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## Exploring the Racial Microaggressions American Sign Language–English Interpreters Commit

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**Exploring the Racial Microaggressions  
American Sign Language–English Interpreters Commit**

By  
Cheryl Gallon

An Action Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

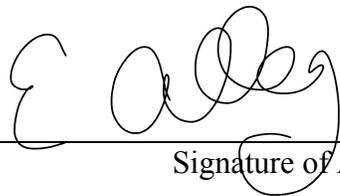
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and Communication Equity**

**St. Catherine University  
St. Paul, Minnesota**

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Signature of Advisor

Date **6/3/18**

# EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

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## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

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# EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	iii
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	1
<b>Abstract</b> .....	2
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	3
Background.....	3
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study.....	7
Theoretical Bases and Organization.....	8
<b>Chapter 2: Review of the Literature</b> .....	11
ASL – English Interpreters.....	12
Essential Concepts.....	15
Privilege.....	15
White Fragility.....	16
Intersectionality.....	19
Microaggressions.....	21
Microaggressions in Academic Literature.....	25
Transformative Justice Theory.....	31
Deaf Community Cultural Wealth.....	32
Integrative Justice Model.....	33
Transformative Justice Pedagogy.....	34
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b> .....	38
Research Question.....	40

# EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

## Table of Contents (Continued)

Methodology Design.....	40
Data Collection.....	42
Data Analysis.....	43
Limitations.....	44
<b>Chapter 4: Results and Discussion of Findings.....</b>	<b>47</b>
Participants.....	48
Identified Themes.....	49
Microinsults.....	51
Microinvalidations.....	53
Unique Categories.....	55
Impacts of Microaggressions.....	56
Desired Alternative Behaviors and Comments.....	59
Listen, Learn, Act.....	59
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>61</b>
Summary.....	61
Historical Context to today’s practitioner.....	62
Research findings.....	63
Recommendations to Interrupt Racism.....	66
The work starts with self.....	66
Current practitioners and interpreter education.....	67
Courageous conversations.....	69
Future Research.....	70

EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

Table of Contents (Continued)

Closing thoughts.....71

**References**.....72

**Appendices**

Appendix A Journal of Interpretation Reference list.....82

Appendix B Interview questions.....88

Appendix C Demographic Survey.....92

Appendix D Recruitment Message.....94

Appendix E Informed Consent.....95

# EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Total Microaggressions Identified.....	50
Figure 2: Participants' Self-Identified Intersectional Microaggressions.....	51

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

### Abstract

This phenomenological case study explores the racial microaggression committed by ASL–English interpreters. Data regarding microaggression events were collected by documenting experiences of Deaf People of Color through semi-structured interviews. To date, there is not any identified research investigating this topic. The field of professional sign language interpretation has a historical praxis of centering White epistemologies, while marginalizing the lived experiences of both Deaf and hearing People of Color in both formative interpreter education, as well as professional trainings. The growing interest in topics relating to social justice in the field of sign language interpretation has brought about an increase of investigations on issues of privilege and equity. Issues of social justice typically present solely as a binary comparison between lived experiences of Deaf and hearing people, without regard to their racial identity. This research aims to fill that gap. Seventeen microaggression events were shared by participants which fell into the categories of microinsults, microinvalidations and three unique themes. By recognizing the racial microaggressions ASL–English interpreters commit, practitioners are better situated to mitigate oppressive actions and practice with enhanced equity.

Key words: Deaf People of Color, sign language interpreting, racial microaggressions, equity, privilege, transformative pedagogy

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### Background

“If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

– Lilla Watson

Watson, a Gangalu elder, Aboriginal activist, academic and artist has profound words that illuminate both the desires of the oppressed, and challenge the intentions and actions of allies working toward social justice. The work of social justice does not only benefit those that are oppressed, but by everyone confronting acts of injustice we all have the opportunity to gain liberation. Renowned authors of liberation and anti-oppression work such as Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Paulo Freire, and Elie Wiesel share the common praxes of critical reflection and action (Lorde, 2007; hooks, 1994; Freire, 2000; Wiesel & Wiesel, 2008). When working toward liberation, agents of social justice must be critically reflective of self and societal systems of power. When working toward anti-oppression, agents of social justice constantly look for ways to interrupt systems of oppression. These praxes are not limited to time and space, but are transformative because they are constant and cyclical in nature. “The true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations that we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us” (Lorde, 2007).

Deaf people, who use sign language as their primary mode of communication, are members of an ethnic minority culture (Lane, Pillard, & Hedberg, 2011). Since Deaf people also embody other socially constructed minority identities, such as race, gender, other ethnicities and or religions, the Deaf ethnic identity is interwoven and layered with other identities into one

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

being. Deaf People of Color (DPOC) face racial oppression, just as their hearing counterparts do, as well as barriers of access to social institutions because of language and cultural differences.

There is a swell of energy and interest in the field of sign language interpretation to examine equity from many different perspectives. As human service providers, there is a common assumption that interpreters want to improve the overall quality of life of those they serve. Sign language interpreter education and professional training rely on the study of at least two languages, two cultures and how they interact with one another. At the very foundation of most sign language interpreter education programs in the United States is the study of Deaf culture and American Sign Language (ASL). The commonly used texts on Deaf culture, and most of the scholarly work in the field of Deaf cultural studies, investigate issues of power, privilege and oppression focusing on a Deaf–hearing binary (Holcomb, 2013; Ladd, 2003; Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996; Padden & Humphries, 1988). These commonly used texts tend to focus heavily on the unique world view, or marginalization of Deaf people from society at large, as a sole factor. When investigating issues of power, privilege and oppression, commonly used texts do not acknowledge the importance of racial identity, and the Deaf identity, as equal influences for a persons' whole identity formation. Research on how race intersects with power, privilege and oppression in interpreted events is sparse at best. This research considers the notion that American Sign Language (ASL)–English interpreters can view their practice as an act of social justice.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Within the field of Deaf cultural studies there has been much literature and research on the formation of culture and identity. Common texts used in Deaf cultural studies curricula regarding culture and identity compare a general conception of a Deaf epistemology, with non-

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

Deaf people and systems from majority culture's epistemology (Holcomb, 2013; Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996; Padden & Humphries, 1988). If and when race is acknowledged, it is set apart from the normed experience in separate chapters on diversity, or identified as a "new reality" to which the Deaf community must adjust (Holcomb, 2013, p. 8). It is perplexing how racial diversity in America, in 2013, is a "new reality" with which to contend. This narrow binary comparison between the lived experiences of White Deaf and White hearing people as the norm is based on theories of audism (Fernandes & Meyers, 2010), and flattens our understanding of the richness of the Deaf identity. Moreover, it goes to furthering an oppressive White supremacist system that ignores and invalidates DPOC's lived experience. The praxis of the White identity being normed, and established as a standard frame of reference in academic literature, is a common phenomenon to many major fields of study (Kendall, 2001; McIntosh, 2015, 2016). Fernandes and Meyers (2010) critique of the literary canons of Deaf Studies state, "Validating everyone's experiences can teach us how to respect, value, and include each other" (Fernandes & Meyers, 2010, p. 42).

