioners. Due to the limited research available, this literature review will explore topics on gender and interpreting as well as topics from related disciplines. These disciplines include the development and implications of gender identity and gendered discourse; utilization of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI); experiences of practitioners in female-dominated professions; and the evolution of the role of the American Sign Language - English interpreter.

Development and Implications of Gender Identity and Gendered Discourse

When looking at the impact of gender socialization on the work of American Sign Language - English interpreters, it is necessary to examine how gender impacts personal identity and use of discourse. Effectively doing so requires adopting a framework from which to view the literature. Ackerly and True (2010) discuss the importance of feminist theory to the research process. They emphasize examining feminism and feminist theory by reminding us “feminism is the search to render visible and to explain patterns of injustice in organizations, behavior, and normative values that systemically manifest themselves in gender-differentiated ways” (p. 464).
This notion has caused the field of feminist theory to expand down numerous branches; however, each strand of feminist theory still maintains roots in the same theoretical tree. Finding ties to historical women’s movements, “feminists argue that all knowledge is produced in a social and political context. As such, the conditions of our research must be studied, critiqued if necessary, and certainly made explicit as part of the account of our research findings” (p. 465). It is vital for any researcher using a feminist lens, according to Ackerly and True’s parameters, to do so in a manner that uses research to get “good information about a social pattern [and] to try to change it” (Cancian, 1992, as cited in Ackerly & True, 2010).

While the research for this thesis did not expressly seek to determine if male or female practitioners experience “patterns of injustice,” elements of the findings may point to future research in this area. The majority of American Sign Language - English interpreters are female, as is reflected by the reporting membership of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and published in their Annual Report (2013). Members of the diverse Deaf Community are an oppressed linguistic and cultural minority (Mindess, 2006). As individuals who experience systemic gender oppression, female practitioners provide services to a group of individuals who likewise confront systemic oppression on a daily basis. It is through the framework of feminist theory that these parallel injustices should be viewed in order to bring about practitioner awareness and open professional dialogue.

In using feminist theory as a framework, a shared understanding and definition of what ‘gender identity’ encompasses is requisite for any research on identity and role. As an effort to move towards examining the impact of multiple identities held by individuals,
Frable (1997) assessed theories and frameworks commonly used to discuss gender and other salient identities such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class. Looking particularly at gender identity, Frable quoted Ashmore’s (1990) definition of gender identity as “the structured set of gendered personal identities that results when the individual takes the social construction of gender and the biological ‘facts’ of sex and incorporates them into an overall self-concept” (as cited in Frable, 1997, p. 139). Therefore, we must view gender identity not as stemming from one specific source, but instead a myriad of factors that work together to create a whole: “personal and social attributes, social relationships, interests and abilities, symbolic and stylistic behaviors, and biological/physical/material attributes … which is separate from his or her sex stereotypes and gender attitudes” (p. 139).

One significant factor in understanding the importance of the impact of identity on an individual’s sense of self is to see how their identity serves to motivate their consciousness and affiliation with the group sharing the examined trait. Gurin and Townsend (1986) surveyed groups of women based on three properties of gender identity: “perceived similarity to other women, sense of common fate, and centrality of gender to the sense of self” (p. 139). As Gurin and Townsend maintain, identity is tied to a person’s “awareness of membership and feelings attached to being a member … [while] consciousness refers to the [person’s] ideology about the group’s position in society” (p. 139). Variation was present among the respondents in the study, however, Gurin and Townsend conclude that one of the most strongly recognized implications for gender consciousness was the “sense of common fate” (p. 147) shared by research participants. Members of a group who recognize and share a sense of common fate are more likely to
examine and address issues faced by the group as a whole. However, gender identity in particular “is so taken for granted that it is most often difficult to perceive that men and women are treated differently or that gender-based stratification is unfair” (p. 147). This tendency further points to the necessity of recognizing and discussing these gender-related injustices as they present themselves within the interpreting field as a whole. Without this recognition, practitioners cannot seek to alter commonly held beliefs and practices.

As identity constructs work implicitly and explicitly to impact individuals on a daily basis, examining the use of discourse is paramount to understanding how our identities impact interpersonal relationships, both personal and professional. Over the past several decades, researchers have examined the myriad ways in which gender impacts the use of discourse. This area of research has emerged to look not only at patterns in language use but has evolved into “a lens through which to view social and political aspects of gender relations” (Kendall & Tannen, 2001, p. 548). The importance of taking a broad scope has enabled scholars to observe and examine the notion that discourse and gender are not mutually exclusive, but rather create and impact one another in profound ways. A broad scope “not only provides a descriptive account of male/female discourse but also reveals how language functions as a symbolic resource to create and manage personal, social, and cultural meanings and identities” (p. 548). It is through these meanings and identities that practitioners of American Sign Language - English interpretation find themselves operating on a daily basis.

Linguistic features, such as the utilization of weaker expletives, trivializing adjectives, tag questions, and rising intonation, have come to be known as powerless
language (Bradac & Mulac, 1984). For example, the work of Maltz and Borker (1982) suggests, “women show a greater tendency to make use of positive minimal responses, especially ‘mmhmm’” (p. 197) and are more likely to use this strategy throughout the act of communicating. The research further suggests that the use of these minimal responses by women stems from the desire to indicate a sense of ‘I am listening to you’ while the use of a minimal response from men may, instead, indicate ‘I agree with you’ (Maltz & Borker, 1982, p. 202). The use of powerless language, particularly in a professional setting, has the potential to unintentionally influence consumers’ views of the interpreter and person for whom they are interpreting.

Further, research shows that men and women utilize gendered language and discourse as a resource in developing their presentation of self (Bucholtz & Hall, 1995). In so doing, individuals can “appropriate ‘women’s language’ or ‘men’s language’ for better communicative success … [which] suggests that language use is not … derived from the sex of the speaker but … is constructed from a vast array of ideological discursive mappings” (Bucholtz & Hall, 1995, p. 7). This array of options may consist of uses of powerful/powerless language or other strategies that do or do not construct a particular gendered identity to accomplish their pragmatic and interactional goals (Kendall & Tannen, 2001, p. 558).

Tannen (1994, as cited in Kendall & Tannen, 2001) has found evidence for “what Lakoff had earlier identified as a double bind: women who conformed to expectations of femininity were seen as lacking in competence or confidence, but women who conformed to expectations of people in authority were seen as lacking in femininity – as too aggressive” (p. 560). As interpreters working between two languages, this double bind
may have implications on many of those involved: the interpreters working between the
languages, the perceptions of the hearing participants, and the perceptions of the D/deaf
participants. It was further shown by Bergvall (1996, as cited in Kendall & Tannen,
2001) that when women “[fail] to enact the traditional supportive feminine role, [they
are] negatively sanctioned and [are] silenced by gender-normative activities” (p. 560).

Close examination of discourse and gender is imperative to the success of
American Sign Language - English interpreters, both personally and professionally.
Through this examination, practitioners are better able to make note of their own
interactive and discourse styles, how the choices they make may impact consumers, and
how they create physical and emotive spaces within their work environments.

Utilization of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI)

A core piece of the methodology in this research is the utilization of the Bem Sex-
Role Inventory (BSRI) developed in 1974. The BSRI was founded on the premise that
concepts of masculinity and femininity had been primarily thought of as two ends of a
continuum, while failing to recognize the potential that individuals may contain aspects
of both genders. The BSRI supports the notion of a diverse gender identity by asserting
that “strongly sex-typed individuals might be seriously limited in the range of behaviors
available to them … [while] a mixed, or androgynous, self-concept might allow an
individual to freely engage in both ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ behaviors” (p. 155). In
other words, it might be considered more ideal to have a mixture of characteristics than to
be predominantly masculine or predominantly feminine.

Instead of furthering the idea of gender as a binary concept, the BSRI has studied
survey participants’ responses to attributes that align with sixty “socially desirable”
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(1974) characteristics divided into categories of masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. A higher masculine score “represents not only the endorsement of masculine attributes but the simultaneous rejection of feminine attributes. Similarly, a ‘feminine’ sex role represents not only the endorsement of feminine attributes but the simultaneous rejection of masculine attributes” (p. 158). However, Bem recognized that a score falling within the androgynous range, representing a balance of both masculine and feminine attributes, might indicate a shift towards a “more human standard of psychological health” (p. 162).

Undoubtedly, ideals of masculinity and femininity have changed over the course of time, as have societal expectations of gender roles. Auster and Ohm (2000) identified several salient ways in which these roles have evolved since the initial usage of the BSRI:

“women … [have] increased participation in the workforce; … women’s educational achievement and employment in previously male-dominated fields has grown; … men are beginning to make inroads into previously female-dominated occupations … and some men are taking on more day-to-day responsibility for their children; … and in many movies and television, women and men are found in a wider variety of positions and roles, display a greater repertoire of behavioral traits, and appear to experience a wider range of emotions.” (p. 500)

Auster and Ohm (2000) sought to determine if the Bem Sex-Role Inventory was still a valid instrument for investigating gender characteristics in light of the aforementioned societal changes. Their study paralleled the inaugural Bem study by examining which traits survey respondents identified as being socially desirable for a man and for a woman and added an examination of traits respondents viewed as being
important for themselves to possess. While there was not a great amount of change in preference of socially desirable traits between the 1970s and the late 1990s, a greater overlap of traits seen as personally important to respondents was seen in their 1999 study. While male respondents identified ten masculine traits seen as important, they also included five personally important feminine traits. Female respondents, on the other hand, when identifying a list of their fifteen most important traits, included “seven feminine traits [and] eight masculine traits. This means that the top fifteen traits for women [included] more masculine than feminine traits” (p. 522).

The inclusion of feminine and masculine traits for respondents of both sexes shows a shift away from the belief that respondents should only identify with traits associated with their particular sex. Shifts also occurred amongst the traits identified as most important. For instance, “the masculine traits … appear to represent the self-sufficient or decisive factor, rather than the dominant or assertive factor, and the feminine traits … seem reminiscent of the sensitivity or compassion factor rather than the dependency or subservient factor” (p. 525). Likely this is reflective of the salient societal shifts identified early on by Auster and Ohm (2000), namely the role flexibility and diversity that has been reflected in the media and come to be seen as more socially acceptable.

**Practitioner Experiences in Female-Dominated Professions**

While Auster and Ohm (2000) identified men “making inroads into previously female-dominated occupations” (p. 500) as a contributing factor to societal shifts in the acceptance and increased flexibility of gender characteristics, Williams (1992) discusses the complex experiences men face as underrepresented members of four predominantly
female-dominated professions: nursing, elementary school teaching, librarianship, and social work. Since the American Sign Language - English interpreting field is predominantly comprised of female practitioners (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2013), looking at the experiences of male practitioners in this and other fields contributes to our greater understanding of how gender may impact the work of an interpreter on a daily basis.

