

INTERPRETER ROLES AND TRANSITION
FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF:
A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

A Dissertation Manuscript Presented to the
Faculty of the School of Education
Liberty University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By
John T. Hinz
April, 2012

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ABSTRACT

John Hinz. INTERPRETER ROLES AND TRANSITION FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF. (under the direction of Dr. Dunn) School of Education, Liberty University, April, 2012.

This qualitative multiple case study research project examines interpreter use for students who are Deaf in the public school system and juxtaposes it with interpreter use found in the work sector after the school-to-work (STW) transition. Semi-structured interviews with 16 Deafness professionals and 6 study participants who are Deaf, as well as workplace observations yield bits of data which are coded and themed for review. Results confirm that interpreter use is abundant in public schools and scant in the work sector. Further results determine that STW placements for students who are Deaf can be haphazard, while employers are largely unaware of accommodation responsibilities beyond the tangible/architectural modifications for the Deaf made in the workplace. Also, interpreter roles can and should be expanded to assist in ensuring STW success for students who are Deaf. Finally, recommendations for further study and action are made.

Descriptors: Interpreting, American Sign Language, Deaf, Transition, Employment, Deaf Community.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wonderful family, and especially to my wife, Amy. Her strength and love was the propellant that enabled me to complete this work, even though I was at times limping toward the finish line. I also dedicate this work to my children Johnny, Carolyn Joy, Dusty-Boy, and Sonya Noel, who have endured countless evenings without their father present for dinner, playing, stories, prayers, tucking in, and goodnight kisses. Although I, your earthly father, was often away from home for this endeavor, I find peace and comfort in knowing that your Heavenly Father always was and always is with you.

I would also like to dedicate this study to my parents, Richard & Deanna Hinz, who have given of themselves selflessly to support my family during this season of labor. Dad and Mom, your fine example of church leadership and strength in family has channeled my course in life to endeavor to be a strong Christian, a devout LCMS Lutheran, and a dedicated husband and father.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to my Heavenly Father, who has instilled in me the fortitude to wend this road and the mindset to always look to the inerrant Word for strength and Truth.

“In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.”

Proverbs 3: 6.

“You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

Psalm 16:11

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Finally, thank you to Liberty University for giving me a chance to grow and reach beyond my limits. Your Christian programming through distance learning and through utilizing key teacher break times has allowed me to answer this challenge.

“ . . .but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

Isaiah 40:31

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Intent of the Study

The topic of intense interest and focus of inquiry for this qualitative multiple case study research is the use of interpreters in vocational training programs for students who are Deaf and their impact on the readiness of these students to enter the world of work. Specifically, this study addresses the curious juxtaposition of interpreter use, which is inherently plentiful in the public school systems and largely scant in the work sector. In the public school system, interpreters are utilized as an accommodation for students who are Deaf and use American Sign Language (ASL). Students who are Deaf have access to these interpreters during classes and during breaks – all day long. When students leave school, or in this case, vocational training, they enter the work force where they are accommodated with interpreters only during group meetings and during special planned interactions with supervisors or employers. This contrast in interpreter usage between school settings and work settings is a communication chasm that may be difficult to breach and may hinder successful transition for students who are Deaf. Transition professionals in public school systems need to be aware of this chasm in order to help students who are Deaf prepare for this inevitable and oft difficult transition.

School systems seem to have a trove of funds to supply interpreters for students who are Deaf. But why is it difficult to accommodate deafness in the workplace? For most employees or for job applicants, occasional interpreting on an as-needed basis may be sufficient. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires that employers make sure that deaf employees or job applicants can communicate effectively when necessary (Americans with Disabilities Act, 2007). This includes special occasions and meetings, trainings, job evaluations, and communication concerning work, discipline or job benefits. It also includes regular work-

related communication and employee-sponsored benefits and programs. In spite of this law being enacted nineteen years ago, there continues to be a breach between the law and practice, as many employers may still be reticent in regard to hiring people who are deaf. Fear of the unknown is probably why employment barriers for people who are deaf exist. John Sturtevant, founder of The Writing Workshop and international speaker on business writing and presentation skills, can corroborate this feeling, as he once led a training weekend that involved nine men who were deaf or hard of hearing (2010). His reactions were typical of hearing people in the work place.

“It was humbling. But it took a while to find that feeling. Like most of the other staffers on the weekend, I checked in with fear at the first staff meeting. Actually, that fear began back in September, when I learned the weekend would include deaf men. You know how it is. The voice kicks in. ‘Oh, that’s going to be weird. Maybe I shouldn’t do it. I don’t know sign language. Everything’s going to be different. I might feel uncomfortable.’ I held on to that burden for weeks. Every few days I’d consider stepping off the weekend. I struggled with the fear. Fear of the unknown. Fear that I’d make mistakes. Fear that I’d be left out.” (Mankind Project, 2010).

This statement sums up the difficulties that arise when considering hiring people who are deaf in the world of work. Communication is the main issue, but fears brought on by the idea that discomfort may take over are paramount. Employers, being people who are generally in charge of company operations, find this feeling of loss of control or comfort to be insurmountable, and may opt to sidestep or avoid the issue altogether. This is the difficulty that arises when employers are confronted by the unknown. Like John Sturtevant, these irrational fears quickly turn into humbling, if not exhilarating experiences.

Deafness and Isolation

Helen Keller is known for overcoming the overwhelming obstacles of deafness and blindness, and has become an icon of strength and inspiration in our American culture. She is at the same time succinct and thorough in her assessment of deafness as it relates to isolation.

Consider her words.

“I am just as deaf as I am blind. The problems of deafness are deeper and more complex, if not more important, than those of blindness. Deafness is a much worse misfortune.

For it means the loss of the most vital stimulus – the sound of the voice that brings language, sets thoughts astir, and keeps us in the intellectual company of man.”

(American Foundation for the Blind, 2010).

Being able to access *language that keeps us in the intellectual company of man*; this is an undeniable liability to being deaf. It is a gripping statement to the isolation of deafness and the isolation that accompanies this disability. People who are deaf can see the physical manifestation of the isolation that is experienced by not being able to hear; to be a part of the whole. This powerful realization can be generalized to human relationships from casual interaction to home integration to work assimilation.

In terms of social information regarding deafness, less than five percent of deaf children have deaf parents (Children of Deaf Adults, Inc., 2010). In contrast, over 90% of Deaf adults have hearing children. With this statistical disconnect between hearing and deaf people, one wonders how, initially, there can be *any* communication among and between family members who are deaf and hearing. It seems that, from an early age, a device that is often used to bridge this communication gap is *home signs*. Home signs are signs and gestures made up between the parents and the children to denote different items and activities, so that communication can be

enhanced between them. This is an effective tool for families, but gestures are not universal and are usually isolated to family interactions alone. However, these communications and gestures can begin to chip away at the linguistic isolation experienced by hearing families/parents who have offspring who are deaf, which occurs in 95% of the instances where deaf children are born. The biggest disadvantage to incorporating home signs into the family lexicon is the fact that no one else knows the language (Babies & Sign Language Home Page, 2010). Home signs are effective within immediate families, but they are not part of an organized and linguistically significant language, causing these “home signs” to be ineffectual as a language tool outside of the home. The moniker *home signs* is then seen for what they really are; a device that is best utilized in the home.

Deafness is indeed an isolating disability (Olivia, 2007). People who are Deaf can experience loneliness, paranoia, shame, discomfort, frustration, and even depression in their daily lives at school or work (Connolly, Rose, & Austen, 2006). For all ages and for both sexes, hearing loss causes difficulties with interpersonal communication and leads to significant individual social problems, especially isolation and stigmatization (Mackenzie, 2009). Public schools try to minimize the effects of isolation for people who are deaf through the use of interpreters for ongoing communication needs. According to the Gallaudet Research Institute (2009), in the United States there are over eight thousand public school aged students who receive sign language interpreter support to augment daily communication in the school setting. Also helpful is the oft presence of groups of people who are Deaf in the same educational program. These two factors can help in the assimilation of students who are Deaf into the fabric of the high school system.

Deafness is no less isolating at work, and is often more so. Consider the following statement. While it is dated, it describes a traditional and less than gratifying work experience for a man who is Deaf.

“You work in a factory. You have a break. At lunch you sit alone. For 50 years you are pretty much alone at work. When you retire and they give you a gold watch, you go out and celebrate alone.” (Holcomb, 1977, p. 51)

In employment, people who are Deaf often have no (deaf) peers working with them, and rarely have the luxury of an interpreter to smooth their daily operations and communications at work.

Punch, Hyde, and Creed (2004) relate that attitudinal barriers exist in the workplace for people who are Deaf and can lead to limited career advancement. Providing qualified interpreters to people in the workplace is expensive but is mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (McEntee, 1995), however, doing so on a full time basis is not necessary, as it would represent an “undue hardship” on most employers. While interpreter services may present “undue hardships” on employers, some *reasonable* accommodations that can be utilized to include people who are Deaf into the workplace include, but are not limited to TTYs, amplified telephones, captioned telephones, videophones, instant messaging and e-mail systems, assistive listening systems and devices, visual alerts for audible alarms and messages, modifications to reduce ambient noise levels, captioned audiovisual information, permission to bring service animals into the workplace, modification of intercom entry systems for secured areas or buildings, and policies and procedures for procuring real-time captioning or CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation, or “real-time captioning.”) services (National Association for the Deaf, 2010). Even these more tangible and technical accommodations in the

workplace delve into a continuum that many employers are uncomfortable with. Wheelchair ramps, curb cuts, and stabilizing bars on walls seem to be more recognizable and accepted as accommodations for people with disabilities. This may be why, in the domain of employment, people who are Deaf are generally afforded interpreting services only during personal meetings with employers and during staff or group meetings. To offer full time interpreting services as an accommodation to people who are Deaf would represent ongoing costs too heavy to bear for most employers, who are compelled by law to furnish and pay for interpreting services.

Compounding the issue of deafness as a disability, many people who are deaf are *culturally Deaf*, which means that they share communication characteristics through the use of ASL, have shared experiences, and have a network of friends and family who are Deaf. They see deafness not as an affliction, but as a happenstance of life (Thumann-Prezioso, 2005). They are *proud* to be Deaf. Often these people capitalize the word “Deaf” when describing themselves in an effort to indicate that they are part of a specific and special and proud culture. Noted author on deafness, Mark Drolsbaugh is a “culturally Deaf man.” His wife is Deaf, his parents are Deaf, and one of his three children is Deaf (Deaf People Home Page, 2010). They all communicate in American Sign Language. Mark has written several books and many articles regarding Deafness. He is a graduate of Gallaudet University in Washington, DC. Here is his take on the Deaf Culture.

“...my core group is the Deaf community. It strengthens me and makes me a better person. It gives me a spiritual boost, a sense of belonging. Without it I would feel empty inside. The Deaf community adds a spark to my life, a spark I can share with everyone... including the hearing community.” (Deaf Culture Online, 2010).

On the surface, Mark appears to have a healthy outlook toward his deafness, even as it relates to the hearing community. His deafness roots give him a grounding that enables him to live his daily life in a positive and fulfilling manner.

In short, students who are Deaf and use ASL benefit from and become more integrated into the classrooms through utilizing intensive interpreter support (Stinson & Liu, 1999). It is also known that, according to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, these interpreter supports are mandated. In the seemingly unlimited coffers of the public school systems, accommodating and integrating students who are Deaf does not appear to be problematic.

Conversely, it is recognized that interpreter support, according to the ADA, can be necessary in the workplace to make sure that Deaf employees or job applicants can communicate effectively when necessary. *Necessary* reasons include special occasions and meetings, training, job evaluations, and communication concerning work, discipline or job benefits. They also include regular work-related communication and employee-sponsored benefits and programs (South Carolina Interpreter Recruitment & Training Project, 2007). What the ADA does *not* do is mandate that interpreters in the workplace be used to the extent that it would cause an undue financial hardship on the employer. In other words, for everyday work, interpreters are usually not available for workers who are Deaf. With this dichotomy between public school interpreter support and the relative lack of interpreter support in the workforce, one is compelled to wonder how this natural transition from school to work for students who are Deaf can be regulated to insure greater successes in the workplace.

Situating the Self

When considering this research, I was counseled by our readings of the import of being sufficiently interested and passionate about the topic of intense interest, if, for no other reason,

that this interest and passion might provide the propellant to proceed and even finish the study at hand. According to Bogdan & Biklen (2007), “Self discipline can only carry you so far in research.” (p. 56). With this in mind, I will situate myself with this topic of study, which revolves around deafness and communication at school and at work.

I am fifty years old, and have had problems with hearing loss all my life. I am not deaf, and do not consider myself “hard of hearing.” I am a person with a hearing loss. In clinical terms, I have a conductive hearing loss in my left ear, which varies seemingly without reason in the high and low frequencies. The degree of hearing loss in my left ear is about a 50-decibel (dB) loss. In my right ear, I have about a 25 dB loss. In layman’s terms, I have a moderate hearing loss in my left ear, and a mild hearing loss (within normal limits) in my right ear. I rarely use a hearing aid, but benefit from using one. I consider this hearing loss to be a blessing, especially when endeavoring to sleep and wanting to block out extraneous noise – I simply lay on my “good” ear. I am not sure of the etiology of my hearing loss. It is possible that being born prematurely at two pounds thirteen ounces may have played a role in this malady. It is also possible that my hearing loss occurred as a result of many ear infections and several middle ear surgeries as a child. With this history, I have had to make some accommodations in life in order to facilitate communication. These accommodations are relatively minor in the spectrum of life’s adaptations, and include preferential seating, volume controls, and limiting situations where hearing is a must in large crowds. Because of my hearing loss, I have empathy for people who are Deaf; although I cannot say that I have experienced their same struggles.

Figuring that my hearing was the most fragile of my senses, at age twenty-six I decided to learn American Sign Language (ASL). After taking three levels of ASL study at Florissant Valley Community College in Missouri, I enrolled in the MA Counseling program at Gallaudet

University, the world's only university in which all programs and services are specifically designed to accommodate deaf and hard of hearing students (Gallaudet University, 2007). This was the best way to immerse myself in ASL, and has solidified my interest and desire to perform research for the edification and advancement of people who are Deaf.

For the last eighteen years, I have been working in a vocational training center in a public school setting. I have worked with at least one student who is Deaf each year during my tenure in the public schools. My goal is to prepare all students with disabilities for successful employment after graduation, and it has taken me almost this long to reach the “Aha” moment that made me realize the disparity for students who are Deaf between interpreter support in school and at work. Perhaps the successes for students who are Deaf in our vocational program would be difficult to bear out in the world of employment, where interpreters are not commonly used in the course of daily work. This notion brings us to the study at hand and situates myself in the course of this work.

Guiding Questions

There are several guiding questions that feel natural in the discourse of this study.

Based upon the findings in the review of discourse, it will be helpful to address the following:

- How can interpreter use be modified in public school settings in anticipation of the shortfall of interpreter availability in the workplace?
- In a vocational training setting, what role should interpreters play in the preparation for employment of students with Deafness?
- In a work setting, does more interpreter support lead to more successful employees who are Deaf?
- If interpreters are not available in the workplace, what natural supports would help to

ensure success at work for people who are Deaf?

Definitions

American Sign Language (ASL): A visual language and communication method that utilizes the hands and body in a combination of fingerspelling, signs, facial expressions, and gesturing (National Association of the Deaf, 2007).

Conductive hearing loss: this hearing loss occurs when sound is not conducted efficiently through the outer ear canal to the eardrum and the tiny bones, or ossicles, of the middle ear. Conductive hearing loss usually involves a reduction in sound level, or the ability to hear faint sounds. This type of hearing loss can often be medically or surgically corrected. Conductive hearing losses are usually the result of conditions associated with middle ear such as fluid in the middle ear from colds, allergies, ear infections, perforated eardrums, benign tumors, impacted earwax, infection in the ear canal, presence of a foreign body, or absence or malformation of the outer ear, ear canal, or middle ear (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2007). Culturally Deaf: The members of this group sign using ASL. It is their primary means of communication among themselves. They hold a set of beliefs about themselves and their connection to the larger society. People who find themselves losing their hearing because of illness, trauma or age share the condition of not hearing, but they do not have access to the knowledge, beliefs, and practices that are part and parcel of the culture of Deaf people. (Padden & Humphries, 1988).

deaf: The audiological condition of not hearing (Padden & Humphries, 1988).

Deaf: A particular group of deaf people who share a language - American Sign Language (ASL) and a culture.

Degree of hearing loss: Normal range or no impairment = 0 dB to 20 dB, Mild loss = 20 dB to 40 dB, Moderate loss = 40 dB to 60 dB, Severe loss = 60 dB to 80 dB, Profound loss = 80 dB or more (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2007).

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): “Special education and related services that have been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge, meet the standards of the State educational agency, include an appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the State involved, and are provided in conformity with an individualized education program.” (Library of Congress Home Page, 2009).

Gesturing: Simply stated, gesturing occurs when people move their hands when they talk. It can also include body movements and facial expressions. “Gesturing is a robust phenomenon, found across cultures, ages, and tasks. Gesturing is even performed by individuals blind from birth.” (Goldin-Meadow, 1999 p. 419). When gesturing stands on its own, it is a substitute for speech and clearly serves a communicative function. “When called upon to carry the full burden of communication, gestures assume a language-like form, with structure at word and sentence levels. Gestures can thus serve as a research tool, shedding light on speakers’ unspoken thoughts.” (p. 419).

Hard-of-hearing: “Those in whom the sense of hearing, although defective, is functional with or without a hearing aid.” (Newby & Popelka, 1985, p. 360).

Interpreter: a professional who makes communication possible between people who are deaf or hard of hearing and people who can hear. Interpreters serve as professional communicators in a vast array of settings such as: churches, schools, courtrooms, hospitals and theaters, as well as on political grandstands and television.

Interpreters ascribe meaning to signed statements as well as explaining their significance (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2011).

Interpreter Code of Ethics: The registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), along with the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), co-authored the ethical code of conduct for interpreters. Both organizations uphold high standards of professionalism and ethical conduct for interpreters. This Code of Ethics holds the following seven tenets at its core.

Interpreters adhere to standards of confidential communication.

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

Interpreters conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation.

Interpreters demonstrate respect for consumers.

Interpreters demonstrate respect for colleagues, interns, and students of the profession.

Interpreters maintain ethical business practices.

Interpreters engage in professional development (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2011).

Interpreting: Sign Language/spoken English interpreters are highly skilled professionals that facilitate communication between hearing individuals and the Deaf or hard-of-hearing. They are a crucial communication tool utilized by all people involved in a communication setting. Interpreters must be able to listen to another person's words, inflections and intent and simultaneously render them into the visual language of signs

using the mode of communication preferred by the deaf consumer. The interpreter must also be able to comprehend the signs, inflections and intent of the deaf consumer and simultaneously speak them in articulate, appropriate English. They must understand the cultures in which they work and apply that knowledge to promote effective cross-cultural communications. Interpreting requires specialized expertise. While proficiency in English and in sign language is necessary, language skills alone are not sufficient for an individual to work as a professional interpreter. Becoming an interpreter is a complex process that requires a high degree of linguistic, cognitive and technical skills; takes a committed individual to not only achieve certification but to also maintain and grow the skills needed; requires physical stamina, endurance and the ability to emotionally handle an assignment and adhere to confidentiality; necessitates a great knowledge of the English language and the ability to speak clearly, be audibly heard and to portray the feelings and emotion of the speaker, whether they are voice or sign interpreting (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2011).

Job Coach: “A paraprofessional who accompanies a person to a work site and assists the person to varying degrees to develop and maintain competitive work skills and behaviors and to adapt to the work site environment.” (University of Connecticut Health Center, 2009, P. 16).

Manual Alphabet: Manual alphabet is used to fingerspell a series of the alphabetical letters to form a phonetic or a spoken/written word when there is no signed word in a sign language. E.g. a person's name, a place, a technical word, etc. There are different manual alphabets around the world. Some countries or sign language cultures have similar manual alphabets with a few modifications, borrowing an alphabet from one

another, but their sign languages remain to be distinct. The one-handed American manual alphabet is a set of 26 manual alphabetical letters, corresponding to the English alphabet. It is used for fingerspelling a string of alphabetical letters of a certain English word, person's name, etc. This manual alphabet is derived from the French manual alphabet of the 18th century. This manual alphabet, with a few modifications, is used in many countries or sign languages. For example, the German and American manual alphabets are almost similar; however, ASL and German Sign Language are entirely different (Handspeak, 2010).

National Association of the Deaf (NAD): The NAD is the nation's premiere civil rights organization of, by and for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in the United States of America. They are located in Silver Spring, Maryland (National Association of the Deaf, 2011).

Natural supports: Natural supports are the relationships that occur in everyday life. Natural supports usually involve relationships with family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors and acquaintances, and are of a reciprocal (give-and-take) nature. Such supports help one to develop a sense of social belonging, dignity and self-esteem (Upenn Collaborative on Community Integration, 2011).

Oral deaf: "People who are deaf who learn to listen and talk. They believe that spoken communication facilitates all aspects of life, at school, at home, and in the workplace. People who are educated with the oral approach develop listening skills with the use of current auditory technology, including digital hearing aids and cochlear implants, specific teaching strategies, and speech-reading. Using this combination, children learn to speak much as children with normal hearing do, given the right

intervention.” (Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, 2007).

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID): RID is a national membership organization representing the professionals who facilitate communication between people who are deaf or hard of hearing and people who can hear. They are located in Alexandria, Virginia (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2011).

School to Work Transition (STW). The process and experience of students with disabilities who leave or age out of public school services and enter the work force.

Sensori-neural hearing loss: “A hearing loss that occurs when there is damage to the inner ear or to the nerve pathways from the inner ear to the brain. Sensori-neural hearing loss cannot be medically or surgically corrected. It is a permanent loss. Sensori-neural hearing loss not only involves a reduction in sound level, or ability to hear faint sounds, but also affects speech understanding, or ability to hear clearly. Sensori-neural hearing loss can be caused by diseases, birth injury, drugs that are toxic to the auditory system, and genetic syndromes. Sensori-neural hearing loss may also occur as a result of noise exposure, viruses, head trauma, aging, and tumors.” (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2007).

Speechreading: Also called “lipreading.” “The art of using visual clues from the lips and other parts of the body to determine what a speaker is saying. The ability to develop this skill among people who are deaf varies according to the amount of training received and natural ability.” (Newby & Popelka, 1985, p. 381).

Transition: “The timed empowerment of a diverse population of students with the opportunities and resources necessary for leaving school for a variety of post-secondary

options. Successful transition is achieved through a continuum of instructional strategies, collaborative interdisciplinary team supports, utilization of technology, and awareness of and access to community resources. These services help students develop essential skills for self-determination, independent living, further education and employment in order to maximize participation in their communities.” (Fairfax County Public Schools Career and Transition, 2007).

Translation: “The rendering of one language to another.” (Merriam Webster, 2011).

Translator: someone who reproduces written or spoken language while retaining its original meaning.

Vendors: “Local community agencies whose purpose is to create futures for people with disabilities through employment and support services. Utilizing best business practices, vendors encourage personal and professional growth for people living with disabilities. Vendors strive to incorporate the values of respect, opportunity, success, diversity, and integrity.” (Mount Vernon-Lee Enterprises, 2011).

Vocational Center: “A public school that provides students who receive special education services an opportunity to improve their career and independent living skills. These centers partner with local businesses to provide students with a community-based learning program. Students served are special education students between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one. In addition to community-based learning experience, students receive direct instruction in the areas of banking, travel training, functional literacy, self-advocacy, social skills, life skills, and work experience.” (Davis Center, 2007).

Summary

Deafness in the workplace is a phenomenon that is largely misunderstood and seems to have juxtaposed the notions of disability and communication in a symbiotic relationship that can result in barriers to employment and success in employment for people who are Deaf. There are vocational programs in the public school systems for people with disabilities, and these programs offer extensive support to all disability groups, including extensive interpreter support in the form of American Sign Language for students who are deaf. Upon transitioning from school to work, people who are Deaf often find that the interpreter support that they enjoyed as students is lacking or non-existent in the workplace. This study explores the experiences of people who are Deaf in the school system and in the workplace, along with their support staff and supervisors, respectively, in an effort to learn more about transition and work issues and how to help people who are Deaf become more successful in finding, maintaining, and flourishing in workplace positions of employment.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF DISCOURSE

Prevalence of Deafness

Noted author of thirty-nine books and dictionaries revolving around American Sign Language (ASL), Elaine Costello (2008) reveals that there are more than sixteen million people in the United States who have a hearing loss. According to Children of Deaf Adults Incorporated (2010), the number of deaf and hard-of-hearing people is much greater. They claim that the number of people in this country who are deaf or hard-of-hearing is twenty-eight million. Perhaps the most telling information is brought forth by Sergei Kochkin, PhD (2006), director of the Better Hearing Institute in Alexandria, Virginia, who asserts that the hearing loss population has grown to 31.5 million. He also makes the claim that, in less than one generation, the hearing-impaired population in the United States will grow by a third, topping 40 million people. (Kochkin, 2006; The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2010).

Costello (2008) states that, as a native language (language learned before any other), ASL is utilized by some 300,000 to 500,000 people in this country. Concurrently, there are, at any given time, about 100,000 people who are actively learning American Sign Language. There are roughly thirteen million people in this country who can communicate to some extent using ASL, making American Sign Language the fourth most common language used in the United States of America. Deafness is a hidden disability, meaning that one cannot see the disability with the naked eye. One only “sees” the disability of deafness when people who are Deaf communicate. Often by variances found in speech quality or the use of ASL, deafness, as a disability, becomes decidedly *unhidden*.

In terms of demographic information regarding deafness, less than five percent of deaf children have deaf parents. In contrast, over 90% of Deaf adults have hearing children. (Children of Deaf Adults, Inc. 2009).

Unemployment and Deafness

This study will focus on people who are Deaf and use ASL. Most studies involving the school-to-work transition of people who are deaf do not distinguish between people who are Deaf who use sign language and people who are oral deaf (Punch, Hyde, & Creed, 2004; Claire, Connolly, Rose, and Austen, 2006). In these studies, it is usually found that most people who are deaf are less educated, are unemployed or underemployed, and have lower incomes than their hearing counterparts. In a study of employment of people with disabilities from 1983 to 1996, a random sample revealed that the unemployment rate of men who were “deaf in both ears” was 24.6%, and women of the same set, 49.7% (Houtenville, 2003). Compare this with the current national unemployment figure of 8.3%, which was taken from March of 2012, and we find quite a disparity between the national unemployment figures for the general population and people who are deaf (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).

In order to add meaning to this statistical data, it has been found that the best way to study communication experiences of people who are Deaf is not to do so in a laboratory setting, but to document their experiences within actual work settings (Foster & MacLeod, 2003). Outside of the work setting, people who are Deaf often seek out cultural settings in which they feel comfortable, can communicate and can thrive. These are not natural settings for observation in the sense that they are sought out or manufactured by the people who are Deaf. The fact remains that people who are Deaf are outsiders in a hearing world. “They are outsiders because they miss out on a world of sounds because they cannot hear. They are outsiders because they

live in a world created and controlled by people who can hear. The deaf live in a world that is not of their making, but one that they must continually confront.” (Higgins, 1989, p. 22). It is this confronting of the hearing world that needs study to gain insight into communication, assimilation, and success for students who are Deaf who aspire to become successful workers in a hearing world.

Employer Concerns

In a study of job accommodations in the workplace for people who are Deaf, Scherich (1996) found six major areas of concern that people who are deaf feel limited their ability to participate in the workplace. Receiving instructions/supervision, department/staff meetings, in-service or training activities, performance evaluations, socializing with co-workers, and work-related social functions all present difficulties for people who are deaf. Interestingly, only 18% of the respondents indicated that their hearing loss was a factor during performance evaluations. This may be because performance evaluations are usually in a one-on-one format and allow the individual to more effectively utilize their residual hearing. Participation in the workplace can mean different things to different people. For people who are Deaf, participation encompasses integration, acceptance, communication, and comfort. Without these characteristics available in the workplace, students who are Deaf may find transition to the world of work stressful and unfulfilling.

More recently, the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission performed an ADA research project which encompassed 8,936 allegations claimed by persons with hearing impairments from 1992 to 2003 (Bowe, McMahon, Chang, & Louvi, 2005). In this study, they found that the most common matters of concern were hiring, reasonable accommodation, and discharge. Additional areas of concern revolved around harassment, training, promotion, and

testing. These findings buttress the earlier work of Scherich (1996) and suggest common themes of difficulty for people who are deaf in the workplace. These problems span lengthy periods of time and are recurring in nature. These barriers to employment are real and troubling to people who are deaf, and suggest that there are systemic problems that need to be addressed in order to provide employment opportunities of value to people who are deaf.

Employers are also concerned about hiring people who are deaf. It is likely that they will encounter this problem from time to time, as it is estimated that 28 million people in the United States are deaf or hard of hearing (Job Accommodation Network, 2007). The following are three common questions employers have when faced with the prospect of hiring a person who is deaf. How will we communicate? What happens if there is a fire? How will the person deal with machinery? (Hansen, 1999). While these seem, on the surface, to be legitimate concerns for employers, they may serve as masks or excuses for a socially awkward situation. It is extremely stressful when hearing people cannot understand deaf speech or sign language, creating a feeling of being “stuck with a deaf person.” This feeling of discomfort can be compounded by the noises that some deaf people make, such as eating noises, slamming doors, grinding teeth, and compulsive vocalizations (Vernon & Andrews, 1990). People who are Deaf should be made aware of these trivial annoyances. Like poor hygiene, they can devastate social or work relationships. People in authoritative positions do not enjoy feeling discomfort, and this is a barrier for many people who are deaf who wish to gain employment. However, with accommodation, there really is parity among Deaf and hearing people in terms of the jobs they can do (National Public Radio, 2007).

Studies to Consider

Some work has been performed in an effort to assuage the transition concerns of people

who are Deaf and people who serve people who are Deaf. For successful engagement in the workforce for people who are Deaf, one study of 506 Pacific Northwest students found that steps should be taken to develop and implement school-based transition programs emphasizing year-round paid work experiences. Because this scenario extends beyond the traditional 9 to 10 month public school year, it was suggested that a program of this nature be supplemented or supported by funds from other organizations such as Vocational Rehabilitation (Bullis & Davis, 1995). While the above recommendation represents a very tangible tactic to address integration of people who are Deaf into the workplace, the viability of this option demands commitment and funding that may be difficult to extract from the partners involved in the transition team. This strategy has not become widespread since its initial conception in 1995, and one can surmise that this may be the result of its sweeping difference and cost from the options now being offered to students who are Deaf.

In a study of job advancement for people who are deaf, Mowry and Anderson (1993), who are both professors at the Research and Training Center for Persons who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock, found that characteristics of the worker as well as that of the work setting were important factors in impeding job advancement opportunities. Their study involved forty people who were deaf who worked in small, medium, and large companies in the South. Workers were found to be in two distinct camps. One camp consisted of workers who actively searched out advancement, whereas the other camp happened upon advancement opportunities seemingly by chance. Advancement was enhanced when the workers were more assertive. On the other hand, workers who viewed their deafness as restricting and or limiting their chances for advancement appeared to be less willing to assert themselves.

Regarding work setting, Mowry and Anderson (1993) found that company size did not seem to be a factor in the advancement of people who are deaf. It was discovered that both small and large corporations could be equally unaccommodating. Additionally, both government employers and private businesses were lacking in providing accommodations for people who are deaf.

Finally, Mowry and Anderson's (1993) study offers substance regarding the ostensible handicapping manifestation of deafness, namely, communication. It was revealed that direct communication with supervisors and co-workers was handled via speech-reading and note writing. This approach required little effort for the hearing person during the exchange, and was quite successful in some instances. In most cases, however, the respondents expressed "dissatisfaction" with this mode of communication in the workplace. One respondent, who had fair speech skills and some residual hearing, was expected to "get by" with those abilities. He tried to explain that he preferred ASL, but his supervisors did not seem to understand that there were difficulties arising from relying on his speech, speech-reading, and residual hearing. His plight is quoted below.