Deaf culture and identity curricula is commonly used as the basis for ASL-English interpreter education. Data collected by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf shows that roughly 88% of ASL-English interpreter practitioner respondents self-identify as White (*RID Annual Report*, 2017). The course of study mentioned above becomes problematic in that many ASL-English interpreters are often ill prepared for the multiple, rich, cultural identities of the American Deaf community. Scholars must invest in studies of the diverse experiences of Deaf lives such as studies of Black Deaf families, homes that use Spanish and ASL, Asian American Deaf lives and others, as opposed to centering White Deaf family norms (Fernandes & Meyers,

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

2010). ASL–English interpreters may be adequate with Deaf–hearing cultural exchanges, yet there is a serious deficiency in their cultural competency with DPOC (West Oyedele, 2015).

Most Americans are not fluent in sign language. When a Deaf person participates in an event, ASL–English interpreters are employed to provide access for both the Deaf and hearing participants. The field of sign language interpreting includes both Deaf and non-Deaf (i.e., hearing) interpreters. Deaf interpreters are vital members of the field of practice, and a smaller percentage of total practitioners. The Deaf cultural identity of an interpreter adds a unique and complex layer to investigate racial microaggressions committed by interpreters. In this research, I focused on the exploration of hearing interpreters' comments and behaviors. For the purposes of this study, the term ASL–English interpreter will refer to only hearing interpreters.

ASL–English interpreters are to act as a bridge between Deaf and hearing cultures. In doing so they can hamper that connection by their own lack of cultural competency (West Oyedele, 2015). Many White ASL–English interpreters, who have not been trained in issues of race, oppression and privilege have committed acts of oppression and discrimination on DPOC (West Oyedele, 2015). While this lack of training may be a leading factor in the unintentional oppressive acts, the detrimental effects from their lack of training must be addressed. When ASL–English interpreters lack cultural competency they are at risk of being the perpetrator of any number of microaggressions. Microaggressions are defined as subtle forms of discrimination, oppression, or marginalization that are often committed unconsciously by people with socially constructed privileges (Sue et al., 2007). From a review of the literature, most of the scholarly work in the field of ASL–English interpretation investigating issues of power, privilege and oppression has followed suit with Deaf culture curricula by focusing on a Deaf–

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

hearing binary. The research on how race intersects with power, privilege and oppression in interpreted events has not been explored in academic literature.

Sue et al. (2007), and Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall (2013) have established seminal works regarding racial microaggressions and intersectionality respectively, whereas Stapleton (2014) is one of very few researchers to look at how these concepts intersect with a Deaf identity. While intersectionality has yet to be fully recognized as a praxis of scholarship in the field of ASL–English interpretation, it is a powerful lens through which practitioners can look critically at the impact some ASL–English interpreters have on DPOC. To date, no scholarly work has been identified that specifically examines DPOC’s interactions with ASL–English interpreters.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Recognizing this gap, the purpose of these case studies was to explore ASL–English interpreter committed microaggressions, or the comments and actions that may racially discriminate, oppress or further marginalize DPOC. In this study DPOC identified where and how they have experienced racial microaggressions by ASL–English interpreters. Participants also shared their perspectives on best practices. The process of documenting lived experiences is an important step toward practicing with enhanced equity.

Collectively our society may acknowledge that DPOC are oppressed in a myriad of ways, but through naming it, we begin to legitimize a lived experience, and it goes from invisible to visible. People can begin to more clearly identify the oppression and relate to it. Moreover, collective voices can move into formal resistance efforts (Stapleton, 2014, p. 73).

Conducting this inquiry aims to enhance ASL–English interpreters’ authentic critical self-reflection, with the hope that serious and honest dialogue can provide an understanding of

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

cultural competency beyond a Deaf–hearing binary, to increase equity in interpreted experiences for DPOC.

The goal of this research is to shed light on ASL–English interpreters’ behaviors and comments so that practitioners can be more self-reflective as they interact with DPOC. In doing so, a critical step is to recognize the lived experience of DPOC and open authentic dialogue with practitioners to investigate actionable steps toward change. While this research suggests some initial steps practitioners can take to mitigate racial microaggressions, it is not the intention of this research to assert solutions. Transformative solutions must be developed by ASL–English interpreters working with Deaf Communities of Color to identify what is beneficial to both local micro systems, as well as what can be done on the national macro systems, to shift the field to practice with more equity.

### **Theoretical Bases and Organization**

Marginalized groups in American history have fought for equity in some form or another in most every aspect of their lives. The Deaf community is no different in this respect than other cultural and linguistic minority groups such as, communities of color, women, the community of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people, people living in poverty, or immigrants, among a host of other marginalized identities. In the 1980’s the term intersectionality was introduced to draw attention to the intersecting marginalized identities within antidiscrimination and social movements (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Since its introduction, the theory of intersectionality has been significant in the advancement of critical understanding within major fields of study by acknowledging how race/ethnicity, gender and other centers of power coexist in the discipline (Cho et al., 2013). Following the logic that DPOC cannot isolate the lived

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

experience of their Deaf identity from their racial identity, the intersectionality framework is appropriate for this line of research.

Implementing the devised strategies identified by DPOC is an opportunity to institute initial steps toward transformative justice. The research paradigm of transformative justice is a structure that includes addressing issues of social justice with the role of the researcher as one who “recognizes inequalities and injustices in society and strives to challenge the status quo, . . . and possesses a shared sense of responsibility” (Mertens, 2007, p. 212). The concept of transformative justice prioritizes the process of change, rather than predetermined outcomes, with the goal to prevent future conflicts (Gready & Robins, 2014). Transformative justice is primarily grassroots driven by the communities that will be directly impacted by the change (Gready & Robins, 2014). Transformative justice requires reframing the issues and interventions, utilizing community agency and resources, to “challenge unequal and intersecting power relationships” (Gready & Robins, 2014, p. 340). By utilizing community agency, transformative justice seeks to find a wide range of approaches to apply (Gready & Robins, 2014). Each of these concepts are aligned with the description of Deaf culture as a collectivist culture (Ladd, 2003). For transformative justice to be successful, ASL–English interpreters must work with DPOC developing strategies on how to mitigate microaggressions. For change to be transformative, ASL–English interpreters must use the agency within Deaf Communities of Color to identify the equitable best practices for interpreters.

ASL–English interpreters can either act in ways that support efforts of resistance, or endorse acts of oppression. It is my hope that this research will afford interpreters some insight on how to work as partners with DPOC in support of resistance efforts. In order to work in solidarity toward resistance efforts, ASL–English interpreters must first look inward, on an

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

individual level. To be a partner in resistance efforts, ASL–English interpreters must first recognize their positions of societal privilege, take an authentic critical look at their individual privilege, and seek ways to mitigate the impacts of their exercised privilege.

ASL–English interpreter practitioners can incorporate ways to resist both micro and macro forms of oppression. The theories of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) and Deaf Community Cultural Wealth (Fleischer, Garrow, & Narr, 2015) utilize the agency within Communities of Color and the Deaf community, respectively, to resist racist and oppressive systems that dominate society. When used in tandem, intersectional identities are respected and ASL–English interpreters have pathways to work as partners to resist oppressive systems.