Traditionally, “men are less likely to enter female sex-typed occupations than women are to enter the male-dominated jobs” (p. 253). This creates an interesting parallel with the findings of Auster and Ohm (2000) who noted that female BSRI survey respondents selected masculine traits as being preferable or important at a higher rate than did male respondents for feminine traits. However, while women may enter male-dominated fields at higher rates, “researchers … have identified discrimination as a major barrier to women” (p. 254). While this discrimination may undoubtedly be formal, such as through institutional rules or promotion and hiring practices, the discrimination female employees in male-dominated fields experience may also take place informally “as when women encounter sexual harassment, sabotage, or other forms of hostility from their male co-workers resulting in a poisoned work environment” (p. 254).

Limited studies have indicated that men entering into female-dominated professions may not experience discrimination in the same manner. While some do experience being placed into areas of these professions that are deemed to be “more suitable” for men, many research participants indicated that they are “effectively being ‘kicked upstairs’ in the process. Those specialties considered more legitimate practice areas for men also tend to be the most prestigious, better paying ones” (p. 256). Male
professionals in these fields are being encouraged towards administrative work regardless of their preference to do work that is more traditionally done by female professionals. Though this may look somewhat different within the interpreting field due to the nature and type of work performed, future investigation into the types of interpreting work male and female interpreters perform may be revealing.

Williams (1992) also identified the trend that “men in nontraditional occupations face a different scenario [than women in nontraditional occupations] -- their gender is construed as a positive difference” (p. 259). This was evident in the reactions men received from other men in the same nontraditional professions as well as by many of their female colleagues. Male colleagues, particularly those with greater experience, knowledge, or stature, were likely to exhibit an “us against them” attitude in their dealings with other, newer male professionals. Though some women seemed to resent the ease at which men advanced through the ranks, it did not result in the same “poisoned environment” women in male-dominated professions experienced. Overall, “it appears that women are generally eager to see men enter ‘their’ occupations” (p. 260) and are more likely to offer guidance, mentorship, and support.

Williams (1992) concludes that while both men and women working in nontraditional fields face discrimination of some sort, “the forms and consequences of this discrimination are very different … since prejudice facing men in the ‘female professions’ emanates from outside those professions” (p. 263). Judgment comes from practitioners of other professions, and potentially society at large, by placing value on the work of men in specific fields versus the work of women in those same fields. A female doctor is seen more favorably by others than is a male nurse. “This study [also] suggests
that … men take their gender privilege with them when they enter predominantly female occupations; this translates into an advantage in spite of their numerical rarity” (p. 263). Regardless of the professional environment, male practitioners are still inherently members of the majority group and will therefore benefit from the unearned privileges of such membership.

This same occurrence may be anecdotally true of the interpreting profession. The addition of a male student to an interpreter education program or the hiring of a male practitioner to an agency often includes accolades from female practitioners alerting them to the ease at which they will find jobs within the community. While recognition of the lack of male practitioners, as well as those of other diverse backgrounds, has occurred (Cogen, 2006), efforts to recruit and educate a diverse population of practitioners must be made while still acknowledging that praise on the basis of gender identity may continue to support notions of gender inequity amongst practitioners in the field.

**Evolution of the Role of the American Sign Language - English Interpreter**

The need for sign language interpretation developed primarily from the “[realization] that deaf people require the removal of communication barriers to enable them to achieve their full potential and interact equally within society” (Frishberg, 1990, cited in Dickinson, 2010, p. 63). Over time, the philosophical models and approaches interpreters embodied when producing their work have shifted and evolved. Early conceptions of American Sign Language - English interpreters held “no distinction … between a helper and an interpreter” (Roy, 1989, p. 88). The individuals engaged in the action of interpreting were “hearing friends and relatives of Deaf people who had some fluency in both languages” (Metzger, 1999, p. 22). The implications of this model often
resulted in the “tendency for … intervention [by the interpreter] to be of a paternalistic and controlling nature, with the [interpreter] making decisions on behalf of the deaf individual … Deaf people can become disempowered, the assumption being that [they are] unable to make decisions or take care of their own affairs” (Roy, 1993; Dickinson, 2010).

As interpreters began to professionalize and form formal organizations (Metzger, 1999), such as the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf in 1964, a shift occurred in the framework of the provision of interpreting services in the form of the language conduit model. In stark contrast with the previous helper model, the conduit model “projects the interpreter as machinelike” (p. 22), thereby requiring that the interpreter “[assume] no responsibility for the interaction taking place between participants, but rather … take on a ‘robot-like’ role in the interpreted event” (Stewart, Schein, and Cartwright, 1998, as cited in Dickinson, 2010). As with the previous model, the conduit model does not account for salient extra-linguistic factors of the interpreted event, such as cultural identities or inherent power imbalances between the individuals present.

Over time, “problems arose with regard to responsibility for the quality of interpretations … [which] led to the emergence of the communication facilitator model” (Metzger, 1999, p. 22). While this model does take into account higher expectations for the skill level of interpreters, it remains similar in practice to the conduit model (Metzger, 1999). This is, however, the time when interpreters became more aware of the physical aspects of communication such as placement, lighting, and indicating who is speaking. However, interpreters “were still making ethical and communication decisions that resulted in a lack of equality in terms of access and participation for Deaf consumers”
(Humphrey & Alcorn 2007, p. 177). Though other models have come to light in recent years, such as the bilingual-bicultural model and the ally model (Witter-Merithew, 1999), “the idea of the interpreter as a translating machine, neutral and invisible, is one which still informs the understanding of both interpreters and service users” (Dickinson, 2010, p. 69).

Metzger (1999) describes the impact of the pervasive ideals of the interpreter-as-conduit model through the lens of the Interpreter’s Paradox (p. 21). Although interpreters strive to remain a neutral entity and refrain from “influencing the form, content, structure, and outcomes of interactive discourse, … the reality is that interpreters, by their very presence, influence the interaction” (p. 23). By the very nature of being an additional person in the room, interpreters intentionally or unintentionally have an impact on the communication and interaction occurring within that specific space. While the dilemma remains as to what degree interpreters should insert themselves into the interactions occurring, Baker-Shenk (1991, as cited in Metzger, 1999) “addresses this issue … indicating that there is no such thing as ‘neutrality’ for interpreters. … It is imperative for interpreters to learn the impact of their choices and to make responsible decisions” (p. 24).

The changes in the definitions of the interpreter’s role over the course of our history have had an impact on practitioners as well as users of interpreting services. Frishberg (1990) sums it up nicely in stating:

“The interpreter’s role has been compared to a machine, a window, a bridge, and a telephone line among other metaphors. All of these are in part apt, and at the
same time, all of them ignore the essential fact that the interpreter is a human being.” (p. 59)

The acknowledgement of the interpreter as a human being is prevalent as the basis of the concept of Role Space (Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2013). Role Space serves as a framework for American Sign Language - English interpreters to view their role and how they occupy metaphorical and physical space within that role. This paradigm not only acknowledges that interpreters make decisions and employ various strategies while working, it has become the very foundation that makes up the Role Space framework.

The authors consider role space on three axes. The first axis, presentation of self, is the degree to which the interpreter inserts him or herself into the interaction. This may be through exhibiting norms and behaviors appropriate to the environment versus exhibiting behaviors to maintain the impartial/invisible interpreter-as-conduit model. The second axis, participant alignment, is the degree to which the interpreter appears to converge with the deaf consumer, the non-deaf consumer, or neither/both. The third axis, interaction management, consists of the behaviors or strategies used by the interpreter to regulate the flow of the interaction or communication (Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2014).

These axes, as Llewellyn-Jones and Lee state, “define and delimit [the] areas in which interpreters make decisions and employ strategies to enable successful interactions” (2013, p. 56). Since the framework does not explicitly take into consideration the impact of various personal identities, such as gender, race, or sexual orientation, it would be interesting to consider the likeliness these identities impact the spaces occupied by interpreting practitioners. Interpreters must be aware of a variety of aspects of communication, interpersonal interactions and relationships, and their potential
Gender and American Sign Language – English Interpreting

While limited research exists that looks at specific gender-related traits and the experiences practitioners of American Sign Language - English interpretation, the literature does support the notion that “although women dominate our profession, we still live and work in a society that fosters male privilege while failing to equalize opportunities for women” (Wright, 2007, p. 28). As practitioners, we must work to educate ourselves about factors of identity that are often subject to institutional and everyday oppression. This is true not only because of the limited range of diversity seen among practitioners of American Sign Language – English interpreting, but also due to the vast range of diversity within the Deaf and hearing communities (p. 24).

As practitioners, it is vital that we possess the ability to recognize the manner in which power impacts our work and our consumers. Much of the research on gender and interpreting to date focuses on its deep connection to language. MacDougall (2012) discusses the impact of gender, power, and dominance as they are expressed through discourse. Our identities, backgrounds, and experiences all work together to form our worldviews and shape our understanding of people and society. These “socially constructed ideologies are materialized in the language we use, evidenced through interactional discourse. Interactions occur across sex, race/ethnic, class, and gender lines” (p. 59). This notion has direct impact on the part of the interpreter in discovering if their views and identities influence their interpreting process, their conceptions of their
consumers, their “attitudes toward intersectionalities of gender, race, class, and sexual orientations of others involved” (p. 60). All of these factors are necessary to be recognized and analyzed by practitioners.

Levine (2007) discusses the differences in language choices between male-speak and female-speak. Male-speak includes features such as men typically “[talking] about action … [and] to communicate as a way to exhibit knowledge, skills, and ability” (p. 1) while female-speak is indicative of preferences towards discussions of “emotions and relationships … [and] to share thoughts and demonstrate support” (p. 1). This has direct impact on situations in which a male hearing consumer is speaking to a male deaf consumer through the use of a female interpreter. Levine discusses that in this example the original message

“…may [have been] altered, albeit subtly, by the manner in which the interpreter [utilized] sign choices from ASL … [The interpreter] was doing what research finds most women do when transmitting a male’s message; she [reframed] the message using more relational words, replacing the more action oriented words used by the male sender [of the message].” (p. 1)

In light of this inter-gender arrangement of two male consumers and a female interpreter, Levine found it important that not only should interpreters be aware of the external factors of power and discourse described above, but also become aware of the differences in communication strategies among men and women and how these differences can potentially impact the messages being communicated to consumers (p. 12).
Since research on gender identity, characteristics of gender, and the related experiences of practitioners is limited, a review of direct and related literature was necessary to fully analyze the issue from multiple perspectives. The field of American Sign Language - English Interpretation would benefit from further studies that explore these topics and how they relate to larger societal systems and interpersonal interactions. Engaging in professional dialogues to deepen our shared understanding of gender-related issues and experiences, their impact on practitioners, and their impact on consumers will add to the insight we have on the causes and effects of gender inequities amongst the Deaf and interpreting communities.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research Focus

The aim of the study is to answer the question: how do characteristics of and experiences with gender identity impact the work and role of American Sign Language - English interpreters? To this point, a limited number of studies have mentioned the impact of gender on the work of interpreters. These studies often focus primarily on linguistic choices (see MacDougall, 2007; O’Barr & Atkins, 1980) and less so on other factors related to the work of interpreters, such as interpersonal relationships. Since this study is the first of its kind, it is necessary to see both if there are trends in gender-specific identities as well as if these trends have any relationship to potential patterns in approaches to, and experiences while performing, the work.