"(The supervisors) think the hard-of-hearing can understand (hear and discriminate) words and it's just not true. I can hear sound but not words like normal hearing people. I just can't do that. I've told them that I can only grasp 40% of what I hear. The other part just goes by me. I've explained and explained..." (Mowry & Anderson, p. 372).

While this "Perspective on Barriers" study does illustrate some monumental obstructions that people who are deaf face in the workplace, the authors are quick to suggest that not all of the employers were unaccommodating. They do divulge some examples of accommodation for the deaf, however, most of the examples in the study highlight that the accommodations were

usually made for workers in highly responsible and difficult to replace positions, making the notion of accommodation appear to be a matter of cost-effectiveness, as opposed to a matter of adaptation for the sake of decency, disability, or assimilation. For the transitioning student or the recently hired person who is Deaf, this does not bode well, for it seems to indicate that accommodation is made on a sliding scale according to the employee's worth in the company.

Guiding Questions Addressed

The guiding questions of this work are meant to provide structure and heft to this field of study revolving around Deafness and transition from school-to-work. The review of literature regarding this field, while revealing, benefits from the following complement of research which addresses the guiding questions of this study.

How can Interpreter use be Modified in Public School Settings in Anticipation of the Shortfall of Interpreter Availability in the Workplace?

While educational interpreters are mandated to adhere to a strict code of ethics in their practice, the literature shows that there are needs for students who are Deaf that go beyond that of basic interpreter use. Particularly for deafness, which presents a sensory isolation in school and the workplace, it has been found that a lack of success in the workplace may not revolve around interpreter use; rather, it may be a result of workers who are Deaf not knowing or following the "unwritten rules" of the workplace (Bowe, 2003). With this in mind, interpreter use could be modified to include an advisory role in demonstrating for (Deaf) students how to discover and follow the unwritten rules that may be found in the largely hearing environment of the public school setting and the workplace. Bowe assures that workers who are Deaf and do not follow the workplaces' unwritten rules results in the perception and perhaps even the reality that they are not good *team members*.

Public school education could mirror the training of students in traditional state run Schools for the Deaf, which stress to their students that there will *not* be interpreters to rely upon after graduation, and that true inner strength and success come in the communication *struggle* that inevitably arises when entering the work world. At the Iowa School for the Deaf (ISD) in Council Bluffs, teachers have students participate in interviews and fill out paperwork for employment without warning and without the aid of interpreter use. The school has come to call this exercise “ambush interview day.” (Angeroth, 2009). This activity is impromptu, and meant to be an eye-opener for students who will soon transition to the world of work. The element of surprise seems to force the students to think *beyond interpreter dependency*. Joanne Shannon and Vicki Pridgeon, who teach the transition classes at ISD, cover such ancillary skills as self-advocacy, finances, working with and without interpreters, and independent living. Through hard work and following the advice of his teachers, one successful student of this program recently found a job at a nationally franchised restaurant in his home town. He stated, “I knew how to dress when getting the application, what to write, and how to get an interpreter. I felt confident when I explained why they should hire me.” It is ironic that, although interpreter use for interviews and work related functions is mandated by law as an accommodation, this program teaches students to work with or without interpreters, accepting the non-interpreter fate for students as the likely reality that they will face upon transitioning from school-to-work. Antia, Stinson & Gausted (2002) concur with this direction for students who are Deaf, suggesting that empowering students to determine their own visual communication requirements and to take responsibility for them. Garay (2003) asserts that students who are Deaf “... need to know how to let the interpreters know when they do not understand, or how to interrupt the conversations appropriately so that they can participate and answer questions appropriately.”

The idea is that this skill could generalize to the world of work, where they may need to make their visual communication needs known to hearing people on a daily basis.

Interpreter use in the public schools needs to be initiated by the students, according to Shaw and Roberson (2009). Students who are Deaf depend on interpreters to be there for all purposes, and students develop a lack of initiative through relying on interpreters who are automatically there for communication needs. This reliance leads to the lack of skills development in the responsibility for communication accessibility. So, students securing and scheduling their own interpreter services in the public school setting could lead to the development of the skills and empowerment to initiate the process in the future, especially after transitioning from high school (Garay, 2003).

Supporting the notion of the responsibility of the consumer who is Deaf to gain the skills to work with interpreters, Seal (2000), recommends that students with annual Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) should have included in their plans goals that revolve around proper use of interpreters. Goals such as these could revolve around not only proper usage of interpreters for maximal and efficient results, but also the procurement of and appropriate occasions for which an interpreter is mandated, not only in the school setting, but for transition purposes as well.

Another option for modified interpreter use in public school systems is to focus more on the Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) and less on the dependence of interpreters (Bowe, 2003). Current Federal guidelines for completing annual Individual Education Programs (IEP's) for public school students with any disability require the inclusion of an annual ITP beginning at age fourteen. The purpose of this plan is to address each child's unique needs vis-a-vis the eventual transition from public school to further education or employment. It is important to understand

the relevance of this Transition Plan for students with disabilities, as very few of these students, 26% during the 1999-2000 academic year, leave high school with a standard diploma, and are thus not eligible to continue their education at colleges and universities. The Deaf population mirrors this trend, with only 29.5% receiving high school diplomas. Bowe recommends, then, that a proper course of action to address the Deaf population (70.5%) that does not annually receive high school diplomas is to start transition planning in regard to communication and work outcomes well before age 14, as is the current mandate for people with disabilities.

Developing or increasing self advocacy skills in students who are Deaf can reduce the dependency on interpreters in schools, as well. The IEP and ITP meetings can be tools to foster these self advocacy and initiative skills that will serve students well, and will generalize to skills necessary for employment (Anita, Stinson, Gausted, 2002, Bowe, 2003). In order to make these meetings tools for advocacy success, however, weeks of preparation need to take place prior to the meetings. Further, Bowe (2003) bypasses interpreting as a measure of necessity, and instead pleads for the inclusion of extensive ITP bolstering to include independent living skills and vocational pursuits, stating that only then will people who are Deaf be prepared to adjust to vocational life, be it with or without interpreter support in the workplace.

Finally, the use of interpreters in the school system could be modified through the use of technology, which will enable instruction to be standardized and presented without the use of interpreters. Cheryl Davis (1999) of the Teaching Research Division of Western Oregon University explains that Instruction can be delivered by an instructor who is Deaf through the visual medium of CD-ROM. This kind of instruction presents many advantages for instruction including presenting the material in ASL, repetition of viewing as needed, deaf role models being shown to the classroom, and interpreters are not necessary for the lessons. This would

reduce the need for the presence of interpreters in the classroom, and would thus emulate the reduced availability of interpreters in the workplace, while offering an option to employers for some communication, especially for training, in the workplace.

In a Vocational Training Setting, What Role Should Interpreters Play in Preparation for Employment of Students who are Deaf?

Traditionally, interpreters have been precluded from participating in IEP/ITP preparation exercises of any kind due to their strict adherence to the Interpreter's Code of Ethics, which compels them to "Avoid performing dual or conflicting roles in interdisciplinary (e.g. educational or mental health teams) or other settings." (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2011) More recently, however, *educational* interpreters adhere to a re-tooled code of ethics, which allows them some flexibility to be part of the educational team for each individual student. In their divergent Code of Ethics, it is offered that "Interpreters who work in the public schools as a related service provider are members of an educational team. As an adult in a student's educational life, the interpreter *cannot avoid* fostering or hindering development." (Classroom Interpreting, 2011). In this enlightened view of interpreting as it relates to the vocational education of students who are Deaf, it can then be proposed that, being part of the educational team, the interpreter can be a source of input and value regarding strategies for self advocacy in meetings and for measures to be taken when interpreters are not readily available, as is usually the situation in places of employment. In her dissertation study revolving around employment outcomes for people who are Deaf, Hartmann (2010), recognizes one participant who is particularly thankful for his supportive interpreters in the public school setting. "I grew up in a mainstreamed environment that was very supportive of using an approach that included both ASL and English. I grew up with only one other deaf person in my grade, and we both had a

dedicated team of parents, family, and interpreters who were very supportive of us getting the best education possible.”

Assuming the role of student mentor could be a natural progression for interpreters for the Deaf in a vocational training setting. Foster & MacLeod (2004), who undertook a qualitative study of mentorship for the Deaf, discovered that the kind of influence people who are Deaf received from their mentors fell into six categories including emotional support, advising and teaching, role modeling, setting high goals, advocating, and communication. While interpreters are traditionally the *communication* medium for students who are Deaf and technically meet only one criteria for mentorship, they are equipped to provide much more to the development of students who are Deaf, including the additional mentorship roles of advocate, emotional support, advisor, teacher, role model, and goal setter.

In preparation for employment, family involvement is important for the successful transition efforts of students who are Deaf (Garay, 2003). Including families and being aware of their feelings is crucial to identifying transition needs for students who are Deaf. Since most students who are Deaf are born to hearing parents, communication between parents and students who are Deaf may be lacking. An interpreter’s role in training and transitioning students who are Deaf could then include not only interpreting in the school and during meetings, but also bridging the communication and understanding gap between parents and children in an effort to assist in producing the most salient and useful transition effort from school to work that is possible.

In a Work Setting, Does More Interpreter Support Lead to More Successful Employees Who are Deaf?

At the core of this body of research is a basic issue for consideration. Do people who are Deaf actually benefit from interpreter support in their jobs? Is success actually enhanced through interpreter support in the workplace? It is understood that interpreters on the job site are an accommodation mandated by law for people who are Deaf (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990). Interpreter use in the workplace is meant to improve communication in the workplace for people who are Deaf. Employers can benefit monetarily from hiring people who are Deaf through tax credits offered by the United States government through the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (U.S. Department of Department of Labor, 2011). Does this accommodation actually lead to more success in the workplace for people who are Deaf?

Key competencies for success in the workplace in terms of finding and keeping employment for people who are Deaf and use sign language, according to Bowe (2003), are as follows: Having and producing key documents (for hire), completing application forms fully and accurately, setting realistic goals, knowing how to mount a job search, preparing for an interview, following attendance policies including punctuality, maintaining good hygiene, communicating appropriately and courteously with others, knowing how to use appropriate means of transportation, and knowing what job accommodations one needs and recommending these to supervisors. While interpreter use is implied in prepping for an interview and knowing job accommodation needs and relating them to the employer, it is evident here that there is more substance to workplace success than merely the presence or lack of interpreter support. Conversely, employers also note that the provision of interpreters in the workplace helps to attract dependable workers, reduces turnover, increases

productivity, benefits public relations efforts, and can improve safety in the work place (Scherich, 1996).

When honing in on interpreter support as an actual indicator of work success, it appears that even with interpreter support, people in the workplace who are Deaf trail their hearing peers in comprehension of verbal instruction (Marcshark, Sapere, Convertino, & Seewagen, 2005), and that communication is only part of the equation that comprises work success for people who are Deaf. In her dissertation revolving around experiences of employees who are Deaf, Wells (2008) found that Deaf individuals in the workplace need to interact with people who are friendly and accepting of their lack of hearing, that having Deaf peers in the workplace is helpful, and that when working alongside hearing peers, workplace interactions decline appreciably. Also related to communication in the workplace, Young, Ackerman, and Kyle (2000) found that the formal communication interactions in the workplace, while at times problematic between people who are Deaf and hearing people, pales in import when juxtaposed with *informal* interactions in the workplace. These incidental “water cooler” or “coffee pot” interactions are felt to be insulting and or dis-endearing to people who are Deaf and are not able to access them. This leads to isolation because of real or perceived feelings of rejection, oppression, suspicion, and lack of respect from hearing employees.

This study of workplace environments involving 41 individuals who are Deaf or work with people who are Deaf further reported that interpreter use did not necessarily revolve around the issue of communication, but rather the environment that using an interpreter created. In other words, the environment or climate created through the use of interpreters allowed the workers who are Deaf to *be themselves*. Put plainly, the signing environment at work evoked responses that were more emotional and person-centered than that of functional

or linguistic benefits. A workplace was “successful” when hearing people took the time to try and sign, and study participants reported feeling happy, confident, respected, and valued when the workplace encouraged interaction between Deaf and hearing people utilizing American sign language.

Finally, for people who are Deaf to find success in the workplace, they may need to follow a trail blazed by others in their struggle toward this same goal. In a study of fifty students who are Deaf (43) or hard of hearing (7), it was recommended that people who are Deaf and wish to gain a successful work experience should look to national chains who have a reputation for working with people like themselves (Wheeler-Scruggs, 2003). Companies such as Marriott, Hardees, UPS, and Federal Express all have excellent track records of hiring people with disabilities. The Lenscrafter Company is another company that has discovered the value of hiring people who are Deaf. In her dissertation, Wells (2008) highlighted this company who, after the initial communication barriers were overcome, realized the value of employees who are Deaf, and hired six more. Ironically, at the time of this work, they reported that they had fewer hearing employees (4) than Deaf employees.

Trudy Suggs, owner of T. S. Writing in Faribault, MN, is Deaf and was born of Deaf parents. She recommends forming a clearinghouse of Deaf-friendly company information through a medium such as Angie’s List, the internet word-of-mouth reviewing site for service-related companies (i711 Home Page, 2011). In this way, companies could be showcased as supporting workers who are Deaf, and not only in the traditional sense of interpreter use. For Suggs, interpreter use is but one small way to denote a company’s persona of being “Deaf friendly.” Issues of acceptance and consumer relationships could also encompass the “Deaf

Friendly” moniker, and could lead to the promotion and success of companies that embrace people who are Deaf on these levels.

While the research reveals that there are many components to successful employment for people who are Deaf, it appears that the comfort level in the work place for people who are Deaf, at least on a communicative level, can be helped through interpreter use. For true comfort, success, and integration, however, it appears that language and social issues need to be addressed beyond the level of interpreter intervention. Effective communication is key, but comfort and acceptance are paramount tools to produce in successful work experiences for people who are Deaf. In a study of 145 Deaf and hard of hearing people participating in 21 workshops where the presenters were experienced teachers of the Deaf or Deaf themselves, (Long & Beil, 2005) all of the 145 participants used a Likert scale to reveal that they “agree” or “strongly agree” with the instructor’s having excellent teaching and communication skills. The most telling comment from one participant explains the success of the workshops in this way. “I didn’t have to strain to watch an interpreter or whatever. It was our natural language happening in its natural pace and with all of it cultural comfort, and I think it was really good to be able to socialize with people at the same time.”

Research has also led to a revealing discovery regarding the issue of workplace success, namely that people who are deaf and have marginal acculturation to the Deaf world collectively have less self esteem and less self-worth than people who are Deaf who have more acculturation (Hintermair, 2008). When applied to the workplace, this finding may supplant the need for more interpreter support, in as much as a person with greater measures of self esteem and worth may be more able and willing to find strength in workplace success in spite of communication struggles as opposed to being mired in the obstacles that the lack of communication presents.

Further, and perhaps conversely, this study of 629 people who are Deaf (497) or hard of hearing (132) also suggests that people with hearing losses who can effectively switch from Deaf acculturation to hearing acculturation are more likely to experience self esteem and worth in their lives. Perhaps this information broadens the scope of life and work success beyond that of interpreter use, as this work exposes us to the notion that successful adjustment at work may be a compilation of factors that include healthy adjustments in personal, social, family venues as well as interpreter use.

If Interpreters are not Available in the Workplace, What Natural Supports Would Help to Ensure Success at Work for People Who are Deaf?

Hiring sign language interpreters can be a costly, recurring accommodation for people who are Deaf. Employees are struggling to balance the principles of fairness/equality with their own economic realities (Tucker, 1997). Unfortunately, it really only makes economic sense to provide interpreter support for employees who are Deaf who are very highly paid (Geyer & Schroedel, 1999). Further, in a nationwide study of disability policy, it was found that complying with ADA makes hiring people who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing less attractive, especially for those workers without postsecondary education (Houston, Lammers & Svorny, 2010).

Physical accommodations aside from interpreter use can be helpful in the workplace, but they can be costly as well. Employers can take solace in the fact that the following accommodations are usually one-time expenses that cultivate successful experiences for workers who are Deaf. Accommodations such as TDDs (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf), amplified telephones, assistive listening devices, and real time captioning can ease communication in the workplace, but some are only helpful for people who are hard of hearing (Tucker, 1997). While

these accommodations show an employer-driven effort toward acceptance and accommodation, people who are Deaf may not benefit from all of the aforementioned accommodations.

Natural supports in the workplace may be a reasonable and effective option for employers who wish to promote successful employment for people who are Deaf. One such natural support might be the elimination of “drive-by” conversations in the workplace (Nation’s Restaurant News, 2009, Young, Ackerman & Kyle, 2000). Especially in a fast paced work environment such as a restaurant or hotel, this may require some practice to achieve, but the importance of eye contact and articulation may help. Nancy Watson, who is deaf, has eliminated the “drive-by” conversations at her restaurant in Illinois. Also, she wears a pager which can be set to “vibrate.” In the Kona Grill, which she manages, employees press a doorbell-like button on the host stand that can summon her immediately. While these natural support accommodations can be useful for people who are Deaf, it should be noted that face to face conversation and articulation may only be valuable for someone who is Deaf and possesses skills in lip-reading.

More seemingly minor natural supports that can be utilized to ensure success for people who are Deaf in the workplace include not raising your voice when speaking to a person who is Deaf, and speaking to people who are Deaf in the first-person (Anixter Center, 2006). Hearing people at work should not endeavor to approach a conversation with a Deaf worker with the introduction (in the third person), “Tell them that I want them to know about...” Also, since people who are Deaf may not be able to perform all of the functions of their job, such as answering phones and customer contact, it may be helpful for employers to help their hearing employees to understand that, even though they are working with someone who is Deaf, that person who is Deaf can perform the *essential* functions of the job. This information may assist

in workers feeling less resentment or discomfort toward their Deaf peers, and will enable them to understand that all employees have value and can be respected, as such.

Interaction strategies can be a supplement to communication when interpreters are not available in the workplace. These strategies need to be pushed during the educational years, and this thrust through exposure and motivation to sign can result in small class networks where hearing people can become fluent signers (Anita, Stinson & Gaustad, 2002, Luckner, 1999).

While many people who are Deaf experience difficulty in initiating communication, they need to be aware of their own visual and communicative styles and be able to make these needs known to others in their particular and specific environments. Anita, Stinson, and Gaustad go on to assert that initiative is the key, and that success in communication needs to come from people who are Deaf, therefore working toward increased communication when no interpreters are present.

Natural supports in the workplace can be created as well as cultivated. Conceivably, this could be an option that can bolster success for employment-aged people who are *Deaf*. Instead of waiting for successful employment opportunities to present themselves, opportunities are *fabricated*. One such instance is Keepsake Theme Quilts, a company founded by Meredith Crane and her husband in an effort to ensure a successful and supportive workplace environment for their two sons who are Deaf. This company employs a handful of young people who are Deaf, and has made over 300 quilts for sale ranging from \$200.00 to \$350.00. This company is a place in which to build confidence and “strengthen career potentials” for people who are Deaf (McCullough, 2001). Building career potential, for this non-profit company, includes buttressing such job readiness skills as arriving to work on time, staying independently on task, following directions and maintaining work areas as important for maintaining future employment. While

starting a company seems like a heroic measure to take on the behalf of a handful of people who are employed by this business, it perhaps represents the ultimate in natural support – family involvement for the cause of people who are Deaf. As this company has developed over the years, they have helped over 125 people who are Deaf and their families in career endeavors.

When continuing the search through the literature, it appears that there is much overlapping of information regarding successful employment and natural support for people who are Deaf. In a survey of seventy-six working adults who are Deaf and seventy-six of their hearing co-workers, Lussier, Say, & Corman (1999) found that the most common support suggested by both groups, outside of interpreter use, which is an accommodation as opposed to a natural support, was the introduction of sign language classes for the hearing workers. It was reported that this support in the workplace would be the most effective tool in improving their work situation. Other supports from this study that have also garnered mention in other portions of the guiding questions are: developing positive attitudes, becoming familiar with each other, and providing diversity training. It should be pointed out here that, inherent in many sign language classes are the topics of diversity and cultural identity/familiarity.

In a study of fifteen workers who are Deaf from Pennsylvania and New Jersey, participants were interviewed in a semi-structured format regarding vocational experiences, friendship experiences at work, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs regarding transition, perceptions of loneliness, family supports, and experiences with accommodation (Steinberg, Sullivan & Montoya, 1999). Two key strategies for natural support surfaced via this study. For interaction at work without interpreter support, some participants made use of their sense of humor in the context of work relationships. The second method was for people who are Deaf to develop a “hearing informant,” or someone to whom they can go to at work for information, answers to

questions, and to explain social expectations and dynamics of other employees. Having an informant was reported to give workers who are Deaf a sense of social integration and success in the workplace.

Juxtaposed with the notion of “hearing informants” in the workplace may be the natural support of mentorship. The influence and support that can be received from mentor relationships can include emotional support, advising and teaching, role modeling, setting high goals, advocacy, and communication (Foster & MacLeod, 2004). Mentoring fosters a relationship at the workplace that can ease feelings of isolation and frustration, and can make the workplace more meaningful for people who are Deaf. Foster and MacLeod go on to say that, even when communication is difficult between a mentor and an employee who is Deaf, it is the *effort* made toward the relationship and attempted communication that is remembered and valued by the mentee who is Deaf. One caveat to this support may be the turnover that many companies encounter, and mentors may not be long time fixtures in a given mentor relationship. For this reason, mentoring, while found to be helpful, may be a limited source of support in the workplace for people who are Deaf. In spite of this reality, one Deaf mentee who “lost” their mentor offered this statement. “...one of the last bits of advice that he gave me before he moved to another company, he said it is very important to get along with other people, to be able to continue with a company for a long time.” (Foster & MacLeod, 2004).

People who are Deaf need more time to respond to hearing people (Garay, 2003). It seems that they need more time to think about what they need to say, as well as coming up with a strategy to communicate what they are going to say to a hearing person. Sensitivity training with employees could include this strategy as a natural support to help people who are Deaf to be successful in the workplace. With the notion of sensitivity training comes the premise of making

efforts toward communication – for hearing people. While this often represents a great struggle for people who are hearing to learn ASL, people who are Deaf feel valued and respected when co-workers make this investment of time and effort (Young, Ackerman & Kyle, 2000), and regardless of how effective the communication becomes, it is the toil on their behalf that fosters a successful workplace experience for people who are Deaf.

Ostensibly, working with hearing people who are fluent in sign language may be an ideal natural support for people who are Deaf in the workplace. This may occur periodically, randomly, or by design, but accommodation and support in the workplace for people who are Deaf is more realistically found to be an ongoing process and combination of overcoming fears of asking, educating self and employer, and the personal characteristics of assertiveness, persistence, self-advocacy, and working together to find solutions (Jans, Jones & Kaye, 2010). Additionally, according to the National Technical Institute on Deafness (2011), many strategies for success in the workplace mirror those employed by hearing people. The NTID relays that some of these strategies include: Dressing appropriately for the job, explaining best communication methods, showing enthusiasm and respect for the employer's ways, asking what is expected on the job, taking notes, arriving on time (early), being friendly and positive, fitting in with workplace culture and rules, understanding your role in the team, follow deadlines, take workshops and classes offered by the employer, ask for performance reviews. Ironically, the NTID, in their formula for workplace success, places the onus for success on the *employee* who is Deaf, not the employer. They remind that with employees who are Deaf almost always being the minority in any workplace, the key to success may very well lay within the individual who is in fact in the minority.

Summary

The review of literature reveals that the ramifications of Deafness are widely misunderstood and underestimated. Deafness affects communication access and segregates Deaf employees from their hearing colleagues. In turn, this curtails their participation in the learning, networking, and camaraderie that naturally occur among those who can hear. These interactions are critical foundations to being a well-adjusted, motivated, and productive employee. With stilted and limited interactions at best, employees who are Deaf are commonly exposed to more misunderstandings than necessary, more underemployment than should be tolerated, and fewer opportunities for advancement than their hearing peers. They often miss communications entirely. This limited communication also prevents hearing colleagues from recognizing the abilities of Deaf employees; instead it places the focus on what they perceive to be *disabilities* and reinforces any unfounded stereotypes they hold about people who are Deaf. Isolation and lack of communication access significantly harm deaf employees personally, emotionally, and professionally. (Rochester Institute of Technology, 2011).

With upwards of 31.5 million people in this country with hearing losses, and 300,000 to 500,000 people who are Deaf and communicate in sign language, and an unemployment rate of 25 to 49% for a population that sees only a 29.5% high school diploma rate, it seems a moral imperative to address the topic of successful S-T-W transition for students who are Deaf, vis-à-vis interpreter use. On the surface, interpreter use seems to be the logical place to begin or to build upon for successful employment outcomes for students who are Deaf. From the literature, however, it seems that many ancillary factors are sandwiched between interpreter use and successful workplace outcomes. With this in mind, this study endeavors to not only uncover the issue of interpreter use and how it related to successful employment outcomes for students who

are Deaf, but also to provide substantive and tangible resources and strategies to foster success in the workplace for transitioning students who are Deaf.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH PROCESS / METHODOLOGY

Relationship to Research Genre

This qualitative multiple case study research work is undertaken in a concerted effort to gain insight into the issues faced by people who are Deaf in the workplace. The data collected is in the form of authentic interviews, conversations, and observations of people who are Deaf and professionals who work with people who are Deaf, as [laboratory] communication assessments between hearing and Deaf people “fall short in assessing real-life conditions, because they cannot anticipate or account for the many contextual permutations within which the targeted behavior or event is to be evaluated.” (Foster & MacLeod, 2003, p. 128).

Specifically, this research is in the form of a case study of five people who are Deaf. Two are students who are Deaf in a public school vocational training program. A third school-aged participant had agreed to be in the study, but was expelled from school shortly after signing his consent form. Additionally, three people who are Deaf and employed and are recent transitioners from public schools were included in this study. These subjects are part of a purposive sampling. The selection criterion for this study sample is fourfold. First, the participants must be Deaf. In this case, these students and employees must have profound sensori-neural hearing losses that occurred before birth or from a pre-lingual time in their lives. Second, these participants must all communicate by way of American Sign Language (ASL). ASL should be their first and primary language. Third, these subjects should have no intelligible speech skills and not be versed in speech-reading. Fourth, the participants in this study are part of the Deaf culture, which is not usually available to them in the work place. Incidentally, the students in this study are between 19 and 21 years of age, which represents an older variety of students than that of the typical high school graduate of 18 years of age. This is so because

students who are in special education programs with Individualized Education Plans (IEP's), are afforded several extra years of free and appropriate education (FAPE), as they may need extra time to grow, mature, and achieve what regular education peers achieve (Fairfax County Public Schools, Special Education Handbook, 2007). The three recent transitioners were similar in age, ranging from 26 – 30 years of age. These people met all of the criterion for inclusion in this study, and two of the three were graduates of the Fairfax County Public School system. The third participant grew up in a Maryland suburb of Washington, DC and was a graduate of a school for the Deaf in Washington, DC. This study involved the extensive use of *snowball sampling*, as the effects of the use of interpreting for students and employees included periphery participants such as employers, co-workers, interpreters, teachers, and placement coordinators. The guiding questions were addressed through a meld of data gained from not only the students, but from the periphery participants used in the snowball sampling. The dominant strategy for data collection was observation. Specifically, the *observer as participant* stance was taken. Also considered for this study was the participant as observer stance, as the people being observed are part of a culture (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Soresen, 2006, p. 475). A brief self-deliberation resulted in the former technique of observer as participant being employed, as individuals being observed were not in their cultural settings during observation times. (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 30, 93).

While observations comprise the bulk of this case study, semi-structured interviews were conducted and were vital in the completion of this study. In an effort to discover “rich” material from which to gain insight and promise, a blend of observation, field notes, and interview transcripts proved to reveal discoveries for improvement in the field of transition from school to work for people who are Deaf.

Observations and semi-structured interviews with students took place during structured hours of the school day. The interviews occurred in natural settings in the school and at vocational off-sites that serve these students who are Deaf. Observations and semi-structured interviews for post-transition employees involved in this study occurred during work hours and break times with the permission of work site supervisors. Releases were obtained from the students, teachers, employers, and other professionals who were involved in the study and assurances of confidentiality were given. To this end, permission for this research was also procured from a principal and from the supervisors who work with the participants in this study.

Selection of Site / Case / Subjects / Participants

The primary sites for this study were to be two major vocational training centers in a Northern Virginia public school system. Each site serves over 100 students with disabilities from ages sixteen to twenty-two who are preparing to enter various levels of employment upon transition. These sites are “sister schools” with the same purpose, serving students with disabilities in two geographical areas within Northern Virginia. These training centers utilize a model of learning that includes extensive student training time at community work sites. It is at these community work sites that much of the observation took place. Further, these sites were within ten miles of each other, and represent a trove of observation opportunities that were not too cumbersome to access.

While the primary sites for this study were to be *two* major vocational training centers in a Northern Virginia system, only one of the training centers was found to contain subjects who matched the four criteria for inclusion. This training center had two students who were profoundly and pre-lingually deaf, used ASL, had no intelligible speech or speech-reading skills, and were part of the Deaf culture. They were a primary focus of this study. The employees who

are Deaf that were included in this study were equally important to this study, as they represented students who have transitioned from school to work, and can relate perspectives on transitioning for the Deaf that are empirical in nature.

Description of Settings

The participants observed and interviewed in this study participated from their school and work sites. For the students participating in this study, observations occurred at their work sites, while interviews occurred at their school base locations. Work sites are part of the service sector in Fairfax County, and include a retirement facility, a restaurant, and a retail store. The observational settings were in the form of vocational training locations and work settings in the community. All of these settings were very public – they are service-oriented places of work training, and require some worker communication for instructions from supervisors, interaction with co-workers, and at times, interaction with the general public. It is in these settings that observations took place, and each participant who is Deaf was observed three times, with the observations lasting about one-half hour in length.

The participants who are Deaf and have transitioned from school to work were observed and interviewed at their work sites. Interestingly, the three participants who were post-transitioners from vocational training programs all worked at the same retail location, although they worked in different departments. These three participants illustrate the potential and value of snowball sampling, and were discovered through knowledge of one of the participants, a deafness professional, in the study who was interviewed early in the study's data collection period.

Overview of Deaf Participants

This study seeks to address school-to-work transition through the lens of interpreter use. Also sought through this work is the possibility of smoothing transition and work experiences for people who are Deaf through discovering strategies and characteristics that will improve employment outcomes. To this end, there were a total of twenty-one participants in this study, with the primary focus being on the five participants who are Deaf and in pre or post-transition status. Two of the Deaf participants were female; three were male. Two worked in Restaurant settings while the remaining three worked in retail. The remaining sixteen participants in this study were deafness professionals and supervisors of employees who are Deaf. Briefly, there were four interpreters for the Deaf, five work supervisors, three teachers who work with Deaf students, two Employment and Transition Representatives, and two additional public school interpreters for the triangulation of videotapes. Most of these professionals became involved in this study through snowball sampling, which has been pervasive in this study and beneficial for fulfilling the mandate for participant numbers. All of the people who were Deaf and met this study's inclusion criterion are described in Figure 1.

Natasha

Natasha is an employee at a major retail store in Northern Virginia. She is profoundly and pre-lingually Deaf and uses American Sign Language to communicate. She has no intelligible speech skills and does not verbalize while communicating. She is part of the Deaf culture. She completed an internship at a sister store in Maryland and then transferred to her current location. She transitioned from school in 2005 and has worked at this store since that time. She was originally hired to work during the day shift, but transferred to nights about two years after her start date. She works on the floor of the store, unpacking clothing and general

goods in the Baby and Women’s and Girl’s Apparel section of the store. She works full time and has a lunch break and two other fifteen minute breaks during her eight-hour shift at work. She rarely initiates communication with co-workers at work and prefers to work alone.