ASL–English interpreter education entities, whether they be formative or continuing education for current practitioners, can infuse their curriculum with the practice of transformative justice pedagogy (Brown, 2004; Nieto, 2010). Transformative justice pedagogy moves beyond the traditional ASL–English interpretation framework of examining most every interaction from a Deaf–hearing binary. It acknowledges Deaf people through a holistic lens, and examines ways ASL–English interpreters can work as agents in furtherance of racial and social justice.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not live single-issue lives.”

-Audre Lorde

ASL–English interpreters who are tasked, professionally and ethically, to act as a bridge between Deaf and hearing cultures, can impede that connection by their own lack of cultural competency (West Oyedele, 2015). Deaf People of Color (DPOC) and interpreters of color have endured oppression and discrimination from White ASL–English interpreters, many of whom have not been formally trained in issues of race, oppression and privilege (West Oyedele, 2015). While the damaging effects may not be intentional, the impact ASL–English interpreters have on DPOC must be addressed. When ASL–English interpreters do not have the cultural competency to work with DPOC, they risk being perpetrators of any number of discriminatory and oppressive actions, known as microaggressions.

Microaggressions are common subtle comments or behaviors “that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). Enhanced competency in the areas of power, privilege and oppression can facilitate interpreters to examine diversity in the field of interpreting through a more critical lens. Scholarly work to date examining diversity has encompassed a Deaf–hearing binary (Bauman, 2008; Cokely, 2005; Mindess, 2006). Heightened awareness of interpreters’ oppressive acts is the first step to lead to actions that promote justice, and produce services with equity for Deaf Communities of Color.

Optional remedies to oppressive actions take many forms that aim to promote justice to oppressed people. The literature bears out three major theories of justice for marginalized

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

communities which include a) restorative justice, which emphasizes repairing harm caused by criminal behavior by engaging victims, offenders, and community for solutions (Suzuki & Hayes, 2017); b) transitional justice, which refers to the justice societies seek from political and legal institutions while they are in a transition from systematic abuses and mass atrocities (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2017) and c) transformative justice which is rooted in community involvement and accountability to expand the “social justice model, which challenges and identifies injustices, in order to create organized processes of addressing and ending those injustices” (Save the Kids, 2017, para. 2). Presently, there is no research that focuses on theories of justice for DPOC, nor is there any research in the field of sign language interpretation which has sought to identify the type of justice that practitioners could adopt with DPOC. Transformative justice is an appropriate framework for ASL–English interpreters to adopt with Deaf Communities of Color as it utilizes the knowledge, power, and agency within those communities to identify injustices and seek out ways for practitioners to end unjust practices.

The following section will present some basic demographics of the field of ASL–English interpretation and definitions to frame the practitioners’ professional structure. Along with a review of some key terms used in this research, this section will situate those terms in the context of interpreted situations. Although the literature presents the theory of transformative justice in a variety of conditions, this research will explore aspects of transformative justice that could be applied by ASL–English interpreters toward Deaf Communities of Color.

### **ASL–English Interpreters**

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) is a professional membership organization that also serves as a major credentialing entity for ASL–English interpreters. The

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

most recent demographic survey conducted in 2016 states that the RID membership is comprised of more than 15,000 members, of which, roughly 88% of respondents self-identified as White, and 96% of respondents self-identified as hearing (RID, 2016, 2017).

Membership of certified interpreters requires one take and pass a credentialing exam, payment of dues, continued professional development, which is tracked and regulated by RID in the form of continuing education units (CEU), and compliance with ethical practices as described in the RID's Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, [RID] 2015b). The CEU requirements are delineated into various content areas. At the 2015 RID National Conference the content area Power, Privilege and Oppression (PPO) was recently added by motion C2015.05 (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf [RID], 2015d). The new content area requires interpreters to fulfill a minimum of ten hours of training, out of the minimum eighty required hours in a four-year cycle, to be centered on "topics of power, privilege and oppression" (RID, 2015d, p. 16). The rationale to add the new content area, as stated by the authors of the motion, recognized the wide range of diverse individuals with whom interpreters interact and provide services, and the need for interpreters to be reflective, culturally competent practitioners (RID, 2015d, p. 16). Considering the membership demographic survey results, which shows the overwhelming majority of interpreters identify as White and hearing, this particular additional content area of PPO is appropriate for continued reflection and development of culturally competent ASL-English interpreter practitioners.

RID intends for the CPC to be a comprehensive guide to interpreter behavior which is applicable in any setting or situation (RID, 2015c). Beyond the seven core tenets, RID offers a supporting document that delineates a guiding principle and illustrative behaviors to assist in

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

compliance with each tenet (RID, 2015c). The seven tenets of the CPC that intend to guide professional behavior are as follows:

1. Interpreters adhere to standards of confidential communication.
2. Interpreters possess the professional skills and knowledge required for the specific interpreting situation.
3. Interpreters conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the specific interpreting situation.
4. Interpreters demonstrate respect for consumers.
5. Interpreters demonstrate respect for colleagues, interns, and students of the profession.
6. Interpreters maintain ethical business practices.
7. Interpreters engage in professional development (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2015c).

Currently, none of tenets explicitly identify racial justice, or disparity of power and privilege (RID, 2015c). The new PPO requirement can impact how interpreters will view their ethical practices regarding six of the seven tenets; all but the tenet regarding adherence to confidentiality. The PPO requirement is aligned with the goals of the RID's ethical practices (RID, 2015c), and the organization's diversity statement (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2015a). Again, the general concept of valuing diversity is mentioned repeatedly in both areas, yet there is no specific mention of racial justice, power, privilege or oppression.

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

### **Essential Concepts**

There are several concepts that are important to frame in the context of this research. Having a shared understanding of privilege, intersectionality, microaggressions, and transformative justice will provide the foundational framework of this research.

**Privilege.** Black and Stone (2005) define privilege by the following five characteristics (as cited by Lucal, 1996; McIntosh, 2016; Robinson, 1999); a) special advantages that are granted or unearned by one's efforts or skills, b) a right related to status, c) an action that benefits the recipient, d) while simultaneously disadvantaging others and finally, e) those with privilege are often unaware they possess it. While most of the literature focuses on race and gender privilege, in the context of this discussion, the definition of privilege is layered with unrestricted access to information, based on one's hearing ability and access to spoken language, known as hearing privilege ("Institutional Audism," 2016). Hearing privilege has been a recognized source of oppression in the lived experience of White Deaf people and DPOC, yet presently has not been sufficiently researched. More research in this area may bear out differences in how White Deaf people and DPOC experience hearing privilege.

These privileges are commonly bestowed at birth, and not by any special effort, intelligence or merit of the recipient. Many people who are privileged do not recognize the special advantages they hold. They view their lived experiences as the norm by which all others are compared (Black & Stone, 2005). A common impact of privileges that is often overlooked is the benefit to one group does not happen without consequence. When one group gains an advantage, another is disadvantaged, they do not remain in a constant status. While commonly used definitions of privilege primarily focus on the domains of race and gender, the domains of

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

sexual orientation, social economic status, age, differing degrees of ability and religious affiliation are also layered with the definition of privilege (Black & Stone, 2005).