Design of the Investigation

Recognizing the complexities of the work of interpreters, it was necessary that the research adopted the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The initial research phase occurred through a survey disseminated online and hosted by Google Forms. The survey was shared through email and posted in approximately a dozen online forums and social media groups where American Sign Language - English interpreters connect. The second phase of data collection took place through semi-structured interviews via the use of videoconferencing technology.
Survey Methods

The survey was open to those who identify as professional American Sign Language - English interpreters in the United States. While a few responses were collected from interpreters outside of the United States or from those who chose to not disclose their gender identity, use of the data collected from those individuals is beyond the scope of the study at this time. The survey was open for one month and received a total of 346 responses (see Appendix A for a full list of survey questions).

The first portion of the survey gathered the demographic information of each respondent. Survey participants were asked for information pertaining to their gender identity, sexual orientation, interpreting experience, educational and certification statuses, hearing identity within the D/deaf community, and racial identity. While the intersectionality of the collected demographic data does have an impact on participant responses, for the purposes of this research, the most significant demographic factor used in interpreting this portion of the data was self-reported gender identity.

The next portion of the survey asked participants to respond to the sixty-item Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Since this was the first study of its kind to look specifically at gender-related identity trends among interpreters, it was necessary to understand what, if any, those preliminary trends are. The items contained in the BSRI are adjectives and descriptive phrases that have been linked to demonstrate the “social desirability” (Bem, 1974) of a trait’s association with societal understandings and expectations of femininity, masculinity, and androgyny. Participants were asked to rank themselves for each item on a scale of one to seven, with a range of ‘not at all like them’ to ‘always like them.’
The third and final portion of the survey consisted of sets of situation-based questions aligned with the three axes of the Role Space model developed by Llewellyn-Jones and Lee (2009): the interpreters’ use of interaction management, the interpreters’ typical patterns when accommodating the participants, situation, activity, or other factors present in a work environment, and the interpreters’ presentation of self. Respondents were asked to self-report based on patterns of their typical responses over the course of their careers. Responses to each of the questions were analyzed and themed for certain aspects of gender norms, particularly those qualities highlighted in the BSRI. Analysis of this data is not contained within the current thesis but has been recommended for future research.

Limitations of Survey Methodology

As is typical of all research methodologies, the limitations of this survey must be acknowledged and discussed. The first limitation of this study was the possibility of the results of the BSRI being more strongly reflective of past interpretations of “social desirability” (Bem, 1974) and, therefore, holds true to outdated definitions of femininity, masculinity, and androgyny. Since the BSRI was developed in 1974 and society’s views of gender and gender roles have changed, the likelihood of the survey instrument having some inapplicable measures is higher. Several research studies, however, have been conducted that use the BSRI as a form of measuring and discussing gender roles. Holt and Ellis (1998) test the validity of the tool, noting “gender-role perceptions have changed over the years, but not enough to invalidate the BSRI at this time” (p. 939). Holt and Ellis do acknowledge, though, that their specific study may have “limited
generalizability” due to their sample and prompt other researchers to use the tool with wider audiences.

More recent studies, such as that done by Choi, Fuqua, and Newman (2009) further validate the tool while also acknowledging, “gender role stereotypes may be declining, even though they obviously still exist” (p. 703). One of the key findings of this study was that while “social desirability of masculine … traits in women has increased over time,” men and women exhibited masculine traits in different ways. Women, for instance, exhibited traits which were considered to have a more “internal, more personal, or self-control locus” (p. 704) while men exhibited traits that were interpreted as representing “some form of social control of others” (p. 703).

Though the results of the situational questions of the research instrument have been held for future research, this section of the survey proved to have several limitations. Each question in this portion of the survey was designed with the intent of eliciting answers that would cover a variety of types of responses, with no intention of being an exhaustive list. In order to identify patterns, an option for a fill-in-the-blank “other” answer was disallowed for the intent of forcing respondents to provide one of the given answers that most closely represents what they might choose. However, in disallowing open-ended responses for individual questions, respondents were unable to account for several other factors that might impact their true-to-life decision-making strategies, such as environmental factors of the work setting, specific people involved, and the nature of the interaction. An open-ended question at the end of each situational question segment provided an opportunity for respondents to add any information they chose.
Interview Methods

The second step of data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews of professional American Sign Language – English interpreters selected from the pool of survey respondents. A total of five interviewees were selected, three who identified as cisgender females and two who identified as cisgender males. In their 2013 Annual Report, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) stated that, of the percentage of membership reporting demographic data, 87.3% were female and 12.6% were male (p. 16). In this portion of the study, 60% of interviewees were female while 40% were male.

A total of 174 survey respondents offered their email addresses for interviewing purposes. Each of those respondents was contacted and asked to submit specific demographic information. Sixty-four people responded to the request for information, providing their age, gender and racial identities, sexual orientation, certification status, and what kind of interpreting work they do. Potential interviewees were screened for certain characteristics, such as certification through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), having had at least five years of professional experience as an interpreter, and having obtained at least a Bachelor’s degree in any field. Of the twenty-three who qualified, five individuals were selected and asked for interviews after further screening for as much homogeneity as possible in regard to age, type of interpreting work most typically performed, and years of interpreting experience.

The final pool of five interviewees included three female practitioners and two male practitioners. Two were from the southwestern United States, one from the northwestern part, and two from the eastern United States. All interviewees identified as white or Caucasian. Two of the female participants identified as straight while the third
identified as pansexual. The male participants identified as either gay or queer. Three of the interviewees had completed or were currently in graduate school while the other two had completed Bachelor’s degrees. All candidates interpreted in community settings including post-secondary education, medical, and governmental agencies. All were certified members of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and possessed either National Interpreter Certification (NIC) or National Interpreter Certification: Advanced (NIC:A). Two female interviewees also had a K-12 Educational Interpreting endorsement (Ed:K-12) from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

Utilizing a sample size of five individuals for this qualitative approach allowed for more extensive understanding of the interviewees’ perspectives and experiences than a larger sample size or a second quantitative study would have. Since the aim of this research is to examine the potential relationship between characteristics of gender identity and an interpreter’s professional experiences, having three female-identified interpreters and two male-identified interpreters was sufficient for the scope and size of this study.

Upon receiving consent from each participant (see Appendix C: Interview Consent Form), individual interviews were scheduled. Each interview was conducted with the researcher and interviewee through online videoconferencing technology, such as Skype or Face Time, regardless of the interviewee’s geographic proximity to the researcher. Choosing this route helped to guarantee that the experience of each interview was as close to the same as possible for each participant. Interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed. Any identifying information was stored on the researcher’s
password protected computer with intentions of being removed five years after the publication of this thesis.

Each participant was asked a set of six questions (see Appendix A: Survey and Interview Questions). Questions developed were reflective of qualitative data collected through written comments on the initial survey. Each question was designed with the goal of being non-leading and open-ended, giving interviewees room to discuss self-identified, salient aspects of their work and experiences.

**Limitations of Interviewing Methodology**

As with survey methods, there are limitations inherent in the interviewing process and the data obtained. While the sample size of five individuals is appropriate for a study of this size and scope, it still must be acknowledged that a limited number of individuals’ perspectives are present in the study. Therefore, it is inappropriate to generalize the information obtained to the interpreting profession at large. Because there is very limited information about the impact of gender in the interpreting process, it is difficult to compare the findings of this study with the findings of similar or comparable studies.

Another important limitation is inherent in the pool of selected interviewees. In an attempt to draw connections and note patterns, interviewees were chosen based on having the most similarities among the pool of potential participants. One of these similarities is that all five participants identify as being cisgender male or cisgender female. Inclusion of those who identified as being transgender is outside of the scope of this study at this time but is recommended for future research. Another limitation in the pool of interviewees is that all held racial identities of white or Caucasian. Future research should investigate the impact of gender identities and the intersection of diverse racial identities.
Data Analysis Procedures

Results from the survey were analyzed for numerical trends and interviews were analyzed and coded for prominent themes. Each portion of the survey results was analyzed with the goal of that specific set of data in mind. The data were first categorized by results of the Bem Sex Role Inventory by qualities of gender identity, such as being more feminine, more masculine, or androgynous (Bem, 1974), and then were compared in several ways. For purposes of this research, more focus was placed on traits falling within the masculine and feminine categories. Comparisons and relationships were made between traits with which female respondents did or did not identify, traits with which male respondents did or did not identify, and traits with which all respondents did or did not identify.

After identifying all applicable trends and relationships from the survey data, questions were developed for the one-on-one interviews. Each question was designed to reflect an aspect of the interpreter’s role or the impact of gender on their role and experience. After each interview, the audio was transcribed using an online transcription program and then coded using an open-coding format. This approach, “the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101), is the most appropriate approach in assessing this sort of data. Instead of limiting the data to a set of pre-determined codes or themes, the data was assessed for potential gender-linked themes and relationships and other salient ideas discussed by the interviewees (see Chart 15 for a list of codes and themes). That there is very little research into the impact of gender identity on the role
and experience of American Sign Language - English interpreters was a key factor in determining the approach utilized for data analysis.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Survey Results

The survey was disseminated through various social media sites and through direct e-mail to randomly selected members of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). A total of 346 surveys were received through Google Forms. For the purposes of this study, 336 surveys were deemed to be suited for further investigation based on demographic data.

Demographic Results

Of the collected surveys (n=336), a total of 81.7% (n=283) of respondents identified as female, 15.3% (n=53) identified as male, and 2.8% (n=10) identified as genderqueer, non-binary, transgender, or preferred not to answer. Responses to this survey similarly reflect overall membership of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, which reports overall statistics of the membership reporting as 87.3% female and 12.6% male (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2013). In order to establish this research as a potential foundation for further exploration, this study will focus on results from respondents who self-identified with the two largest demographic groups for this question, female and male.
Other salient demographic information included the sexual orientations, ethnic identities, and ages of respondents. A total of 69.0% (n=232) of respondents identified as straight or heterosexual, 16.0% (n=54) identified as lesbian, gay, or homosexual, 9.2% (n=31) identified as bisexual, 2.0% (n=7) identified as queer, 1.1% (n=4) identified as unsure or questioning, and 2.3% (n=8) provided a self-selected response.