Figure 1: Study Participants

Name	Work position	Employee or Student
Natasha	Retail: Major Retail Chain Store. Store Replenishment/Stocking.	Employee
Ivan	Food Service: Retirement Home. Food Preparation Worker.	Student
Josey	Retail: Major Retail Chain Store. Flow Team Member/Logistics.	Employee
Albert	Food Service: School Café. Food Preparation.	Student
Laurel	Food Service: Restaurant. Food Preparation and Dishwashing.	Student
Harry	Retail: Major Retail Chain Store. Inventory Clerk.	Employee

Ivan

Ivan is a student at a vocational training center in Northern Virginia. He will transition from school in 2013. He is profoundly and pre-lingually Deaf and uses American Sign Language to communicate. He has no intelligible speech skills. He is part of the Deaf culture. Ivan has worked at a Retirement Home in the kitchen as a food prep worker for nine months. His responsibilities include preparing “to go” lunches and salads for individual residents and a local convenience store within the retirement community, and setting up a salad bar for residents who eat in the main cafeteria at dinner time. He works Tuesday through Friday for about four hours each day. He is of Middle-Eastern background. He is the only person in his family who is Deaf. He has limited communication with the people he works with, but relies on facial expressions extensively to increase his interaction at work.

Josey

Josey transitioned from a vocational training center in Northern Virginia in 2006. Shortly after graduation, he started working at a major retail store in Northern Virginia. He is profoundly and prelingually Deaf and uses American Sign Language to communicate. He has no intelligible speech skills. He is part of the Deaf culture, but is very willing to try and communicate with co-workers. His primary responsibilities include unloading semi trucks that arrive at the store nightly and moving pallets of goods via “pallet jack” to various parts of the store. His supervisor intimated that Josey would be a good candidate for advancement in their store. Josey’s background is Hispanic, and he is the only person in his family who is Deaf.

Albert

Albert is a student at a vocational training center in Northern Virginia. He consented to be in this study, and then was expelled a week later for nefarious conduct outside of school hours. Albert is not included in the research of this work.

Laurel

Laurel is a student in a Work Adjustment Program through her public high school in Fairfax County, Virginia. She is profoundly and prelingually Deaf and uses American Sign Language to communicate. She has no intelligible speech skills. She occasionally voices some utterances to support her signing, but these utterances are largely mono-syllabic and probably would not be understood by someone unfamiliar to the field of deafness. She is part of the Deaf culture. She has trained at a trendy restaurant two or three days per week for the duration of the 2009-2010 school year. This work experience was set up by her teachers at school, and is a non-paid position. Laurel trains at this restaurant during school hours. Laurel is positioned to

transition in the spring of 2011 at the age of twenty-two. She is the only person in her family who is Deaf, and she is of Hispanic background. She has limited interaction with her co-workers.

Harry

Harry is a graduate of a vocational training program in Northern Virginia. He is profoundly and prelingually Deaf and uses American Sign Language to communicate. He has no intelligible speech skills. He does not use his voice, not even to supplement his signs. He is part of the Deaf culture. He has a Middle-Eastern background. Harry has been working at a major retail chain store for four and-a-half years. He keeps to himself during work hours and tends to be mistrusting of his hearing counterparts. Harry's primary responsibilities are pulling "backstock" items from the second floor of the store for disbursement on the first or "main" floor of the store and taking inventory using an electronic "gun." Harry consented to being observed in his work setting, but declined to be interviewed for this study.

Overview of Deafness Support People

The professionals in this study from the Fairfax County School System and in the community represent an array of positions as well as varied experience levels in working with people who are Deaf. For several of these participants, especially from community businesses, this is the first time that they have worked with people who are Deaf. Teaching professionals in this study have a range of two to thirty years experience in working with people who are Deaf. Finally, the interpreters involved in this study have an experience range of one to fifteen years in working with students who are Deaf. Brief profiles of the participants in this study who serve or work with people who are Deaf are outlined in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Deafness Professional Participants

Name	Work Position	Years of Service - Deaf
Debney	Vocational Training Center. Interpreter for the Deaf.	8
Chef	Vocational Training Center. Special Education Teacher.	1
Juliette	Vocational Training Center. Special Education Teacher.	2
Kristle	Vocational Training Center. Interpreter for the Deaf.	1
Karol	Fairfax County Public Schools. Lead Interpreter for the Deaf.	15
Melinda	Public High School. Interpreter for the Deaf.	8
Marvin	Vocational Training Center. Special Education Teacher.	6
Clerc	Vocational Training Center. Employment & Transition Rep.	9
Timson	Food Service: Restaurant. General Manager.	2
Leila	Vocational Training Center. Employment & Transition Rep.	30
Glolinda	Food Service: Retirement Home. Supervisor.	1
Edwin	Retail: Major Chain Store. Flow Team Supervisor.	5
Stephan	Retail: Major Chain Store. Shift Leader.	1
Wally	Retail: Major Chain Store. Head of Logistics.	3
Julia	Educational Interpreter. Triangulation of Data.	9
Quade	Educational Interpreter. Triangulation of Data.	7

Participant Descriptions

Debney

Debney is an employee in a Northern Virginia school system in her final year of service before retirement. She has served as an interpreter in a Special Education Vocational Training Center for six years, and has also been a Public Health Training Assistant (Assistant Teacher) in the same public school setting for the past two years. In her positions, she has served approximately nine students who are Deaf in vocational settings such as hotels, kitchens,

retirement facilities, and classrooms. Debney has a grown son who is Deaf and is a graduate of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, New York. During her interview, she related some frustrations about her son finding and maintaining work, as well as hiring interpreters in the work place, but approached this subject with levity and candor.

Chef

Chef is a Special Education Career Skills Teacher in a Vocational Training Center in the public school system. He has worked in this position for seven years, and this is the first year he has worked with a student who was Deaf. He trains student in a culinary arts setting, teaching them basic food preparation and kitchen work skills. He feels that clustering people who are Deaf together in a work place would be a good way to augment work adjustment, and also stated that people who are Deaf should “get along together.”

Juliette

Juliette is an Independent Living Skills Teacher (Special Education) in a Vocational Training Center in the public school system. She has been teaching for four years and has served students who are Deaf for two years in this setting. Her job duties include teaching such skills as banking, using the public transit system, budgeting, money handling, functional reading, and community integration. She team teaches with a Career Skills Teacher on a daily basis, and part of her work is to support vocational work skills training and efforts toward transition. She offers hope for people who are Deaf through a “tools in the box” approach including amplification, speech-reading, hands-on training, and body language.

Kristle

Kristle is an Educational Interpreter working in a Vocational Training Center in the public school system. This is her first year serving a student who is Deaf. Her duties include interpreting in American Sign Language (ASL) for students who are Deaf, and working with teachers and supervisors at work sites to facilitate communication and to acclimate them to work settings and to train them in skills and behaviors required for successful work experiences upon transitioning from public school. Although she is new to the vocational interpreting realm, she feels that she can offer a “fresh perspective” to the realm of interpreter use and transition for students who are Deaf.

Karol

Karol is a Lead Educational Interpreter a Northern Virginia public school system. She has 15 years of experience split between interpreting in a classroom setting and interpreting in vocational training settings in the community. She now spends most of her time coordinating the ASL interpreters for her entire school system. Occasionally, she finds herself filling in for other interpreters when there is a void in class coverage or an absence of an interpreter for the day. She is passionate about her work and has strong opinions about interpreting and transition which will be covered in the “FINDINGS” section of this work.

Melinda

Melinda is an Educational Interpreter for the public schools who serves students who are Deaf in both classroom and vocational training settings. She has about eight years of experience in this role. She tendered a suggestion that, to help people who are Deaf become more successful at work, they should be taught more about how to communicate with hearing people.

Marvin

Marvin is a veteran Special Education Teacher of six years in public schools, and has spent those years as a Career Skills Teacher for a Special Education Vocational Training Center. Originally teaching “shop,” he now works with a crew of students in retirement home kitchen and dining room. He is responsible for teaching such concepts as work ethic and work behaviors, and also tries to deliver transferrable skills that can help people become successful in any work location. Marvin was not aware of the lack of interpreter support in the community for people who are Deaf, and feels that it is “hit or miss” in terms of the level of support (interpreting and otherwise) that a person who is Deaf may need when working in the community.

Clerc

Clerc is an Employment and Transition Representative in the public school system. He has worked all of his nine years at a Vocational Training Center. He is responsible for placing transitioning students into work settings that require various levels of support, ranging from independent work settings to “sheltered employment” settings, which require intensive support for success. He is quite knowledgeable and militant about Deafness issues, as he has a younger sister who is culturally Deaf. He would like to see interpreters be more free to “step out of their roles” to assist in communication success on the job, both before and after transitioning from public school.

Timson

Timson is a general manager for a trendy restaurant in Fairfax, Virginia. He has two years’ experience in working with people who are Deaf, although he states that his first year was

easier, as the student that worked for him had some speech skills. Timson seemed to be a pleasant man, but his facial expressions were stoic and his voice was monotone. He sees success for workers who are Deaf as a matter of training them and making sure they understand through demonstration back to the trainer. Regarding phone communication, he relies on the school system, saying “they take care of that.” Also, he stated that “I can’t communicate with her (his current trainee who is Deaf), so when the school calls, about anything, then I let them know she needs to get whatever item.”

Leila

Leila is an Employment and Transition Representative (ETR) for a public school system. She has thirty years of education-related experience, most of them in this position. She will be retiring at the end of the 2010-2011 school year. Like Clerc, she is responsible for finding suitable employment for people with disabilities when they transition from school-to-work (STW). She has served approximately ten students who were Deaf in her tenure in as an ETR. Several years ago, she was the first person to alert me to the issue of interpreter use being a problem before and after transition. This came about during a casual conversation at a Vocational Training Center for students with disabilities.

Glolinda

Glolinda is a kitchen supervisor at a large retirement community in Northern Virginia. This is her first time working with someone who is Deaf, and she admitted that she kept forgetting that he was Deaf and was trying to talk to him without support. She feels that he understood her anyway. Glolinda linked job success for people who are Deaf with characteristics such as “attitude, work ethic, and respect.”

Edwin

Edwin is a “Flow Team Supervisor” for a major retail chain store in Northern Virginia. He taught me that “flow” is the term used for getting deliveries placed into the different areas of the store. Edwin has worked with about five people who are Deaf in this work setting. Edwin accommodates his workers who are Deaf by offering hand-written notes from meetings or by using a phone to text information to these workers. He has a good sense of humor, and finds it comical when his “feeble attempts at sign language” get misread. He thinks that his store could “possibly set something up [for interpreting]” like they have for translating English for the Hispanic workers at the store.

Stephan

Stephan is a “Shift Leader” at a major retail store in Northern Virginia. He has been with this store for about a year, and has worked with three people who are Deaf at this store. He has some background in working with children who are Deaf at summer camps, where they utilized interpreter support. Regarding interpreter use on the job, he was aloof in his response.

“Actually, I wasn’t aware of anything of the policy as far as communicating. I didn’t realize that they were allowed to have uh, I...I’m not saying that they weren’t allowed, I just... I’ve never known them to have any interpreter. I wasn’t sure. I didn’t know the policy about it at all, actually.” (Stephan, personal communication, September 16, 2010).

His response claiming ignorance of interpreter practices is a possible clue to the way many people who are Deaf are accommodated or *not* accommodated in the work place.

Wally

Wally is Head of Logistics for a major retail chain store in Northern Virginia. He was my original contact at the store after I received approval for my study from “corporate” in Minnesota. He was very accommodating in finding workers, space for interviews, and giving me free reign of the store for observations. He has had three years’ experience in working with people who are Deaf, all at this store. In that time, he has worked with four people who are Deaf. For communication, he relies on gesturing and texting. He knows that there is a [phone] number he can call to get an interpreter and that there is an existing contract for this service, but he has never used it. He has had one of his employees teach him sign/gestures for a couple of important work concepts, such as “backstock” and “full.” He has good rapport with the workers who are Deaf, especially Josey, and wants to promote him someday, but is wondering how to do this with the communications problems that will be present.

Julia

Julia has been an Educational Interpreter in classroom and vocational training settings for nine years. She is fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) and has worked in such settings as hotels, retirement homes, and grocery stores. She also fills interpreting needs outside of regular school hours, picking up available work as needed for student sporting events and clubs. Julia was not interviewed for the purposes of this study. Instead, she was utilized as a source for triangulating videotaped interviews of study participants. This was an effort to separate interpreter participants who *provide* data from the interpreter participants who parse (triangulate) the data.

Quade

Quade has been interpreting in a public school setting for seven years. He is known to have a particular strength in interpreting ASL, especially when “voicing” the signs of people who are “culturally Deaf.” Like Julia, Quade was utilized to triangulate the interviews of videotaped interviews from study participants who were Deaf, but was not interviewed for the purpose of collecting data for this study.

It is recognized that, because of the researcher’s knowledge of and empathy for the population being studied, observer bias needed to be monitored well. To this end, memoing and journaling were used as tools to release and muse on feelings experienced regarding observations, and may assist in explaining observed phenomena in the context in which it is observed. While memoing and journaling are not part of the formal research design in this project, it is anticipated that this activity may lessen the presence of observer bias and will serve as a pervasive means with which to monitor the presence of bias in this study.

The settings for interviews were varied, and ranged from semi-structured style interviews to casual conversations that occurred from time to time. The interviews with students took place in the Vocational Centers. It is anticipated that rich material may present itself unexpectedly, and that precluding off-hand or casual information from field notes may result in a less than fulfilling product for this study. Observer Comments were added within the transcriptions of the observational notes. Often these Observer Comments were at the beginning and end of the write-ups, and set the stage for the observation and debriefed the observations upon their conclusions.

Data Collection Process

The data collection process involved the audiotaping/videotaping and transcription of interviews and the writing and transcription of observational field notes. Bogdan & Biklen (2007, p. 118, 127) suggest that the writing of field notes should occur on the same day of the observation, and every effort was made to adhere to this edict. Observations represented colorful settings and busy, interactive work areas. In order to encourage healthy habits for immediate transcription, a grid was developed so that the tracking of dates was kept current for observations and the transcription of field notes. Further, this grid was a tangible avenue for charting the course of the entire collection of data. Fields for participant names, consent forms signed, interview and transcription dates, and triangulation of videotapes were also included on this form. While this chart's formal purpose was to serve as an organizational aid, it also served as a personal, concrete reminder of the progress being made toward the complete collection of data.

Transcribed field notes were kept on file in my personal password-protected computer, and were backed up on a 500 gigabyte auxiliary drive. Hard copies of field notes, transcriptions, releases and documents were kept in a loose-leaf notebook, which in turn was kept in either a 4' by 7' locking wall cabinet or a locking two-drawer file cabinet. Video and audio clips for this study were uploaded to the personal password-protected computer as well. Semi-structured interviews, observations and documents of import (form letters, consent forms, etc) were kept in structured electronic folders, which assisted in the effort toward organization and efficiency. Field notes were labeled as such and included a pseudo name of each person observed, observation number, date, and place in the file name. For example, one observation was saved as "HARRY_2_SEPT_15_10_TARGET.doc." Placing the name and observation number first in the file names ensured that the files maintained some semblance of order. Periodically, a review

of files transcribed occurred in an effort to keep up with the organization of the data. Audio and videotapes were saved in the locking cabinet and will be erased after this study is defended.

Data Analysis Procedures

Upon completion of the data collection for this case study, I had intended to take a break for one month as recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p. 172). This study consumed my life for an extended period of time, and it was anticipated that taking care of life apart from this study would enable me to come back to the data refreshed and ready to tackle the analysis. The intention to take time off from this project was not carried out in the interest of expediency in preparing the dissertation manuscript. Bogdan and Biklen's words were therefore considered "optional" for this project.

The initial coding of the data resulted from perusing the transcriptions of observations, observational comments, and interviews in search for patterns, topics, and regularities. In this step, broad words were chosen as catalysts (see Figure 3) for placement in data collection categories based upon the guiding questions of the study.

Figure 3: Initial Codes and Themes

TRUST/MISTRUST TMT	LESS SUPPORT LES	POSITIVE ATTITUD POS	NATURAL SUPPORTS NAT
INTERPRETER ROLE IRO	ETHNICITY ETH	NEGATIVE ATTITUDE NEG	PLAY TO STRENGTHS P2S
RESPONS. 4 INTERP. R4I	EXPECTATIONS EXP	PEN & PAPER P&P	PREP FOR ABYSS PAB
GESTURING GTG	ADVOCATE ADV	HEARING FAMILY HRF	FRIENDS AT WORK F@W
INTERP/TRANSLATE ITR	RED CARPET RDC	DEMONSTRATION DEM	HUMOR ON THE JOB HOJ
LANGUAGE OR DB? LDB	OVER CONFIDENCE OVC	LIP READING LRD	WHERE 2 OR MORE W2M
NO COMMUNICATO NOC	ISOLATION ISO	SENSE OF WORTH SOW	MEETINGS/PHONES MPH
MORE SUPPORT MOR	TEACHING THEM TCH	TEXTING TXT	ENCOUR. ENVIRONS EEN
MISUNDERSTAND MSU	OUTLIERS OUT		

This physical separation of the data enabled the parsing of large amounts of information more readily, although many of these categories contained data that overlapped. To assist in making the coding of data more reliable, the following strategies were employed for regulating data codes. Codes and themes were labeled and charted (see Figure 3), and definitions and characteristics of each code/theme were formulated. (see Figure 4)

Figure 4 Data Code Explanations

<p>TRUST/MISTRUST Basic Deafness rule – there can be a mistrust of hearing people.</p>	<p>LESS SUPPORT Will less interp. support “steel” people (Deaf) for work success?</p>	<p>POS. ATTITUDE Statements or comments re: positive attitude as a predictor of success at work.</p>	<p>NATURAL SUPPORTS People/relationships at work places that demonstrate a welcoming attitude and support.</p>
<p>INTERPRETER/ROLE Data suggesting the expansion/evolution of the traditional interpreter role.</p>	<p>ETHNICITY Data revealing the effects of homogeneous ethnicity on the job.</p>	<p>NEG. ATTITUDE Statements made that may hinder work success.</p>	<p>PLAY 2 STRENGTHS Are there inherent strengths found in Deaf employees that may contribute to success?</p>
<p>RESPONS. 4 INTERP. Data suggesting ambiguity regarding how to access interpreter use.</p>	<p>EXPECTATIONS Are expectations at work for deaf people realistic/on par w/hearing people?</p>	<p>PEN & PAPER Data calling for resorting to written communication on the job.</p>	<p>PREP FOR ABYSS Data calling for additional/ different preparation for work for people who are Deaf.</p>
<p>GESTURING Data suggesting or resorting to gesturing on the job.</p>	<p>ADVOCATE Data suggesting that advocacy increases success on the job.</p>	<p>HEARING FAMILY Data revealing hearing family status and how to communicate with them.</p>	<p>FRIENDS AT WORK Data regarding work friendships – are they real?</p>
<p>INTERP/TRANSLATE Statements offering data regarding interpreter vs. translator confusion.</p>	<p>RED CARPET Physical evidence of a welcoming environment on the job.</p>	<p>DEMONSTRATION Data regarding demonstration as a learning tool on the job.</p>	<p>HUMOR ON THE JOB Signs of humor on the job – is it beneficial?</p>
<p>LANGUAGE OR DB? Is Job accommodation a matter of language or disability?</p>	<p>OVER CONFID. Too much confidence in (literacy) abilities of the Deaf.</p>	<p>LIP READING Reading lips as a tool for increased communication at work.</p>	<p>WHERE 2 OR MORE Data regarding two or more people who are deaf in the same workplace.</p>
<p>NO COMMUNICATION Data regarding the lack of communication at work for people who are Deaf.</p>	<p>ISOLATION Data revealing loneliness/isolation at work for people who are Deaf.</p>	<p>SENSE OF WORTH Data regarding the sense of worth afforded to or felt by people who are Deaf on the job.</p>	<p>MEETINGS/PHONES Data regarding phone or meeting communication needs of people who are Deaf.</p>
<p>MORE SUPPORT Does the particip/subject feel that more interpreter support OTJ would benefit people who are Deaf?</p>	<p>TEACHING THEM Data regarding the teaching of signs or learning sign language.</p>	<p>TEXTING Data regarding texting as a tool for increased communication at work.</p>	<p>ENCOUR. ENVIRONS Is the work environment encouraging to the workers who are deaf?</p>
<p>MISUNDERSTANDING Data regarding the absence or presence of misunderstanding at work.</p>	<p>OUTLIERS Data that is unexpected or infrequent in the research.</p>		

Many of the codes for data revolved around the Guiding Questions of this study, which is fortunate because this study’s observations offered no guarantee of relational interest, and the interviews, while semi-formal, often strayed topically and may or may not have included (or

excluded) some of the questions that were initially anticipated to be asked. While the Guiding Questions offered a tangible display of options with which to sort the data, the codes were not limited to the Guiding Questions, and many evolved from the data itself.

Bogdan & Biklen (2007, p. 185), suggest limiting the number of codes to about thirty to fifty. The data from this study yielded approximately thirty initial coding categories. This number of codes was more than I was expecting, and codes were eventually chunked into eleven smaller groups. (See Figure 5) These groups are clustered in shaded sets.

Figure 5 Codes Grouped for Themes

TRUST/MISTRUST (TMT)	POSITIVE ATTITUDE (POS)	NEG. ATTITUDE (NEG)	HUMOR O/T JOB (HOJ)
HEARING FAMILY (HRF)	NO COMMUNICATO (NOC)	MISUNDERSTAND (MSU)	ISOLATION (ISO)
INTERPRETER ROLE (IRO)	INTERP/TRANSLATE (ITR)	LANGUAGE OR DB? (LDB)	MEETINGS/PHONES (MPH)
MORE SUPPORT (MOR)	LESS SUPPORT (LES)	NAT. SUPPORTS (NAT)	PLAY 2 STRENGTHS (P2S)
ETHNICITY (ETH)	RED CARPET (RDC)	SENSE OF WORTH (SOW)	ENCOUR. ENVIRONS (EEN)
EXPECTATIONS (EXP)	PREP FOR ABYSS (PAB)	ADVOCATE (ADV)	RESP. 4 INTERP. (R4I)
PEN & PAPER (P&P)	OVER CONFIDENCE (OVC)	LIP READING (LRD)	TEXTING (TXT)
OUTLIERS (OUT)	GESTURING (GTG)	DEMONSTRATION (DEM)	TEACHING THEM (TCH)
		FRIENDS AT WORK (F@W)	WHERE 2 OR MORE (W2M)

With this in mind, it should be mentioned here that some of the coding categories contained large amounts of data, while other categories were lean. This contingency led to the

discovery and understanding that all of the coding categories, whether plentiful or lean with data, represented important findings in this study, as seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Codes with Data Represented

(TMT) 23 / 111	(POS) 54 / 111	(NEG) 14 / 111	(HOJ) 20 / 111
(HRF) 5 / 112	(NOC) 23 / 112	(MSU) 24 / 112	(ISO) 60 / 112
(IRO) 48 / 133	(ITR) 21 / 133	(LDB) 41 / 133	(MPH) 23 / 133
(MOR) 14 / 24	(LES) 10 / 24	(NAT) 43 / 161	(P2S) 15 / 161
(ETH) 32 / 161	(RDC) 15 / 161	(SOW) 39 / 161	(EEN) 17 / 161
(EXP) 19 / 73	(PAB) 38 / 73	(ADV) 16 / 73	(R4I) 66
(P&P) 33 / 90	(OVC) 34 / 90	(LRD) 15 / 90	(TXT) 8 / 90
(OUT) 14	(GTG) 74 / 110	(DEM) 22 / 110	(TCH) 14 / 110
		(F@W) 31 / 44	(W2M) 13 / 44

While the above chart illustrates that there were indeed 34 categories for coding in this study, the final coding category, “outliers,” could be considered as fourteen different categories with one response in each category. Simply stated, the initial coding categories could have numbered approximately forty-seven ($34 - 1 + 14$), however, the fourteen pieces of data collected in the “outlier” category, while unrelated to the other thirty-three coding categories, became a category unto themselves because they shared the characteristic of being unique and

exclusive. Being replete with unique and exclusive pieces of data does not make this category any less or more powerful or statistically significant than the other coding categories presented in this study. As was mentioned previously in this work, snowball sampling was used to gain participants in this study, and this avenue offers the researcher “a degree of control rather than being at the mercy of any selection bias inherent in pre-existing groups” (Barbour, 2001, p. 1115). Further, this sampling technique goes out of its way to include the “outliers,” which are commonly discounted in quantitative bodies of research. Buttressing this thought, (Runciman, 2002, Barbour, 2001) it has been suggested that new and innovative information usually lay in the “outliers” of the data, and not necessarily in the larger body of evidence that appears to substantiate a conclusions. Perhaps the previous statement ties in with the import of the “rich” material that was plentifully mentioned in the Methodology of this paper. Consider the viewpoint of Drs. Alison Mathie and Anne Camozzi (International Development Research Centre Home Page, 2010), who expand on the weight and meaning of “Rich” material in (qualitative) research.

“...the qualitative research aims to build an understanding of people's "lived" experience, discovering how people interpret the world around them and how this influences their actions. ...the description should reflect everything that the researcher has observed and heard, whether or not these things seem significant at the time.

Rich or thick description is the basis for qualitative analysis. From the description, it is possible to build analytical explanations about what is going on. The richer, or thicker, it is, the greater the possibility of a thorough analysis.” (International Development Research Centre Home Page, 2010)

Rich material causes the researcher to reach farther for important, novel, and innovative data and therefore ignites the possibility of deeper rigour, or thoroughness, in the data and its interpretation for the results of a study. This is the hope for our study, which not only targets a unique, or purposive sample, (prelingually Deaf, no speech skills, uses ASL for communication, culturally Deaf) but also opens a window toward exclusive and exceptional and distinctive research and data collection through traditional qualitative means.

From these code categories and their consolidation, it became apparent where this qualitative effort was headed. Questions such as whether my data relates to or is different from the research, what implications for practice my data uncovers, and relating stories from my research that captured the insight of the data were important to creating clear and understandable and important work for the field of deafness and transition. While it is too early to make predictions as to the eventual import and reach of this study, aspirations of important breakthroughs for transitioning from school to work for students who are Deaf and even recommendations to assist in the flourishing of employees who are Deaf are not out of the question.

Validity Issues

Accuracy and truthfulness are important to the credibility of this work. Part of maintaining the accuracy of this work was to be cognizant of time – the distance between observations/interviews and writing fieldnotes/transcriptions. Also, endeavoring to accurately describe the human condition hopefully aided in the credibility of this effort. Pitting data from interviews, observations, and conversations against each other to find similarities and differences in their interpretation augment the validity of this study, as well. This structural corroboration is important, especially when data is collected in the language of ASL. ASL is subject to

interpretation, and the use of two or three different people in the interpretation of this language will support the accuracy of the fieldnotes and reports and transcriptions.

In order to minimize bias, an outside source was utilized to review the fieldnotes and data. This “peer debriefer” questioned the data, looked for discrepancies, and checked to see that the data collected pertains to the study. Also, in this particular study, triangulation in the form of utilizing two people [interpreters] to corroborate videotaped interviews was used. Voicing what is signed can be difficult to do, and the diction chosen by different people to “read” what is signed may differ from person to person. For this reason, along with the researcher’s viewing of the videotapes, two educational interpreters viewed the videotapes to assist in obtaining fuller and more accurate transcriptions of the interaction, and thus served to buttress the validity of the reports.

Referential or interpretive evidence of validity occurred, as well. Asking the people observed if the fieldnotes reflect what actually happened in the field assists in validating the data. It is important to make sure that the feelings, viewpoints, thoughts, intentions, and experiences of people observed are accurately recorded (Ary, et al., 2006, p. 506). To this end, occasionally asking for the notes to be read by case study participants was a strategy utilized in this research. A caveat to this strategy is inherent in the level of language proficiency of the people being observed. With an average reading level of fourth grade for high school graduates who are Deaf, it was cumbersome for the students observed to read what has been recorded as data and reflect upon its worth (Smith, 2007).

Finally, because I have an active and passionate interest in this study, any potential personal biases and their effects upon this study needed monitoring. While it was important to be sufficiently interested in the study topic, recognizing my biases and “where I am coming from”

was important to lend ballast to the richness of the material. Keeping a reflective journal and releasing any pertaining thoughts regarding bias in the Observer Comments assisted in keeping my feelings and biases on the conscious level and enabled me to be continually vigilant regarding my biases and how they may have affected the nature of the data and results. Finally, any discrepant or contrary data, what I call “outlier” data was sought out and examined in an effort to rule out alternative explanations and to remain objective and without bias.

Ethical Issues

This qualitative study began with an important statement regarding deafness being an “isolating disability.” This being said, it is important to note how quickly rapport can be developed with people who are Deaf when the researcher can communicate in *their* language. People who are fluent in ASL are not commonly seen in public places, and because I am fluent, or at least *capable* in ASL, it should be noted that ethical issues may have surfaced as I became seen less like a researcher and more like an acquaintance. Hopefully, as is mentioned by Ary (2006), this was not a hindrance, but was a point at which my best data was collected.

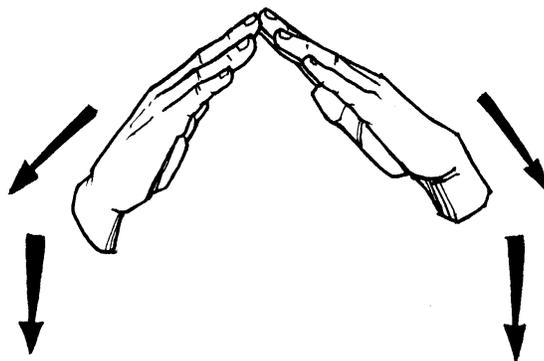
Another ethical issue to be considered is reciprocation, although at this time, I feel it has been a minor issue. Time was afforded to me by my principal to pursue this study, and I required time away from my duties as a teacher and away from my team teacher and support staff. They have not made statements as to my indebtedness, but I do feel indebted to them. This is a personal issue with me, the researcher, and may be assuaged with time and understanding. Handling this issue is not a priority, but any thoughts of reciprocation will be monitored constantly even during the penning of this study with the thought that they may have surfaced, at least subtly, from time to time during the study and research period.

Detailed releases and consent forms were signed for fieldwork and data collection purposes. Two different releases were designed for this case study: one for teachers /faculty/interpreters, and one for students/employees being observed. Informed consent forms were modeled after the suggested design from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board Home Page (2007). Areas covered in these forms were: focus of the study, institution and researcher name, background information, procedures, risks and benefits of being in the study, compensation, confidentiality, voluntary nature of the study, contacts for questions, and statement of consent with spaces for subject and researcher signatures and dates. These forms were utilized for the fieldwork performed prior to penning this work as suggested by Bogdan & Biklen (2007). It is important to note that, for clarity and understanding, the consent form for inclusion of the students/employees who are Deaf was interpreted to the prospective participants for the purposes of clarity and understanding. The interpretation of the forms for the students was performed by educational staff interpreters. The interpretation of the forms for employees in this study was performed by an educational interpreter, as well. The interpretation of these forms is not a reflection of the subjects' intelligence or literacy skills; it was done in deference to fact that American Sign Language is the first and primary language of the students and employees being observed, and that the English language, while being a base for ASL, is not their preferred or primary communication method.

Additionally, interviews from hearing participants were audiotaped in an effort to transcribe verbatim the content of the sessions. It should be noted that, because the students and employees being interviewed for this case study were Deaf, their interviews were videotaped as prescribed in the study consent forms. Transcription of the videotaped interviews involved reverse interpreting or "voicing" what was signed. These videotapes were also used in an effort

to triangulate the content; to verify the facts and to help find a fuller understanding of the phenomena being studied. When working with American Sign Language, if one asks ten different people or interpreters to transcribe the same videotape, there will be ten different versions, all very similar, as a result. This is because interpreters often rely on visual representations of the topic at hand, and one sign can be voiced in many different ways. There are many fewer words in ASL than in the English language, which has more than a quarter of a million words (Oxford Dictionaries, 2011). This is because one sign can have several different meanings. For example, The sign “house” is made by placing the fingertips of both hands together and then separating them by lowering them at an angle (the roof) and then bringing them down straight to form the walls of the house (Lifeprint, 2011). The sign “house” (see Figure 7) can mean several different things in the English language, including house, residence, abode, domicile, quarters, dwelling, not to mention slang terms such as crib, pad and place. One sign can denote any of these terms when being voiced by an interpreter, so direct and concrete translating is often fluid and is determined by the words chosen by the interpreter.