McIntosh is one of the foremost White authors to write about White privilege in a way that speaks to White readers. To do this, McIntosh (2016) names a list of ways in which White people enjoy advantages that People of Color do not. This list is used as an entry point to explain the concept of privilege to those that are not confronted by their privilege on a regular basis. In efforts to work toward justice, it is not enough to merely recognize and name one's privileges, but people must take action to interrupt the system that confers such power (McIntosh, 2015). While the field of ASL–English interpretation has largely moved away from a helping profession model—where Deaf people had little autonomy and interpreters assumed a more paternalistic role (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001), it is still a service-based practice profession, filled with well-intentioned practitioners who are at risk of committing microaggressions against the people they serve. It is informative to look at how ASL–English interpreters may encounter the concepts of power, privilege and their role in oppressive systems.

***White fragility.*** To address the growing interest in social justice issues, and the new professional requirement of the Power, Privilege and Oppression CEU (RID, 2015d), issues of race and cultural competency are likely factors to be examined. As new sign language interpreting practitioner trainings are developed, and formative sign language interpreter education curricula shift to address new competencies in regard to race, resistance and discomfort of White practitioners and students may become apparent and should be addressed. Considering the high percentage of ASL–English interpreting practitioners who identify as White (*RID Annual Report*, 2017), it is appropriate to consider what role the theory of White

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

Fragility (DiAngelo, 2011) may play as the field becomes more invested in issues of social justice.

DiAngelo (2011) coined the phrase “White Fragility” to describe the state of being when White people are confronted with a challenge that may take them out of their racial comfort zone, and they are not able to respond in constructive ways. The institutions where White people live, learn, play, study, love and where they worship are mostly, if not entirely comprised of other White people. Many White people can go their entire lives without authentic, personal, long-term relationships with People of Color. This homogenous life experience does not allow the chance to acknowledge perspectives from People of Color; nor does this uniformed experience acknowledge what is lost. DiAngelo (2011) concludes that the most profound form of racism that builds the fabric of our society is a primarily segregated society. This level of segregation is a leading factor in the maintenance of systems of White supremacy and the state of White Fragility (DiAngelo, 2011).

When White people must confront issues of race and racism, there is a level of stress and discomfort to which they are unaccustomed. Racial stress in White people can cause defensive measures that present in various forms. “White Fragility is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves” (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 57). When addressing White Fragility in the field of ASL–English interpretation it is expected to witness defensive measures that include “emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence and leaving the stress-inducing situation” (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 57). These defensive measures and behavioral reactions may be expected, but primarily serve to allow the White experience to persist as centered, and derail actions to be accountable.

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

While racism in America is pervasive, and an everyday experience of People of Color, it is also a shifting system of White dominance that can be evidenced in the current strategies of those in power (Kivel, 2017). For many White people, accepting the breadth and depth of racism as a system of how American society functions are difficult concepts with which to contend. Confronting topics of racism are incredibly uncomfortable and unsettling for most White people in America (DiAngelo, 2011; Kivel, 2017; Orelus, 2013). In the United States, White people function in a social environment that “protects and insulates them from race-based stress” (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 55). Race is an issue that People of Color confront in most every situation or aspect of life. Whereas White people typically only confront issues of race when interacting with People of Color. While there are a range of ways White people are challenged by racial stresses, DiAngelo (2011) has outlined a variety of challenges and examples to illustrate the challenges to include:

- Challenge to objectivity - Suggesting that a white person’s viewpoint comes from a racialized frame of reference;
- Challenge to white racial codes - People of color talking directly about their racial perspectives;
- Challenge to white racial expectations and need/entitlement to racial comfort - People of color choosing not to protect the racial feelings of white people in regard to race;
- Challenge to colonialist relations - People of color not being willing to tell their stories or answer questions about their racial experiences;
- Challenge to white solidarity - A fellow white not providing agreement with one’s interpretations;

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Challenge to white liberalism - Receiving feedback that one's behavior had a racist impact;
- Challenge to individualism - Suggesting that group membership is significant;
- Challenge to meritocracy - An acknowledgement that access is unequal between racial groups;
- Challenge to white authority - Being presented with a person of color in a position of leadership;
- Challenge to white authority - Being presented with information about other racial groups through, for example, movies in which people of color drive the action but are not in stereotypical roles, or multicultural education (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 57).

Authors working to dismantle racism share common themes to address the theory of White Fragility. They agree that there is no neutral space, or universal experience that can disregard race; inaction is necessarily endorsing the system of racism (DiAngelo, 2011; Kivel, 2017; McIntosh, 2015). They encourage White people to a) think deeply about how they are situated in a White dominated society and recognize the multitude of ways they enjoy unearned privilege; b) receive messages and feedback from People of Color without defense; c) reflect on those messages; and d) seek actionable steps to address racism (DiAngelo, 2011; Kivel, 2017; McIntosh, 2015; Tatum, 1994).

**Intersectionality.** Socially constructed identities can carry inherent privileges or oppressions depending on the power formation in that society. The domains of privilege named above (i.e., race, gender, hearing level, sexual orientation, social economic status, age, differing degrees of ability and religious affiliation), as well as others, represent various social identities that a person may embody. These identities have a direct relationship with the power structure of

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

our society. Intersectionality is a term that recognizes the varying and overlapping identities and the corresponding oppression or discrimination experienced (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). These identities cannot be parsed out to be examined individually, as the ways of being and knowing the world cannot be done through a solitary lens; we are whole beings with complex experiences. To examine one's singular identity experience is to flatten the whole being and disregard their other valid identities and the societal power structure. If we are to examine one's lived experience only through the lens of race, that inquiry would be insufficient if one's gender or one's Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind or DeafDisabled identity, were set aside. A person's orientation to the world effects how they interact with the community, and how the community interacts with them.

In the 1980s, the term intersectionality was introduced to draw attention to the intersecting marginalized identities within antidiscrimination and social movements (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Since that time, intersectionality has been significant in progressing a critical understanding of major fields of study such as history, sociology, psychology, feminist studies, ethnic studies and many more by acknowledging how race/ethnicity, gender and other centers of power converge in the discipline (Cho et al., 2013). Since Deaf people also embody other socially constructed minority identities, such as race, gender, various ethnicities and/or religions, the Deaf ethnic identity is interwoven and layered with other identities into one being. DPOC, like their hearing counterparts, face racial oppression. Additionally, Deaf people in general face barriers of access to social institutions because of language and cultural differences ("Institutional Audism," 2016; Ladd, 2003). Considering the logic that DPOC cannot parse the lived experience of their Deaf identity from their racial identity, the intersectionality framework is appropriate for scholarly inquiry regarding the lived experiences of DPOC.