A total of 88.6% of respondents (n=298) identified as White, 3.5% (n=12) identified as Hispanic or Latino, 1.7% (n=6) identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.4%
(n=5) identified as Black or African American, .08% (n=3) identified as Native American or American Indian, and 3.5% (n=12) self-reported an alternative ethnic identity.

Figure 3. Racial identities of survey respondents.

Finally, of the 336 respondents, 6.25% (n=21) were between the ages of 18 - 24 years, 28.5% (n=96) were between the ages of 25 - 34 years, 25.0% (n=84) were between the ages of 35 - 44 years, 21.4% (n=72) were between the ages of 45 - 54 years, 16.0% (n=54) were between the ages of 55 - 64, and 2.6% (n=9) were aged 65 or older.

Figure 4. Age ranges of survey respondents.
Bem Sex Role Inventory Results

Survey participants were asked to answer the sixty-item Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) instrument. Participants rated themselves on a scale of 1 to 7 with the following descriptors:

Table 1. Original Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) trait scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Never or Almost Never True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Usually Not True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sometimes but Infrequently True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Occasionally True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Often True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Usually True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Always or Almost Always True</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For purposes of analysis, responses were grouped into three major categories. Responses with scores of 1 - 3 were given the grouping “Never to Infrequently True,” responses with scores 4 and 5 were given the grouping “Occasionally or Often True,” and responses with scores 6 and 7 were given the grouping “Usually to Always True.”

Table 2. Bem Sex Role Inventory Trait Scale Groupings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 3</td>
<td>Never to Infrequently True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – 5</td>
<td>Occasionally or Often True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 7</td>
<td>Usually to Always True</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 283 female-identified respondents and 54 male-identified respondents participated in the Bem Sex Role Inventory. Both female and male respondents aligned with characteristics that were identified by the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) as being expected or “socially desirable” (Bem, 1974) for their gender identity. Women scored highest (a selection of a score of 6 or 7) in seven of the twenty feminine traits while men
scored highest in ten of the twenty masculine traits. Table 3 and Table 4 below detail the specific traits each group of respondents was most closely aligned.

Table 3. Feminine traits with strong association by women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>4 - 5</td>
<td>6 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive to Others’ Needs</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loves Children</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheerful</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Masculine traits with strong association by men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>4 - 5</td>
<td>6 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reliant</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>92.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>79.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Sufficient</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>79.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defends Own Beliefs</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to Take a Stand</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Ability</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Personality</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts as a Leader</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualistic</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, female and male respondents also aligned with several traits determined by the BSRI as being suitable for the other gender’s traditional characteristics. Women scored high in eight of the twenty masculine traits while men scored high in eight of the twenty feminine traits. See Table 5 and Table 6 below for details of specific traits each group of respondents identified with most closely.
Table 5. Masculine traits with strong association by women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Score Range: 1 - 3</th>
<th>Score Range: 4 - 5</th>
<th>Score Range: 6 - 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reliant</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Sufficient</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>71.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defends Own Beliefs</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Ability</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to Take a Stand</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Personality</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Feminine traits with strong association by men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Score Range: 1 - 3</th>
<th>Score Range: 4 - 5</th>
<th>Score Range: 6 - 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loyal</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheerful</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive to Others’ Needs</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eager to Soothe</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In either case, the predominant masculine traits identified by both male and female respondents tend to focus on the self-sufficient or decisive quality instead of the dominant or assertive quality, as echoed in the research of Auster and Ohm (2000), while the predominant feminine traits follow in this same trend as being more closely linked to sensitivity and compassion instead of dependency and subservience (p. 525).

There is very little overlap seen among survey respondents in regards to the traits deemed acceptable for one gender identity and not acceptable for another. In fact, the only characteristic for which this is true is the trait Loves Children. A majority total of 52.2% (n=148) of female respondents scored within the “Usually to Always True” range (score 6 - 7) while a minority of 28.3% (n=15) of male respondents scored within the
“Never to Infrequently True” range (score 1 - 3). In other words, while many traits were potentially acceptable for both male and female respondents, the Loves Children trait is the only one that fell into the category of being desirable for women and not desirable for men.

As female and male respondents identified with traits expected of both gender identities, it is also important to note that both groups disassociated with specific traits expected of their genders. Female respondents did not identify with five of the twenty feminine characteristics, while male respondents did not identify with only two of the masculine traits. See Table 7 and Table 8 below. Female respondents did not identify with characteristics such as Shy, Gullible, or Childlike, likely due to the connotations and implications of these terms. Male respondents did not identify with terms such as Athletic and Aggressive. As such, the data suggests that female respondents felt more open to disassociate with feminine traits while male respondents aligned with masculine traits more often than not.

Table 7. Feminine traits with strong disassociation by women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Score Range: 1 - 3</th>
<th>Score Range: 4 - 5</th>
<th>Score Range: 6 - 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childlike</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft-Spoken</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gullible</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Not Use Harsh Language</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Masculine traits with strong disassociation by men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Score Range: 1 - 3</th>
<th>Score Range: 4 - 5</th>
<th>Score Range: 6 - 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Furthermore, female respondents identified six of twenty masculine traits that did not commonly describe their gender identities. These traits, such as Forceful, Dominant, and Aggressive, typically carry a more negative connotation. Male respondents identified seven of the feminine qualities that did not strongly resonate with their anticipated gender identities, such as Shy, Gullible, and Childlike. It is important to note that these three traits specifically are shared between both groups of respondents as being unfavorable.

Table 9. Masculine traits with strong disassociation by women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>4 - 5</td>
<td>6 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forceful</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. Feminine traits with strong disassociation by men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>4 - 5</td>
<td>6 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gullible</td>
<td>81.1%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childlike</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft Spoken</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does Not Use Harsh Language</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several traits were considered to be of moderate association, or less significant, for both gender identities in that neither group’s majority scored within the “Never to Infrequently True” range (score 1 - 3) or the “Usually to Always True” range (score 6 or 7). These traits, shown in Table 11 and Table 12, demonstrate the potential change in societal acceptance of these qualities for either gender over the course of time.
Table 11. Feminine and masculine traits with moderate association by women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>4 - 5</td>
<td>6 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine Traits:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yielding</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentle</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tender</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affectionate</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flatterable</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eager to Soothe Hurt Feelings</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine Traits:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes Decisions Easily</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualistic</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes Risks</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts as a Leader</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12. Feminine and masculine traits with moderate association by men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>4 - 5</td>
<td>6 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine Traits:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yielding</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentle</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tender</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flatterable</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affectionate</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loves Children</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine Traits:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forceful</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes Risks</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes Decisions Easily</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is also interesting to note findings among similar traits within each group. For example, respondents were asked to rank themselves on two traditionally masculine traits: Leadership Ability and Acts as a Leader. A total of 54.4% (n=154) of female respondents scored themselves within the “Always to Usually True” range (score 6 or 7) for the trait Leadership Ability. However, only 40.9% (n=116) of respondents similarly scored within the “Always to Usually True” range for the trait Acts as a Leader. The same is true for male respondents who scored at 58.4% (n=31) for Leadership Ability and 49.1% (n=25) for Acts as a Leader in the “Always to Usually True” range. See Table 13. While these traits are similar, this may give indication as to the number of respondents who recognize their ability to be a leader versus their opportunity to utilize those leadership skills.

Table 13. Leadership Traits: Leadership Ability versus Acts as a Leader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
<th>Score Range:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>4 - 5</td>
<td>6 – 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Respondents:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Ability</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts as a Leader</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Respondents:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Ability</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts as a Leader</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When looking specifically at the traits Feminine and Masculine, similar patterns occurred for both female and male respondents. The majority of female survey participants, a total of 50.8% (n=144) selected the “Occasionally or Often True” range (score 4 - 5) for the descriptor of Feminine. A similar occurrence is true for male survey participants, with the majority of 60.3% (n=32) selecting the “Occasionally or Often True” range for the Masculine trait. However, when looking at the reciprocal traits,
participants were far more likely to select the “Never to Infrequently True” score of 1 - 3. A total of 76.3% (n=216) female respondents selected “Never to Infrequently True” for the Masculine trait, while a total of 69.8% (n=37) of male respondents selected the same range of scores for the Feminine trait. See Table 14. While women are more likely to associate with other masculine traits, as noted above, they are as equally as likely to refrain from overtly identifying as Masculine as are their male counterparts in identifying as overtly Feminine.

Table 14. Trait Comparison: Masculine and Feminine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Score Range: 1 - 3</th>
<th>Score Range: 4 - 5</th>
<th>Score Range: 6 - 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feminine Trait:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Respondents</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Respondents</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine Trait:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Respondents</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Respondents</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interview Results**

While the survey yielded trends of the general population, but the qualitative interviews provided the opportunity to more fully examine how aspects of gender identity impact individual interpreters on a daily basis.

**Situating the Researcher**

Before looking directly at the results, it is important to acknowledge the potential impact of the researcher on the interview process and outcomes. Because it would be quite nearly impossible to obtain a “neutral” interviewer in regard to gender identity, it is important to acknowledge the unavoidable impact of the researcher’s presence and identity as a white, cisgender female on the qualitative data collected. In addition, the
researcher’s work in the field, personal experience working with interpreters who are of the same or differing gender identities, and potential biases towards the subject may have had an immeasurable impact on the development and design of this study and its aims.

One significant finding occurred in the opening interactions between each interviewee and the researcher. With each of the female participants, the interviews began with some level of relational dialogue, whether it was to discuss how the participants’ days had been, the weather, or some other form of small talk. However, with each of the male interviewees, the amount of small talk was much more limited, if not non-existent. These interviews, instead, were marked by brief thanks for their involvement and moving directly into the interview questions. While it is important not to characterize all men or all women as possessing a specific trait or tendency, this example does lend itself to the notion that women’s communication is often “more personal” (Wood, 2009) or relational than men’s communication.

Interview Framework

In approaching the qualitative aspect of this project, interviews were conducted with three female-identified and two male-identified American Sign Language - English interpreters. Each interviewee has been given a pseudonym in order to protect their privacy. Myra, Elaine, and Chloe were the three female-identified interpreters and Stephen and Marcus were the two male-identified interpreters.

The interviews were coded using an open-coding format (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). When reviewing each transcript, any statement or utterance that seemed to have a significant relationship to gender was given a code. The only criteria that guided coding at this point was that a statement needed to relate somehow to gender and the
interpreters’ experiences with work, their role, or other professional considerations. A total of 35 salient codes were identified and 6 prevalent themes emerged from the codes.