Figure 7 American Sign Language (ASL) sign for “house” (Lifeprint, 2012)



Limitations of the Study

This study frames the work and communication efforts of five individuals who are either in vocational training programs or who have been in the workforce for a number of years. While

the information contained in this body of work has strived for validity, it can, at the same time, be analyzed for its size and scope. Five subjects and their immediate support staff and supervisors, twenty people, all told, have yielded rich and innovative perspectives regarding the transition and daily work struggles and triumphs of people who are Deaf. Generalization of this body of work may occur, however, the number of subjects and participants in this study may be seen as a lens that has a decidedly narrow focus. With this being said, the interpretation of such data may bring forth commonalities that can be identified by and for many others who are Deaf or work with people who are Deaf.

Importance / Significance of the Study

Many students who are Deaf lag behind their peers in reading and writing. A majority of students who are Deaf or hard of hearing graduate high school with no more than a fourth grade reading and writing level (Smith, 2007, p. 519). In agreement, the Gallaudet Research Institute (2009) reports that, according to recent norming samples of the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition, the mean reading levels for 17 and 18 year old students who are deaf and hard of hearing is approximately on a 4.0 grade level. In a candid reference to Deaf culture, New York Times Best-Selling author Edward Dolnick (1993) muses on the reality that three of four students who are Deaf are unable to read a newspaper when they leave school.

As stark as the above statistic may seem, it may be better understood or received by understanding a perspective that reveals that the English language simply feels like a foreign language to many people who are Deaf (Dolnick, 1993). American Sign Language, in other words, has been described by people who are Deaf as “the natural language of the Deaf.” Further, many students who are Deaf fall behind in their classes because, historically, they have been taught with materials way below their conceptual level since they were taught through

English. Many of these students receive special diplomas and are prepped for entering employment (as opposed to college) upon graduation. Only 2 of 100 students who are Deaf, as opposed to 40 of 100 in the general population, go on to college (Dolnick, 1993). They are served in vocational training programs in the public school setting. Upon graduation, students who were being served with full time interpreters in their elementary, middle, and high school years must then adjust rather abruptly to the conspicuous absence of interpreters in the daily world of work. This adjustment is compounded by the aforementioned limitations in their literacy skills.

It is documented in this study that students who are Deaf are afforded interpreters to facilitate communication during their years in public education. It is also well known that supplying people who are Deaf with *full time* interpreters in the workplace would represent an undue hardship to many employers. Most interpreters are contracted by the hour, and may cost \$120.00 for the initial two hours, with a cost of \$50.00 per hour for each additional hour contracted (Anne Leahy, 2007). For an eight-hour day, interpreting services could cost approximately \$420.00. It is clear to see that paying for the use of a full time interpreter for an employee who is Deaf may not be cost-effective for the employer.

What is being explored in this case study is the phenomenon of disparity between the plentiful and *free* use of interpreters in the school setting and the relative inaccessibility and expense of interpreter use in the workplace. This is a phenomenon that has been seen separately in the settings of school and work, but has not yet been recognized as a linked and systemic disparity. The disconnect of interpreter use during and after the S-T-W transition has not yet surfaced, at least systemically, as an issue for people who are Deaf and transitioning to work. It is anticipated that any rich data yielded might lead to effective and affordable accommodations,

procedures, techniques, and communication guidelines that might augment the success of people who are Deaf in the workplace. Additionally, information and data garnered from this case study may lead to employers feeling less tentative or wary of hiring people who are Deaf. The key is to smooth the transition from school to work (S-T-W), which may be magnified in complexity for people who are Deaf.

This study will also contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of education in several ways. First, it will address a problem that may be overlooked in vocational training programs across the country that serve students who are Deaf. In providing accommodation for students, a disservice may be occurring in that students are not prepared for the extreme contrast in communication efforts that they will face in the workforce. Additionally, this work may also be a promising resource for employers, who need to understand the factors and backgrounds of the people they hire. Concrete and practical strategies to create successful transition and work experiences for people who are Deaf are a very real goal for this study. Finally, Deafness is a disability that is often misunderstood, misrepresented, and *uncomfortable* to attend to, likely because of communication difficulties and barriers, and the just plain uneasiness that many people feel when they are around people who are Deaf. This study brings this thought to the surface, and may help hearing people to confront their feelings of discomfort because they will recognize that, while these feelings are largely irrational and illogical, they exist, and are common. Perhaps, armed with this reflection, the uneasiness that is felt around people who are Deaf can be more easily attended to and eventually resolved.

Summary

This study, in teasing out the problem of interpreting incongruence between school and work, may lead to the examination of new policy in order to bridge the communication gap that

exists among these realms. One of every sixteen people in this country has a hearing loss that precludes them from hearing speech, and many of these people communicate in ASL (McEntee, 1995). Furthermore, there are approximately two million people in this country who are Deaf. Any work that endeavors to bring more understanding to the populous regarding such a widespread and often mysterious disability may resonate with a message of hope for increased, successful, and fulfilling employment for people who are Deaf.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

This work examined an exclusive population of the working and the *aspiring to work* community. Specifically, this study endeavored to explore the phenomenon of transition from school-to-work for people who are Deaf through focusing on the use of interpreters, which are pervasive and plentiful during public education phases, and scarce or inadequate when people who are Deaf enter the work force.

People who are “capital D” Deaf are part of a culture, which is melded through shared experiences, pre-lingual deafness, and the use of American Sign Language (ASL). While a dichotomy is evident between interpreter use in the public school setting and interpreter use in the work force, this work sought to discover revelations into the issue of school-to-work transition for people who are Deaf, as well as strategies that may help to smooth the transition, enabling more stable and successful outcomes for people who are culturally Deaf. It has been noted that there is an unemployment rate of at least 25% for people who are deaf (Houtenville, 2003). According to Sign Net News (2012), an online news source for the Deaf community, there is an unemployment rate of 60% among the Deaf community. Recent reports indicate that the unemployment rate for the general population is about 8.3% (Bureau of Labor & Statistics, 2012). For people who are Deaf, these can be viewed as alarming figures, as they expose a significant disparity between employment levels for people who are Deaf and people who are hearing.

In order to highlight and learn about the school-to-work transition for people who are Deaf, a case study involving twenty people involved in this field were examined using the tools of interviewing, observation, and case notes, with the focal point being five people who are Deaf who either plan to transition soon or have recently transitioned to the world of work. This study

came to execution through the use of snowball sampling, which enabled the study to grow and blossom as contacts were made through working with the five primary participants who were Deaf.

Guiding Questions

Several guiding questions were inherent in the discourse of this study. Interview questions, observations, and field notes revolved around these questions and issues, although other questions became useful during the semi-structured interviews that took place during the course of this study. The initial guiding questions were as follows:

- How can interpreter use be modified in public school settings in anticipation of the shortfall of interpreter availability in the workplace?
- In a vocational training setting, what role should interpreters play in the preparation for employment of students with Deafness?
- In a work setting, does more interpreter support lead to more successful employees who are Deaf?
- If interpreters are not available in the workplace, what natural supports would help to ensure success at work for people who are Deaf?

Participants

The participants in this study were part of a purposive sampling, and the criterion for inclusion and participation was, to review, Deafness occurring pre-lingually, communication via American Sign Language (ASL), no intelligible speech skills, and participation in the Deaf culture. Through working with these participants, peripheral support people came to the surface as integral members of a snowball sampling, which provided much of the substance for data

utilized in this work. Data gathered for this study largely revolved around the use of semi-structured interviews, observations, and observer comments. Each of the five primary subjects was interviewed one time for fifteen to thirty minutes each, and was observed on three separate occasions for thirty minutes per session. Observations and interviews of the five subjects who are Deaf took place from May 20, 2010 through September 21, 2010.

The other fourteen participants in this study took part in semi-structured interviews only. Each interview was approximately fifteen minutes in length, with the noted exception of one interview, which lasted for more than thirty minutes. These interviews took place from May 20, 2010 to September 27, 2010. Observations were performed in an unobtrusive manner, and interaction with the subjects was kept to a minimum. Every effort was made to observe the participants in their natural work settings, and to this end, little communication was pursued during the collection of field-notes from observations. Also, every effort was made to adhere to the edict that field-notes be transcribed during the same day the observations took place (Bogen & Bicklen, 2007). Largely, this was the case, although it should be mentioned that some of the subjects who were Deaf worked the “night shift,” and observations that took place late in the evening (before midnight) were transcribed, technically, the next calendar day.

Interviews were subject to a paradigm set forth in the consent notices. If the participants were Deaf, the interview was videotaped using a researcher-operated video-camera and tripod. If the participants were hearing, the interviews were audio-taped using a small hand-held Memorex recorder positioned between the researcher and the participant. Every effort was made to transcribe these recordings in an unedited fashion, that is, to report, through transcription, the complete responses given, as well as the emotions (if any) present in the responses. The interviews were semi-structured. With this thought in mind, some of the interview questioning

format was predictable, while some of the questions represented content that was novel and sought to gain additional rich material from the content being discussed. All told, there were eighteen semi-structured interviews (One participant declined to participate in this segment of the study) and fifteen observations totaling some 180 pages of data for consideration in this study.

Participant Characteristics

The participants of this study range from 19 to about 60 years of age. The participant group consisted of two students who are Deaf, three employees who are Deaf, and fourteen professionals who work with these people. Breaking down this “professionals” demographic, there were three teachers, three interpreters, two Employment & Transition Representatives, five work supervisors, and one interpreter/assistant involved in this study. Additionally, there were two educational interpreters utilized in the transcription of videotaped interviews of participants. These two people were instrumental in the triangulation of interviews, with the anticipated result of increased validity in the interpretation of American Sign Language. All of the Deaf subjects in this study are part of the Deaf community. Of the remaining participants, six are familiar with or somewhat knowledgeable of the Deaf community to varying degrees. None of the participants were compensated for their work or involvement in this study.

Individual Participant Characteristics

It is essential to note here that this study is a qualitative effort. In this vein, it is important to understand that the researcher has “situated the self” for the purposes of transparency in researching and reporting, and to lend perspective to the thought that the researcher has more than a passing interest in the topics of Transition as it relates to Deafness. Also, situating the self permits the reader to grasp that there is a sustainable interest by the researcher in the topic of this

study. It is this sustained interest that drives the completion of this effort. With the self being situated, it is also vital that each participant should be “situated” in their own right. The coding and analysis of responses and observations directs the product of this study, and the interpretation of some individual responses, along with coding and analysis, may provide a foundation upon which to view the findings of this study. Specific individual analysis may include such variables as character, age, experience, attitude, strengths, weaknesses, researcher observations, quotes, interaction, and personal background. These individual analyses, for the sake of commitment to fairness and objectivity, are presented in reverse alphabetical order of pseudo names.

Wally

Wally is the lead supervisor for a major retail chain store in Falls Church, Virginia. His official title is “Head of Logistics.” He has been working in this field at this store for four years. He has worked with “five or six” people who are Deaf during his four years at his current position. He is the overseer of several supervisors who work a night shift. During this night shift, most of the supervised work revolves around receiving products, sorting, unpacking, storing, shelving, and retrieval of warehoused items.

Wally is thirty-five years of age, and as observed when working with employees and especially with Josey, an employee who is Deaf, seems to build rapport with his workers and is not afraid of communicating with his employees who are deaf. He has been seen gesturing and pantomiming communication using rudimentary movements to get his point across.

Wally is fond of Josey, or at least fond of his commitment and work ethic. He is envisioning some kind of promotion for Josey at some point in time. When not pantomiming, Wally likes to text for communication with his Deaf employees. He also has note-takers write

down information during meetings for dissemination to his employees who are Deaf. Team meetings are called “huddles,” and occur several times per week. His communication technique for these meetings is illustrated here.

Um, when we have “huddles,” when we have team huddles with everybody, um, it’ll be...I’ll be leading the huddle because I’m usually the one that’ll be talking and giving out information. Um, one of my team members will be behind me, just constantly writing everything I’m saying. Then we’ll either type it up or transport it upstairs and copy it or Josey will give us his phone so he can just read it or just one of them there, they’ll just read the notes.” Wally (personal communication, September 27, 2010).

Wally appears to have a positive attitude toward working with people who are Deaf. His pantomimes reveal good-natured interaction and a sense of humor, as illustrated in the following interaction with Josey.

Josey moves the pallet into the public part of the store and resumes his role in the truck. Wally, his boss, signs to Josey “okay?” Josey gives a “thumbs up” and lifts up his South Pole shirt, revealing a lifting strap that is firmly around his waist and has shoulder straps. Wally starts to pantomime a boxing routine, first covering up and then delivering several uppercuts, as if to say that Josey resembles a boxer in training, or that the unloading of the truck will be a “fight.” They both send a “thumbs up” to each other after this pantomime. Josey (personal observation September 21, 2010).

Wally was not aware that interpreters are utilized in the school systems during the entire school day. To this end, Wally is aware of a couple of employees who are Deaf that have utilized interpreters for their interviews, but has indistinct recollections on how to procure interpreters for

use in his store. Most accommodations for his employees who are Deaf involve writing or texting.

Timson

Timson is a general manager for a trendy restaurant in Fairfax, Virginia that specializes in healthy, albeit pricey, breakfasts and lunches. He is the direct supervisor of “Laurel” a Deaf participant in this study. His restaurant hosts Laurel two to three days per week, depending on her school schedule. Timson has worked with two people who are Deaf, although the person he worked with before Laurel had passable speech and speech-reading skills.

Timson is aware of the limited interpreter support that is generally found for people who are Deaf in the workplace. During observations with Laurel when Timson was present, he was not observed communicating with her. Timson is soft-spoken, and his face does not carry much expression. He is not very animated when he speaks. Timson’s preferred mode of communication for Laurel seems to be to call the school and have them speak with her or to “relay a message,” as is attested by the following passage regarding dress code policy from his personal semi-structured interview.

“So, obviously we can’t interpret that, but she, she, she knows what she did. I would point to her head, and she knows she doesn’t have her hat or her shoes or her shirt, like and all that so the items, you know, I can’t communicate to her, um, uh, but then when the school calls about anything, then I let them know she needs to get whatever item. Timson (personal communication, May 27, 2010).

Timson has a “quality control” method to make sure learning has occurred for his Deaf employees. He has his workers (who are Deaf) demonstrate back to him that they know how to do the various tasks that are given to them.

Um, last year and this year they both caught on very quickly, and um, and when I would follow up with them after the interpreter had left I would see if they remember everything that they were taught. And they have to show me, either writing it down or show me how they are supposed to do the job. That way I know that they did pay attention and they were listening to the interpreter. Timson (personal communication, May 27, 2010).

Timson has an interesting attitude toward the responsibility of who calls in when sick at his restaurant. He stated, “Um, no, the school takes care of that.” He happily works with the school for communication and for utilizing students in work-training situations, but in his day-to-day dealings with his workers who are Deaf, there is scant evidence of true integration into the workplace.

Stephan

Stephan is a Team Leader at a major retail store in Falls Church, Virginia. He works under Wally and above Edwin. He is the only supervisor at this store who holds a college degree. He has been working at this store for almost a year, and during that time he has worked with four people who are Deaf. His connection to the field of deafness is bolstered by his work as a counselor with a camp in Louisiana for children with disabilities. Annually, they devoted a week to children with hearing impairments, visual, and speech impairments. They called it the “Hearing Speech and Visual Camp.” During his years at this appointment, he learned the manual alphabet. He also knows a few signs such as “thank you” and “sorry.” He is a proponent of writing notes for his Deaf employees. His formula for effective communication appears to be “...alphabet, some sign language, and speaking clearly...” He also relies on lip-reading and text messaging.

Stephen was not aware that students who are Deaf are afforded sign language interpreters at all times when in school. He also was not aware of the need for interpreters in the work setting. When asked about people who are Deaf being entitled to interpreters for certain occasions at the workplace including meetings, interviews, and group functions, he appeared to be shaken and taken aback. His response is revealing:

Actually, I wasn't even aware about anything of the policy as far as communicating, I didn't realize that they were allowed to have uh, I, I'm, not saying that they weren't allowed, I just I've never known them to have any interpreter. I wasn't sure, I didn't know the policy about it at all, actually. Stephan (personal communication, September 16, 2010)

Stephan gives the impression of being a fair and understanding supervisor. He also believes that lip-reading is a reliable and effective mode of communication for interacting with his employees who are Deaf.

Quade

Quade is an educational interpreter working in a high school in Fairfax, Virginia. He has been working in this field for about seven years, and interprets in American Sign Language (ASL). According to his peers, he has a particular linguistic strength when faced with "voicing" American Sign Language. Quade has worked in vocational training settings with students who are Deaf as well as in classrooms serving students who are Deaf in academic settings. Quade was utilized exclusively during the data collection phase of this work in the triangulation of interviews for all Deaf participants in this study.

Natasha

Natasha is a participant in this study who is Deaf. She is a 2005 graduate of the Model Secondary School for the Deaf in Washington, DC. She gained employment in her retail store after serving an internship at a sister store in Maryland. She is in her mid-twenties. Her entire family is hearing. They are of Hispanic background. Natasha worked the day shift when she was hired, but did not care for the day shift for these reasons:

Yeah, I like to work at nights. Because I enjoy my work, I'm motivated, and I put things away...I gesture and people understand me. It's better than working days, because I was bored...what do I do? You know, I was stuck. At nights, there's more different things to do. The reason why is because I was just more motivated about it. I can do things myself. I'm eager to go to work. Nobody bothers me. It's more of a casual environment for myself. Natasha (personal communication, September 16, 2010)

Natasha appears to have a positive attitude regarding working with hearing people, but her interactions with them, as observed by this researcher, were limited. She is confident of her reading and writing skills, but most of her communication with hearing people at work utilized facial expressions and appeared to be superficial in nature, as can be seen in the following two interactions recorded during observations at work.

At 11:49, a man comes to them with another pallet of boxes and parks it next to the original pallet that the three ladies were addressing. He turned to Natasha and said "problem" in a joking way and pointed to Natasha. She then looked at him and made big eyes at him while pointing her finger, as if to say "you are the problem." She then shrugs

and smiles. The man leaves with his “pallet jack” (a low manual forklift of sorts).

Natasha (personal observation, September 8, 2010)

And another example occurred one week later.

A gentleman walks by her with a full pallet jack of boxes – he slows and points to the boxes and points to Natasha. She blows him a kiss. He points again to the boxes.

She smiles and blows him a kiss again. This happens three times. He moves on; she gets back to work. Natasha (personal observation, September 15, 2010)

While Natasha has a positive attitude about work and a strong work ethic. Regarding communication, she says “There’s no interpreter here. I’m just independent and we gesture. I gesture a lot to communicate. We write notes.” Her positive attitude is illustrated in this statement from her interview. “We show each other how to do things, like we show and discuss and we write. We work it out.”

Melinda

Melinda, an educational interpreter for in the public schools, has been in this capacity “off and on” for about eight years. She has served about six students who are Deaf in vocational programs, but has served others in an educational, or “classroom” setting. She is aware of communication and interpreter issues that may face students who are Deaf when they transition to work. She stated that people who are Deaf should have more support at work, which buttresses what several others have said throughout this study.

MELINDA: I think that it is important for them [people who are Deaf] to have interpreter support at work, but also to teach them how to communicate with people at work. I think they should have more support.

INTERVIEWER: So you feel that is something you do, as a part of your role in a vocational setting to sort of, not only interpret, but to teach skills in communication other than through interpreting?

MELINDA: Correct, and trying to incorporate teachers in that as well as the interpreters and the staff that they work with.

Melinda (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Not only do her statements suggest more support at work for people who are Deaf, but they support the idea that the interpreter can be bolstered by additional staff to train co-workers, as well.

Marvin

Marvin is a six year veteran of teaching in the Fairfax County School system. He currently teaches Special Education in a vocational training center in the southern part of Fairfax County. His daily work includes the career skills education of 15 students who gain practical experience in a senior living community in Fairfax County. Prior to working in this capacity in the senior living community, he taught automotive trades in the same school.

Marvin has taught four students who are Deaf, and is currently one of a team of two teachers who serve Ivan during this school year. Marvin, being situated in a vocational training setting within the public school environment, is aware of the use of interpreters to serve students who are Deaf – that they are served in this way on a daily basis.

Marvin has ideas regarding the use of interpreters for students who have transitioned from school-to-work. Perhaps his most potent idea is to incorporate the use of interpreters not only for interviews and meetings and events, but for training purposes, much as a job coach is utilized to train and to acclimate any new hire to work in a job. His candid comments regarding

the use of interpreters are below, and demonstrate a thoughtful and daring way to ensure success in the workplace for people who are Deaf.

I think they should have more support initially, just like, you know, in an intensive job coach, because they will be getting a job coach to learn, you know, to do the job, to have the skills, but I think that they could probably fade that out a little quicker and just say, you know, 'This is the cutoff.' and just cut 'em off. I think that they could give them a little support initially, on the job. They don't have to do a lot by themselves, but I think initially, I don't think they need to say, 'Okay, you are now away from the school system and you have no support.' Marvin (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Marvin further sees a parallel between people who are Deaf and their peers, suggesting that young people want to try and be independent, and are generally less willing to initiate or ask for support. Marvin has offered a response that suggests that the problems of isolation, pride, and wanting to be independent are indeed not unique to a given disability population, but are faced by the population as a whole that is entering into or a fledgling part of the workforce.

[People in] this age group are not going to just readily go and ask for as much help as they need. I think they need to be more sometimes pushed on them because, you um, you get somebody like we had this year and he won't ask for help, I mean, at all. So, if you come from the viewpoint, 'Well, I'm only going to help him when he needs help,' when he comes to ask for help, I think he needs to be, he needs to be a little more engaging if he needs some more support there, um, especially to show him how to *gain* that independence... ...I know it's not typically a role and it is more of a teacher role

kind of thing, but I think if they could help them develop ways to connect, which means that they would probably be more successful. Marvin (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Leila

Leila has been working in special education for 30 years, and is planning to retire at the end of the 2010-2011 school year. During her time in the Fairfax County School System, she has served approximately ten students who are Deaf. Incidentally, Leila has a vanity license plate on her late-model Honda Accord that reads “N2SPNDS,” or “into special needs.”

Leila had an integral role in the inception of this study. Three years ago, during a casual conversation with her, she brought to the surface the disparity of interpreter use between schools and work. It is this seed, planted years ago, that has grown into this work.

Leila sees the need to not only support people who are Deaf in the workplace, but sees success as contingent upon expanding the support offered to include not only the people who are Deaf, but also to their employers and co-workers. “I think they need more... support not only for the individual who’s Deaf or hearing impaired, but for the employer and the co-workers.”

Leila (personal communication, May 24, 2010)

Leila offers the solution of seeking natural supports among vendors that serve people who are Deaf. Specifically, Vendors who not only support transition efforts from school-to-work, but have in their employ people who can use ASL. When asked if interpreter use on the job should be increased, she responded with a proposal and a caveat.

I think in an ideal world, yes, it [increased interpreter use] would be, in terms of the financial responsibility, it could be, you know, fairly costly. One of the things that I’ve tried to do over the years in working with students with disabilities is try to, to

identify individuals within a certain vendor that may have the signing skills, so it's been kind of helpful to approach it from that point. The only downfall to that, though, is, you know, when students are looking at vendors, it should be their choice, you know, so it's kind of limiting them but, when you're looking at the total picture in terms of communication, it's a fine line, um, you know, there, and it is ultimately their decision and I think that for our students and our families they, they want to be able to know that, you know, they have a counselor at a particular vendor that is able to sign. That's kind of few and far between. Leila (personal communication, May 24, 2010)

In Leila's view, interpreter support is necessary and should be increased, but it may come at the expense of people who are Deaf working in positions that are personally less desirable.

Laurel

Laurel is a 19 year old student who is learning work skills through a three day/week "internship" at a local restaurant near her school. She has a pleasant demeanor, but she is illustrative of the basic wariness that people who are Deaf may feel toward hearing people. This wariness could be the result of several considerations: past negative relationships with hearing people, insecurity in her literacy skills, or a need to show that she can be independent. Clues to this reality are based on observations and the following exchange, which occurred at the onset of our semi-structured interview.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, we are recording.

LAUREL: Yeah, are you going to save it?

INTERVIEWER: Well, eventually I will erase it.

LAUREL: Who are you going to give it to?

INTERVIEWER: Myself. So, it is private information.

LAUREL: Okay, it is private.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, Laura – it is nice to see you again.

LAUREL: Yes.

Laurel (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

The preceding exchange surfaced innocently as part of the “pre-interview” small talk of our interview. Interestingly, her Consent Form was signed on May 11, 2010, with an interpreter present who, along with the researcher, explained that this study was confidential and that names would be changed and that any recordings or transcriptions or data would be kept in a password-protected computer in a locked cabinet.

Laurel is very focused on her employment aspirations, and hopes to work in a hotel after her school-to-work transition.

INTERVIEWER: When will you graduate?

LAUREL: Next year.

INTERVIEWER: Two thousand eleven?

LAUREL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Very good. What kind of job do you want when you graduate?

LAUREL: I want to go straight to hotel work. That’s it. Straight to hotel work.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you like hotel work?

LAUREL: Because it’s quiet and no-one bothers me. I can do it by myself. It’s quiet. I can take my time and focus in my work get it going by myself. Keep going. I don’t mind helping people if they need help, either.

Laurel (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

While this study endeavors to ensure or increase opportunities for success in the workplace for people who are Deaf through changes in interpreter use or other means, Laurel offers us a paradox to the increased integration and communication and relationship-building notions of others who participated in this study. Laurel wants to find a position that *decreases* her need for integration and communication, and feels that the alleged increase in her ability to focus that would be afforded through this scenario would inevitably bring about success, or, at least, better productivity. This belief is buttressed by Observer Comments made by the researcher during her first observation at work. It is a link between her feelings about work and the observer comments to this effect.

This observation was not replete with rich communication, however, as I watched her work, I began to make some assumptions about work and deafness. This study revolves around work as it pertains to strategies for success for people who are Deaf. It occurs to me that the lack of communication can be a blessing in disguise. If you are not communicating, you are working. Laurel was VERY busy working at a competitive pace without distraction. No “water cooler” discussions or wasteful banter. Setting aside the isolation that this brings, Laurel was working hard, and had picked up the cues of the seven other people around her who were also working hard. It is nearing the lunch hour, and Laurel is working at a “rush” pace along with the others in the kitchen. No distractions and no extraneous talk – just work. Advantage: Laurel. (observer comment, May 27, 2010)

Interactions between Laurel and her co-workers and boss were few, and when they occurred, they were fleeting, casual exchanges. Finally, Laurel is aware of the plentiful availability of interpreter support for her and others in her school setting. She is also aware that

interpreters can be used in the work setting after graduation, but she was of the misunderstanding that *she* might have to pay for the interpreters used at work from her own pocket. While she conveys a readiness to work and a strong work ethic, at the same time she displays a relative naiveté regarding her preparedness to enter the world of work.

I mean, I don't want to have to pay the interpreter to keep coming. I have to be independent, I have to do things myself, I have to go to work myself, you know, I have to do it all by myself. The boss is not going to pay the interpreter. I have to pay the interpreter myself. Because I need an interpreter because I'm Deaf. That's only my opinion, though. Laurel (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

Laurel equates the use of interpreters as a barometer of independence. The more interpreter use, the less independent you are. Conversely, the less interpreter use you require, the more independent you are [in your work]. Below, Laurel briefly explains why one might need an interpreter at work.

If there's a meeting. Will there be an interpreter for the meeting at work? To discuss things. That would be good. Sometimes for Deaf, I know they do that, you know, if you have to sign a form or something like that for work at a hotel, they would need somebody to explain what was going on to make sure there was no problems going on if you need help. Laurel (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

In her viewpoint, interpreters, along with the obvious duty of translating the spoken work into ASL, are to be utilized to “explain what was going on” as well as to smooth situations when there are “problems” at work. While beyond the bounds of the interpreter code of ethics, Laurel suggests that the roles of “explainer” and “problem solver” are ideals that should be incorporated

into the function of the professional ASL interpreter. Without saying it directly, Laurel has touched upon a common misconception that people who are Deaf have of interpreters, and this may be a rich avenue to explore in working toward a malleable solution to the vexing issue of interpreter support as it pertains to success and integration on the job.

Kristle

Kristle is a self-professed “newbie” in the field of deafness, and this is her first year working as an Educational Interpreter in a vocational training program serving students who are Deaf. In her brief time in the Fairfax County Public School system, she has served three students who are Deaf. She is aware of the disparity between interpreter support offered in the public school setting versus what may be found in the workplace for many people who are Deaf.

Regarding interpreter use upon obtaining work in the community for people who are Deaf, she offers this:

Um, you know, in the real world, interpreters are not always there. Like you said, in the workforce, we’re there for meetings, and, you know, “pow-wows” that the department is having, um, I don’t know if we should be there more, um, because, perhaps we become a safety net, um, for the students that just graduated. So I don’t think we should be there more, but we shouldn’t be there less (laughter) especially for those meetings and things like that, but, I don’t think, for the kids that have just graduated, we should be there more. I don’t think that’s necessary... Kristle (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

In her eyes, Kristle feels that too much support enables people who are Deaf. They come to rely too much on interpreters for support and they come to see interpreters as a “safety net.” Plainly put, she holds the perspective that there is growth in the struggles that almost inevitably occur when people who are Deaf enter the work force. Stepping outside of one’s comfort zone (as is experienced probably daily for people who are Deaf) should be an opportunity to exert a resolve for innovation and advancement of integration, communication, and success in the work place.

Karol

Karol is an Educational Interpreter for Fairfax County Public Schools. She also holds the title of “Lead” Educational Interpreter, and coordinates all of the ASL interpreters in a Northern Virginia school system. She has been an interpreter for the County for about 15 years, and is very frank in her comments about interpreting, students served, and how to ensure success for students who are Deaf. When asked if she knew that people who are Deaf in the workplace only receive interpreter support for meetings and trainings and personal communication with managers, etc., she replied under her breath “If they’re lucky.”

In anticipation of an apparent void of interpreters on the professional level, she sees her primary role as preparing students for what they will face after graduation or transition.

We are trying to make the students who are Deaf as independent as possible, which means that, um, once they are comfortable in their work setting, we try to back off or remove ourselves as much as possible and let the students communicate with their co-workers and um, supervisors alone as much as possible. And when necessary when asked to sign when we see that the students are struggling with communication. Karol (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Karol also sees the role of interpreter as a limited role. For instance, she suggests expanding the role to include job coaching and possible other duties.

If you are a Deaf client with multiple disabilities, and communication is one of, one of your deficiencies, I think that an interpreter “slash” job coach, not necessarily an interpreter, but maybe an interpreter/job coach someone who can...they can help them work through whatever issues may come up is more appropriate. Karol (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Karol identifies this evolution in the role of interpreter specifically for people who are Deaf *and* have additional disabilities present. Karol agrees with others in this study that more prep work needs to be done to steel students who are Deaf for what they face in the hearing world of work. Twice she broaches this train of thought in her words to me.

I think that everyone is so worried about training them *how* to do their job and good work behaviors that sometimes we forget that the interpreter doesn't magically appear once they transition because they do in the school system. The interpreter is magically there, um, that we forget to teach them. How can we, how can we communicate with somebody who is hearing that works with us. Can we point, can we write notes, can we draw pictures, can we have flip chart on our belt of the pictures that are jobs we are supposed to do. Think that that is some area of improvement that we could have.