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

**Microaggressions.** Historically, racial minorities have had to contend with systems of power and oppression. The violent overt racism that was once commonplace has evolved into new subtle forms of racism recognized as racial microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007). The unconscious and subtle forms of racism, known as racial microaggressions have been predominantly examined in the fields of psychotherapy, and education (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue et al., 2007; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009; Wong, Derthick, David, Saw, & Okazaki, 2014). Currently, there is not an identified research study on racial microaggressions in the field of ASL–English interpretation. Microaggressions and other forms of oppression are centered on upholding a power structure for those in privileged positions. It is important to note that there are other types of microaggressions that people from marginalized communities experience. Microaggressions based on gender, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic status, and citizenship status may have equally powerful and harmful effects. Further research is needed in these areas. The focus of this research are the racial microaggressions committed by ASL–English interpreters.

Racial microaggressions are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). These indignities are not limited to solely interactions between people. The exclusion of a person’s racial identity in literature and decoration can act to minimize a person’s self-worth, or make one feel insignificant (Sue et al., 2007). There is a great deal of similarity of how racial microaggressions are enacted against People of Color, regardless of the setting. Sue et al. (2007) examined the presence of racial microaggressions in clinical therapy settings and created a taxonomy of racial microaggressions that help to categorically identify various types.

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

Sue et al. (2007) identified three forms of microaggressions: a) microassaults, which are purposeful and deliberate attacks intended to hurt the target (e.g., use of racial slurs, serving Whites before POC etc.); b) microinsults, which verbally express rudeness or “subtle snubs, frequently unknown to the perpetrator, but clearly convey a hidden insulting message to the recipient of color” (p. 274), or nonverbally when a teacher or supervisor fail to acknowledge or make eye contact with the POC; and c) microinvalidations which “exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color” (e.g., “I don’t see color” and “Don’t be so sensitive”) (Sue et al., 2007, p. 274).

Microaggressions gain their power because they are not overt and can often be explained away by seemingly unbiased reasons (Sue et al., 2007). Sue et al. explains a phenomenon in the field of psychology that may shed light on the field of ASL–English interpretation. Psychology is similar to the field of sign language interpreting in that both fields are human service providers and have predominantly White practitioners. Recent data shows 84% of psychologist identify as White (American Psychological Association [APA], 2015). ASL-English interpreters and White psychologists, being members of the larger society, are not immune from internalizing racial biases and may become victims of cultural conditioning that seeds bias and prejudice (Sue et al., 2007). For several decades, the call for cultural competence in the helping professions has prioritized two characteristics for effective provision of services “to racial /ethnic minority clients: (a) awareness of oneself as a racial/cultural being and of the biases, stereotypes, and assumptions that influence worldviews and (b) awareness of the worldview of culturally diverse clients” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). The failure of White practitioners to recognize how issues of race impact the provision of service blocks the practitioner from effective delivery of service

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

(Sue et al., 2007). When service providers are unaware of their biases and prejudices they may unintentionally create barriers for recipients (Sue et al., 2007).

Solórzano et al. (2000) and Yosso et al. (2009) examine racial microaggressions committed against African American and Latina/o college students respectively. Their findings echo the importance of documenting experiences of racial microaggressions; while pervasive in occurrence, are in the inception of research. The research on the cumulative effects of racial microaggressions has just begun as well. Solórzano et al. (2000) and Yosso et al. (2009) found that both groups studied displayed responses of resistance by creating counter spaces that encompassed the academic, social and familial ties needed to persist in colligate environments. These two lines of inquiry, documenting the racial microaggressions experienced and the cumulative effects, are of particular interest to the field of ASL–English interpretation. The fields of ASL–English interpretation and college educators also have similar racial demographics. The percentage of White full-time college faculty (i.e., professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, lecturer, assisting professor, adjunct professor, or interim professor) for degree awarding institutions averages 77% (US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Practitioners can glean concrete lessons from Sue et al. (2007), Solórzano et al. (2000), and Yosso et al.'s (2009) research as a foundation of what could be expected in Deaf Communities of Color, regardless of setting.

Sue et al. (2007) clearly defines eight themes of microaggressions, gives example comments or behaviors that are microaggressions and the subtle underlying messages:

- Alien in own land – When Asians Americans and Latinos are assumed to be foreign born. Ex. “Where are you from? Where were you born?” Message: You are not American.

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Ascription of intelligence – Assigning intelligence to a person of color based on their race. Ex. “You are so articulate.” Asking an Asian person to help you with math. Message: People of color are not generally as intelligent as Whites, or all Asians are good at math.
- Color blindness – Statements that indicate that a White person does not want to acknowledge race. Ex. “When I look at you, I don’t see color. There is only one race, the human race.” Message: Denying a person of color’s racial/ethnic experiences, or denying the individual as a racial/cultural being.
- Criminality/assumption of criminal status – A person of color is presumed to be dangerous, criminal or deviant based on their race. Ex. A store owner following a customer of color around the store. A White person waits to ride the next elevator when a person of color is on it. Message: You do not belong. You will steal. You are dangerous.
- Denial of individual racism – A statement made when Whites deny their racial biases. Ex. “I’m not racist. I have several Black friends. As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority.” Message: I am immune to racism because I have friends of color. Your racial oppression and my gender oppression are no different, I can’t be racist. I’m like you!
- Myth of meritocracy – Statements which assert that race does not play a role in life successes. Ex. “Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough.” Message: People of Color are lazy and/or incompetent and need to work harder.

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Pathologizing cultural values/communication styles – The notion that values and communication styles of the dominant/White culture are ideal. Ex. Asking a Black person: “Why do you have to be so loud/animated?” To an Asian or Latino person: “Why are you so quiet? We want to know what you think. Speak up more.” Message: Assimilate to dominant culture and leave your cultural baggage outside.
- Second class citizen – Occurs when a White person is given preferential treatment as a consumer over a person of color. Ex. Person of color mistaken for a service worker. People of color are servants to Whites. They couldn’t possibly occupy high-status positions (Sue et al., 2007, p. 276).

### **Microaggressions in Academic Literature**

Throughout the academic publications in the field of ASL–English interpretation there is a severe paucity in acknowledgement of race as a unique factor that impacts the practitioner and participants, alike. I acknowledge that during this research, only commonly known publications and sources were examined. The texts noted here are representative of a trend in the writings and research on how the field of ASL–English interpretation conceptualizes culture, and diversity. This review of academic literature is not intended to touch on every possible publication.

Race is generally overlooked in commonly used Deaf culture textbooks, which build the foundational cultural knowledge of interpreter education (Holcomb, 2013; Bauman, 2008; Ladd, 2003; Lane et al., 1996; Padden & Humphries, 1988). Unfortunately, we see more of the same praxis in common interpreter education textbooks, in that they center the cultural conversation on a Deaf–Hearing binary, and ignore the lived experience of any racial minority (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2001; Mindess, 2006; Dean & Pollard, 2013).

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

This failure to recognize the presence and impacts of race in the respective fields of study inhibits a critical inquiry of culture, identity and the practice of interpreting. The fact that race is not acknowledged in major textbooks used in interpreter education may also speak to the low numbers of interpreters of color who persist in the field (Nakahara, 2016; West Oyedele, 2015). This is not to say that commonly used texts do not offer a great deal of insight and content to the field of interpreter education; in fact, they do. It is significant to note that for a service-based practice profession, comprised of a diverse workforce, interacting with just as diverse participants, the predominant determinant of inter-cultural dynamics and competency is narrowly construed as a Deaf–hearing dichotomy. If, and when any of the texts examined do discuss race, it is a relatively small chapter, segregated from all other conversations, found in the latter sections of each book.