Table 15. Interview codes and themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Interpreter Role</th>
<th>Interpreter Gender</th>
<th>Interpreter Physical Presence</th>
<th>Interpreter Invisibility</th>
<th>Medical Settings</th>
<th>Identity Intersection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Expression of femininity</td>
<td>Women in male dominated settings</td>
<td>Personal comfort with opposite gender</td>
<td>Hiding or presenting gender identity</td>
<td>Dresses and clothing choices, makeup</td>
<td>Physical beauty and impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication facilitator</td>
<td>Opposite focus from interpreter</td>
<td>Remove focus from interpreter</td>
<td>Women as a distraction</td>
<td>Keep out of situations</td>
<td>Power and impact of interpreter on relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural mediation</td>
<td>Opposite gender interpreter and consumer</td>
<td>Locus of control</td>
<td>Power and impact of interpreter on relationships</td>
<td>Potential nudity</td>
<td>Consumer comfort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers as role models</td>
<td>Opposite gender interpreter and consumer</td>
<td>Locus of control</td>
<td>Opposite gender interpreter and consumer</td>
<td>Locus of control</td>
<td>Consumer comfort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide accessibility</td>
<td>Sense of sameness on multiple levels</td>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td>Racial identities</td>
<td>Racial identities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education for consumers</td>
<td>Racial identities</td>
<td>Racial identities</td>
<td>Racial identities</td>
<td>Racial identities</td>
<td>Racial identities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting process ownership</td>
<td>Racial identities</td>
<td>Racial identities</td>
<td>Racial identities</td>
<td>Racial identities</td>
<td>Racial identities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prevalent Themes

Perspectives of Interpreter Role

Before looking specifically at gender and its impact on the work of interpreters, each interviewee provided their perspective and understanding of their professional roles. Since the conception of the role of the interpreter has shifted and evolved over time (Witter-Merithew, 1999), this information is vital to beginning to understand how each interview participant may view her or himself first as a practitioner and second as an individual with a unique gender identity.

Of the five interviewees, four discussed their roles in terms of having two major components: communication facilitation and cultural mediation. When asked for more information as to what these terms implied, Myra framed her work as being “…there to bridge [the] gap between languages. We’re not necessarily there to aid or assist or put in our two cents.” This idea of seeking role invisibility and placing ownership on the consumers involved in a situation was prevalent throughout each interview, as is discussed below.

It is important to note that while four out of five interview participants described the role of an interpreter as a ‘communication facilitator,’ all of the participants described factors of a more evolved understanding of their role: attention to multiple factors of identity, the impact of power on the interpreted event, and how their decisions may impact the consumers and outcomes. Evidence of the communication facilitator model is present in the interview discussions, yet mention of the above factors shows a transition towards the ally model, in which practitioners “strive to create greater balance in power
Interview participants also mentioned their goal of providing access to the interpreting process through serving as educators to the hearing and, less frequently, D/deaf consumers. For Stephen, providing appropriate education to hearing consumers comes largely from years of prior experience in the field. When going into a situation, he expressed his ability to assess if a hearing consumer has familiarity with working with a D/deaf consumer and provide information based on his assessment. This direct education to the consumers often includes tips for speaking directly to the consumer and making eye contact, among others.

Some interviewees brought up the idea of the ownership of the interpreting process and empowering consumers to become involved through access to appropriate interpreter modeling. Elaine, who works primarily within the K-12 educational system, described part of her role as being able to make “negotiations between the interpreter and the consumer: how much are they advocating for themselves, how much do they want to take on the ownership of dictating the interpreting process … [because] sometimes they have never learned how to do that.” Myra also echoed this idea in her work within the D/deaf community at large by asserting that she “[wants] it to be their situation … and not about me as the interpreter … [I’m] just there for the language and culture aspect; that’s the only thing they really can’t do without the use of an interpreter.”

**Interpreter Gender**

Each interviewee discussed the impact of feeling a sense of sameness or shared identity when working with consumers of similar gender identity versus the impact felt
GENDER IDENTITY AND AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE – ENGLISH INTERPRETERS

when working with consumers of differing gender identities. At times, this sense of sameness or shared identity created a positive atmosphere that may have played a role in influencing the success of the interaction. Chloe discussed her observations of consumers sometimes selecting other interpreters “who [are] a lesbian or have the appearance of a lesbian … as a comfort level, it’s a sameness issue.” This sameness issue appears frequently as tied not only to the appearance of gender identity but also in the appearance of possessing a particular sexual orientation. Stephen also shared similar experiences with past consumers in saying that working with someone with a shared identity helped the process because of prior knowledge and their ability to get along.

However, there were times when this sense of possessing a shared identity may have placed a less positive impact on the interactions between the interpreter and D/deaf consumer. Stephen discussed this in light of sharing two aspects of his identity with a consumer: gender and sexual orientation. He described an experience with a consumer by expressing that “…as a male interpreter, the assumption automatically is that I’m gay. I am gay … [and] I’m not offended by the assumption. What offends me is when I have a D/deaf male, gay client who decides … [that] they can have conversation with me that is on a level that is not professional … This has happened more than once to me.” In this example, that sense of sameness and shared-identity has progressed past a professional boundary Stephen typically seeks to assert.

All interviewees discussed the issue of being the only person of their particular gender identity in a room of those with differing identities. Most commonly, female interviewees discussed experiences being the only female in a room entirely of male-presenting consumers. Each of the three female interviewees cited personal background
and experiences such as being a self-identified tomboy, growing up with several brothers, et cetera, as having influenced their abilities to meet the demands of interpreting in a male-dominated setting. As Myra recounted, “I felt like I was an appropriate match [for my work setting] because I grew up with three brothers … so going into [that setting], I already knew [about] things like forklifting or welding, so I could interpret those [classes].”

Yet, discussions of additional factors female interpreters took into consideration, which male interpreters did not, while approaching and engaging in their work were prevalent. While the most common theme among them, their physical presence, is discussed below, other factors frequently arose in the interviews, such as consumers’ discussion of sexual content or the likelihood that speech was being altered in order to accommodate the interpreter. Myra described her work involving interpreting group discussions for sex offenders within the prison system, stating:

“Sixty percent of the inmates there are sex offenders. So when they’re talking to their group therapy, they don’t want a female in the room, to talk about some of that stuff or to talk about their feelings. I’m changing the dynamics by being there because the person facilitating the meeting is male and everybody in there is male. I’m the only female in there, so for some or all of them, I could possibly be a distraction.”

Elaine recounted an experience of working in an all-male classroom in a post-secondary setting. She recognized in her specific situation that “things [were] filtered out because I was in the [room]. There were … some jokes that would have gone unnoticed.
but then [a consumer] said ‘Oh, there’s a lady in the class.’ I didn’t even realize it was an inappropriate joke until they made an issue about it.”

Elaine also discussed the impact of her gender identity when interpreting issues that were personally emotional or may be considered emotional for others of the same gender identity. She described that as someone who was unable to have children of her own, interpreting in situations with highly sensitive topics being discussed, such as birth or reproductive choices, and child abuse or pornography, would likely cause her to have an emotional response while providing interpreting services. While she did not necessarily state that those topics might be better suited for a male interpreter, she did acknowledge the potential impact it could have on her while she produces her work.

Interviewees also raised the issue of the evolution of their personal gender identities and sexual orientation as having an impact on themselves as practitioners. One interviewee, Marcus, who self-identifies as queer, stated that his identity affects his work, such as “the types of assignments that I’ll take … like things I’ll take now that I wouldn’t necessarily take before, when I was not as comfortable with my identity.” He went on to discuss that he sometimes felt like an inappropriate match for certain assignments due to being more or less aligned with a particular identity.

Physical Presence and Appearance of Interpreter

Considerations related to the physical aspects of being in an interpreted situation arose time and time again during the interviews, particularly when it came to the practitioners’ physical bodies. While female interviewees predominantly discussed this topic, common threads were found among responses from male interviewees as well.
Female interviewees frequently took note of their experiences as women and the concept of femininity as it impacted their work. They consistently discussed the impact of their physical appearance, clothing choices, and decision to use or not use makeup. Chloe went into the most depth on this topic, providing several examples of when gender has been an issue or consideration for her as she views her role and engages in her work. She described her feeling that “even if I can do a good cultural mediation, I am still a curvy female in the room … it’s just a portion of [my] work that [I] have to deal with.” In this way, Chloe has made a strong connection between her identity as a woman, her physical presence in the environment, and the work she produces as an interpreter.

Chloe also particularly emphasized outward appearance and the need to juggle “what you’re supposed to look like as a professional versus what you’re supposed to look like as a female versus what you’re supposed to look like [in that setting].” This comment is revealing in that it was echoed by all female interviewees, however, neither of the male interviewees mentioned their physical appearance having an impact on how they engage in their role and work in this manner. Here the assertions of Ackerly and True (2010) are affirmed in describing the impact of feminist theory as “[rendering] visible and … [explaining] patterns of injustice in organizations, behavior, and normative values that systemically manifest themselves in gender-differentiated ways” (p. 464). Since this phenomenon was not echoed in interviews with male participants, this may point towards such a pattern of injustice.

Chloe continued to discuss the issue of physical appearance, particularly as it related to inappropriate interactions on the part of hearing male consumers. Because of these interactions, she remains purposeful about how she appears when going into
particular settings. She stated, in relation to one of her work locations, “I always wear my ugly professional clothes. I don’t wear my cute professional clothes because I’m already getting [rude advances]. I’m not going to help them out at all.” Having to make these types of decisions and confront these experiences in a work environment further detracts from these interpreters’ previously self-identified role functions: communication facilitation and cultural mediation. Female interpreters are, by and large, making considerations about themselves and their physical appearance prior to being able to focus on the work and communication access they are there to provide.

Myra and Chloe both discussed the issue of the use of makeup in professional settings. Chloe expressed that while she does not typically prefer to wear makeup herself, she “[feels] obligated to wear [it] and I always write it off as ‘oh, they need to see my face, they need to see my lips.’ I’m super pale, so I’m trying to say it’s for the D/deaf consumer but if I’m also in front of 5,000 people, I don’t want to look stupid … But I’m very thoughtful and very purposeful about my level of femininity and where it goes.” As with the above discussion and consideration of physical appearance, the additional considerations of makeup are an added layer female practitioners have had to include in their approach to their work that male practitioners have not expressed.

Myra discussed the mismatch of expressions of interpreter femininity and the expectations or requirements of the work environment. One experience involved working with a substitute interpreter in a prison setting. The interpreter “came in [wearing] heels, had her hair curled, heavy makeup. She was very feminine.” She expressed the potential impact of these decisions of the interpreter’s appearance on the environment and on the consumers therein. She related this mismatch of physical appearance to the role and
function of an interpreter in her opinion that “if we’re coming in with heels on and a skirt and a low cut shirt and curled hair, we’re impacting that situation just by us being there, when really we’re there to communicate and facilitate communication … We need to dress the part too.”