Sometimes I believe we *are* doing them a disservice because they believe that an interpreter is going to magically appear. You wouldn't believe how many students say “Well, if I get a job a Wal-Mart, the interpreter will tell me what the customer is saying.”

No they won't; there is no interpreter there. They don't understand that we're not...they think that we're there all the time because they are Deaf. We have, and, yes, some of the vocational students are lower, but we need to teach...we still need to teach them...we need to teach them when they will get an interpreter and when they won't, and how to work through the issues if they don't have one. Karol (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Karol has kept in touch with some of the students she has served, and admits that, through language, the relationships she develops with students go far beyond that of interpreter and pupil. When a hearing person speaks the language of ASL, the skills alone identify that this person is not only approachable for the purposes of communication, but that they have chosen a course that includes people who are Deaf and their culture, and this extension of the olive branch, if you will, brings with it rapport, respect, admiration, and often friendship.

Josey

Josey is a young man who is Deaf and works for a major retail chain in Falls Church, Virginia. He has been working there for five years, and, through observation, seems to be a well adjusted and well liked worker. He recalled from his date of hire that there was no interpreter for him, and that writing notes back and forth was how his employment was initiated. Further, he really has not had an interpreter assist him in communication in his five years with the company. When asked if an interpreter would be helpful to have at work, Josey replied,

Yeah, yeah, I would like an interpreter. I wish I had one...sometimes you need one, but, all the people, every day, we don't need it. Things go over our heads. We talk and they have meetings and they all gather around. Do I understand? I wish I could

understand them, but, you know, I want an interpreter, but, to make it clear, better, you know, that's what I would want it for. I wish I had that, yeah. Josey (personal communication, September 15, 2010)

Josey's has a positive attitude on the job. He is very comfortable around hearing people, and makes eye contact with them often. He also pantomimes to communicate, but seems to understand the limitations of pantomime, choosing to let his work ethic and positive attitude supplant any shortcomings in communication that may be present on the job. Josey also seems to excel in "reading" people, and looks as if he can catch onto the mood or import of situations without direct communication. Perhaps this is a gift that he possesses, or a learned trait that he has honed over time. Regardless of its etiology, it has proven to help Josey adjust to the hearing world of work and to stand out among his hearing and Deaf peers on the job.

Juliette

Juliette is a four year veteran of teaching, who trains students for work in a public school vocational training setting. She feels that her role in preparing students for the future is "all about preparing them for life." In her tenure, she has served four students who are Deaf in a vocational training setting.

Juliette underscores the problems faced by employers when working with people who are Deaf in their employ:

It's ridiculous that they would get an interpreter all the time, when, they're going to go out and get a job, and nobody's going to hire them if they need to have an interpreter with them. Uh, the cost for that would just be astronomical and it would make

it not really worth their time to hire our students. So, we don't want to make them less advantaged; we want to make them more advantaged in the community...

I would hate to think is that they would be less employable because of their, you know, because they would have to hire a second person, you know, to work with them all the time. That would be a deterrent for agencies and companies, I mean, if there was some sort of incentive to hire Deaf people with an interpreter, um, and then somehow financially that all came through that would be wonderful, but, especially in the economy that we're in right now, it just seems like it would deter employers. Juliette (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

From Juliette's perspective, perhaps more interpreter support in the workplace is a deterrent to hiring people who are Deaf. She focuses on the expense of hiring interpreters and how, if the financial piece were not an issue for employers, perhaps they would be more inclined to hire and keep people who are Deaf.

Regarding the current interpreter support model in place for workers who are Deaf, Juliette suggests fading support (as is found in the field of job coaching) and that demonstration could be an integral piece to offering employment success for people who are Deaf.

Fading support, um, that there should be some support that they get connected to the work environment, but, um, just like a job coach or anything else, to me it seems like it should be a fading level of support, that they shouldn't be dependent on it because, you know, in reality, once Ivan gets started in the kitchen, the interpreter just helps us to make food, like, you know, I mean, which is great; he's so helpful and we enjoy having him,

but, I mean, there is not a lot of interpretation that really even needs to be done at that point. Juliette (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

Juliette, in summation, sees the interpreter as someone who should be faded in use over time, and also as someone who could assist in the demonstration phase or model of integration and training for people who are Deaf.

Julia

Julia is an Educational Interpreter who has served students who are Deaf in academic and vocational settings in a Northern Virginia public school setting for ten years. Julia was utilized specifically during the data collection phase of this study in the triangulation of interviews for all Deaf participants in this study. Julia was not interviewed for the purposes of data collection for this study. Her role is exclusively one of lending her expertise in ASL for the clarification and verification of semi-structured interviews obtained via videotape from the Deaf participants in this study.

Ivan

Ivan is a student who is Deaf in Fairfax County Public Schools who trains for work through a vocational training center. He is currently training at a large senior living community in their main kitchen. He will transition to work in the year 2013, and claims to use or need interpreter services once or twice a day while at work.

On the surface, Ivan appears to be very cavalier in his assessment of interpreter needs in the workplace. He knows that interpreters will be available to him in the workplace “just sometimes” (personal communication, May 20, 2010) and when asked if this fact bothers him, said “I’m not upset. It doesn’t really bother me. I think I don’t need it. I’m very independent.”

It happens that he has a supervisor, Glolinda, (interviewed for this study) who is demonstrative and patient in working with Ivan, as is evidenced in these observation comments.

Ivan went to the walk-in to get out the cherry tomatoes, as he did for our last observation. He placed the carton of cherry tomatoes on his work area and went to look for a gallon-sized container in which to place the “good ones.” They were not in the same high spot on the shelf where they usually were, so he foraged around on the counter until he found ones that would work. As he stacked and un-stacked the containers, there was loud clashing from his movements – a subtle reminder that he is Deaf and does not recognize the incidences of noise that might be considered excessive to others. After he brought the desired container to his work area, his supervisor, Glolinda, walked over to him and tapped his shoulder. He followed her a short way to another counter where she pointed to some clear “to go” containers. He pointed to the containers, pointed to himself with raised eyebrows, and pointed back to the containers. She nodded “yes.” Ivan returned to his work station and put back his tomatoes in the walk-in and placed his container back where he found it, and went over to the work area with the “to go” containers. Glolinda then proceeded to show him how to place grapes from a tray next to the containers into the containers. Ivan did this for the containers that already sported beds of lettuce upon which to place the grapes. Suddenly, Glolinda put up her finger in a “hold on” gesture and walked over to get more grapes for Ivan. They worked together on these “to go” salad containers – seemingly in concert, seamlessly switching spots to place lettuce and grapes accordingly onto the containers. Seems as though they knew and anticipated each-other’s movements in advance. (observation comments, May 27, 2010)

This observational exchange was brief, but yielded evidence of patience, kindness, demonstration, gestures, and personal space comfort levels between Ivan and Glolinda.

Harry

Harry is a member of the night shift team at a major retail store in Falls Church, Virginia. He has been working at this store for four years. Harry was willing to participate in this study, but only after a lengthy discussion of the Consent Form during his break time and the reassurance from a Deaf co-worker that it was okay to take part. Harry seems to mistrust hearing people. During our discussion of the study and the Consent Form, he asked if I was a “spy,” and wondered if I work for the “CIA” or the “FBI.” While agreeing to and signing the Consent Form, he opted out of the interview portion, choosing to be involved in only the three observations stipulated in this project. He was wary of being videotaped. I thanked him for his willingness to be involved and said (in ASL) that I understood why he did not wish to be interviewed. In spite of his reservations regarding inclusion in this undertaking, his involvement yielded some “rich” data for this study. As opposed to the other participants in this study, Harry was not satisfied to be observed; he wanted to explain his job and justify his work as worthy – that he has literacy skills that are part of his position and enable him to succeed in his work, as is evidenced by the following discourse:

We are nearing the end of the observation and Harry comments on a messy stack of boxes and says, “Spanish people can’t read – they put different boxes together. Pallets mixed up. It is confusing. I straighten it out. I try to teach. I put boxes together that match. I scan once and go to the aisle with many boxes. It saves time.” Harry (personal communication September 9, 2010)

Without being cognizant of its bigoted nature, Harry (who is of Middle-Eastern decent) makes a sweeping statement about his Spanish colleagues. He wants to be seen as competent, in spite of his Deafness, but is not reticent about pointing out alleged weaknesses in his counterparts of different heritage.

During his second observation, Harry reiterates the status of his position, which requires some reading to fulfill.

At this time, the loudspeaker again blares “It is now 10:55. In five minutes, the store will be closing. Please make your finals selections and proceed to the checkout area.” Harry is oblivious to the loudspeakers, and continues working. He continues working on his pulling of items from the shelf. He has two 24” square boxes filled with items for stocking. I ask him if he will be putting the items on the shelves downstairs. He says “no,” that he only pulls the items and then someone downstairs stocks the shelves. He says that the work downstairs is “easy,” and that *his* work requires reading, which is more difficult. Harry (personal communication, September 15, 2010)

In addition to Harry’s disposition regarding his [literacy] strengths, he is mistrusting of hearing people. He feels that he is being discriminated against because of the job duties assigned to him, as is evidenced by a discussion I had with his supervisor during the night of Harry’s second observation.

About 15 minutes later (11:45), I see Edwin, who is Harry’s supervisor. I am now down on the floors, doing an observation of Natasha. He mentions that last week they had to give Harry a “coaching.” He says that this is where they talk about doing the job. Harry had refused to work in an aisle assigned to him – the plastics aisle, which has many

heavy items in it. They went to the office, Harry, Edwin, and another “boss,” and wrote notes back and forth. They wrote that he has to follow orders from his supervisor. Harry wrote back that he was only scheduled for three days, so he wanted to pick the work he does. The supervisor wrote back that he must follow the orders. Harry wrote back “You crazy hurt.” The supervisors looked at each other, not knowing quite what the meaning was or if it was a threat. At that time, Harry started laughing, which diffused the situation. Harry went to work in the aisle that he was supposed to work in. Harry (personal communication, September 15, 2010)

Harry feels that he does his job well, and that he is being singled out to do some of the more difficult work. The management team seems to be aware of Harry’s disposition, and see it as an indication of an uncooperative team member. Harry sees it as discrimination. As is evidenced here, Harry also believes his English skills are proficient, but wrote to his boss “You crazy hurt,” which is a statement that is ambiguous if not incomplete and elementary in nature, demonstrating that his literacy skills may not be as competent as he imagines.

During the final observation of Harry, perhaps his most telling interchanges surface. While working, he makes the following four statements:

Harry is working at scanning labels and pulling items from the shelves, when he looks at me and says “Last week Stephan approached me and his facial expression was angry. I thought what’s the point? Is he spying on me? Why does he approach me and not the other workers?”

I tell him that a supervisor is like a spy in that he has to observe and check up on people. Harry signs “It is only me – that is discrimination.” He continues working.

Harry is at the end of the aisle near the main corridor. Another associate walks past. They smile at each other and wave. The associate's name is Julio – he points at himself and holds up his finger in a “one” fashion, perhaps meaning that he is going to aisle one. He leaves to go to work with his cart. Harry backs into his aisle and signs, “He is a bad person. He doesn't like deaf (people). I sign “really?” He replies, “I know from experience growing up.”

Harry catches my attention and signs “I always do PETS. It is not fair.” I want to talk to the supervisor – not fight – just talk. Fight – you get fired. The boss I don't trust him. He is buddies with some – not fair.”

Harry signs to me again. “Ed. You know Ed?” I say “Yes.” He signs – “He pushes people. Not right.” I sign “Is he teasing or serious?” He says “I think he is serious.” I tell him to be patient – He says “I am patient.” Harry (personal communication, September 21, 2010)

Glolinda

Glolinda is Ivan's work supervisor at a large retirement community kitchen. She is African American, and through her actions and words, is very supportive of Ivan. This is her first experience working with someone who is Deaf. She wears her emotions on her sleeve, and wishes to be a part of Ivan's eventual success in his school-to-work transition. She was not aware that, upon entering work, Ivan would not have unfettered access to interpreters. She is appreciative of Ivan's positive attitude at work, as is evidenced by these exchanges during my interview with her.

GLOLINDA: They have a little class or something, a man explainin' to 'em what, to each one, what they gonna do in that particular day, you know, as they are

working. Then he'll come back to me. And every morning when he comes in, the first thing he do, he comes to me and he hugs me, says "good morning." That's lettin' me know he's happy, he's smilin'.

INTERVIEWER: How does he say good morning?

GLOLINDA: Well, he comes and he grabs me.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

GLOLINDA: And he hugs me. Uh-huh, and he smiles, he have a beautiful smile. He's never...never angry or...at no particular time. Always happy. Love to work, love to work.

If anybody ever give him a good job, and honest my hand to God, if they was hiring here, and this boy need a job, Lord knows, I would be the first one to go and fight for him, because he is damned goo... (covers mouth) he is really good.

Glolinda (personal communication, May 28, 2010)

A large part of Glolinda's recipe for success with Ivan, and perhaps with all of her workers, is respect, which is afforded to workers and can also be earned through a strong work ethic.

INTERVIEWER: So it sounds like work ethic and work attitude are very important to you.

GLOLINDA: I want to give him the respect, what he is entitled to, when we are around people. What we say when we both is around, jokin' with one another, that's our thing. But when he is around anyone, I respects him.

INTERVIEWER: It sounds like you respect your bosses and you also respect the people under you.

GLOLINDA: But I think respect will carry you farther than your money or anything because a person look at you with respect and the way you carry yourself, I think you have a better chance...a person, well I would like to have that person workin' in my kitchen, or work here, because they seem like they care and they understand, like I'm sayin', this guy...I'm tellin' you... I wish...I thought maybe you was tryin' to help him get a job, or whatever, but even though, what you are doing is good because this is your job and that...you are helping so many others, that, you know, maybe you saw this one person and you were wondering how this one person is doing this, how come this other person cannot...

Glolinda (personal communication, May 28, 2010)

Glolinda believes in Ivan, and while it was difficult to keep her on topic during our discussions and interview, her belief in Ivan as an important, productive, and valued member of the kitchen staff was evident. As I left her at 5:40 *am* at the end of our semi-structured interview, she offered these words to me as a way of proving or demonstrating Ivan's metal in the workplace.

GLOLINDA: Any time, you are welcome to come in the morning, when he get here, and the next time you come, I tell you what. I will put, um, you can put an apron on and you can walk with him. Don't say nothin', just walk and you will...let him show you, and don't listen to what I'm saying; let him. And then you turn to him and ask him "what are you doing" and "do you like what you are doing?" And then you can get a better answer and a better, um, question from him about what he is doing. Because no one's forcing him to do it; he's doin' it on his own and he's you know, I really appreciate what he do because that little bit what he does, it's a big help to me.

INTERVIEWER: Good.

GLOLINDA: And I like him.

Glolinda (personal communication May 28, 2010)

In spite of Glolinda's inability to answer many questions without skirting the topics, she was able to reveal to me that her Deaf worker was valued and had worth in her kitchen, and that, to her, is an indicator for success for people who are Deaf, regardless of shortcomings or barriers in language that surface daily in this kitchen.

Edwin

Edwin is a supervisor for a major retail chain store in Falls Church, Virginia. He has been working in this field for nine years, and has been at this store for six years. He has worked with "four or five" people who are deaf during his tenure at this current position. He is one of several supervisors who work a night shift. Edwin, as observed and interviewed, has a pleasant demeanor, and is proud of this store's record on hiring diverse people. Interestingly, Edwin was not aware that students in public schools are afforded interpreters during each day and during their entire school experience, but also states that interpreters are not a pervasive entitlement in the workplace.

This particular store, at least in the night shift work force is comprised of about 75% Hispanic workers. It is interesting to see that Hispanic translators are utilized often, while ASL interpreters are not, as is evidenced by this exchange during our semi-structured interview.

INTERVIEWER: Now, these Spanish interpreters, are they part of the Target system?

EDWIN: It's, it's, it's, it's actually uh...it's actually some sort of service uh, it's an independent place.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so Target has a contract with them.

EDWIN: Correct.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, well, they could probably set up something like that too with sign language.

EDWIN: I think they, I actually think they can, I'm really not all that familiar with it, uh, um, it seems to me I was reading somewhere that they might be able to do that... they probably should.

Edwin (personal communication, September 8, 2010)

Edwin's experience here at this retail store, at least as it is entangled with the Deaf population, is laced with best intentions. He feels that they should offer more interpreter service, but is not sure how to access the service, which, by law, is mandated. Further evidence of his willingness to help, albeit without any action, to date, is illustrated below:

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any questions or anything that you can think of about uh, working with people who are Deaf or communication, or anything else?

EDWIN: No, I don't think uh, I, I, you know, I'm another one that, we, we, you know, a few of us actually got together at one point and, and, and tried to get Target to, to, to pay to send us to a class to learn sign language, and then that kind of fizzled out. That was a few years ago, but I'd be willing to do something like that.

INTERVIEWER: I bet if you looked hard enough you could find some continuing education stuff in Fairfax County.

EDWIN: I'm sure, yeah, yeah, I'm sure,

INTERVIEWER: Real cheap stuff.

EDWIN: Oh no, I already found it, and, and, it was, in fact uh, I think in Alex...I live in Alexandria, so I think Alexandria would be something and uh, I know I saw it somewhere. I'll probably just go ahead and do it myself.

Edwin (personal communication, September 8, 2010)

Edwin's experiences with his workers who are Deaf are congenial yet limited. His intentions for improving conditions for communication are evident, although probably not going to happen without some directive from the top down.

Debney

Debney is a staff member of a vocational training center in Northern Virginia. In her eight years with the County, she has served approximately nine students who are Deaf. Incidentally, Debney is fluent in American Sign Language, and has served the County as both a Sign Language Interpreter and a Public Health Training Assistant (PHTA). Also, Debney has a son who is Deaf. He has graduated from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) in Rochester, NY, and currently works locally as a graphic artist.

Debney is aware of issues that arise when people who are Deaf transition into the world of work, both through her professional experiences and through her experiences with her son. Her personal experience and frustration are illustrated here in these very personal words regarding her son's experiences at work. When asked if she was aware that there will be interpreters available in the workplace only for important meetings and special trainings, etc. at work, she responded with these comments:

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Did you know that people who are Deaf in the workplace only receive interpreter support only during meetings and important sessions with supervisors and employers?

DEBNEY: I know that because my son is Deaf and he has that problem at work, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Does he have difficulties... have major problems arisen because of those uh, problems getting interpreters or misunderstandings?

DEBNEY: Once in a while there's a problem. Most of the time they comply with... once in a while there is a problem with...they don't know how to find them because there is a scramble at the end. It can get messy, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Where is he working?

DEBNEY: He works for a graphic um, a sign company, and when they have meetings it is hard for them to come up with somebody at the last minute.

Debney (personal communication, May 18, 2010)

The feelings of helplessness are evident in Debney's responses, as she struggles to delicately verbalize the struggles that her son has faced in the workplace. She tries to keep a light-hearted attitude about the plight of people who are Deaf, as is evidenced in her response to the following interview question.

INTERVIEWER: So, students who are Deaf, at school, that need a lot of support, what do you think is going to happen to them when they get to work?

DEBNEY: They're going to have a tough time (laughter).

Debney (personal communication, May 18, 2010).

Debney feels that more interpreter support at the onset of a new job would be beneficial for a person who is Deaf. She says, "I think, in the beginning, when they are first at a job site, they need a lot of support and explanation, and then once they get into a routine, most of our kids love a routine, and then once they get into it, then they understand things in their own way and

there are less problems. And uh, in the beginning, they need a lot of support.” (personal communication, May 18, 2010). It is perhaps key to mention here that Debney seems to maintain that interpreter use for communication is, of course, helpful but that there should also be a measure of “support and explanation” to augment the communication piece. She feels that, although communication and translation are important, *interpretation* of what is said, along with *explanation* of concepts, may be helpful in the adjustment and eventual success for the person who is Deaf in the workplace.

Finally, Debney’s words buttress a common theme among people who interviewed for this study. Specifically, she and others support the notion that more preparation for the post-transition world for people who are Deaf is imperative for building a foundation for success in the workplace. She states simply,

DEBNEY: I’ve had several students come back after they’ve graduated and have lost the interpreter services... they’ve wanted me to accompany them, uh, they don’t understand that once they graduate, you know, we’re not in the picture anymore, and they try to get us because they feel comfortable with us and they don’t really want somebody new from the outside, and it would be nice if there was some way we could get paid through the county or the state to do that for them. I’ve had to turn down a couple people because I knew they couldn’t afford it, and um, you know, that, that would be my only recommendation...I don’t know how something like that would work out, but it would be nice.

INTERVIEWER: So, having students understand more about how the interpreting uh, setup works in terms of, “Gee, these are people that get paid...”

DEBNEY: Yes, yes. They actually make a living (laughter).

INTERVIEWER: It's kind of an unreal world they live in where they think an interpreter is just going to show up all the Time.

DEBNEY: Right. Exactly. Well said! (laughter)

Debney (personal communication, May 18, 2010)

From this semi-structured interview, we can get a sense through Debney's eyes that not only is the communication piece important for success, but that the preparation one gets before obtaining a job, and the support aside from communication when in a job is key to assuring a more positive employment outcome for people who are Deaf.

Clerc

Clerc is an Employment and Transition Representative (ETR) with Fairfax County Public Schools. In his nine years with the County, he has served approximately nine students who are Deaf. Clerc is fluent in ASL, in large part because he has a grown sister who is Deaf. As I learned during our interview, Clerc is very passionate about the topic of successful work experiences for people who are Deaf for several reasons. His work revolves around school-to-work transition for people with disabilities (including deafness), his sister is Deaf, and he has seen first-hand the difficulties in employment faced by people who are Deaf. His interview and its transcription were by far the lengthiest of all of the interviews in this study, covering seventeen pages of single-spaced transcription.

Clerc feels that an ingredient for work success for people who are Deaf is to get them to be open about their Deafness. His reasoning is in place because employers cannot bring it up – it is only permissible for disability discussions to be introduced by the person who has the disability.

As you know, employers can't ask about...it's a big elephant in the room...they can't ask about, uh, disability, but they know you're Deaf. You come there with an interpreter, um, most people haven't worked with someone who's Deaf before, so the successes that I've had are to get the students to talk about... I've found it very successful when the students are very comfortable talking about their Deafness, um, *they* bring it up. 'You're probably concerned about this...oh, you haven't worked with anybody who is Deaf before? Okay you haven't, well let me explain to you... the fact that they are able to address this with the employer really puts them [the employer] at ease, and then they're also answering their employers' questions that they can't ask. 'It's no problem for me; I've been Deaf my whole life – this is how I deal with this, this is how I deal with that.' Um, it really seems to put the employer at ease. Clerc (personal communication, June, 4, 2010)

Regarding the issue of whether or not someone who is Deaf should have more or less interpreter support on the job, Clerc was reticent to make any recommendation. Instead, he states,

I think it depends on the student. Um, I, I, I, I...the student should have the strongest voice in that. I really think the student should lead uh, the, the, the...not lead, but *guide* us it telling us when I need an interpreter and, and when I don't, and if they don't, then the interpreter is on "stand by." They're still there; they're just kind of waiting in the wings until they're needed. Clerc (personal communication, June 4, 2010).

Clerc's words above are a statement of empowerment for people who are Deaf. He feels they have been too long insulated in the environment of education and need to know that they

can be a voice for their own interpreter needs. He also claims that if we are pushing interpreter use when it is not absolutely necessary, then we are impeding success and integration in the workplace. “If they’re able to, to *breach* that [communication] gap on their own, and we’re forcing an interpreter on them, then we’re actually standing in the way of their progress. We’re...we’re impeding their independence.” (personal communication, June 4, 2010)

Clerc is especially passionate about addressing misconceptions about people who are Deaf, especially the notion that all people who are Deaf can lip-read. More education for employers needs to occur before they should hire people who are Deaf because “...most hearing people just have *no* idea.” Clerc offer a solution to this particular issue that is both effective and entertaining in its quest to unearth the limitations of lip-reading.

I always tell people, you know, just turn off the TV. Your favorite sitcom characters you know. Turn the sound off and watch it for a half hour and then tell me what they talked about. You know, you um...because of the actions and you’re familiar with the characters you might be able to figure it out, but, tell me about the conversations they had, tell me about a specific joke that they told, you know, what was the...it’s impossible! So, you know... and you’re expecting these people to be able to do this *all the time* with *unfamiliar* people. Clerc (personal communication, June 4, 2010)

Perhaps one of this study’s intents was to find some pragmatic tools to utilize in acclimating employers to working with people who are Deaf. Clerc’s straightforward and creative idea of turning off the TV and lip-reading a sitcom illustrates in a non-threatening and pervasive way that the notion of lip-reading as an effective communication tool across the board for people who are Deaf is shortsighted and arcane.

Additionally, Clerc supports the idea that interpreting should be more than just translating the spoken word to ASL. He purports that the effective or “good” interpreters will sense when understanding is not occurring during an interpreted Deaf / hearing interaction.

There are Times when...and, and, and the good ones know when to do this...the interpreters come, and they’re interpreters, and they interpret. But, they’re signing for the same student three, four, five, six months, they know the student, um, and there are Times, and the interpreter will do it. They’ll raise their hand and say “May I step out of my role for a second. I want to do...” So, you know, they...clearly they understand what their jobs are, because they are asking for permission to step out of their role, and they know the person well enough that they, they, understand, “They’re not getting what you’re saying. This is not working. Please allow me to...because I know them and I know how they communicate, and, and, and their level of understanding. Allow me to, to go ahead...” Clerc (personal communication, June 4, 2010)

Clerc is curious of how this paradigm of interpreters stepping outside of their roles would ensue, given the strict code of ethics that ASL interpreters study and adhere to that is produced and monitored by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID).

...whether it’s one on one, or it, it’s, it’s a team of people but a consensus, or at least kind of permission like, this is...this is not...this is the exception and not the rule, but I’m letting everyone know, you know, I would like to do this because I don’t think that, you know, my job is to make sure that communication flows naturally, and, and, and, uh, coherently, and it’s, it’s, it’s not happening. Um, yeah, I, I, I...that would not be abusive if it were the exception, you know what I mean, it happens so infrequently. It’s,

it's, it's definitely a topic I think is worthy of discussion by, like RID or the people who do this because, um, there are Times when it does need to happen, and, and I would hate for someone to get in trouble because they stepped outside their role and their purpose was to make sure the message was communicated...clearly. [Stepping outside of their role] made a big difference [in understanding]. Um, it made a *huge* difference as a matter of fact, so yeah, I, I, I, I do think it's worthy of discussion. I think it would be very difficult to, to codify like, which exceptions are okay and which ones aren't, but it's happening now, so you can either turn a blind eye or accept it. Look, it's gonna happen, and there are times when it is okay. Clerc (personal communication, June 4, 2010)

Another issue raised by Clerc in the employment of people who are Deaf again revolves around the preparation of the employer to receive these people into the workplace. Key words like "willingness" and "motivation" when hiring people who are Deaf can foster the environment for work that will either fail or succeed. His school-to-work experience and mindset enabled Clerc to verbalize this concept in grooming employers to work with people who are Deaf.

...it's the willingness... If I have an employer who is willing to work with someone who is Deaf because they feel, and I'm quoting someone who said this once. "This is my debt to society," you know, when that's the attitude, the Deaf person can be a rock star, you know, I mean they could be the best employee in the world; It's not going to work, um, because, from the top down, this person just kind of sees this as a burden. A broken person that we're taking in. that employer loved the idea. Thought this was a terrific idea, um, didn't feel that, uh, there was enough diversity at his site, so, that...this, this, this guy was a good worker; not the world's best worker, but he's a solid worker and he is very eager to learn. But the fact that the employer had this attitude of

“It’s going to work. I don’t care what we have to do, we’re going to make this work.” he went to his guys and said “we’re going to make this work. This guy’s comin’ on, he’s one of us, you treat him the same, if your...literally down to everything, if, uh, you know, on Saturday, if everybody’s going to buy tickets to an Orioles game, you buy...you make sure that he knows about this and he can buy a ticket, too. I mean, just everything. “He is to be treated like everybody else.” kind of the litmus test for success is, is, um, how does the, the manager, you know, the person I’m dealing with the top dog, the hiring person. Are they invested, like you said, are they invested in this, because if they are, it’s, it’s gonna work. Clerc (personal communication, June 4, 2010)

Paradoxically, Clerc mentions the Targeted Jobs Tax Credit (TJTC) and how this can be a deterrent to success when hiring a person who is Deaf. This Tax credit for hiring people with disabilities, when it is one of the only motivations or impetuses for hiring people who are Deaf, becomes a component of the work environment that is less than amenable to people who are Deaf.

CLERC: ...you can have the best worker in the world with an employer who feels like “oh, God,” You know, maybe I’m...the, the, the Targeted Jobs Tax Credit, you know, there’s a tax credit, there’s another reason I’m doing this, but I really, really don’t...or maybe “corporate” says, ‘because of the size that we are, you know, the ADA compliance office says we have to have somebody with a disability, and that’s why I’m here, it’s it’s...’

INTERVIEWER: ‘I’m sorry, we *have* to do this...’

CLERC: Yeah, exactly, exactly. (sarcastically) ‘I apologize to everyone, but this...we’re going to have to live with this person.’

Clerc (personal communication, June 4, 2010)

Clerc offers this illustration of work for someone who is Deaf, and at the same time offers another plan for improving chances for success for people who are Deaf. Any isolation and alleged lack of empowerment felt by people who are Deaf in the workplace might be assuaged by working in a company or place that employs at least one other person who is Deaf.

...the biggest problem, I think, that a lot of Deaf people have, is, you know, there's, there's no other Deaf people, you know, all Deaf kids, when they get out of school, they want to work with somebody else who's Deaf. Why? Because I don't want to be *alone* all the Time...I want to have somebody to talk to, and, and he made sure...'I don't want him isolated.' Um, the, the, the most of the, the, the...for lack of a better word, "failures" that I've seen, the, the person's completely alone and they get depressed, and then they're not motivated to do their work and then they begin to *dread* to go to their job and then when, you know, once that happens, you reach a certain point where you, you just can't turn it, even if you go in a try to work things out, it, it, it can be almost impossible to turn around, um, because you just, you feel like an outsider. 'I *know* I'm not welcomed here,' even though people have said 'we're going to work on this and that...' 'I just, I know I'm not wanted here.' Nobody wants to go...some place where they're not wanted. Clerc (personal communication, June 4, 2010)

Clerc feels that a sense of belonging, regardless of work skills, should be in place so that the desire to go to work and the comfort level that they feel can be conscious and palpable. Clerc asserts that without this open-arms environment for people who are Deaf, hiring them is a futile model for failure.

In working with S-T-W transitions, Clerc is inherently aware that the students are young, and offers the notion that, because of the age of students who are Deaf and transitioning to work, they may not be mature enough to “tough it out” in the workplace, as is illustrated by this account of his sister’s attitude toward work after years of frustration.

CLERC: The isolation, there’s nobody to talk to, um, happened a lot more when she was younger. I mean, now that she’s older, she’s a bit more comfortable around hearing people. One of the issues that she had was her...the fear and the anxiety and the discomfort around hearing people. ‘They’re talking. I don’t know what they’re saying.’ You know, the panic; the anxiety, and it, it...

INTERVIEWER: The paranoia. ‘Maybe they’re talking about me...’

CLERC: Sure, and it wasn’t until she got into her thirties that that, she...one of the few benefits of getting older, she just stopped caring what other people think about you. (laughs) Um, you know, as a young girl, it, it, it, it created a lot of problems for her, and, and, um, particularly in the job, you know, maintaining employment and things like that. The older she got, the less she cared, uh, the more comfortable she became, you know, with herself, you know, realizing that, you know, ‘there’s nothing wrong with me, that everybody...some of the best people I know are Deaf, You know, I...I’m more than,’ you know, I got that from her ‘I’m more than one giant ear that doesn’t work,’ you know, so, once she began to accept that, they, you know, it all changed, but I, I think for some people, the, the, the...the just working through that discomfort of...of being around hearing people.