Academic and professional publications in the field of sign language interpreting do not have a praxis of naming or examining race as an influence when discussing issues of diversity and culture. A review of the archives of *The Journal of Interpretation*, a professional publication for sign language interpreters, was conducted from 1981 – 2016. Of the 144 articles reviewed, thirty-one articles highlight a focus on diversity, cultural or inter-cultural competencies, ethical decisions, norms of native ASL users, or demographics. Of those thirty-one opportunities, all but *one* examined cultural differences and competency solely from a Deaf–hearing binary lens (See Appendix A). Even articles that reported demographic data did not always collect participants’ race. These microinvalidations, are examples that racial identity was not perceived or reported as an influential factor to issues of diversity, culture and language norms. The one example in the archives of *The Journal of Interpretation* that examined issues of race in the interpreting field looked at privilege, lack of racially diverse representation in the field of interpreting and

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

recognized the importance of DPOC having access to interpreters of their same race (Harrigan, 1997). The majority of articles in this body of work focus on issues related to discourse analysis, functions of parameters of language and specialty genres of practitioners (e.g., educational, medical, legal interpreting, etc.).

Even some recent research with the phrase “social justice” in the title, or as a primary focal topic, only examine cultural dynamics as a Deaf–hearing binary, and do not acknowledge that a person’s race is central to their cultural identity formation (Coyne, 2012; Barnett, McKee, Smith, & Pearson, 2011; Cokely, 2005). As a result of the concept of social justice becoming a growing interest in the field of ASL–English interpretation, there are increasingly more publications coming to bear on that topic. Acknowledging race as an equally central factor of one’s being, contributing to cultural dynamics, issues of social justice and ethical considerations, may be an opportunity to gain a holistic view of the lived experiences of Deaf and hearing People of Color as richly complex beings.

The failure to name the races of people involved, whether they are People of Color or White, in literature and research on inter-cultural dynamics and competency is an example of the microinvalidation, which Sue defines as Neglect of Representation (Sue et al., 2007). This is not to blame or find fault with authors and researchers. It has been asserted by those who study privilege and power that the system teaches those who have privilege that they have the average and normalized experience (Kivel, 2017; McIntosh, 2016; Wildman & Davis, 2016; DiAngelo, 2011; Kendall, 2001). This belief of one’s White normalcy is so strong, that some researchers do not even inquire about race in their demographics collected regarding participants in social justice research. When the literature or research is based on White experiences or beliefs, the experiences of People of Color are effectively erased from the research. It is important to simply

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

name that the epistemology is based on the White Deaf or White interpreter experience. By naming the racial identities of those involved as White does not diminish or devalue the work, it accurately frames the literature and research. Without naming it, this type of microaggression assumes that White Deaf or White interpreter experiences are the norm and validates them as such (Sue, 2015). This praxis of reporting normalizes Whiteness and sets the experience of People of Color as the Other, an after-thought, or non-existent.

Although the examples used above are representative of the majority of intercultural and social justice publications in the field of sign language interpreting, there are some publications that have recognized minority race and being Deaf as significant factors in the examination of identity and culture. While Harrigan (1997) was the one article found in the *Journal of Interpretation* that examined race as a factor impacting inter-cultural interactions, there were others in the field doing so, yet this perspective was not prevalent. One source which was cited several times, the *Proceedings of the Ninth National Convention* (McIntire, 1986), included articles which are additional resources that identify racial and Deaf identities as unique factors when examining the interpreting process and culture (Aramburo & McAllister, 1986; Jones, 1986; Mathers & White, 1986).

With the exceptions of the National Multicultural Interpreter Project (Mooney, 2000), and the *Social Justice in Interpreting* curriculum by the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (Coyne & Hill, 2014) most resources identified do not focus on the interchange between Deaf Communities of Color and ASL–English interpreters.

The National Multicultural Interpreter Project (NMIP) is one of the most extensive and robust curricula to date that examines race as a significant factor in the interpreting process (Mooney, 2000). This five-year grant funded project developed an eight-section curriculum to

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

enhance ASL–English interpreter multicultural competencies. It is unknown at this time how many interpreter education entities utilize this curriculum, or to what extent it is utilized in other capacities, such as professional workshops and conferences, or trainings for entities that employ large numbers of ASL–English interpreters.

One of the goals of the NMIP is to enhance interpreting services for DPOC and to recruit more interpreters of color. To accomplish this goal would require a significant paradigm shift in the established curriculum that is used in many interpreter education entities. The NMIP lays out a clear, step-by-step approach to enhancing interpreter curriculum. The NMIP begins with the three layers of curriculum change as: a) inclusion, which “is to include the ‘omitted’ or to correct the stereotyped portrayals of groups”; b) infusion as “multicultural content is ‘infused’ into all aspects of the curriculum on a regular and routine basis” (e.g., curriculum, materials, media, etc.); c) and transformation and change which go “beyond inclusion and infusion to a core value paradigm shift that leads to strong social action, equality, and transformative dimensions” (Mooney, 2000, p. 4).

The NMIP curriculum and materials are intended to be infused into any type of interpreter education entity from college based interpreter education programs, or in-service trainings, to distance education courses, independent study and workshops/conferences at every level (i.e., local, state, regional or national) (Mooney, 2000). By utilizing the NMIP curricula, ASL–English interpreters can become more proficient with cultural competencies to work more effectively with a broader base of Deaf and hearing people, as well as interpreters of color.

Finally, the *Social Justice in Interpreting* module by the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) was examined (Coyne & Hill, 2014). This module was developed to as an infusion resource for existing interpreter education entities. This curriculum

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

includes five sections that offer resources, activities and theories that serve as an introduction to the various dimensions and concepts of social justice. It gives students an overview of the concepts of social justice, their positionality and social privileges, an opportunity to investigate their own belief systems and attitudes, guidance on allyship behaviors, and videos from Deaf people describing social justice issues from their own perspective (Coyne & Hill, 2014). The entire module is centered on how social justice concepts are practiced in the interpreting profession. Although the intersections of racial and Deaf identities are not the only dimensions of identity covered, it is a well-rounded inclusive survey of topics to initiate students' journey to practice equity in the field of ASL–English interpretation.

While the NMIP curriculum is very robust, and the NCIEC curriculum includes race as one of the many dimensions of social justice, the field of ASL–English interpreting cannot thrive on these two sources. There is a growing body of work investigating the lived experiences of African American/Black Deaf people (Stapleton, 2014; McCaskill, Lucas, Bailey, & Hill, 2011). The peer reviewed publications focused on American Indian Deaf, Asian American Pacific Islander Deaf, and Latinx Deaf lives are sorely underrepresented. However, they are vitally important because they can inform practitioners and interpreter education of epistemologies that have not been historically centered. A cursory inquiry found there are other resources examining the identity formation of African American/Black Deaf, Asian/Pacific Islander Deaf, Latino/Hispanic Deaf and American Indian Deaf cultures and identity formation, yet they are not central to, nor plentiful in, the canons of Deaf culture and interpreter education (Marbury, 2007; Wu & Grant, 1997; Susan & Kinuthia, 2003; Paris et al., 2012; Mooney, 2000) There is a plethora of topics on which to inquire about and learn from all DPOC. Due to the fact that most of the identity formation publications are beyond ten years old it is my hope to see an influx of

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

this knowledge to be currently investigated and shared with interpreter practitioners and interpreter educators.