Most of the interview participants also discussed the notion of changing or altering some physical aspect of themselves, whether it be their stance, the way they use their voices, the manner in which they do or do not move, in order to meet the demands of the interpreted situation. All three female interviewees identified their response to working within a male-dominated setting as taking on a more powerful voice, carrying themselves differently, or being increasingly aware of their powerful or powerless language choices. Chloe mentioned specifically what this looks like for her in a male-dominated setting, “...I get this strong body posture, my stance is a little wider, I’m leaning forward a little bit, I’m sort of a little gruffer faced. My voice goes down. I definitely have control over the pitch of my voice.” She further contrasted this with how she responds in a female-dominated setting: “...I’ll cock the hip, I’ll go to the side … just to mentally be in that space of ‘this is who you are, this is who you are being, this is who you need to sound like’ because everything else follows a lot faster if I can physically feel or look or motion like I’m that person.” To further emphasize her point, Chloe mentioned feeling like she stands out more in an interpreted situation when she does not make these adjustments.

While Stephen did not feel it was necessary to take on the characteristics of consumers, Marcus shared his tendency to blend in with his work environments through the use of specific stances, language choices, and movements. Marcus noted his
inclination to “[conform] to what I believe to be some sort of a standard in behavior or speech, which is not queer.” By saying this, Marcus is taking into consideration the potential impact his identity might have on his interpretations and therefore altering it to meet what might be the expected norm for that setting. Marcus did, however, describe that this looks different based on the perceived or known identities of his consumers. He mentioned that “if a gay deaf man is talking to a gay hearing man, I would probably use different words … The converse is true if a gay deaf man is talking to a straight hearing man I will sometimes butch up his language a little bit.”

Marcus noticed a similar tendency in the way he has observed his stance while filming his work for self-analysis. His stance, which he described as “legs somewhat apart and kind of upright and kind of not moving,” has two potential reasons that he has discerned after viewing himself on video. While the primary reason for this positioning might be to limit potentially distracting movements, he also recognized the possibility that part of his stance was an effort to “stand straight” in terms of blending in with the perceived predominant sexual orientations of consumers. However, he has also noticed a propensity for moving more freely when working with consumers who are known or perceived to be of a shared gender identity or sexual orientation. In reflecting on this, he mentioned that “...there’s the component that I felt comfortable and … he and I have something in common … and I know that looking at him kind of influenced the way I was signing … If I was working with him in a different environment, I would make different choices.”
Interpreters Invisibility

The literature supports the notion that interpreters produce their work while operating with two competing ideals: that of invisibility or neutrality and responding to the demands present in a situation (Metzger 1999; Dean & Pollard 2013; Llewellyn-Jones & Lee 2014). The concept of interpreter invisibility was prevalent in each of the interviews, though female participants mentioned this idea more frequently than did the male participants. The practitioners primarily wished to remain as little noticed as possible when engaging in their work and hoped to keep themselves out of the situation as much as possible. For Myra, this meant recognizing her role as a communication facilitator and cultural mediator and to realize that it is “[the consumer’s] situation and not about me as the interpreter.” In so doing, Myra strives to enable her consumer’s ability to become more autonomous in their decision-making and interactions with one another.

Chloe referred back to her discussion of taking on seemingly gendered characteristics as appropriate for the consumers and setting and the impact she has felt if she does not take on those characteristics. She explained, “when I don’t, I feel noticed. It feels like there’s an interpreter here who is interpreting … The more I can fit into the mold of whatever this interpreting situation is, whether it’s about gender or whatever else, the less noticed I am, which is the point.” The literature supports this notion in identifying that interpreters must be able to interact “in ways that are consonant with, rather than counter to, expectations of the participants. By … acting in ways that are similar to the other participants, interpreters can be more effective in facilitating successful interactions” (Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2014, p. 31).
Myra expressed another facet of this idea in stating that taking on particular feminine characteristics may, in fact, have the opposite effect on consumers and may therefore make it even more difficult to maintain some semblance of invisibility. While the experiences she described focused on working within the prison system, she still maintained, “there’s no reason a female can’t [do this work] if we’re just aware of how we impact that situation.” In other words, interpreters must be aware of their choices and make responsible decisions (Baker-Shenk, 1991, in Metzger, 1999).

Stephen discussed his goal of limiting his potential impact on any interpreted situation in which he is involved. He explained that “I try to limit my interaction in the situation, limit my effect … I believe everything that we do affects what goes on in an interpreted discourse; we can’t NOT affect it. We like to say we’re just furniture but it’s just not true.” In this case, Stephen is describing a desire to both limit the impact of his choices and decision-making on the consumers while also recognizing that he will, in fact, still have some impact.

*Interpreted Situation: Medical Settings*

Each of the five interviewees specifically mentioned medical settings as being impacted directly by the gender identities of the interpreter and the consumer -- whether they are of similar or dissimilar gender identity. Stephen described the potential of taking on assignments with female consumers and related that he engages in deep consideration prior to acceptance of the work, particularly when it comes to the specific nature of the medical appointment. He shared one experience working in an emergency room setting with a female consumer requiring a vaginal ultrasound. The consumer “was mortified; she didn’t even want the tech to do it … we worked it out and I stepped away as I usually
do. It’s normally not a problem, but I’m always thinking about that.” As Stephen acknowledged, his gender identity is usually not an issue though has, from time to time, become part of the focus when it comes to sensitive medical needs. His experience with the female patient in the emergency room is supported by the literature which has found that not only are interpreters aware that their gender has an influence on a medical situation (Brück, 2011, p. 12) but that consumers often have strong preferences when it comes to the gender of their interpreter. By and large, female patients prefer to have a female interpreter particularly if they “want to reveal things of intimacy, so we’re not free [with a male interpreter]. If it’s a woman, it’s different” (Weber, Singy & Geux, 2005, p. 144).

Each of the three female interviewees mentioned possible discomfort in working with male patients in medical settings, particularly when it comes to prostate examinations. Elaine stated that this is one case, if given prior notice, she may completely refrain from accepting the work in favor of a male interpreter being given the opportunity. Myra, on the other hand, is more likely to accept the work due to her understanding of the limited number of qualified male interpreters in her area. She added, “I put that ownership back on the deaf person [if] they want me to leave the room … Most of those medical situations have been where they’re going to have to take off part of their clothing. [Some] do allow me to stay in the room and [others] do not.”

Each of the interpreters was primarily concerned with maintaining the comfort of the consumers during these situations and typically felt it was best to have an interpreter of similar gender whenever possible.
Identity Intersectionality

Throughout the interviews, while participants primarily focused on gender identities and their prior experiences, mention of other identities also occurred. For some participants, these identities, such as sexual orientation, were often used interchangeably with discussions of gender. Though each of the interviewees mentioned this to some degree, both of the male participants referenced it frequently throughout their interviews as it related to their own sense of self-identity. Referring back to the sense of sameness or shared identity became a salient point for both of the male interviewees.

Female interviewees, on the other hand, mentioned sexual orientation but typically in light of the known or perceived sexual orientations of their consumers as well as a host of other considerations to be made. Two of the three interviewees identified as straight while the third identified as pansexual. The difference in responses between the gay and queer male interviewees and two straight female interviewees might be due to the female participants’ membership in the majority group and, therefore, less recognition of the impact of intersecting identities on practitioners or consumers. However, Chloe described her initial process when engaging in cultural mediation as “thinking about gender, thinking about race, thinking about ethnicity, thinking about ‘what do I know about this entity versus that entity’, et cetera.” While gender is a salient issue for practitioners of American Sign Language - English interpreting, interpreters do also recognize the impact of a myriad of other identities and how they intersect to create individuals who impact each and every communicative event.
Discussion

Results from this study’s utilization of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) support the findings of similar studies discussed in the literature (Holt & Ellis, 1998; Auster & Ohm, 2000; Choi, Fuqua, & Newman, 2009) in demonstrating the gradual shift of the identified traits and research participants’ gender identities. Research shows that it is acceptable, or at least likely, that men and women will possess characteristics previously deemed suitable or “socially desirable” (Bem, 1974) for either gender identity. Likely, possessing a shared mixture of masculine and feminine traits best suits the work of American Sign Language - English interpreters, particularly because the shared traits reflect ideals of compassion, sympathy, self-reliance, and leadership.

While there remains several differences with regards to common or shared association of traits among male and female respondents, it is important to notice that the majority of respondents strongly associated with feminine traits such as Loyal, Compassionate, Understanding, and Sympathetic and masculine traits such as Self-Reliant, Independent, Self-Sufficient, and Defends Own Beliefs, regardless of the specific gender identity of the respondent. The research focused primarily on traits categorized as feminine or masculine, and not the traits placed into the androgynous category, but this gradual shift may be indicative of movement towards the ideal balance of “psychological health” (1974) aimed for by Bem.

While we may support the notion that societal ideals have evolved to accept traits attributed as masculine and feminine for either gender identity discussed in this research, it would be remiss to ignore the fact that each of the five interview participants discussed their gender identity as having a salient impact on their work. This discussion most
commonly related to decisions about physical appearance, choices made to adjust stance, tone, or facial expressions, and strategies for addressing interpersonal interactions with consumers. In addition to this, female interview participants recognized salient aspects of their gender identities that were remarkably different from those recognized by male interview participants. Male interview participants predominantly discussed the space they did or did not allow their bodies to inhabit while working (e.g. such as through stance or movement), while female interview participants were more commonly discussed their physical appearance in regards to expressions of femininity through clothing and makeup in addition to the physical characteristics they inhabited while working. This may be due in part to socialized ideals of what femininity and masculinity presentation are ‘supposed to’ look like in practice.

Chloe and Myra’s discussions of physical appearance are very telling in bringing to light the differences in experiences of gender oppression and gender privilege. These discussions are closely linked to their personal feelings of self-confidence, recognition of power imbalances, and their abilities to feel as though they are making good decisions for their work. That these discussions occurred so frequently and with such depth for both interviewees is demonstrative of the significant impact this experience has upon these, and likely other, practitioners.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Implications

As Chloe mentioned in her interview, “I think it would be silly for anyone to ever think their gender doesn’t impact any part of their life, much less their work.” As practitioners of American Sign Language - English, it is necessary that we are able to recognize the manner in which our identities impact us as we conduct our work as well as how they impact our consumers. Interpreters have often focused predominantly on how the identities of consumers can influence the situations in which they participate. However, if we acknowledge that the presence of an interpreter impacts the situations they interpret, we must also consider the impact of the interpreter’s identity as well.

While men and women may be on close to equal footing in terms of population statistics, men have traditionally and historically held privilege when it comes to gender identity. Though male practitioners of American Sign Language - English interpretation may also identify with minority or oppressed groups (such as sexual orientation), it does not negate the impact of their gender privilege. Male practitioners are, by and large, not having to make decisions about their work based on how much or how little they present their masculinity. However, female practitioners are making these considerations on a regular basis to determine an appropriate “amount” of femininity to present within the spaces they are working. As Llewellyn-Jones and Lee (2014) discuss the interpreter’s
presentation of self in an interpreted event, gender identity and the associated physical considerations being made may be an implicit aspect of that role space axis.