Clerc (personal communication, June 4, 2010)

In short, Clerc offers the possibility that the age and seasoning of a person who is Deaf may be a component of success in the workplace. Clerc has a passion for S-T-W issues that face people who are Deaf. Through his personal experiences with Deafness and his work as an Employment and Transition Representative, he is in a position to embrace ideas and recommendations regarding S-T-W for the Deaf and carry them out on a personal level. He acknowledged this juxtaposition and is looking forward to continued efforts to ensure workplace successes for people who are Deaf.

Chef

Chef is a special education teacher who has been in the field for seven years. His focus is career skills as they relate to the food service industry. This is the first year that he has worked with a student who is Deaf. Incidentally, Albert, the student who is Deaf that was served by Chef, was expelled from his school shortly after this interview. Albert had consented to be in this study, but was unavailable to follow through with participation in this effort.

Chef, along with several other people interviewed, recommends work situations for the Deaf that have been paved by people who are Deaf that are already employed in these companies. His comments surfaced after being asked about interpreter support for people who are Deaf. He explained it this way:

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel that students who are Deaf should have more or less interpreter support while training for work?

CHEF: Depend on the student. If they have a smart kid like Albert, he can work with them but we want him to leave him alone. Like my next goal is for Albert, I try for next year, I will send him to somewhere in some kitchen. Work with a couple of Spanish people and they have a Deaf there. They have another Deaf, I found at Marriott kitchen,

and the people they work with they are very successful. They are Spanish people. They can speak the language very comfortable. If we get success – if we put Albert there with this group, that would be very helpful for Albert, and he work very hard over there. And we will be very successful there.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so looking for places that already have someone who is Deaf there to sort of join in...

CHEF: Yes, to join in there together. And he will not have some rejection or something like that. They already know about Deaf people. They been trained or they have some knowledge about that. When they go there, it is not something new over there. And that is what my goal is for Albert for next year.

Chef (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

His comments suggest the import of the support that may be found in workplaces that already accommodate a worker who is Deaf. Ostensibly, this would appear to be an excellent natural support for a worker who is Deaf.

To conclude, Chef recognizes that there may be positives that come from the communication struggles between Deaf and hearing people. People who are Deaf, in order to develop and hone the skills necessary for entrée into the hearing world of work may need to be left to their own devices in order to grow. The following conversation is unedited, and it should be noted here that English is Chef's second language.

INTERVIEWER: What (if anything) would you change about the current interpreter structure and support for students who are preparing to enter the work force? So you have interpreters here at your school now, would you change anything about what they do?

CHEF: Sometimes for some of them, when they can talk, let them to independence themselves, a little bit. Not just. Let them can talk, for example, without interpreter he go to somewhere he have to try to talk to the people to understand, even if he can use a little of the languages. A language barrier there.

Chef (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Albert

Albert is an eighteen year old student who is Deaf. He attends the same vocational training center as Ivan. Albert was training in the Culinary Arts program of his school. Albert fit all of the criterion for inclusion in this study, and both he and his mother signed a Consent Form to participate in this undertaking on April 26, 2010. Unfortunately, only days after agreeing to support this project, Albert was expelled from school based upon events that occurred outside of the school environment. Albert was therefore not able to be included in the data collection and findings for this study.

The preceding pages of individual analysis, while thorough and lengthy, provide two important aspects for the foundation of these findings. First, they situate each study participant in their relationship to the topic of focus for this study, namely the school-to-work transition and successful integration of people who are Deaf into the workplace, and the role of interpreter use in this integration. Secondly, important and candid excerpts from interviews and observation are included here to give an initial foreshadowing to the findings of this report. The validity of these excerpts has arrived via unpredictable sources, that is, many similar and many unique perspectives, recommendations, and musings have come from all participants, be they new or experienced to the field of deafness, training for work or in the existing workforce, or fledgling

or seasoned interpreters. With this standpoint, the gathering of data and the parsing of same ensues on the foundation of individual input leading to collective findings from the whole.

Themes

The data collection for this study ensued on April 26, 2010 and closed on October 25, 2010. Fully six months of data collection and transcription has lead to a handful of themes emerging from the initial thirty-four codes of data as illustrated herein. The themes that have emerged are as follows, and are listed in order of their prevalence among the data:

1. Support: The Value of Comfort.
2. Interpreters: A Call to Morph.
3. Segregation: It is Pervasive but Understandable.
4. Mind-Set: The Outlook is a Predictor.
5. Strategies: What is Being Used Now and its Effectiveness.
6. Strategies: What is Not Working Well.
7. Groundwork: Paving the Way for Success.
8. Communication: Who is Answerable for Results?
9. Peers: The Merit of Equals.
10. Interpreter Support: Opinion, Views, and Beliefs.
11. Outliers: Data Worth Mentioning.

Support: The Value of Comfort.

This theme emerged as a meld of several initial data codes including Ethnicity, Natural Supports, Playing to Strengths, Red Carpet, Sense of Worth, and Encouraging Environs. Much of the data for this theme was gathered from the participants in this study who are Deaf, which

may lend credence, along with the amount of data supporting this theme, to the import of this theme leading to encouraging and successful employment outcomes for people who are Deaf.

Of the nearly one thousand pieces of data collected from this study, about 17% of them revolved around this theme. For instance, regarding ethnicity, Laurel works with thirteen different people, eight of whom are Latino. It is difficult to say whether this has been a factor in the measure of success for Laurel, and the topic of ethnic/cultural homogeneity as it relates to work may in itself cause “bristling” among champions for integration in the workplace. Whether it is politically correct to mention or not, working within one’s culture may bring a measure of comfort into the work surroundings. Study participants Josey, Laurel, and Natasha all work almost exclusively with people of their own culture. Trust may be a factor in this avenue (Guiso, Paola, Sapienza & Zingales, 2006), as being able to predict reactions and performances among cultures lends a level of comfort to working relationships.

When considering acculturation, language is also considered the strongest single predictor of belonging (Arcia, Skinner, Bailey, & Correa, 2001). Josey, Natasha and Harry all work in a company that employs other people who are Deaf. While this may not be an indicator of acculturation, it is an example of bringing to or being in the proximity of one’s culture in the workplace. Chef and Clerc both agree with this paradigm as a possible stanchion for success.

Like my next goal is for Albert, I try for next year, I will send him to somewhere in some kitchen. Work with a couple of Spanish people and they have a Deaf there. They have another Deaf, I found at Marriott kitchen, and the people they work with they are very successful. They are Spanish people. They can speak the language very comfortable. Chef (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

...the biggest problem, I think, that a lot of Deaf people have, is, you know, there's, there's no other Deaf people, you know, all Deaf kids, when they get out of school, they want to work with somebody else who's Deaf. Why? Because I don't want to be *alone* all the Time...I want to have somebody to talk to... Clerc (personal communication, June 4, 2010)

Natural supports in the workplace are, by definition, a give and take between two people [in the workplace] and provide for smooth daily interaction and integration into the work environment (Pacer Center, 2011). While many different kinds of natural supports may be available to someone who is Deaf, they are mentioned often in the data collected for this study. Edwin, who supervises people who are Deaf in the workplace, sees the possibilities in developing “natural supports” in the workplace.

...you know, a few of us actually got together at one point and, and, and tried to get this company to, to, to pay to send us to a class to learn sign language, and then that kind of fizzled out. That was a few years ago, but I'd be willing to do something like that. Edwin (personal communication, September 8, 2010)

Leila, who assists students who are Deaf in the school-to-work transition, has been seeking natural supports for her students for many years.

One of the things that I've tried to do over the years in working with students with disabilities is to try to identify individuals within a certain vendor that may have the signing skills, so it's been kind of helpful to approach it from that point. The only downfall to that, though, is, you know, when students are looking at vendors, it should be their choice, you know, so it's kind of limiting them but, when you're looking at the total

picture in terms of communication, it's a fine line, um, you know, there, and it is ultimately their decision and I think that for our students and our families they, they want to be able to know that, you know, they have a counselor at a particular vendor that is able to sign. That's kind of few and far between. Leila (personal communication, May 24, 2010)

Playing to their Strengths is another code which, along with others, comprises this theme of comfort in the workplace. In particular, one of Josey's responsibilities during each of his shifts at work is to unload an entire tractor-truck full of merchandise. Consider this observational note made on September 8, 2010.

It occurs to me that Josey's task, at least this task, requires no reading and no sorting. It is a visual job, and whether Josey's spacial abilities are inherent or developed because of his experience in this part of the job, it is a strength for Josey, and he is obviously comfortable and confident as he empties the truck. (observation notes)

Another "plus" regarding Deafness is that workers may develop or have more opportunities to focus on work and productivity. Another observer comment made on May 27, 2010, supports this thought.

It occurs to me that the lack of communication can be a blessing in disguise. If you are not communicating, you are working. Laurel was VERY busy working at a competitive pace without distraction. No "water cooler" discussions or wasteful banter. Setting aside the isolation that this brings, Laurel was working hard, and had picked up the cues of the seven other people around her who were also working hard. It is nearing the lunch hour, and Laurel is working at a "rush" pace along with the others in the

kitchen. No distractions and no extraneous talk – just work. Advantage: Laurel.
(observation comment, May 27, 2010)

Still another characteristic of the successful workplace for someone who is Deaf may be feeling that a “red carpet” has been rolled out for their arrival and existence in the workplace. Rosengreen, Saladin & Hansmann (2009) concur with the importance of feeling welcomed, especially by the boss.

Findings related to organizational culture suggest employers play an integral role in establishing an organizational culture based on their own expectations and values related to hearing culture. Hearing culture is the basis for the vast majority of workplaces, although it presents a complex and demanding environment for people who are Deaf and communicate using sign language. (Rosengreen, Saladin & Hansmann 2009, p. 133).

Clerc describes a “red carpet” placement that he made years ago and then had a chance to revisit recently. He describes a robust environment that has completely made the worker who is Deaf feel welcomed.

...his [the employer's] attitude “we are going to find a way to make this work” and he told his guys underneath him...it was a very *male* workplace, with all guys in a very kind of masculine environment, and, and he went to his guys and said “we’re going to make this work. This guy’s comin’ on, he’s one of us, you treat him the same, if your...literally down to everything, if, uh, you know, on Saturday, if everybody’s going to buy tickets to an Orioles game, you by...you make sure that he knows about this and he can buy a ticket, too. I mean, just everything. He is to be treated like everybody else.
Clerc (personal communication June 4, 2010)

For Clerc, this employer's attitude represents an investment in the new [Deaf] hire, and his willingness and insistence in rolling out the "red carpet" for his new worker has yielded success for the whole team at this company. Similarly, an employee's sense of worth in the workplace is probably paramount, and this rolling out of the red carpet may tie into this sense of worth. When the "red carpet" and "sense of worth" codes are combined in this theme, they account for a third of the data harnessed in this category, and leave the impression that their inclusion should be considered as ingredients for success in the workplace for people who are Deaf.

A sense of worth can be a compelling argument for feeling successful in a workplace. Having a sense of worth in one's workplace makes the statement of "I'm needed/wanted here." Natasha has developed a sense of worth in her workplace, even though, from my observations during her shift, she has very little communication with her co-workers. There seems to be a quiet reverence toward her. I had a first-hand glimpse of the buoying of her sense of worth during her third observation.

Natasha is working with clothing today. I ask her if she prefers clothing over boxes – she signs that she "prefers boxes." She walks back to a pallet full of boxes after hanging some blouses on a tall metal two-tiered rolling rack. She walks up to two Hispanic ladies who are studying their scanning "gun." They show it to Natasha and shrug. They point to the screen. Natasha takes the gun, presses a few buttons, and hands it back to them. The gun works. The two ladies smile and laugh – then motion for "high fives" from Natasha. (observation notes, September 21, 2010)

“It occurs to me that a successful ingredient for work is a sense of worth – these ladies have given Natasha a chance to show her knowledge and to feel a sense of worth, regardless of language shortcomings.” (observation notes, September 21, 2010)

A true sense of worth in the workplace is a balance of worker dignity and the ability to establish a sense of self-respect and to appreciate the respect of others (Naus, van Iterson & Roe, 2009). According to these parameters, Natasha has a decent foothold of the positive feelings of worth that may lead to a fulfilling and prosperous experience in her workplace. With a raw number of thirty-nine data responses revolving around “sense of worth,” this is a sub-theme that may warrant further examination as a focal point of employment success for people who are Deaf.

Encouraging Environs in the workplace, on the surface, appear to be self explanatory in their ability to secure encouraging employment prospects for people who are Deaf. Below is an observation by Timson, who is Laurel’s manager at a trendy restaurant where she is receiving work training while in school. It speaks to encouraging environs in the workplace in several ways: through ethnicity, work ethic, longevity, consistency, and aspirations for the future.

And that fact that uh, she’s Latino, and the...we had last year was the same way, Latino, so, for them to come in to an environment and see that everybody in the kitchen, um, is Latino and have been here, you know, three, four years, they’ve been working a long Time here, and to see the responsibility that, you know, she’s seventeen, I believe, and to help out the Latino guys working here, and to see the Latinos here, they work very hard and she sees them every...during the day when she comes in the same people, so I think that helps and benefits her and, you know, is driving her to have goals and dreams. Timson (personal communication, May 27, 2010).

Interpreters: A Call to Morph.

As this study developed, a call surfaced to be more familiar with the role of “interpreter” and to possibly change or modify or “morph” the role of interpreter as it pertains to school-to-work transition efforts on the behalf of people who are Deaf. Currently, interpreters for the Deaf are beholden to a strict Code of Ethics which is akin to remaining objective, confidential, and firm in their role as interpreter for people who are Deaf. Many of the participants in this study have viewed the role of interpreter as either limiting or constricting in their usefulness in S-T-W transition and employment situations. While this theme is comprised of only four of the data code categories that were produced in this study, a statistically significant 133 responses in the data called for a visitation of the field of interpreting as it relates to S-T-W issues revolving around Deafness. The data code categories that comprise this theme are Interpreter Role, Interpreter/Translator, Meetings/Phones, and Language or Disability?

Interpreter roles in S-T-W transitions for people who are Deaf is an issue that, ironically, surfaced on the first day of research for this study. Karol, a Lead Interpreter for the Deaf for Fairfax County Public Schools, brought it up after our interview as we walked back to the office of the school in which she was working.

I think we need to see a change in the role of the interpreter. I really think you’re going to see interpreters expanding their role to interpreter *slash* job coach, or interpreter *slash* mentor, or interpreter *slash* teacher. These students really need support beyond the traditional role outlined by the RID. Karol (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

To support this notion, two of the people who are Deaf in this study appear to have a perspective on interpreters as “explainers” of information as well as communicators of same.

During her interview, Laurel implied that the interpreter's role in the workplace is to *explain* the work.

INTERVIEWER: Do you use an interpreter to communicate at your job site?

LAUREL: The interpreter explains and then I go ahead and do whatever I need to do.

Laurel (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

Similarly, Natasha and Glolinda made remarks during their interviews that lead the researcher to believe that there is a misconception of the role of interpreter for the Deaf as they pertain to the workplace. Natasha remarks, "No, I have no interpreter here. Before, I had one sometimes, like at my internship to explain things, but now, I gesture and get along that way. We gesture and communicate. We write notes back and forth. You know..." (personal communication, September 16, 2010)

Glolinda also reveals the limited use of interpreters, and that the use of interpreters was only at the onset of the job.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And, uh, did you know that when they are in the public school setting, they are entitled to have an interpreter all the Time with them?

GLOLINDA: At the first beginnin'. Yes, they came in and they explained everything to me. Yes, they did.

Glolinda (personal communication, May 28, 2010)

Also, Kristle made mention of the support that she feels she can give to a student who is Deaf that is beyond the bounds of the Code of Ethics that she works by.

I think it's important that we...that's another thing that we instill is confidence in them, now, when they have us every day, Monday through Friday, um, you know, kind of

build that up, and then, when they graduate, hopefully, you know, I mean, and hopefully, It'll, you know, they'll be able to do their job, too...they way they would like to do it... for the few years they're here, we're instilling in them, 'You can do it yourself,' like, what to do next, and also, like, helping their, in their, you know, they can, and confidence, and everything like that. Kristle (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

Finally, Leila, an Employment and Transition representative for students, bluntly states that it would be helpful if interpreters were to be able to be more subjective in their work.

...it's always been my understanding that interpreters for the school system aren't teachers, aren't there to... their only role is to, basically, communicate, so offering opinions and those kinds of things, I guess that would be something that I would like to see changed, because I think that the sign language interpreters that we've had here certainly would be more than willing to, to step up, but their job duties restrict them...Leila (personal communication, May 24, 2010)

There seems to be a misconception as to whether interpreters for the Deaf are interpreters or translators. After reviewing the data, it appears that this confusion exists primarily in the general population, but can also be a source of uncertainty among the Deaf population. Simply stated, translation is the direct verbatim exchange of information from one language to another language. Interpreting, on the other hand, is a bit more nebulous in its construct. Interpreters need to be impartial in what they interpret, but also need to be involved and invested enough to make sure that communication is accurate and successful. According to Marschark, Peterson, and Winston (2005), this role of enhancing and supporting communication places interpreters in awkward positions. Interpreters then need to be more than voice to hand translators of language.

They are communication facilitators, and this role is as important as it is misunderstood. So, while the terms “translator” and “interpreter” are often used interchangeably, there is a decided difference between the two, although this difference is often overlooked or ignored. Debney, an interpreter and teacher for students who are Deaf, explains her interpreter role and how it extends beyond the mere translation of words.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about your role in preparing students who are Deaf for the world of work.

DEBNEY: My role consisted of interpreting and then going back and making sure the student understood instruction and then assisting them in their... in the practice of those uh, the job descriptions. To make sure they understood what the instructions were and they could follow through.

Debney (personal communication, May 18, 2010)

As illustrated above, misconception, confusion, and misinformation are present when addressing the topic of translation versus interpretation of language. The same is true when considering the issue of Deafness. What is the handicap of Deafness? Is it a disability or merely a language barrier? This issue protruded forty times in the data, making this matter a topic for consideration as demanded by this study’s research. While this issue surfaced in many of the interactions with different participants (Deaf and hearing) in this study, nowhere was it more poignant than during an impromptu retail store “huddle” which is a brief team meeting that usually occurs after break time in a shift and is informal, with all parties standing up for the exchange of information. The researcher happened to be observing study participants when one of these meetings occurred at 12:45 am, during the night shift. Stephan, a senior supervisor over all night shift employees, including three people who are Deaf, delivered a message to his

workers. There was no interpreter for the Deaf present, though there was a Spanish translator addressing the largely Hispanic crowd after each phrase delivered. It was at this time that I realized that, during these huddles, there is always a Spanish interpreter supplied. I confirmed this fact with Stephan after the meeting. This is where an “aha” reaction occurred, as identified below.

Language is my focus when I think of this meeting. Then it hits me. *Language*. They have not made an accommodation to provide for the language (ASL) needs of Harry, Josey, and Natasha. Then it really hits me. These supervisors are thinking of the three Deaf employees through the lens of *disability*, not *language*. There is no need for sign language interpretation, because these people know English. Notes can be taken and read. Our culture and society have spent so many years cultivating the “disability” aspect of deafness, that the language barrier that is present seems to be cast to the side, like yesteryear’s empirical data that has been discarded for a new day’s enlightened viewpoint. Not visible is the disability. Not visible is the limited language skills of these three Deaf workers. Not present is an interpreter, because deafness is a disability, not a language barrier. After all, don’t they communicate in *American* sign language? This is an “aha” moment for this researcher. (observation notes, September, 16, 2010)

Perhaps this “language versus disability” issue is borne from decades of work toward transforming the “hidden disability” of Deafness into a visible disability with its own set of accommodations. Accommodations for people who are deaf (small “d”) include but are not limited to the following items.

Reasonable accommodations include telecommunication devices for the deaf (TTYs), amplified telephones, visual alarms, assistive listening systems, visible accommodations to communicate audible alarms and messages, and, for deaf employees who rely on sign language, provision of qualified sign language interpreter services. For some individuals and for some jobs, it may be necessary to have interpreter services available on a regular basis. For other employees or for job applicants, occasional interpreting on an as-needed basis may be sufficient. The ADA requires employers to make sure that deaf employees or job applicants can communicate effectively when necessary. This includes special occasions and meetings, training, job evaluations, and communication concerning work, discipline or job benefits. It also includes regular work-related communication and employee-sponsored benefits and programs.

The ADA also requires reasonable transfers of nonessential job duties. For example, a deaf individual would be qualified for a position with a small amount of telephone responsibility, if these responsibilities could be transferred to another employee or handled with a TTY, a TTY relay system, or other accommodation such as e-mail. The regulation specifically lists these accommodations: Job restructuring; part-time or modified work schedules; reassignment to a vacant position; acquisition or modifications of equipment or devices; appropriate adjustment or modifications of examinations, training materials, or policies; the provision of qualified readers or interpreters; and other similar accommodations for individuals with disabilities. (West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, 2011)

When the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 was passed, the notion of deafness as a disability was broadened and awareness was heightened. As is attested in the above explanation

of accommodations for Deafness, interpreter services are supplemented by no less than ten additional ways to accommodate this disability. Most of the accommodations listed here (West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources) are less costly than extensive or even occasional interpreter use, and perhaps employers in general have given themselves to accommodate deafness in the manner which represents the most economical option for themselves. Not understanding the “capitol D” deafness that may be present, “small d” measures are put into place to accommodate this disability. This seems to be the case for Josey, Harry, and Natasha, where interpreter use has been supplanted by scribbled notes, gesturing, and texting.

The final data category in this theme comprising Meetings/Phones, further illustrates the lack of understanding and communication for employees who are Deaf in the workplace. None of the workplaces that I observed had any TTY devices available or measures in place for interpreting meetings. Any communication in these venues was performed via third parties, who relayed messages to the people who are Deaf. These words regarding phone communication, signed by Laurel, illustrate a daily occurrence for many people who are Deaf in the workplace.

That happens to me a lot. Like the phone was ringing, so I picked it up, and I couldn't hear them, so I hung up the phone, so, you know, I don't know, it's kind of annoying. I can't hear anything, so picking up the phone really is pointless. Some deaf people can hear a little bit, maybe hard-of-hearing, but me, I can't hear anything. Laurel (personal communication, May 20, 2010).

Segregation: It is Pervasive but Understandable.

The third theme revolves around segregation. Data codes such as “No Communication, Misunderstand, Isolation, and Hearing Family” weave together to form a barrier that is difficult to breach for people who are Deaf. While people who are Deaf, physically speaking, blend into

workplaces well, there is still the presence of segregation that is pervasive, and probably was present in Deaf people's lives even before entering the world of work. No Communication and Isolation are part and parcel for the Deaf experience. Illustrated below from the field notes is the realization that a sense of remoteness may be evident in the work place. Laurel's last day of her internship revealed this impression.

A couple of things occur to me during this observation – Nobody has spoken to her in her forty minutes at work and she has approached no one with communication. Another item – she has been working at First Watch for the better part of the school year for two or three days per week (depending on her school “block” scheduling), and there is no fanfare for her final day. She will just leave anonymously. Interesting; perhaps sad, perhaps normalcy for her in what may be a lonely chapter in a hearing world. (observer comment, June 15, 2010)

Included in this theme is the realization that isolation at work is only part of the issue faced by people who are Deaf. Nine out of every ten children who are born deaf are born to parents who are hearing (Deaf Action Center, 2011). This may be true for all of the Deaf participants in this study; that isolation can begin at home and continue at work. Josey tells us in this exchange from his interview:

INTERVIEWER: How do you communicate at home? How do you communicate?

JOSEY: Well, really, growing up I'm just used to, you know, my mom, she speaks fluent Spanish, so, I really don't understand a whole lot of it, so we just try our best to gesture.

INTERVIEWER: Is that good for you?

JOSEY: You know, reading and comprehending, yeah, it is kind of difficult, so, again, you just have to go back to body language, and then you can kind of figure out what's going on. Sometimes my mom will write Spanish down and I don't understand it, you know, she might write down the Spanish translation, and then have it written down in English, and then I'm able to understand that a little better.

Josey (personal communication, September 16, 2010)

Also, Clerc offers a poignant instance of a person who is Deaf falling victim to misunderstanding while training at a Vocational Center.

...we had a student, not very long ago, get very hostile, because he was misunderstanding what we were saying. He interpreted that we were *forcing* him to do something. Presenting options that he thought were mandates, and the interpreter just, you know, she said, 'Stop. May I explain to him what you guys are trying say.' Because he was very upset and his face was red and angry; he wanted to leave the room. And then she was able, because she stepped outside of her role, and was able to explain the difference between 'I'm *telling* you what to do' vs. 'I am *offering* you something.' And she was able to help him with that concept and then he understood what we were saying. It made a big difference. Um, it made a *huge* difference as a matter of fact... Clerc (personal communication, June 4, 2010)

Mind-Set: The Outlook is a Predictor.

It seems that the mind-set of a person who is Deaf and preparing for work or who is entering the workforce much be clear, unbiased, and focused. Such data sets as Trust versus Mistrust, Positive or Negative Attitude, and Humor on the Job represent the Mind-set of the Deaf worker, and this theme is on par with the previous theme of Segregation and the ensuing theme

of Strategies in terms of relevance and responses in the data. Each of these three thematic areas represents about twelve percent of the data pieces, respectively. This seems to be a rather transparent theme, but does the mind-set come from the satisfaction in the work/job or does the work/job create the mind-set of the worker? Harry and Josey, both participants in this study, work at the same place, although they hold different positions and see each other only during breaks. While they are both competent in their work, they are viewed differently in their mind-sets. Josey is viewed as a helpful and cheerful worker. Even when he makes mistakes, there is humor on the job and a positive attitude is displayed by hearing and Deaf workers, as is expressed in the observation below.

In the back room, Josey immediately starts to clear an aisle for pallets to receive boxes from the truck conveyor line. He boards an electric cart that apparently has lift capabilities, and turns it on. He goes about a foot and it stops. He adjusts a knob and starts again. He rolls to the end of the room and turns a bit, but there is not enough room to avoid crashing (lightly) into a couple of red metal carts. He laughs along with a co-worker next to him. His boss, Edwin, is there as well and makes a “ducking” motion in jest. They all laugh and Josey moves on to the next item to be cleared from the aisle.
(observation notes, September 15, 2010)

Josey’s employment status, work ethic, positive demeanor, and humor on the job are making a difference at his work site. While discussing communication on the job, it was mentioned by Edwin, his supervisor, that Josey is even being considered for a promotion.

Well yeah, yeah, and, and, and , and with, and with somebody like uh, with somebody like Josey, I guess, uh, we all really feel that he could perhaps even, that

perhaps he could even be promoted. That might present some unique problems, for him, to communicate to, to, to other people what, what, what needs to be done, but as I said he's, he's very good at it, and uh, I know that the uh, uh, my boss, uh, Wally, is really seriously considering doing something with Josey. Edwin (personal communication, September 8, 2010)

Conversely, a negative mind-set can be disrupting to the successful and comfortable interactions and routines between people who are Deaf and their hearing counterparts in work positions, as is underscored by the notes from this intercourse between myself and Harry's boss, Edwin.

He [Edwin] mentions that last week they had to give Harry a "coaching." He says that this is where they talk about doing the job. Harry had refused to work in an aisle assigned to him – the plastics aisle, which has many heavy items in it. They went to the office, Harry, Edwin, and another "boss," and wrote notes back and forth. They wrote that he has to follow orders from his supervisor. Harry wrote back that he was only scheduled for three days, so he wanted to pick the work he does. The supervisor wrote back that he must follow the orders. Harry wrote back "You crazy hurt." The supervisors looked at each other, not knowing quite what the meaning was or if it was a threat. At that Time, Harry started laughing, which diffused the situation. Harry went to work in the aisle that he was supposed to work in.(observation notes, September 15, 2010)

Throughout my dealings with Harry in this study, which were limited to observations only (he declined an interview, wondering if I could be trusted), he displayed a general lack of

trust for hearing people, as well as supervisors. Harry also made some racial remarks regarding co-workers. In addition, he felt that he was being treated unfairly at work on a regular basis.

Humor on the job can have a way of diffusing the tensions related to the often uncomfortable settings created when hearing and deaf people try to communicate. Minnesota State's Judith Kuster (2005), a certified Speech-Language Pathologist and professor emeritus, views the topic of disability and humor in this way.

Making fun of disability is certainly not funny, but in the process of healing and developing shared understanding, humor can play an important role. Humor also has power to heal and is a good indicator of progress in dealing with the emotional baggage many of our clients and their families carry. Not only can it be appropriate, when they are ready, to lead people to find humor in their personal difficulties, it is also an appropriate treatment goal to help our clients understand humor or develop the skill to share humorous stories. (p. 30).

Perhaps it is in this vein of jesting and indulgence among some of the Deaf as well as hearing people in this study that causes their work interactions and outcomes to build upon positive and bonding relationships based on interaction through humor. It seems that these comedic exchanges can buoy employment situations among the typically strenuous relations that are found between Deaf and hearing people in vocational settings.

Strategies: What is Being Used Now and its Effectiveness.

It was discovered through this study and the data cultivated from this work that there are several strategies for communication between hearing and Deaf people that occur on a regular basis. These include Gesturing as a means of interaction, Demonstration as a learning tool on the

job, and Teaching [hearing] people how to communicate effectively. Each of these strategies was given its own code. These codes account for over ten percent of the data collected, and gesturing in particular was mentioned as a communication method by most of the participants in this study. Gesturing is, therefore, the code in this theme that receives the most attention in this section, for it can be as effective as it is confusing as a communication device. Kristle, an educational interpreter, is confident in this mode of communication between Deaf and hearing individuals. She says, "...if I'm not right there, they know how to gesture. They [deaf students] know how to get things across so clear..." (personal communication, May 20, 2010). Similarly, Ivan, a trainee at a vocational center, suggests gesturing as a solid means of communication, although he claims to be comfortable in writing notes back and forth, as well. "Some [of the workers] know a little bit of sign. I've taught people here [at the work site] how to, you know, use a little bit of sign language and then also to gesture." (personal communication, May 20, 2010). Whether it is an effective tool or not, gesturing is a resource that is relied upon quite heavily, according to the data in this study, and it will therefore be discussed further in the recommendations of this work.

Ivan (above) has mentioned that he has taught his co-workers some signs to use at work. Among the participants in this study who are Deaf, several of them also mentioned teaching hearing people as a strategy to communicate with them. Natasha, who is Deaf, recognizes when someone needs to learn how to communicate with her.

Yeah, if there is a new person that works here and they try to talk to me, I get someone else that knows me and they go over and talk to them and then we can figure out what we're saying. You know, because I'm deaf and they don't understand me, but the people I've been together with can communicate with me and they show the new people

how to gesture with me – they show them, and also writing notes, so we get along that way. (personal communication, September 16, 2010).

The previous statements by Ivan and Natasha illustrate the incumbency upon themselves, *because* they are the minority, to make sure that communication happens, or at least is attempted.

Strategies: What is Not Working Well.

In contrast to the previous theme of communication strategies is the theme of Strategies: What is Not Working Well. While this study endeavors to pave the way for successful employment experiences for people who are Deaf, It may be helpful to highlight the communication strategies that are limited in their effectiveness, therefore, allowing the communication strategist to bypass certain trial and error situations that obstruct clear interaction between hearing and Deaf people.

The specific strategies for communication that are limited in their scope and helpfulness appear to be texting, pen and paper communications, and lip-reading. All of these strategies are compounded by many Deaf people's overconfidence in their own ability (as well as hearing people's ability) to understand each other. Ivan, one student in this study at a vocational center, was very confident in his own abilities to communicate with hearing people.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. How do you communicate at school when you don't have an interpreter? How would you communicate with a hearing person if you didn't have an interpreter?

IVAN: I would write back and forth.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, do you have good writing skills?

IVAN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. How do you communicate at your job site when you do not have an interpreter? So if you have a problem or something at Greenspring and you can't find an interpreter?