### **Transformative Justice Theory**

Various theories of justice have been used to address communities that have experienced oppression, discrimination, violence and trauma. Transformative justice uses concepts from the fields of peace building and conflict transformation (Gready & Robins, 2014). The concept of transformative justice prioritizes the process of change, rather than predetermined outcomes, with the goal to prevent future conflicts (Gready & Robins, 2014). The definition of transformative justice is intentionally very broad, in order to be inclusive, so that the concept can be applied anywhere, at any time (Gready & Robins, 2014). While Gready and Robins (2014) illustrate some general themes that transformative justice emphasizes, they caution that these examples are not exhaustive. The grassroots communities who are directly impacted by the change are the primary drivers of transformative justice (Gready & Robins, 2014).

Transformative justice requires reframing the issues and interventions, utilizing community agency and resources, to “challenge unequal and intersecting power relationships” (Gready & Robins, 2014, p. 340). By utilizing community agency, transformative justice seeks to find a wide range of approaches to apply (Gready & Robins, 2014). Each of these concepts are aligned with the description of Deaf culture as a collectivist culture (Ladd, 2003). For transformative justice to be successful, ASL–English interpreters must work with Deaf Communities of Color to reframe how to address the issues of race DPOC face. For change to be transformative, ASL–English interpreters must reflect on and respect the power, knowledge, resources and ways of being within Deaf Communities of Color to identify the equitable best practices for interpreters.

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

**Deaf Community Cultural Wealth.** Deaf Community Cultural Wealth (DCCW) is a theoretical approach, adapted from Yosso's (2005) examination of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), which identifies six forms of capital within the Deaf community used to resist micro and macro forms of oppression (Fleischer, Garrow, & Narr, 2015). Yosso clarifies that "these various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth" (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). Yosso (2005) and Fleischer's et al. (2015) descriptions of the six forms of capital in Communities of Color and within the Deaf community include

- aspirational capital is the ability to maintain hopes and dreams "even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (Yosso, 2005, p. 77);
- linguistic capital is the "intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78) that develop complex cognitive skills, socialization and self-awareness (Fleischer et al., 2015);
- familial capital is the cultural knowledge and consciousness that hold a "sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition" nurtured by extended family and friends (Yosso, 2005, p. 79);
- social capital is the network of people and community resources that allow one to meet their social development milestones (Yosso, 2005; Fleischer et al., 2015);
- navigational capital includes the skills to move "through structures of inequality permeated by racism" and audism (Yosso, 2005, p. 80);
- resistant capital is "the emotional and psychological ability to resist and challenge negative slights...It allows a person the opportunity to maintain their dignity and to

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

create spaces that transform negative views of themselves in to an understanding of their own great potential” (Fleischer et al., 2015 as adapted from Yosso, 2005).

DCCW, in conjunction with Yosso’s CCW (2005), offer an opportunity to ASL–English interpreters to practice in ways that further equity for DPOC. Using the two theoretical approaches in concert exemplifies the value of intersectional identities that may be lost by focusing on one, or the other. This guidance is instrumental in the development of ASL–English interpreter cultural competency. Considering these forms of capital are dynamic processes that build on one another to form community cultural wealth, there are a myriad of possible opportunities to shift interpreter practitioners’ ways of knowing to be more inclusive. Being that DCCW and CCW are not yet guiding conceptual approaches to sign language interpreter practice or education, they offer a plethora of opportunities for ASL–English interpreters to search out ways to practice equity.

**Integrative Justice Model.** Current interpreter practitioners have an opportunity to view their work through a different lens than it has historically been viewed. The integrative justice model (IJM) is a business model founded on transformative justice theory (Santos, Laczniak, & Facca-Miess, 2015). This business model incorporates the ideas of transformative justice by shifting the traditional mind-set, of value being established by the service provider, to a collaborative process to establish value of service (Santos et al., 2015). The five key elements to the IJM are: “(1) an authentic engagement with customers with non-exploitative intent; (2) co-creation of value; (3) investment in future consumption; (4) interest representation of all stakeholders; and (5) long-term profit management” (Santos et al., 2015, p. 698). Utilizing the IJM, ASL–English interpreters can work with DPOC to better understand their values, and develop systems of practice that have stakeholder representation. This process allows for service

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

providers, and recipients alike, to have more authentic, satisfying experiences. This business model has implications for the field of ASL–English interpretation to be explored further. Combined with CCW and DCCW, it provides a framework for shifting practitioners’ mindsets around the value of service.

**Transformative pedagogy.** The theories and approaches used in transformative pedagogy can help to conceptualize the ASL–English interpreter’s role as an agent of social justice. Transformative pedagogy offers strategies to frame the teachers’ focus, curriculum design and content through the lens of social justice, equity, and liberation (Brown, 2004; Nieto, L., Boyer, Goodwin, Johnson, & Smith, 2010; Nieto, S., 2000). Transformative pedagogy also addresses the learners’ and practitioners’ outlook on their practice (Freire, 2000; hooks, 1994). It informs the shift from a paternalistic helping model (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007), to the provision of ASL–English interpreting services as an act of social justice.

While the authors S. Nieto, (2000) and Brown (2004) address the need for transformative pedagogy in teacher preparation education, it is all together appropriate for the field of ASL–English interpreters and interpreter education considering the parallel demographics of practitioners and learners. A recent report from the US Department of Education reports 82% of teachers in elementary and secondary public education are White (US Department of Education, 2016). This statistic is comparative to the data collected by RID reporting roughly 88% of ASL–English interpreters are White (*RID Annual Report*, 2017). Freire (2000), hooks (1994) and L. Nieto (2010) address education in general, making their work instrumental to formative education, professional trainings and practitioners alike.

Enhancing ASL–English interpreter education by adopting the transformative pedagogy framework could make advancements in the equity training of ASL–English interpreters.

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

Understanding the overwhelming majority of ASL–English interpreters are White, they may not readily have authentic lived experiences with other races. Brown (2004) and S. Nieto (2000) highlight the need for curriculum and educators to critically challenge racism and oppressive systems. In doing so, students develop a concept of transformation as a life long journey. Brown (2004) weaves together the Adult Learning Theory, Transformative Learning Theory, and Critical Social Theory for a transformative pedagogy to “increase awareness, acknowledgement and action within preparation programs” (p. 78). She suggests that weaving in social justice and equity requires carefully crafted authentic experiences for students in preparation programs, as well as a necessity for ongoing professional development opportunities (Brown, 2004). The author offers eight activities to help develop social justice and equity skills (Brown, 2004). The activities for adult learners include assignments on awareness building, reflective practice, cross-cultural interactions, and activist action planning (Brown, 2004).