Women are disproportionately influenced by the gender oppression they systemically face, particularly when it comes to displays of femininity in the professional environment. As was reflected in all three of the interviews with female practitioners, female American Sign Language - English interpreters are making decisions about their bodies, their femininity and about the impact of their femininity on their professional environments as a typical consideration of their work. Male American Sign Language - English interpreters have not expressed making these same considerations on a regular or frequent basis. While their gender identity did become a salient point in specific settings, such as a medical appointment with a female patient, their focus was more on the comfort of the patient herself instead of making decisions about “how masculine” to present themselves or how much of a “distraction” they might be while being male in an exam room.

As the data from this research reflects, traits and characteristics that have been traditionally identified as masculine or feminine are starting to blur together. Women are just as likely to select masculine traits as are men are to select feminine traits when describing themselves. However, we must be careful in equating this increase in shared traits with a change in dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression. While a female participant identifying as self-reliant, independent, or willing to take a stand may have a positive impact on her self-concept, the impact of power dynamics may end up coming into prominence when engaging in interpersonal interactions. This becomes particularly salient for female practitioners with the understanding that women, as an oppressed
group, and others, who experience identity discrimination, are working with consumers who are likewise members of oppressed groups. Addressing these “patterns of injustice” (Ackerly & True, 2010) through the lens of feminist theory is vital for working towards eliminating these patterns.

**Recommendations**

*For Interpreter Education*

In light of these findings, establishing instructional practices in interpreter education programs that specifically address issues of power and oppression, inclusive of gender oppression is recommended. Instructors should provide students with opportunities to examine their identities in regard to their privileged versus non-privileged statuses and encourage them to engage in discussions of societal systems of oppression, social justice, and intersectionality. As discussed in the literature review (Ackerly & True, 2010), framing these discussions from a feminist theory standpoint will promote students’ exploration of the very systems of oppression they will experience as professional interpreters. This type of discussion and analysis will likewise encourage their development as thoughtful, reflective practitioners working in diverse communities.

Faculty should support and utilize methods of teaching that promote equal recognition of all students’ classroom contributions. As is reflected in Williams (1992), males in female-dominated professions are more likely to receive praise on the basis of their gender. They are also more likely to be “tracked” into receiving higher positions or greater accolades than their qualified female peers as they transition into the professional arena. Due to this phenomenon, faculty members must be willing and able to recognize
when they are praising, complimenting, or otherwise acknowledging potential positive outcomes for a student simply because of their male identity.

Members of the faculty who are responsible for hiring decisions should also be mindful of hiring a diverse faculty. This is true of hiring not only male and female instructors, but encouraging the development of a faculty that includes diverse racial, ethnic, and sexual orientation identities, as well as diversity in faculty who are and are not Deaf parented. In addition to this, hiring practices should give attention to which positions male and female applicants are being selected. The likelihood for a male applicant to be “tracked” (Williams, 1992) into an administrative position further perpetuates the concept of the “glass escalator,” the tendency for men to “despite their intentions, … face invisible pressures to move up in their professions,” (p. 256). This, in turn, limits female members of the faculty from moving into these positions.

For Practitioners

As practitioners of American Sign Language - English interpretation, we must understand the impact of our intersecting identities on the work we produce and on our consumers. While this thesis looked primarily at gender identity, it would be remiss to not acknowledge that gender is not the only salient identity that impacts a person’s worldview. Practitioners should seek to establish and interact regularly with a diverse community of practice. It is in these communities in which discussions of gender identity, its impact, and how to address associated issues can arise and become more deeply explored.

Adoption of a feminist theory lens can also benefit interpreters by equipping them with the tools to assess professional situations for potential gender-related oppression.
Looking at specific branches of feminist theory, such as Feminist Standpoint Theory (Harstock, 1983; Hekman, 1997; Wylie, 2003), may be beneficial for understanding the viewpoints and experiences of practitioners. This particular branch of feminist theory embodies two main ideas: “social location systematically influences our experiences, shaping and limiting what we know, such that knowledge is achieved from a particular standpoint” and that “some standpoints, specifically … of marginalized or oppressed groups are epistemically advantaged … in some contexts” (Wylie, 2003). Examining the experiences of practitioners in relation to their specific standpoints may deepen the profession’s understanding of how practitioners approach and engage in their work.

Since all interviewees were able to communicate salient aspects of their gender identity that impact their work, it is clear this facet of an individual’s identity will arise at some point for most, if not all, practitioners. Practitioners should work towards recognizing the gender-linked traits with which they most identify and how they might play out in the professional arena. When examining their work, whether it be through the lens of role space (Llewellyn-Jones & Lee 2014), the Demand-Control Schema (Dean & Pollard 2013), or another framework, understanding their gender identity as it relates to their self-concept will enhance a practitioner’s ability to determine if their decision making is based upon thoughtful, deliberate practice or ingrained societal systems and social norms.

Future Research

Since there was very little direct research into the impact of gender identity and practitioners of American Sign Language - English interpretation at the outset of this project, this is certainly an area in need of future exploration. More research could be
done utilizing the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Since the results of this study showed a trend towards shared masculine and feminine traits for all participants, it would be worthwhile to examine if members of the general population reflect this trend as well. If yes, it is likely reflective of a shift in societal values and beliefs. If not, it may be indicative of something deeper related to the traits possessed by members of the interpreting profession specifically. Further exploration into the traits deemed androgynous by the BSRI may also be indicative of establishing patterns among practitioners of interpreting and the general population.

There is a wide range of opportunity for discussing the impact of gender identity and practitioners’ work. Due to the preliminary nature of this work, one of the most glaringly absent factors of gender identity is the concept of gender constructs as a continuum and not as a binary. Therefore, in creating and conducting the qualitative aspect of this research, perspectives from members of the interpreting community who identify as anything other than ‘male’ or ‘female’ were not included. Further research should take the investigation of the impact of transgender, gender-queer, and non-gendered identities into consideration as vital for fully understanding the makeup of our professional community.

Further research should seek to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of female practitioners. While this thesis captured aspects of the lived experiences of three female practitioners, it is clearly not a full representation of the field at large. Discussion of topics related to gender identity conducted through the use of round tables, open forums, focus groups, or one-on-one interviews with a variety of individuals would deepen our understanding of the experiences of female-identified practitioners. Other
directions for the exploration of gender identity might look at teaming, interactions with
consumers, practitioners’ self-concepts, and strategies for addressing salient interpersonal
situations.

Continued exploration of this topic should also include the perspectives and
experiences of male practitioners. As with female practitioners, strategies for ascertaining
these experiences may come from a myriad of research methods. Future research should
examine male practitioners’ reasons for becoming interpreters, their experiences in likely
female-dominated interpreter education programs, their experiences teaming with a
variety of other professionals, how their gender privilege impacts their work within a
female-dominated field, and other salient aspects of their gender identities that may arise.

Finally, further research should address the impact of identity intersectionality on
American Sign Language - English interpreters. While there is no denying that several
factors of identity -- gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, and sexual orientation -- all
play a vital role in shaping our worldviews, one of the most salient aspects of the male
interviewees’ contributions to the research was the discussion of gender identity and
sexual orientation. These two factors seemed to be nearly interchangeable in some of our
discussions. Therefore, further exploration of how sexual orientation specifically, and
intersectionality in general, influences who interpreters are individually and who they are
as a professional group is recommended.

Closing Thoughts

As research in the field of American Sign Language – English Interpretation
continues to advance, it is vital that explorations into how the identities of practitioners
impact their work continues to develop. As this research has demonstrated, female
practitioners are making considerations about themselves, their appearance, and their physicality prior to being able to engage in their work, while male practitioners, in light of their gender identities or expressions of masculinity, are not. As Ackerly and True (2010) describe, this “pattern of injustice” may have a strong, and as yet unknowable impact, on the interpreting field and those receiving and engaging with interpreting services. Given the convergence of shared gender-related traits, and the divergence among lived experiences among male and female practitioners, greater understanding and willingness to examine the ramifications of this identified pattern is an undertaking that will benefit practitioners and consumers alike.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: SURVEY AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Survey Questions

Demographic Information

1. What is your gender identity?
   a. Female
   b. Female to male transgender
   c. Male
   d. Male to female transgender
   e. Prefer not to answer
   f. Other:

2. Do you identify as:
   a. Hearing
   b. Deaf
   c. Hard of Hearing
   d. DeafBlind
   e. Coda
   f. Other:

3. What is your age?
   a. 18 – 24
   b. 25 – 34
   c. 35 – 44
   d. 45 – 54
   e. 55 – 64
   f. 65 – 74
   g. 75 or older

4. Please specify your ethnicity:
   a. White
   b. Hispanic or Latino
   c. Black or African American
   d. Native American or American Indian
   e. Asian/Pacific Islander
   f. Other:

5. Do you identify as:
   a. Lesbian, gay, or homosexual
   b. Straight or heterosexual
   c. Bisexual
   d. Queer
6. In what region of the country do you live?
   a. New England (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)
   b. Atlantic (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, NJ, NY, PA, SC, VA, WV)
   c. Midwest (IA, IN, IL, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI)
   d. South (AL, AR, KY, LA, MI, OK, TN, TX)
   e. West (AZ, CO, ID, NM, MT, UT, NV, WY)
   f. Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)

7. Your location of employment would be best described as:
   a. Urban
   b. Rural
   c. Suburban
   d. Other; please specify:

8. How long have you identified as a professional interpreter?
   a. Less than five years
   b. 6 – 10 years
   c. 11 – 15 years
   d. 16 – 20 years
   e. 21 – 25 years
   f. 26 – 30 years
   g. 30 years or more

9. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   a. High school graduate
   b. Some college
   c. Associate’s Degree
   d. Bachelor’s Degree
   e. Master’s Degree
   f. PhD
   g. Other; please specify:

10. Are you certified?
    a. Yes
    b. No
Bem Sex-Role Inventory

Participants were asked to rate themselves on the following scale for each of the 60 traits identified below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Never or Almost Never True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Usually Not True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sometimes but Infrequently True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Occasionally True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Often True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Usually True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Always or Almost Always True</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Traits:

1. Self-Reliant
2. Yielding
3. Helpful
4. Defends Own Beliefs
5. Cheerful
6. Moody
7. Independent
8. Shy
9. Conscientious
10. Athletic
11. Affectionate
12. Theatrical
13. Assertive
14. Flatterable
15. Happy
16. Strong Personality
17. Loyal
18. Unpredictable
19. Forceful
20. Feminine
21. Reliable
22. Analytical
23. Sympathetic
24. Jealous
25. Leadership Ability
26. Sensitive to Others’ Needs
27. Truthful
28. Willing to Take Risks
29. Understanding
30. Secretive
31. Makes Decisions Easily
32. Compassionate
33. Sincere
34. Self-Sufficient
35. Eager to Soothe Hurt Feelings
36. Conceited
37. Dominant
38. Soft-Spoken
39. Likeable
40. Masculine
41. Warm
42. Solemn
43. Willing to Take a Stand
44. Tender
45. Friendly
46. Aggressive
47. Gullible
48. Inefficient
49. Acts as a Leader
50. Childlike
51. Adaptable
52. Individualistic
53. Does Not Use Harsh Language
54. Unsystematic
55. Competitive
56. Loves Children
57. Tactful
58. Ambitious
59. Gentle
60. Conventional

Situational Questions

1. In a typical interactive interpreting assignment, who is the primary focus of your work?
   a. The D/deaf consumer
   b. The hearing consumer
   c. Both consumers equally
   d. Both consumers but not always equally
2. To what degree do your personal beliefs and values impact the assignments you typically accept?
   a. Not at all
   b. A little
   c. Somewhat
   d. A great amount
   e. Completely
3. To what degree do your personal beliefs and values impact you during a typical interpreting assignment?
   a. Not at all
   b. A little
   c. Somewhat
   d. A great amount
   e. Completely

4. How often do you find yourself reacting to or making a decision while interpreting that is reflective of your personal beliefs and values?
   a. Never
   b. Rarely (about once a month)
   c. Sometimes (about once a week)
   d. Often (more than once a week)
   e. Usually (about once a day)
   f. Always

5. In a typical interactive interpreting assignment, you prefer your work to focus:
   a. Primarily on the D/deaf consumer
   b. Primarily on the hearing consumer
   c. Both consumers equally
   d. Both consumers but not always equally

6. In a typical interactive, one-on-one interpreting assignment, where do you physically position yourself?
   a. Closer to the hearing consumer
   b. Closer to the D/deaf consumer
   c. Equidistant from both consumers

7. How would you assess the amount of eye contact you give to hearing and D/deaf consumers during a typical interactive interpreting assignment?
   a. Frequent eye contact with the D/deaf consumer; little eye contact with the hearing consumer
   b. Little eye contact with the D/deaf consumer; frequent eye contact with the hearing consumer
   c. Frequent eye contact with both consumers
   d. Little eye contact with both consumers

8. Prior to a typical interactive interpreting assignment, you:
   a. Chat with the D/deaf participant to become familiar with their communication style
   b. Chat with the hearing participant to become familiar with their communication style
   c. Chat with both participants to become familiar with their communication styles
   d. Chat with neither participant

9. Is there anything you would like to add?
10. In a typical interactive interpreting assignment, if someone is speaking inaudibly or too quickly, your first response is most likely to:
   a. Interrupt the speaker and request an adjustment in volume or pace
   b. Explain to the D/deaf participant that the person is speaking quietly/quickly
   c. Make do and interpret to the best of your abilities
   d. Ask the D/deaf participant what they would like you to do
11. If an English/spoken language term arises with which you are unfamiliar (e.g. technical jargon, slang, etc), you are most likely to:
   a. Pause and ask the speaker to explain the term
   b. Fingerspell the term to the D/deaf consumer and move on
   c. Fingerspell the term to the D/deaf consumer and wait for a signal that the concept is understood
   d. Ask the hearing consumer to spell the term
   e. Leave the term out of the interpretation
12. When you observe that one or more participants has not understood the message, which action are you most likely to choose first?
   a. Alert the speaker that the message may not have been understood
   b. Wait for one of the message recipients to seek clarification
   c. Assume responsibility for the misunderstanding and reinterpret what was said
   d. Assume responsibility for the misunderstanding and ask for clarification
   e. Ask the consumer if they would like you to seek clarification
   f. Ask the consumer if they would like to seek clarification themselves
13. When a cultural reference may have been missed by the message recipient, you are most likely to:
   a. Alert the speaker that it may not have been understood
   b. Wait for one of the message recipients to seek clarification
   c. Leave it out of the interpretation
   d. Assume responsibility for the missed reference and reinterpret what was said
   e. Assume responsibility for the missed reference and ask for clarification
   f. Ask the consumer if they would like you to seek clarification
   g. Ask the consumer if they would like to seek clarification themselves
14. In a typical interactive interpreting assignment, when participants are speaking over one another, you are most likely to:
   a. Stop one (or both) speaker(s) and allow the other to continue
   b. Briefly ignore the talk of one person, continue interpreting, and add in the previously ignored utterances
   c. Ignore the overlapping talk entirely
   d. Interpret the talk of one speaker while ignoring the other, and ask for the second person to repeat what they had said
   e. Attempt to incorporate the overlapping talk of the second participant while still interpreting for the first
15. Is there anything you would like to add?

16. When arriving at a job site, how do you typically make your presence known to the hiring entity?
   a. Identify yourself by your name, the agency you represent, and your reason for being there (e.g. "Hi, I am Morgan from XYZ Interpreting Agency, here to interpret for Mrs. Smith's appointment.")
   b. Identify yourself by the agency you represent and your reason for being there (e.g. "Hi. I am from XYZ Interpreting Agency and I'm here to interpret for Mrs. Smith's appointment.")
   c. Identify yourself by your reason for being there (e.g. "Hi, I'm here to interpret for Mrs. Smith's appointment.")
   d. Identify yourself by name and agency (e.g. "Hi, I'm Morgan from the XYZ Interpreting Agency.")

17. In an interactive assignment, a hearing consumer directs a question or statement towards you. For example, he or she asks how you know sign language, became an interpreter, or expresses curiosity about a sign. You are most likely to:
   a. Ignore the utterance
   b. Interpret the question to the D/deaf consumer as if the question was asked to them
   c. Interpret the question, while indicating it was asked to you, and answer
   d. Answer the question without interpreting
   e. Answer the question and then provide an explanation to the D/deaf consumer

18. If seeking clarification or fixing an error while interpreting, you are most likely to:
   a. Say: “The interpreter needs to clarify/repair an error.”
   b. Do not explicitly state that a clarification/repair is being made but use appropriate target language features (e.g. shift in stance or tone, facial expression, etc) to indicate a clarification/repair is being made
   c. Phrase the clarification as if it were part of the source language message
   d. Say: "The interpretation was unclear..." and then ask for clarification/make the repair.
   e. Say: "I'm sorry but I need to clarify/repair..."
   f. Say: "I need to clarify/repair..."

19. If you experience a self-care need (e.g. hunger, pain, are tired, hot/cold, etc) during an assignment, you are most likely to:
   a. Keep it to yourself
   b. Share it with the Deaf consumer during a break
   c. Share it with the Deaf consumer while interpreting
   d. Share it with the hearing consumer during a break
   e. Share it with the hearing consumer while interpreting
   f. Share it with both consumers during a break
   g. Share it with both consumers while interpreting
20. How likely are you to interact with the hearing consumer during a typical interactive interpreting assignment?
   
   a. Never
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Frequently

21. What information are you most likely to share with a hearing consumer you've just met prior to an interpreting assignment? Select all that apply.
   
   a. Your name
   b. Your agency
   c. Where you grew up
   d. Where you learned sign language
   e. Information about your family and/or friends
   f. How long you've been interpreting
   g. If you're certified
   h. Why you became an interpreter
   i. How the interpreting process works
   j. An explanation of your role

22. How likely are you to interact with the D/deaf consumer(s) during a typical interactive interpreting assignment?
   
   a. Never
   b. Rarely
   c. Sometimes
   d. Often
   e. Frequently

23. What information are you most likely to share with a D/deaf consumer you've just met prior to an interpreting assignment?
   
   a. Your name
   b. Your agency
   c. Where you grew up
   d. Where you learned sign language
   e. Information about your family and/or friends
   f. How long you've been interpreting
   g. If you're certified
   h. Why you became an interpreter
   i. How the interpreting process works
   j. An explanation of your role

24. Is there anything you would like to add?
Interview Questions

1. Describe the experience and education you’ve had in becoming an interpreter.

2. What percentage of your work is (or has been) interpreting? 0-100%. Follow-up with: why? What other professional endeavors have you participated in?

3. Describe, in your own words, what an interpreter does? Who are interpreters?

4. What is the role of an interpreter?

5. What is your typical approach to an assignment?

6. In an ideal world, what information do you like to know ahead of time?

7. Upon arriving to a job, what is your typical approach? What are your interactions like? With whom do you tend to communicate?

8. If you are in an interactive interpreting assignment where participants are speaking over one another, how do you respond?

9. How do you respond if a hearing participant directs a question to you while in the process of interpreting?

10. What soft skills should professional interpreters have?

11. What typical interactions do you have with a Deaf consumer prior to an assignment? During? After?

12. What typical interactions do you have with a hearing consumer prior to an assignment? During? After?

13. Do you ever feel like you need to behave in certain ways during interpreting assignments? If so, how?

14. Have you ever felt like you have “stepped out of” your interpreting role? What did that look like?
Follow-up questions to any of the above may include questions such as:

1. How does your gender identity impact that?
2. Please expand on that.
3. Tell me more about that.
4. What do you mean by that?
5. Is there anything else you would like to add?
6. What else would you like to add?
Hello,

My name is Grace Artl. I am a student in the Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies program at Western Oregon University and an interpreter in Columbus, Ohio. I am conducting a research study that examines the impact of gender socialization on the perceptions of interpreter role-space formation and decision-making.

I would appreciate it if you would complete the survey linked below by September 15th. The survey is anonymous and your contribution will help add to the knowledge in the field about the impact of gender socialization on interpreting. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

You may exit the survey at any time and no data will be submitted. Clicking the link to the survey below indicates your consent to participate in this study via your answers to these questions.

The Institutional Review Board at Western Oregon University has approved this research project. For questions about the review process, please contact the IRB at (503) 838-9200 or irb@wou.edu.

If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me at gartl13@mail.wou.edu, or my faculty advisor, Dr. Elisa Maroney, at maronee@wou.edu.

Here is the survey: goo.gl/GqwF31

Thank you,

Grace Artl
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

I, ____________________________, volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Grace Artl from Western Oregon University. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about how gender socialization impacts how American Sign Language – English interpreters utilize role space.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

2. I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

3. Participation involves being interviewed by Grace Artl from Western Oregon University. I will have an opportunity to share information not covered in the interview questions if desired. I understand that notes will be written during the interview. An audio and/or video recording of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made if applicable. If I do not want to be taped, the interviewer will agree not to record the interview. I understand that this may mean that my interview may not be included in the published study.

4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.

5. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Western Oregon University. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted at (503) 838-9200 or irb@wou.edu.

6. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

7. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

__________________________________________  ______________________________
My Signature                     Date

__________________________________________  ______________________________
My Printed Name                   Signature of the Investigator