IVAN: I would write back and forth.

INTERVIEWER: Writing too? Does that work out pretty well for you?

IVAN: Yeah.

Ivan (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

Similarly, Natasha is confident in her ability to use note writing as an effective means of communication at work.

NATASHA: No, I have no interpreter here. Before, I had one sometimes, like at my internship to explain things, but now, I gesture and get along that way. We gesture and communicate. We write notes back and forth. You know...

INTERVIEWER: Writing is fine for you? English...you can understand fine?

NATASHA: Yeah, sure.

Natasha (personal communication, September 16, 2010).

All of this confidence in the written word as an effective tool for communication carries over to the hearing counterparts of these Deaf workers.

EDWIN: Yeah, so you know, really, all we do is just, like when we do have meetings, you know, we write notes, usually either myself or one of the other team leads will write notes, you know, for the guys (speaking softly). I think it would be a good idea if we could.

INTERVIEWER: Mm hmm. Do you feel like the notes are pretty effective?

EDWIN: It seems so, yeah, yeah, it seems so.

INTERVIEWER: Are the notes written, I mean is it all...a lot of information on a note or is it just paraphrasing and..?

EDWIN: No, no, no, basically when we have meetings, uh, as a group, will, will last, you know, five or ten minutes, and we just uh, we go over if there are any specific problems, so it's basically going to be like a hand-written, one page is usually sufficient. Sometimes it's more, but it's usually only one page or a half page.

Edwin (personal communication, September 8, 2010)

Also, in step with the practice of writing notes as an accommodation is *texting*, a recent breakthrough for communication for all people, which has been adopted by people who are Deaf. Wally, the Head of Logistics in a company that has hired a handful of Deaf workers, acknowledges that texting is used when communicating with people who are Deaf. Regarding "team meetings" at their company, Wally reveals his strategy for communication to include writing and/or texting.

Um, one of my team leaders will be behind me, just constantly writing everything I'm saying. Then we'll either type it up or transport it upstairs and copy it or Josey will give us his phone so he can just read it or just one of them here, they'll just read the notes. Wally (personal communication, September 27, 2010)

Along with texting and note taking, the assumption is usually made that lip reading is a viable form of communication for *all* people who are Deaf. Stephan, an intermediate supervisor for some of the Deaf participants in this study, uses all three of these communication methods.

STEPHAN: Um, I believe, um, I think we could definitely benefit from, uh like particularly, I mean, I can communicate easily with uh, Josey Ramada , and uh, Natasha, sometimes I have uh, difficulty uh, communicating with Harry. As far as like uh, verbal

communication, like It seems like Natasha and Josey can read what I am saying, but even if I try to speak clearly with Harry, most of our uh, communication is with text message.

INTERVIEWER: Uh Huh.

STEPHAN: But if I just try to talk to him, like we immediately use the cell phones.

INTERVIEWER: So you each have your phones and you're texting.

STEPHAN: We'll share a phone, like we'll just go back and forth – communicating through our text messaging.

INTERVIEWER: (Laughing) Okay, and that seems to work out better than, than speech reading, so to speak?

STEPHAN: Yes, for Harry.

Stephan (personal communication, September 16, 2010)

And regarding team meetings, Stephan uses notes or texting to impart information.

Um, one of my team leaders will be behind me, just constantly writing everything I'm saying. Then we'll either type it up or transport it upstairs and copy it or Josey will give us his phone so he can just read it or just one of them here, they'll just read the notes. Stephan (personal communication, September 16, 2010)

As was mentioned in the Review of the Literature for this study, literacy is a question mark for many people who are Deaf, even if they have graduated from high school. For example, even tasks such as searching the internet, which seems to be second-nature for hearing people with almost any reading level, becomes a thorny and complex navigation for people who are Deaf (Smith, 2006, p. 520). With a fourth grade literacy level being touted as an average for *all* people who are deaf (capital "D" or small "d") when they graduate from High School, the

written word may not be the most proper or effective form of communication, especially for people who are culturally and pre-lingually Deaf, as are the subjects in this study.

Perhaps it could be mentioned here that it is ironic that, arguably, texting was popularized by people who are Deaf as a tool for communication. In 2002, the Danger Company, a subsidiary of Microsoft, introduced its “Hiptop” mobile phone, which was tailored to the hearing impaired community by incorporating several key improvements and “data only” plans (Danger Company Home Page, 2011). While texting is popular among the Deaf community, its use as a replacement for signed communication may be a question for further research.

Groundwork: Paving the Way for Success.

At this point in the findings of this study’s research, the theme of Groundwork: Paving the Road for Success characterizes a limited yet vital portion of the data. In this theme, comprised of the codes of Advocacy, Expectations, and Preparation for the “Abyss,” there is compelling information that leads us to believe that the proper foundation for success is not being laid for people who are Deaf that are involved or have been involved in the school-to-work transition. This issue was raised by the Employment and Transition Representatives as well as some of the educational interpreters interviewed for this study. Leila wants more devices in place for people who are Deaf and their employers.

Um, I guess the, the, the first thing that jumps in my mind is maybe some type of pictorial, um, you know, communication, um, device um, that they could use, or being able to express basic needs, um, in terms of you know, asking for help or uh, I’m feeling sick or, you know, some of the more basic um, you know, day to day um, kind of things. Maybe they forgot their lunch money, so they need to be able to communicate with someone, you know, ‘could I borrow money for lunch’ or something like that...

I think that they need more, and I think it's also, um, support not only for the

individual who's Deaf or hearing impaired, but for the employer and the co-workers. Leila (personal communication, May 27, 2011)

Teaching students advocacy skills may be an avenue for increased successes in the workplace. Kristle, a public school educational interpreter, would like to inform students that her role is for communication, thus placing students who are Deaf in positions to empower themselves.

I think, um, we just have to make sure that we have the goal of, you know, when they graduate, they're going to leave and they won't have an interpreter, so we have to remember and keep in mind always, every day, it's like, you have to basically, keep it in mind constantly... So, you know, in the beginning, and that's hard for interpreters, too, like, you, you have to, in the beginning, if it's like a shy student, you have to let them know that 'I'm here for communication, but, it's *your* job, but I'm here for support, but, um this is *your* job, so what *do you* do? Kristle (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

Karol, also an educational interpreter, suggests "backing off a bit" in order to prepare students for the limited amount of interpreter support that they will encounter in the world of work.

We are trying to make the students who are Deaf as independent as possible, which means that, um, once they are comfortable in their work setting, we try to back off or remove ourselves as much as possible and let the students communicate with their co-workers and um, supervisors alone as much as possible. And when necessary when

asked to sign when we see that the students are struggling with communication. Karol (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Melinda, yet another educational interpreter, agrees, and succinctly says, “As interpreters, we try to focus on independence during their Time in the vocational program.” (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Marvin, a Special Education Teacher in a vocational training program, sees the urgency in getting young people, especially young people who are Deaf, to advocate for themselves.

I think they should have more, um, I know that they’re, like I said, I know that they’re supposed to be independent, but I feel that, um, a lot of Times, that independence, um, students, uh, especially this age group are not going to just readily go and ask for as much help as they need. I think they need to be more sometimes pushed on them because, you um, you get somebody like we had this year and he won’t ask for help, I mean, at all. So, if you come from the viewpoint, ‘Well, I’m only going to help him when he needs help,’ when he comes to ask for help, I think he needs to be, he needs to be a little more engaging if he needs some more support there, um, especially to show him how to *gain* that independence. Marvin (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Clerc wants his students to be very frank and open about disability, because employers are “not permitted” to bring it up. He sees the initiation of discussion about disability a weapon for success in getting a job.

Um, a lot of the emphasis I have is on preparing the students to talk comfortably about their Deafness with an employer and to, to educate. As you know, employers can’t ask about...it’s a big elephant in the room...they can’t ask about, uh, disability, but they

know you're Deaf. You come there with an interpreter, um, most people haven't worked with someone who's Deaf before, so the successes that I've had are to get the students to talk about...the employer's worried about 'well what if there's a fire, what if, you know, you fall down,' you know, all these ...

I've found it very successful when the students are very comfortable talking about their Deafness, um, *they* bring it up. 'You're probably concerned about this...oh, you haven't worked with anybody who is Deaf before? Okay you haven't, well let me explain to you...I can use a buddy system, certainly email now, you can...you can text me, um, but for them to share...' And the students always have their way of, you know, they're individuals, so they're going to have maybe different ways of doing things, or what they prefer, but, the fact that they are able to address this with the employer really puts them at ease, and then they're also answering their employers' questions that they can't ask. So it's very comforting and because they brought it up, now they can have a conversation about it...

...it's no problem for me; I've been Deaf my whole life – this is how I deal with this, this is how I deal with that.' Um, it really seems to put the employer at ease... Clerc (personal communication, June 4, 2010)

There is plenty of theory to go around on this theme of "Preparation for the Abyss." Well wishes and thoughts of what *should* be happening abound. The notion of "transition" in the public school system is approached the same way for *all* disability groups, and is not specified or tailored for use be students who are Deaf.

Communication: Who is Answerable for Results?

This theme is borne of only one data code: “Responsibility 4 Interpreters.” This code revolves around the responsibility for garnering interpreters in the work setting. There is no shortage of misunderstanding when it comes to the usage of interpreters at work and who is responsible for making it happen. While this is primarily true for employers of people who are Deaf, this issue of misunderstanding is true for some of the transitioners who are Deaf, as well. During my interview with Laurel, she seemed unaware of how interpreters “show up” at the workplace, as is evidenced by the following two exchanges.

INTERVIEWER: When you do get a job...okay you're going to graduate and get a job. If an interpreter is needed at work, for a meeting, or something important is happening...

LAUREL: Yeah, that's what I'm talking about. Like an interview or a meeting or something that you would need to tell someone something.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you have to tell the boss that it is his or her responsibility to get the interpreter and to pay for the interpreter. You don't have to pay for the interpreter.

LAUREL: I thought I had to. That was my opinion. I didn't know that.

INTERVIEWER: So they really should get an interpreter and you shouldn't have to pay for them.

LAUREL: Ah...

Laurel (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

Also during her interview, she put it more succinctly.

I have to be independent, I have to do things myself, I have to go to work myself, you know, I have to do it all by myself. The boss is not going to pay the interpreter. I have to pay the interpreter myself. Because I need an interpreter because I'm Deaf. That's only my opinion, though. Laurel (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

Debney, an educational interpreter and special education support staff, has personal and professional experience in the matter of interpreter procurements. Her son routinely experiences interpreter issues on the job, and she has also been asked to help out with interpreting after students have transitioned and secured jobs.

DEBNEY: Once in a while there's a problem. Most of the time they comply with... once in a while there is a problem with...they don't know how to find them because there is a scramble at the end. It can get messy, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Where is he working?

DEBNEY: He works for a graphic um, a sign company, and when they have meetings it is hard for them to come up with somebody at the last minute.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you have any questions about this topic or opinions about transitioning students who are Deaf?

DEBNEY: It would be nice... I've had several students come back after they've graduated and have lost the interpreter services... they've wanted me to accompany them, uh, they don't understand that once they graduate, you know, we're not in the picture anymore, and they try to get us because they feel comfortable with us and they don't really want somebody new from the outside,

INTERVIEWER: So, having students understand more about how the interpreting uh, setup works in terms of, "Gee, these are people that get paid..."

DEBNEY: Yes, yes. They actually make a living (laughter).

INTERVIEWER: It's kind of an unreal world they live in where they think an interpreter is just going to show up all the time.

DEBNEY: Right. Exactly. Well said! (laughter)

Debney (personal communication, May 18, 2010)

Similarly, Clerc has been asked to interpret for workers even though he is not a professional interpreter. His only qualification to interpret is that he has a sister who is Deaf and he knows ASL. While he is probably competent to interpret, it is not his responsibility, and the employer should not be placing Clerc in this awkward position. In the following case, which was discovered during our interview, Clerc was asked to interpret in lieu of an interpreter, and was solicited by the employer and the employee who is deaf, as Clerc knew these people well, and they trusted him. Clerc, in his awkward position, did feel indebted to them because of the investment that this worksite has with the Vocational Center where Clerc works.

CLERC: ...the [hotel's] been terrific to us. That's the kind...they're huge, they're you know, an international corporation, um, but don't know that they need to get a certified interpreter for, you know, a student who's, or a person who's got a grievance. Uh, you know... and I know they have an ADA compliance officer. This is...this is not a 'mom and pop shop.' And, and they still don't understand, so, you've got quite a...

INTERVIEWER: Did you bring it up to them?

CLERC: I had said, I felt strongly that they should have a certified interpreter, and I wasn't...Yeah, and I've known this woman[work site liaison] for five years, so I explained that to her, and she didn't quite understand, and I said 'I really feel strongly that the person, the Deaf person, should know this.' Of course, he [Deaf worker] knows

me because he sees me on the job site, so he's like 'Ahh, Clerc, that's fine.' Which is...not what I wanted him to say. I wanted him to say "No, I want a certified interpreter." Clerc (personal communication, June 4, 2010)

Finally, a large retail corporation which has hired a handful of people who are Deaf, does not comply with ADA recommendations for reasonable accommodation, even when hiring these folks, as is attested by Josey, who has been working there for five years.

INTERVIEWER: Before they hired you, did you have an interpreter for your interview?

JOSEY: No, there was no interpreter. We did a lot of writing, and it went pretty smooth, I mean...

Josey (personal communication, September 16, 2010)

Stephan, an intermediate level manager for a major nationwide retail chain, was quite unfamiliar with making communication accommodations for people who are Deaf, such as his Josey, his employee, as we find below.

Actually, I wasn't even aware about anything of the policy as far as communicating, I didn't realize that they were allowed to have uh, I, I'm not saying that they weren't allowed, I just I've never known them to have any interpreter. I wasn't sure, I didn't know the policy about it at all, actually. Stephan (personal communication, September 16, 2010)

Stephan's boss, Wally, was also only vaguely familiar with proper ADA protocol when working with people who are Deaf.

Um, we knew that, uh, whenever they needed it we had certain people, we had numbers and people we could call and have people come in here. I'm not sure if all of them, but I know a couple of the guys that have worked here have used interpreters for orientation when they first came here. Wally (personal communication, September 27, 2010)

During my time observing and interviewing at this work location, I had come to find out that there have been five or six people who are Deaf that have worked there in the last five or six years, yet "a couple of guys that have worked there have used interpreters," according to Wally. It seems that they might be more inclined to utilize interpreters via request of the worker than being proactive in securing communication professionals for interviews and meetings.

Glolinda, who was Ivan's supervisor during his time at a training work site, mentions that an interpreter "explained" things to her, but was not aware that an interpreter could or should be used in a work setting.

GLOLINDA: At the first beginnin'. Yes, they [interpreters] came in and they explained everything to me. Yes, they did.

INTERVIEWER: And did you know that when Ivan finally gets out into the real world, he's not going to have an interpreter – only for meetings and important things like that.

GLOLINDA: No, no. No sir, I did not know that.

Glolinda (personal communication, May 28, 2010)

The obligation for hiring interpreters is the responsibility of the employers. The people in this study who are Deaf were largely unknowledgeable about the mandate of interpreter support

in the work place. Perhaps becoming armed with this knowledge is something to consider when preparing students for the school-to-work transition.

Peers: The Merit of Equals.

While conducting this research, I was fortunate enough to come in contact with a company that has concurrently hired more than one person who is Deaf. Further, some of the data collected suggests that some of the people who are Deaf in this study have friends at work. This theme is comprised of two data codes, “Friends at Work” and “Where 2 or More” [are gathered] and only represents about 5% of the data responses collected, but may be an essential component to creating successful and meaningful working conditions for people who are Deaf. While work personnel are often random groups of people brought together for a larger purpose, it may be encouraging for people who are Deaf to show up and be productive on the job if they have friends or [Deaf] peers at the work site. At the very least, this research revealed that a work situation may be strengthened when supported by peers in the workplace.

Josey, one of three people who are Deaf working at a retail store, seems to have some friends at work and is aware of the importance of working with friends and peers and the feeling of belonging and comfort that this situation brings to the workplace. The fieldnotes below emphasize friendship at work.

Soon, a large associate (man) shows up. I have not seen him before, but he taps Josey on the shoulder and shrugs. Josey shrugs back and they clap each other on the back.

Josey turns back to me and I ask him about the associate (the large one) whom I had not seen before, but seemed to have good rapport with Josey. I ask him if they are friends. He says “Yes,” that he “lives near me and we play basketball together.”

Josey (observation notes, September 16, 2010)

During an observation of Natasha, she had an experience that illustrates the value of peer relationships at work. This was also mentioned during the discussion of the theme of Support: The Value of Comfort. This piece of data fits into several themes in this project, and it supports well the notion of working with friends and peers.

She [Natasha] walks up to two Hispanic ladies who are studying their scanning “gun.” They show it to Natasha and shrug. They point to the screen. Natasha takes the gun, presses a few buttons, and hands it back to them. The gun works. The two ladies smile and laugh – then motion for “high fives” from Natasha. (observation notes, September 21, 2010)

Even Harry, who participated in this study and has been noted for having poor relationships with supervisors and peers, exhibited a few times during his observations that he works at developing friendships at work. The following observation, although fleeting, recognizes that friendships at work are sought and valued. “...an associate with a gun walks by and Harry points his “gun” at the man in mock shooting – the man shoots back. They smile at each other and continue working – this was a communication in passing.

Harry (observation notes, September 21, 2010)

Chef, who is a public school teacher in for students with disabilities, recommends that people who are Deaf find work situations with their peers.

...if we put Albert there with this [Deaf] group, that would be very helpful for Albert, and he work very hard over there. And we will be very successful there.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so looking for places that already have someone who is Deaf there to sort of join in...

CHEF: Yes, to join in there together. And he will not have some rejection or something like that. They already know about Deaf people. They been trained or they have some knowledge about that. When they go there, it is not something new over there. And that is what my goal is for Albert for next year.

Chef (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Perhaps the attitude of this employer, who compelled his employees to help the Deaf worker fit in, is an appropriate one, for it seemed to cultivate true friendships in the workplace. Clerc recounts this development for one of his past students.

Um, and I don't know if it was just dumb luck or, or...the, the, that employer figured it out, but just again, like, you know, 'if you go...to see an orioles game, you make sure that he gets a ticket. Not isolating him. Including him in everything,' which, of course, is the biggest problem... Clerc (personal communication, June 4, 2010)

Interpreter Support: Opinions, Views, and Beliefs.

A central subject of this study revolves around interpreter support for people who are Deaf who are either entering the work force or who have recently entered the workforce. It was fitting, then to include questions in the semi-structured interviews regarding the opinions of the participants in this study as they pertain to interpreter support. Most of these interpreter related questions were posed to the professionals and supervisors and co-workers of people who are Deaf. There were also questions posed regarding supports or strategies for communication with people who are Deaf that might be used in lieu of proper or extensive interpreter support, as it seems that interpreter support, across the board, is lacking or neglected or overlooked in the

workforce. From these questions, two data categories, “More [Interpreter] Support” and “Less [Interpreter] Support” were formed and comprise the theme of “Interpreter Support: Opinions, Views, and Beliefs.”

When referencing interpreter support and the need for more or less for people training for or in the workforce, the responses were split somewhat evenly. There seem to be two camps regarding interpreter support in the work place. Some feel that more interpreter support would be a plus, while others feel that less interpreter support is the way to go. The reasoning for this split seems to be that less support would encourage people who are Deaf to grow in their abilities to communicate with hearing people because of their struggles. Marvin, who teaches students who are Deaf in a vocational training setting, would like to see *more* support in the workplace.

I think they should have more support initially, just like, you know, in an intensive job coach, because they will be getting a job coach to learn, you know, to do the job, to have the skills, but I think that they could probably fade that out a little quicker and just say, you know, ‘This is the cutoff.’ and just cut ‘em off. I think that they could give them a little support initially, on the job. They don’t have to do a lot by themselves, but I think initially, I don’t think they need to say, ‘Okay, you are now away from the school system and you have no support.’ Marvin (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

The other camp recognizes a need for more interpreter support. Julie, who is also a teacher of students who are Deaf in a vocational training setting, sees a need to prepare students who are Deaf for the eventuality of experiencing a void of interpreters in the workplace.

It's ridiculous that they would get an interpreter all the Time, when, they're going to go out and get a job, and nobody's going to hire them if they need to have an interpreter with them. Uh, the cost for that would just be astronomical and it would make it not really worth their Time to hire our students. So, we don't want to make them less advantaged; we want to make them more advantaged in the community, so we should be training them how to use their other skills; how to heighten their sense of sight, touch, smell, you know, and everything else, um, to be more functional and more independent, too. Julie (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

The law requests (demands) higher standards than these. However, *enforcement* of the ADA is weak. Because of this, the Deaf culture may be in for more of the same low response rate when it comes to interpreter use as designated and called for in the ADA of 1990.

Outliers: Data Worth Mentioning.

The following pieces of data were captured during the research phase of this work. While they are not included in any of the themes of this study, they are worth mentioning, and became a theme unto its own, especially since some of the data here may be considered "rich" in content and therefore significant for this undertaking.

Laurel, who is Deaf and training for work, suggests that eye contact is a communication method that assists her in succeeding in the workplace.

INTERVIEWER: Are there any other ways that you communicate? Gesturing, writing, is there anything else I need to know?

LAUREL: Eye contact, stuff like that. We look at each other and try to figure out what's going on. Make eye contact, look around.

Laurel (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

Stephan agrees with eye contact as being important to communication, and believes “if you could speak clearly enough to them, they can uh, they just, look at them in the eye and speak clearly uh, they can usually pick up on what you’re saying...” (personal communication, September 16, 2010)

Glolinda made eye contact with Ivan during our observations as well. She also suggests something as simple as looking for a smile between workers and supervisors. Another piece of data from Ivan’s observation is that he does the same jobs every day, with only some variation. Routine, or, conversely, the freshness of new variations in work may be influences upon successful work experiences.

Working in tandem with another person – a tangent to the “natural support” theme, was observed in Ivan’s workplace, as well. Josey also mentioned body language as a step to increase communication or understanding. “[Communication] is kind of difficult, so, again, you just have to go back to body language, and then you can kind of figure out what’s going on.” (personal communication, September 16, 2010)

Julie, a teacher in a vocational center, suggests using amplification (hearing aids), because “the more tools you can put in your toolbox, the more you can give yourself, um, an advantage...and that’s not just in human capital, but in, you know, in materials and equipment.” She also states that the current slow economy may be effecting the hiring of people who are Deaf, and in turn, contracting with interpreters to communicate with them.

I would hate to think is that they would be less employable because of their, you know, because they would have to hire a second person, you know, to work with them all the Time. That would be a deterrent for agencies and companies, I mean, if there was

some sort of incentive to hire Deaf people with an interpreter, um, and then somehow financially that all came through that would be wonderful, but, especially in the economy that we're in right now, it just seems like it would deter employers. Julie (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

Karol, who is the Lead Education Interpreter in her public school system, and characteristically is a very high energy person, was brainstorming about communication strategies during our interview.

How can we, how can we communicate with somebody who is hearing that works with us. Can we point, can we write notes, can we draw pictures, can we have flip chart on our belt of the pictures that are jobs we are supposed to do. I think that that is some area of improvement that we could have. (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Clerc suggests creative funding in the workplace for the sake of hiring interpreters, or tapping into larger corporations to hire people who are Deaf because they can "afford" it.

You know, I've gone to plenty of places where there aren't any Deaf people working, so if someone could figure out a system where, okay, you know, we're, we're going to put our nickels and dimes for our tax money into this kitty and when someone needs an interpreter, we'll be able to pull from that. Uh, that would be wonderful, or a corporation, you know, a *large* corporation that, that, that is able to afford it... Clerc (personal communication, June 4, 2010)

Leila, one of two Employment and Transition Representatives in this study, advocated twice during her interview for some kind of pictorial or communication device to be used in the workplace to augment communication between Deaf and hearing people.

Edwin, a supervisor in a major retail chain, suggests keeping a check on facial expressions, as they can lead to impressions from hearing people that may be erroneous.

EDWIN: Yeah, and there are some people that are, it's like, it's like the young lady Natasha, uh, I think she did work she did work during the day, and um, she wasn't very popular...

INTERVIEWER: Hmm.

EDWIN: ...because people think she had some kind of uh, kind of attitude I guess... a bad attitude. We all found her delightful, but she's kind of funny, she has this habit of when you, when, when, when you're trying to communicate to her, she like, if you say or do something and it's kind of silly, she'll make a face. This face looks like one of those (makes a sour face). And, and she had a hard time, she had a hard time with some of the people that she worked with, but now, you know, working over night, she is another person that is an extremely hard worker.

Edwin (personal communication, September 8, 2010).

It is important not to dismiss these "outliers" in the study at hand, as they are gleaned from a great variety of people associated with the topic of interpreter use in the public schools and on the job. Osborne and Overbay (2004), researchers in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at North Carolina State University, urge researchers to consider the power of outliers.

As a researcher casts a wider net and the data set becomes larger, the more the sample resembles the population from which it was drawn, and thus the likelihood of

outlying values becomes greater. We all know that interesting research is often as much a matter of serendipity as planning and inspiration. Outliers can represent a nuisance, error, or legitimate data. They can also be inspiration for inquiry. Before discarding outliers, researchers need to consider whether those data contain valuable information that may not necessarily relate to the intended study, but has importance in a more global sense. (Osborne & Overbay, 2004).

Conclusion

The participants in this study all have a stake in the successful school-to-work transition and positive work outcomes for people who are Deaf. While some of the participants in this study were Deafness professionals, others were included on a more personal and purposive levels, as they themselves are Deaf. Teachers want to see their charges become well adjusted and prosperous adults. Interpreters for the Deaf want to know that their work is accurate and meaningful in spite of the limitations they sometimes face when trying to impart the spoken and signed word between hearing and Deaf people. Employers want to make sure that their employees, Deaf and otherwise, are productive and valued member of the company team. Even society as a whole values the ethic of including people with disabilities in the workforce, as opposed to seeing these people on welfare and therefore taxing the economy through unemployment and other entitlement programs. It seems that the stake in getting people into the workforce is one that we all have a hand in, and with the unemployment rate among the Deaf at 25% (Houtenville, 2003), this is a particularly deprived population that is in need of answers and results oriented research and practice.

All of the participants in this study offered rich and varied input into the issue of interpreter use in public schools and in the workplace. While some subjects were drawing from

relatively shallow wells of experience with this issue, many of the subjects derived their responses and input from many years of work experiences. In the case of the subjects in this study who are Deaf, their input is drawn from lifetimes of experience regarding interpreter use and communication methods with hearing people.

The data represents some pieces that may seem typical or logical in their usefulness, while others were fresh, novel, creative, and even innovative in their utility. The following chapter will reduce the findings of this study to chunks of functional and sound observations, while also examining the limitations of this study. Finally, recommendations for further research will be presented for examination.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

This concluding chapter will focus upon the guiding questions of this research work. After a condensed and concise summary of the study, conclusions will be offered that have surfaced from visiting the guiding questions as well as the data gathered over the past nine months. Discussing the limitations of this study will follow. Lastly, recommendations for further research will be proposed for future examination of this vexing topic of study.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study research was to investigate the use of interpreters in vocational programs for people who are Deaf and how the use of interpreters impacts these students when they enter the world of work, where they find that the use and availability of interpreter services is usually scant or non-existent. In addition, this study sought to incorporate the experiences of people who are Deaf as well as deafness professionals in a effort to find ways to improve opportunities for success in employment for people who are Deaf, as they are now enduring a unemployment rate of 25% (Houtenville, 2003), which is roughly two-and-a-half times the national unemployment rate. The guiding research questions resulting from the focus of this study are as follows:

- 1) How can interpreter use be modified in public school settings in anticipation of the shortfall of interpreter availability in the workplace?
- 2) In a vocational training setting, what role should interpreters play in the preparation for employment of students with Deafness?
- 3) In a work setting, does more interpreter support lead to more successful employees who are Deaf?
- 4) If interpreters are not available in the workplace, what natural supports would help to

ensure success at work for people who are Deaf?

In order to obtain data to address the focus of this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with several different target groups. Each participant of this study was interviewed once, and the lengths of the interviews ranged from 15 minutes to 50 minutes. First, interviews were completed with students who are Deaf and training for work in vocational educational centers within public school settings. Second, interviews of educational interpreters were conducted. Third, interviews with teachers who serve students who are Deaf were completed. Interviews with public school system professionals who place people who are Deaf in jobs (Employment and Transition Representatives) were also performed. Finally, interviews with people who are Deaf who have recently transitioned to the workforce were completed, along with interviews from their supervisors. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher, and interviews with participants who are Deaf were videotaped and transcribed by the researcher. It should be noted that the videotapes were also voice interpreted by two educational interpreters for the deaf, in order to “triangulate” the interactions and produce and scribe more thorough, accurate, and definitive interview responses.

To complement the rich material gained from the interview process, each study participant who was Deaf was observed by the researcher three times for about a half hour for each observation. The observations took place in work settings, both for student work trainees and people already in gainful employment situations. Observation notes were taken in a discreet manner during the observations and then transcribed within 12 hours of the observation. Interviews, observations, and field notes were kept as candid as possible in an effort to include any and all opportunities for fresh, novel, creative, or innovative information that might lead to advances in employment opportunities for people who are Deaf.

Research Methodology and Data

The method of research chosen for this study was qualitative in nature because, as was stated earlier in this work, formal communication assessments between hearing and Deaf people “fall short in assessing real-life conditions, because they cannot anticipate or account for the many contextual permutations within which the targeted behavior or event is to be evaluated.” (Foster & MacLeod, 2003, p. 128) With this in mind, it was unpredicted and original data that was hoped for in this study, because fresh, innovative and revealing information might then be utilized to understand and more effectively work with difficult employment transitions and work/communication inequities that now appear to be the norm in vocational outcomes for people who are Deaf.

The approximately 180 pages of data collected were parsed into 34 different codes for consideration. These codes were then analyzed for thematic consistencies, and the result was eleven themes for consideration in addressing interpreter and employment issues of people who are Deaf.

Literature

The Review of Research for this study sought to gain perspectives on Deafness in the workplace on several levels. Initially, a review of the prevalence of Deafness was determined in order to gain a point of reference as to the incidences of Deafness in the workplace that one might expect to encounter. It was found that upwards of 31.5 million people (Kochkin, 2006) in the U.S. have a hearing loss, and that approximately 300,000 to 500,000 of these people use ASL to communicate (Costello, 2008).

Most of the studies found in the literature do not distinguish between people who have hearing losses and people who are Deaf (using sign language & have a cultural identity to

deafness). What was discovered, however, is that employers who consider hiring people who are Deaf have largely superficial concerns regarding communication, safety, and working with machines. People who are Deaf in the workplace have their own set of employment concerns including hiring, reasonable accommodation, discharge, harassment, training, promotion, testing, receiving instructions/supervision, department/staff meetings, in-service or training activities, performance evaluations, socializing with co-workers, and work-related social functions (Scherick, 1996).

It was also underscored through the literature that participation in the workplace, for people who are Deaf, includes integration, acceptance, communication, and comfort (Connolly, Rose, & Austen, 2006). Without these characteristics available in the workplace, people who are Deaf will likely continue to find transition from school to the world of work stressful and unfulfilling and issues revolving around this topic will remain largely misunderstood and underestimated.

The review of literature vis-à-vis the guiding questions revealed intricate insight into the field of Deafness and transition. Under consideration for guiding this work were questions revolving the shortfall of interpreters and how to prepare for this eventuality, interpreter roles in preparing students who are Deaf for employment, if indeed, more interpreter support in the workplace breeds success for employees who are Deaf, and, in lieu of interpreter support in the workplace, what natural supports could be implemented to ensure success for workers who are Deaf.

Regarding modifying interpreter to prepare for workplace interpreter shortfalls, one school of thought in the literature suggests that empowering students and equipping them for a world of work that is largely sans interpreters is the way to go. One particularly dynamic

program stresses preparing for interviews and filling out resumes, and offers an “ambush interview day” (Angerth, 2009) to help the students prepare for what they will face in the community after their S-T-W transition. The mindset is that there is too much dependence on interpreter use, and that students/workers, through their reliance on interpreters, do not acquire the skills development necessary to responsibly communicate their needs in the workplace. To this end, Roberson (2009) suggests turning the tables around in the public schools by having interpreter needs/use initiated by students, so that they can get a better handle on being responsible and aware of their own interpreter and communication needs.

Two other thoughts regarding modifying interpreter use are to use the ITP (Individualized Transition Plan) as a tool to foster self advocacy and initiation skills that will be needed for the future, and to look toward technology to supplant some interpreter use. The ITP has traditionally been a tool for preparing students for transition to school or work, but may have been underutilized as an avenue to address specific needs for communication that are salient and specific to individual needs. Since this process starts at age fourteen, a student who is Deaf would have upwards of eight years in which to address and plan for communication and self advocacy needs after transitioning (Bowe, 2003).

Technology may be more endearing for school systems to embrace, as opposed to procuring and paying for interpreters. CD-Roms can deliver material to large audiences and can be reviewed for clarity. Students who are exposed to this medium for learning in school will then be able to offer employers an alternative to costly and cumbersome interpreting dealings. Especially when CD-Roms offer content delivered by someone who is Deaf, this medium is especially useful not only as a tool for learning, but as a way to view Deaf role models concurrently (Davis, 1999).

Concerning vocational training of people who are Deaf, Interpreter roles need to be relaxed and expanded (Classroom Interpreting, 2011). Following a strict Code of Ethics no longer fits too well with a vocational training model. It is difficult to avoid being an influence on someone who is Deaf when one interprets to them daily, and instead of shunning the role of influencer, it should be celebrated and formalized by having interpreters become part of the educational team. In this way, strategies for effectively utilization of interpreter services as well as strategies for success or survival without interpreters could be addressed in a more empirical fashion. Further, interpreters could assume the role of mentor for students who are Deaf (Foster & MacLeod, 2004). Their role as communication liaison can equip them to have a more integral role in the development of transitioning students who are Deaf including advocate, advisor, role model, and goal setter.

Finally, regarding interpreter roles in the school setting, family involvement cannot be ignored as a factor for success (Garay, 2003). We have learned that most people who are Deaf are born to hearing parents. This juxtaposition lends itself to additional areas of social isolation and misunderstanding and frustration for people who are Deaf. Not only is communication a struggle at school, but at home there are communication gaps, as well. Educational interpreters could expand their roles to include seemingly peripheral areas that include family life, including family interactions that are casual and formal in nature, and may assist in the proper social and vocational and familial adjustment of people who are Deaf and transitioning from S-T-W.

Arguably, the most intriguing of the guiding questions revolves around the query of whether or not increased interpreter use in the workplace leads to more success for employees who are Deaf. This guiding question could stand alone as a dissertation work to be pondered. What was discovered is that the plentiful or scant use of interpreters in the workplace is almost a

non-issue. According to Wells (2008) and Kyle (2000), the key to workplace success for people who are Deaf revolves around workplace interactions on an informal level, and that communication between Deaf and Hearing employees, while often cumbersome and ill-fated without interpreter use, was a success if there were efforts made by hearing people to communicate with them. This effort lead to feelings of worth, confidence, respect, and value for the employees who were Deaf. On the continuum of accommodation, this strategy would appear to be both cost-effective *and* helpful in building successful work environs and human capital.

Another strategy for success in the workplace for people who are Deaf is to seek out “Deaf-friendly” places in which to work. Trudy Suggs, a Deaf woman born to Deaf parents, suggests an “Angie’s List” for the internet that may showcase “Deaf-friendly” places to work or patronize. Some “Deaf friendly” companies unearthed in this literature review include Lenscrafer, Marriott, Hardees, UPS, and Federal Express are but a few companies who have hired and worked successfully with people who are Deaf.

Finally, it was found that experiencing, at least periodically, exposure to trainings, meetings, or other interactions lead by people who are Deaf leads to greater comfort levels at work (Long & Beil, 2005). Not relying on or depending upon interpreter use was a liberating experience for Deaf employees, and caused less strain and angst regarding communication.

The final guiding question asks about natural supports for workers who are Deaf as a help toward success in the workplace in lieu of interpreter support. Hiring, coordinating, and paying for interpreters as a recurring accommodation for people who are Deaf can be a struggle for employers (Tucker, 1997). Natural supports are less costly and can be more effective in everyday communication and integration. Such ideas as mentorship, diversity training, ASL classes, humor, giving people who are Deaf more time to respond (Garay, 2003), and investing

time and effort into communication are all natural supports that can help ensure success in the workplace for people who are Deaf. On the surface, these strategies seem like common courtesies that would be extended to all employees, but these natural supports go below that surface to extend to people who are deaf a welcoming and inviting work environment.

Perhaps the most powerful natural support would be for a Deaf worker to have hearing co-workers who can also use ASL. While this may happen periodically by design, it is likely an arbitrary and capricious occurrence, and according to the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (2011), should not be relied upon as a support in the workplace. Instead, employees who are Deaf need to create their own supports in the workplace. Being the minority in most work places, people who are Deaf need to shoulder the onus to show enthusiasm, respect, arrive on time, be part of the team, follow deadlines, volunteer for tasks, and be friendly and positive. And it wouldn't hurt to dress appropriately for the job and follow the workplace rules. Ironically, these are some of the very traits that are sought in all employees, not just people who are Deaf.

Participants

The participants in this study were chosen by the researcher in a purposive sampling, as the criterion for inclusion included being pre-lingually deaf, no intelligible speech skills or particular strength in speech-reading, cultural identification, and the use of ASL as a primary language.

Additional participants in this study were the result of snowball sampling, and were comprised of deafness professionals and co-workers of people who are Deaf. All of the participants in this study were unique, some offering fresh perspectives gained from a limited experiential base within this realm, while others had career-long, or seasoned perspectives upon

which to draw for their input into this study. All input was considered to be sincere, thoughtful, pertinent, and valid. No data was discarded for fear of impertinence.

Discussion

Through interactions with and observations of the participants in this study, several points of discussion were discovered that may enable the reader to gain more insight into the phenomenon of dichotomy between interpreter use in the public school system versus the use of interpreters in the work place. Among these points of discussion were complying with ADA regulations, misunderstanding of the responsibility for providing interpreter services in the workplace, preparing people who are Deaf for the S-T-W transition, changing interpreter roles, and workplace environments.

Complying with ADA Regulations

It appears that, at the time of inception of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which was signed into law by George H.W. Bush, the law's promise was embraced by people within the disability community. This was evidenced in then President Bush's words at the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act on July 26, 1990.

Together, we must remove the physical barriers we have created and the social barriers that we have accepted. For ours will never be a truly prosperous nation until all within it prosper. Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down. Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down (Miller Center Home Page, 2011).

Based upon the observations from this study, physical barriers to employment such as wheelchair ramps, elevators, wider halls, and fire alarms with flashing lights and other tangible

accommodations for people with disabilities that make companies compliant with the ADA have largely been implemented, at least by larger corporations in the community. In principle, the ostensible and material changes have been made. In truth, three of the participants of this study were hired by a major retail chain, and this fact makes that company a champion of diversity and a champion of civil rights for people with disabilities, and in this example, of people who are Deaf.

The ADA is based on a basic presumption that people with disabilities want to work and are capable of working, want to be members of their communities and are capable of being members of their communities and that exclusion and segregation cannot be tolerated. Accommodating a person with a disability is no longer a matter of charity but instead a basic issue of civil rights. (Disability Rights, Education, and Defense Fund, 2011)

Unfortunately, while the more noticeable or “tangible” changes have been made to accommodate people with disabilities in the workplace, the ADA requires that employers go beyond the physical manifestations for the ADA when complying. For people who are Deaf, this may include the regular use of interpreters in the workplace. Accommodations that are more readily seen in the workplace are open and closed captioning, transcription services, written materials, telephone handset amplifiers, assistive listening devices, telephones compatible with hearing aids, closed caption decoders, note takers, telecommunication devices for the deaf, videotext displays, qualified interpreters, and other effective methods of making orally delivered materials available to the Deaf and people who are hard of hearing (Disability Law Center, 2011). Sadly, it seems that the accommodations being made are for people who have *hearing losses*, and not for people who are *Deaf*. When reviewing the extensive list of accommodations for the deaf and hard-

or-hearing above, only note taking and written materials were noticed during this study as accommodations being made for Deaf employees. Conjecture would lead this researcher to believe that many accommodations for people who are deaf involve expenditures that are incurred once, i.e. Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), compatible telephones, closed captioning decoders, flashing fire alarms, and the like. These are one-time expenditures and can be used over and over again. The stumbling block with utilizing interpreters is that they must be arranged ahead of time, are costly, and can be tricky to work with, if one has not utilized interpreter services in the past.

Compliance with the ADA is probably desired by most employers. The discussion here leads me to believe that full compliance for people who are Deaf, i.e. through interpreter use, has not been achieved in the workplace.

Responsibility for Providing Interpreter Services

Fully sixty-six data references among the twenty participants in this study revolved around the nature of “who is responsible for providing interpreter services in the workplace?” A participant in particular who is Deaf and has yet to enter the workplace relayed great confusion over this question. Laurel, who has a great work ethic and wants to be independent, felt that, when an interpreter is needed at work, that it is her responsibility to secure one.

INTERVIEWER: Well, right now, you have interpreters all the time. When you get a job, you will not. Is that fair?

LAUREL: Because...it's not fair for deaf anyway because of all the hearing. We sort of have to help each other. I understand. I understand what you mean, though. I mean, I don't want to have to pay the interpreter to keep coming. I have to be independent, I have to do things myself, I have to go to work myself, you know, I have to do it all by myself. The boss is not going to pay the interpreter. I have to pay the

interpreter myself. Because I need an interpreter because I'm deaf. That's only my opinion, though (personal communication, May 20, 2010).

Interestingly, the responsibility for securing interpreters for work should not be a discussion point between people who are Deaf and their employers. Certainly, it may behoove employees who are Deaf to trigger their supervisors as to when they would like to have one, but the responsibility for hiring interpreters for meetings, trainings, hiring, etc. is definitely the responsibility of the employer, as mandated by the ADA. One hates to run to the law each time that the lack of communication becomes an issue, but perhaps that is what is will take for employers to become accustomed to anticipating for the need for and securing interpreter services for their employees who are Deaf.

To highlight what seems to be the current understanding of employers regarding usage of interpreters at work, only one employer, Glolinda, claimed ignorance of the law in terms of securing interpreters in the work place.

INTERVIEWER: And did you know that when Ivan finally gets out into the real world, he's not going to have an interpreter – only for meetings and important things like that.

GLOLINDA: No, no. No sir, I did not know that.

Glolinda (personal communication, May 28, 2010)

Of the five employers that were interviewed for this study, four of them were aware that interpreter use was something to be considered for employees who are Deaf, and two of the employers seemed to feel that their purpose in securing interpreters was to follow “corporate” guidelines, although they largely were unaware of what the corporate guidelines are for

supplying interpreters on the job. Stephan, in particular, probably felt as though he was painted into a corner when asked about interpreter use in his workplace.

INTERVIEWER: Um, now, did you know that when people who are Deaf get jobs, like here at Target, that they are only entitled to an interpreter during meeting and things like that, or being hired, and so forth.

STEPHAN: Actually, I wasn't even aware about anything of the policy as far as communicating, I didn't realize that they were allowed to have uh, I, I, no saying that they weren't allowed, I just I've never known them to have any interpreter. I wasn't sure, I didn't know the policy about it at all, actually.

Stephan (personal communication, September 16, 2010)

Along with Glolinda, the above statement by Stephan seems to indicate a certain ignorance of the law; that the requirement for use of interpreters might be on the personal or corporate level and not the Federal level, as the ADA assures.

A remarkable exchange between the researcher and Edwin, another employer in this study, revealed that his company had even solicited a hard-of-hearing man in their employ, Daniel, to act as interpreter for a need they had for communication.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel that people who are Deaf, and I guess I'll just say people who are Deaf and working here at [large retail chain]. Do you feel that they should have more or less interpreter support? I guess you don't hardly see any interpreters through here.

EDWIN: No, No, we really don't at night it's uh, like the fella' I was just telling you about Daniel when he was here. He was...he refused to interpret for us.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

EDWIN: Yeah, because he said, ‘well, gee, you’re not paying me for it so I’m not going to do it.’ (Laughing)

INTERVIEWER: That’s true, that’s true.

EDWIN: Yeah, so you know, really, all we do is just, like when we do have meetings, you know, we write notes, usually either myself or one of the other team leads will write notes, you know, for the guys (speaking softly). I think it would be a good idea if we could.

Edwin (personal communication, September 8, 2010)

Edwin seemed to indicate that his hands were tied in terms of securing interpreters. Perhaps he felt that having an employee interpret for them would be a coup in terms of securing communication without any cost involved. He also intimated that, as far as having more interpreter support at work, that “...it would be a good idea if we could.” Maybe he felt that he did not have direct control or access to the ability to hire interpreters: that he is somehow absolved from the issue of interpreter use because he is not on a level to make that decision. Regardless of the reasons why interpreters are not being utilized in the workplace, there is a disconnect when it comes to securing interpreters for work-related communication needs.

Finally, Wally, another work supervisor in this study, relayed a sketchy knowledge of interpreter use. He believed that communication was “pretty good” at his work site.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel that you could use more interpreter support here at work?

WALLY: Um, I think, um, I think we have a pretty good communication here. And we have a number we can call if we need interpreter support.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have a contract with them?

WALLY: Yeah, uh, I think that Corporate, I think, like our HR management can call, whatever the Corporate number is. We have a number for a Spanish interpreter, too.

Wally (personal communication, September 27, 2010)

From a hearing perspective such as Wally's, communication between Deaf and hearing people may appear to be adequate in the workplace. From a Deaf standpoint, however, communication may never be what it should or could be sans the use of interpreters. The disconnect continues, and while accepting attitudes toward workers who are Deaf are in place, passing the buck, in terms of securing interpreters in the workplace, seems to be the norm. It does not appear to be a malicious or conscious decision to omit this kind of support, but, at the very least, the level of awareness to this need must be raised. Incidentally, only one of the employers indicated that they were aware of the pervasive level of interpreter support that is available and utilized while students are in the public school setting. Perhaps if all employers were armed with this knowledge, they could make the connection that more interpreter use in the workplace would be beneficial and prudent for the employees who are Deaf, which in turn, may create a culture of appropriate and pervasive interpreter use in the workplace.

Preparing for the S-T-W Transition.

The research conducted for this study revealed that the schooling of people who are Deaf may not include enough information and therefore *preparation* about the work conditions they will face after they transition from public schools. While many students who are Deaf participate in vocational programs that prepare them for work by instilling a work ethic and transferrable work skills, it appears that not enough knowledge is imparted regarding communication and isolation issues that will be faced upon the school-to-work transition, issues that are further complicated by well-meaning employers who may not be aware of these

problems and how to address them properly. Laurel, a public school student, clearly underscored the lack of preparation that she has for attending to communication and interpreter issues that will inevitably arise when she enters the work force.

INTERVIEWER: When you do get a job...okay you're going to graduate and get a job. If an interpreter is needed at work, for a meeting, or something important is happening...

LAUREL: Yeah, that's what I'm talking about. Like an interview or a meeting or something that you would need to tell someone something.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you have to tell the boss that it is his or her responsibility to get the interpreter and to pay for the interpreter. You don't have to pay for the interpreter.

LAUREL: I thought I had to. That was my opinion. I didn't know that.

INTERPRETER: Right. So we are trying to help people at the work site and also help people who are going to get jobs to know all the rules about interpreter support.

Laurel (personal communication, May 20, 2010)

This exchange should be a red flag as to the need to coach students who are Deaf for doing their part in making sure that communication is not left to chance in the workplace. Empowering students who are Deaf to a) recognize the need for proper communication channels, and b) advocate for entitled interpreter support should be agenda items specific to students who are Deaf, in an effort to increase opportunities for meaningful and successful school-to-work experiences in their futures.

Should Interpreter Roles be Changed

One of the most innovative data sets to arise from this study revolves around interpreter roles. While the impetus of this study centers largely on the expansion or contraction of interpreter use for the Deaf in training programs and in the work force, this avenue of data suggests an *evolution* of the interpreter role, itself. Currently, interpreters for the Deaf adhere to a strict Code of Ethics which charges them with the edicts to remain objective, respect confidentiality, and to maintain interpreter standards regarding training and skills improvement (Registry of interpreters for the Deaf, 2010). While these edicts are revered and create standards for the field of interpreting, they do not allow for interpreters to utilize their signing skills *in combination with their situational understanding of events unfolding* during interpreter assignments. In other words, the Code of Ethics does not permit interpreters to step outside of their professional roles to smooth the transmission of verbal/signing exchanges by introducing verbiage, paraphrases, and explanations apart from the specific signs and words being imparted between their clients. In a word, interpreters are limited, or at times, *hindered* in their ability to ensure that effective and proper communication takes place.

With this in mind, the recommendation of interpreter roles evolving into expanded functions was introduced several times in the data collected for this study. Clerc, an Employment and Transition Representative, recognized and gave credence to this design, adding that it can be a safety net when specific communications between Deaf and hearing people are recognized as being fraught with misunderstanding and confusion.

They'll [interpreters] raise their hand and say 'May I step out of my role for a second. I want to do...' So, you know, they...clearly they understand what their jobs are, because they are asking for permission to step out of their role, and they know the

person well enough that they, they, understand, ‘They’re not getting what you’re saying. This is not working. Please allow me to...because I know them and I know how they communicate, and, and, and their level of understanding. Allow me to, to go ahead...’ And I, I, I have found them to be better uh, uh, *much* better than I anticipated. And it doesn’t happen that often. It happens very infrequent where an interpreter will say ‘I’d like to step out of my role.’ Clerc (personal communication, June 4, 2010)

Also, in proposing the ability to step out of one’s interpreting role, it should be mentioned that stepping outside of the role could involve or incorporate a marriage of roles already assumed by other deafness professionals. Any change in the role of interpreter for the deaf would probably have to be introduced, sanctioned, and approved by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), which is the governing body on issues involving activities of interpreting for the Deaf. The RID works in conjunction with the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) regarding all issues related to deafness and interpreting for people who are Deaf.

Workplace Environments.

Perhaps workplace environments, traditionally, have held a secondary position in importance to other work related issues such as pay, status, and location. While all of these workplace elements likely weigh heavily on prospective employees and also on people already in the workplace, it may be that the importance of these issues, especially work environments, becomes compounded when considering people who are Deaf in the workplace. Why “environment” is such an important consideration in hiring people who are Deaf is likely due to the “confrontational” nature of communication (Higgins, 1989) between transitioners/workers who are Deaf and their colleagues, not to mention the comfort levels of all people in a workplace

that melds workers who are hearing with workers who are Deaf (Long & Beil, 2005, Mankind Project, 2010, Foster & MacLeod, 2003). The notions of confrontation and comfort compete with each other to create environment for work and beyond that are just incompatible and inaccessible for students/people who are Deaf. Perhaps the paths to successful transition from S-T-W for students who are Deaf begin here, with the notions of interpreter use and accommodation following in their wake.

Many work placements in the school-to-work transition are fabricated by people (Employment and Transition Representatives) who are limited to a school work day and harried with paperwork, all the while being constricted to the goal of getting all transitioning students placed by a predetermined date such as the last day of a given school calendar year. As one may guess, this juxtaposition often leaves the placement representative in a bind which may sacrifice quality for quantity in the thrust of placement decisions. Fallen by the wayside are the hopes and dreams of workplaces for transitioners who are Deaf that are communication and comfort. In contrast to this stark reality, Gilbride, Stensrud, Vandergoot & Golden (2003) discovered that to effectively meet the employment goals of people with disabilities, rehabilitation providers need to increase the effectiveness of placement services. They note in their qualitative study of seventeen people with disabilities that issues such as being treated equally, welcoming diversity, management style, focus on performance, senior management attitudes, input from workers with disabilities, and views of and relationships with vocational rehabilitation as key factors in work placement success. The research in this work supports this idea, and factors for employment success emerged such as ethnicity, sense of worth, natural supports, embracing employee strengths, and welcoming new employees. These issues are the intangibles that do not necessarily materialize during one or two visits to a potential work site. These workplace

characteristics must be teased to the surface and the grooming or discovery of these worksites is a cultivation process that may take years of preparation and massaging to develop. Perhaps the current model of placement for people with disabilities, especially when considering the isolation and communication issues that arise among students and workers who are Deaf, needs to involve more time and effort in the way they are fostered and promoted.

Recommendations

This study, for all of its variables, endeavors to increase the successful transition and employment experiences of people who are Deaf. It is then, based upon the results of this original research, the obligation of this work to offer workable recommendations as to how to progress from the current, discouraging S-T-W transition and employment status of people who are Deaf to a climate that supports more achievement of individual employment success for people who are Deaf. The following proposals revolve around interpreter training, student preparation, and worksite preparation as areas of note for improving employment practices and work encounters for people who are Deaf. These are approaches to transition, placement, and hiring of people with Deafness that may increase their chances for meaningful and successful work situations that are positive, efficacious, and rewarding, both on an individual level and corporately for the Deaf culture.

Interpreter Training.

Interpreter training should involve more avenues for service as it pertains to people who are Deaf. Current restrictions and guidelines concerning the conduct and delivery of interpreter services need to be loosened so that interpreters can more fully serve their clients who are Deaf. Several participants in this study alluded to or directly mentioned that their interpreter roles were limiting or that their roles should expand.

- Interpreters could be trained to incorporate the characteristics of “teacher” into their role for serving students who are Deaf who must soon transition to the world of work.
- Interpreters who are serving in communication roles on work sites could have their role expanded to include job coach services.
- Interpreters could also be utilized to deliver workshops or trainings for employers who are considering hiring or have hired people who are Deaf. In this fashion, a formal venue for addressing and allaying reservations, doubts, fears (Mankind Project, 2010), and uncertainties regarding hiring people who are Deaf.

Clearly, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) in conjunction with the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) would have to review clear and overwhelming evidence suggesting that any changes to the professional, if not rigid standards currently in place would benefit any segment of consumers served who are Deaf. Perhaps what is warranted is a “grass roots” movement incorporating interpreters who are already “stepping outside of their roles” to serve Deaf students and clients. A groundswell of anecdotal evidence could have an impact on the professional level in these organizations and could lead to changing interpreter roles to provide more full and effective communication and empowerment of work situations for people who are Deaf.

Student Preparation

Students who are Deaf are being prepared for entering the workplace in the same manner as *all* people entering the workforce. The same general topics such as work ethic, following workplace rules, listening to your supervisor, treating co-workers with respect, interview skills, and pay are addressed when preparing for the school-to-work transition. What is recommended,

based on the data from this study, is a more comprehensive, detailed, regimented, coordinated, and focused plan be developed and incorporated specifically for people who are Deaf. The preparation for transition might include the following topics:

- Students who are Deaf, as well as people who are Deaf that are looking for employment, need to be introduced to the reality that awaits them upon entering the work force. They need to know that approximately one in four people who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing are not employed. They need to know that the pervasive use of interpreters in the public school settings is a right, while in the workplace, that “right” feels more like a “privilege.”
- People who are Deaf need specific and sweeping tutelage regarding their rights as a person who is Deaf in our society, and moreover, their entitlement to services and accommodations, especially regarding communication, when they enter or are in the work force. They need to be taught the tools for advocacy for themselves regarding their rights, entitlement, communication and accommodation needs in the workplace.
- Transition classes *for the Deaf* need to be instituted in the public school systems. Currently, in this study’s school system, many people with disabilities are privileged with once weekly transition classes during their final year of transition from school-to-work. There needs to be in place a venue for students who are Deaf to receive unambiguous counsel on all transition issues related to deafness including communication, rights, entitlement, interpreting services, advocacy, and accommodation. These classes need not ensue during their final year in the public school system. These classes need to begin at age 14, when transition planning

becomes part of their IEP process. Only in this way can a mind-set toward the future and work success be instilled in students whose disability is confounded by isolation and misunderstanding.

Worksite Preparation.

Worksites being considered for students who are Deaf need to be cultivated. It is no longer enough to make educated guesses as to the eventual efficacy of a job placement or employment hiring. This strategy has proven to be ineffectual. With this in mind, it is recommended that worksites be slowly and methodically groomed for Deaf placements through extended conduits which include sensitivity training, interpreter familiarization, natural supports, and networking.

- Prospective employers need to be involved in formal efforts to provide sensitivity training for their employees. Deafness is a hidden and largely misunderstood disability. What's more, it is a malady whose leading handicap is communication, making it a candidate for confusion, trepidation, and consternation in the workplace. This sensitivity training needs to come from Deafness professionals such as Employment and Transition Representatives or Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf. Sessions should be in the form of a three to five part series including hands-on activities and actual interactions with people who is deaf, as well as proper usage of an interpreter (speaking in the first person, interpreter placement, Code of Ethics).
- Even the most well-meaning employer is probably not familiar with procuring interpreters to support them with the on-the-job communication needs of their Deaf workers or interviewees. They need to know that they are responsible for

hiring interpreter support for people who are Deaf, and they need to know where to get that support. This could be part of the sensitivity training, and it could work as part of the advocacy training afforded students who are Deaf.

Regardless, employers need to be aware of and comfortable with practices involving when and how to provide interpreter support for people who are Deaf.

- Likely, most people would prefer to work where they feel wanted. They want to work with their peers. Therefore, according to the results of this study, natural supports in the workplace gain strength as viable and necessary tools for workplace success for people who are Deaf. Whether it is a special person (worker who is Deaf) who embraces them as comrades, an employer who believes in them and infects his workers with this attitude, a person in a company who knows sign language, another worker who is Deaf at the company, someone who has a family member who is Deaf, or a person in the company who has worked with people who are Deaf before, there needs to be a natural support in place in order to increase chances for the employment marriage to work. While this will be difficult to effect in rural areas, larger metropolitan areas may be a proving ground for increased opportunities to provide natural supports for employees who are Deaf.
- A logical, ordered, and systematic network of employers with experience working with people who are Deaf and their needs must to be established. These “Deaf friendly” places of employment should be listed and celebrated among Deafness professionals and the Deaf community. This “Guide to Employment for the Deaf,” their “GED,” if you will, could be a resource for both employers and

prospective employees who are Deaf. “Deaf friendly” companies listed would include places with natural supports as previously stated, and could also include companies that embrace ADA policy (including interpreter support), and positive and diverse workplaces. Just as some companies who espouse and promote Christianity in their businesses advertise their services with an “ichthus” fish(Ancient Symbols, 2011) near their logos, or some housing concerns promote “Equal Lending Opportunities” (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, 2011), “Equal Housing Opportunities” (see figure 9) in their ads and signage. Perhaps the universal “I Love You” sign (ASL University, 2011) could be utilized in a similar manner to publicize or designate a company or service affiliation with people who are Deaf. An “affiliation” with people who are Deaf could come in the form of acceptance, accommodation, knowledge of, or a personal connection to people who are Deaf, hard-of-hearing, or culturally Deaf. (see Figure 10).

Figure 8 “Ichthus” Symbol.

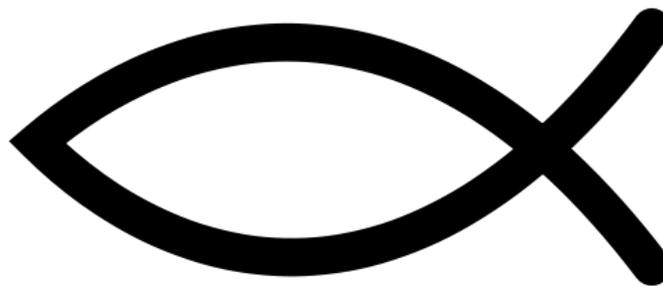


Figure 9: Equal Housing Opportunity Logo.



Figure 10: American Sign Language Sign for “I Love You.”



Limitations of the study

This study examined the use of interpreters for the Deaf in the public school system and in the workplace. Specifically, the dichotomy of interpreter use between these two venues was addressed, as the school-to-work transition success for students who are Deaf is irregular and inconsistent, resulting in a much higher unemployment rate for people who are Deaf than their

hearing counterparts. This study was qualitative in nature, and focused on twenty participants, six of whom were Deaf, for the research gathered herein.

This study focused on participants in the Fairfax County region of Virginia. While the participants involved were the product of random and snowball sampling efforts, the study could be expanded to include other metropolitan regions in order to sure up the findings of this work. Specifically, expanding this study might result in:

- Verifying if the same dichotomy of interpreter use between school and work settings exists in other regions.
- If the dichotomy does not exist, how are school-to-work transitions as they relate to interpreter use handled differently so that they ensure success for students who are Deaf?
- Expanding the study might lend more reliability to this work by revealing similar results in different regions.

Further, this study could benefit from employing a larger sample in order to gain further rich material, insights, experiences and perspectives from a greater pool of sources. This may lead to more validity in the study at hand, as well as more enhanced or thorough data in which to examine.

Suggestions for Further Research

The research in this study incorporated six subjects who are Deaf, three Special Education Teachers, two Employment and Transition Representatives, four Educational Interpreters, and five supervisors of people who are Deaf. The focus of this research could be opened up to other professionals and co-workers who have dealings with people who are Deaf, including educational support staff such as HI (Hearing Impairment) Specialists and PHTA's

(Public Health Training Assistants). Also, co-workers, human resources managers, siblings, parents, and business owners could be involved as subjects who may be able to contribute to the body of knowledge and results gained from this study.

This study was qualitative in nature, and as such, the methods employed did not utilize such quantitative tools as hypothesis and advanced statistical methods. This research could be readily tooled into a quantitative measure through the use of survey instruments and demographically substantial pools of subjects who may have ties to the Deaf culture. This kind of study might be difficult to carry out, due to confidentiality issues vis-à-vis disability as they pertain to gaining mass data from institutions and agencies that serve people who are Deaf.

Along these thoughts, the guiding question “In a work setting, does more interpreter support lead to more successful employees who are Deaf?” could be explored as a grounding and empirical approach to the issue of interpreter use on the workplace. For, if interpreter use is found to be indeterminate of success for people who are Deaf, then other venues for communication and workplace success would then need to be explored and quantified more fully in a continued effort to reduce the current employment disparity between Deaf and hearing people.

Further research could also be sought in establishing subsets of the subjects studied. Currently, much statistical data, especially through government surveys, does not delineate between deaf, culturally Deaf, hard-of-hearing, pre-lingual vs. post-lingual deafness, and speech/speech-reading (lip-reading) capabilities. The same is true of the literature reviewed. Delineations have not been made to determine if certain sets of people who have hearing impairments are more or less employed/employable, or if transition practices can be adjusted to meet the needs of the various hearing-impaired groups in this segment of the population.

Also, this study focused on a population of people who are Deaf who will or have entered the workforce upon completion of their secondary educations. There are, of course, some people who are Deaf who continue their educations beyond high school by attending colleges and universities such as Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, The National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), which is located at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, NY, as well as other varied college and professional training programs across the country. It would be interesting to note if graduates of advanced education programs are meeting with the same elevated unemployment levels that are present in the statistics exhumed for the hearing impaired population as a whole.

Finally, research of this genre could take on a more natural as well as longitudinal feel if the data were to be gleaned from community professionals already in place. Specifically, Employment and Transition Representatives, who are already serving people with disabilities, could track the issue of employment and interpreter use as they place students in community employment situations year after year. Additionally, other professionals in place who serve people with disabilities, including people who are Deaf, are Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, and Community Service Board Representatives. These professionals are pervasive in the school-to-work transition work that takes place for students with disabilities, and they might represent a natural avenue for the collection of data regarding employment success and the parsing of same. Again, questions of confidentiality and consent would need to be addressed regarding the maintaining of these kinds of records, but the information collected could accelerate the ability to make contributions to this field.

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