Transformative pedagogy is not only a framework for ASL–English interpreter education, but current practitioners could significantly benefit by incorporating this framework in their practice. The book, *Beyond Inclusion, Beyond Empowerment* (Nieto, L. et al., 2010) is a model written for educators and transformative learners in any field as a strategy to strive toward liberation. *Beyond Inclusion, Beyond Empowerment* (Nieto, L. et al., 2010) is appropriate for both ASL–English interpreter education and practitioners as it outlines a guide to practicing social justice for everyone. L. Nieto’s (2010) book offers theory, stories, and exercises that support skill development for those that are interested in anti-oppression and social justice work.

All societies are constructed by a ranking system that recognize the various components that construct a persons’ identity. L. Nieto et al. (2010) identify nine categories of the ranking system as age, disability, religious culture, ethnicity, social class culture, sexual orientation,

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

Indigenous heritage, national origin and gender. Each society either overvalues or undervalues membership in each Rank category (Nieto, L. et al., 2010). The term Agent is used for those people who have Rank memberships that are overvalued by society, and the term Target is used for those who have memberships in undervalued Rank categories (Nieto, L. et al., 2010). Agent Rank is not a consciously held hostile oppressor mindset, “but rather a person who is experiencing unconsciousness about social inequality due to supremacist socialization” (Nieto, L. et al., 2010, p. 79). Conversely Target Rank is not a victim mindset, “but rather a person who is experiencing partial unconsciousness about social inequality due to marginalizing socialization” (Nieto, L. et al., 2010, p. 79).

*Beyond Inclusion, Beyond Empowerment* (Nieto, L. et al., 2010) outlines the development of allyship consciousness from the lens of the Agent Skills Model and the Target Skills Model. The Agent and Target models cultivate a re-centering of consciousness to resist socialized oppression. Agents develop a range of skill sets including indifference, distancing, inclusion, awareness and allyship which work to enable liberation, challenge oppression and move toward anti-oppressive consciousness (Nieto, L. et al., 2010). Targets develop a range of skills progressing from survival, confusion, empowerment, strategy and recentering which serve to “become aware of the Rank system, overcome internalized oppression, resist Agent dominance and supremacy, and to become Empowered” (Nieto, L. et al., 2010, p. 141). The Agent and Target Skills Models are highly effective when examining ASL–English interpreter interactions with DPOC. They illuminate the complexity from each Rank status and give a step-by-step guide to practicing liberation.

Adopting the approaches used in transformative pedagogy could serve to increase equity for DPOC as well as for ASL–English interpreter practitioners. The recent surge of interest on

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

social justice and equity for ASL–English interpreting research and professional trainings demonstrates the need for an influx of transformative pedagogy. The insightful work Nakahara (2016), West Oyedele (2015), and Williamson (2015) explore the process of entry, and persistence of, historically marginalized racial and ethnic identities in the field of ASL–English interpreting. The research examining the barriers and oppression interpreters from Asian and Asian American /Pacific Islander, African American/Black and Deaf-parented identities face, respectively, explicates the need for a shift to transformative pedagogy in ASL–English interpreter education. While these authors focus on the experiences of interpreters from various racial and cultural identities, they highlight cultural barriers and oppression which Deaf members of their community also face from White ASL–English interpreters.

Engaging in dialogue with both ASL–English interpreters and Deaf members of historically marginalized communities may bring greater awareness to issues that current curricula does not acknowledge. Dialogue with marginalized communities is not a form of benevolence, nor a gift to people. This engagement with community is required as the “fundamental precondition for their true humanization. . . . in order to stand against the power of oppression” (Freire, 2000, p. 138). Educators and leaders invested in engaged pedagogy are “committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own wellbeing if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students” (hooks, 1994, p. 15). Agent and Target members (Nieto, L. et al., 2010) should not deny or ignore who they are as whole beings. Transformative pedagogy engages a more authentic holistic view of oneself as Agent or Target members to work together in furtherance of increased equity.

### Chapter 3

#### Methodology

“A commitment to love and justice demands the transformation of social structures as well as of hearts.”

-Mary E. Hunt

The transformative paradigm for research serves as a structure addressing issues of social justice. Within this structure, the researcher’s role is identified as one who “recognizes inequalities and injustices in society and strives to challenge the status quo, . . . and possesses a shared sense of responsibility” (Mertens, 2007, p. 212). Conducting this research in the praxis of transformative justice has the potential to promulgate affirmative steps toward transformative justice with Deaf Communities of Color. Transformative justice moves beyond ASL–English interpreters gaining enhanced awareness and, more importantly, offers an opportunity to a large percentage of ASL–English interpreters to be more self-reflective, take action steps to learn, grow and improve the level of service they provide to DPOC.

Research regarding interpreters’ behavior is highly dependent on subject participation to collect data. In these instances, it is appropriate to focus on interpreters’ self-reflection. Practitioners are able to reflect and report on a range of topics in their work. They may reflect about the decisions made regarding the effectiveness of a linguistic product or theoretical process model chosen for a given setting. Interpreters may also discuss the process to make, influential factors, and or the impact of an ethical decision. Other research regarding interpreters’ behavior is best when centered on the consumers’ perspective (Mertens, 2012). There are settings and topics that interpreters can only report limited depth of knowledge at best, if any at all.

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

I strongly believe it is important for people that hold social privileges to do the work and investigate the impact of their words and actions. Interpreters must be able to ask the tough questions and receive the answers without asserting a defense, or explanation of reasoning or intent. The space to reflect on the *impact* of our words and actions is an important step in changing behaviors. Considering microaggressions are often unconsciously committed, the research exploring microaggressions committed by interpreters is a driving force why it is important to center the data collection from those who are impacted the most, Deaf People of Color.

Mertens (2012) outlines four assumptions that build the transformative paradigm as axiological, ontological, epistemological and methodological. Researchers, whose work is focused on increasing social justice, use these four approaches together when engaging with communities that experience oppression. Axiology includes researchers respecting cultural histories and norms and the need to be aware that oppression and discrimination are pervasive (Mertens, 2012). The axiological assumption also argues that cultural competence in research is central for researchers when engaging with underrepresented groups. The paucity of academic work examining ASL–English interpreters’ behaviors, as told by DPOC, makes this exploratory research appropriate and long overdue.

The ontological assumption recognizes issues of power, and that there are various constructions of reality based on the access to privileges (Mertens, 2012). Moving the center from what has traditionally been deemed valid evidence, from predominantly White hearing interpreters’ perspectives to the lived experiences of DPOC, shifts the power structure and critically engages in research aimed at increasing social justice. The epistemological assumption examines questions about control of the investigation, whether by non-members of marginalized

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

communities, or community members (Mertens, 2012). This assumption also discusses the need for the researcher to establish trusting relationships and an interactive link with community members so they may serve as a “supportive reflective activist who works to challenge the status quo” (Mertens, 2012, p. 807). Inclusion of a qualitative aspect in the methodological assumption is a critical piece to institute dialogue between researcher and community members (Mertens, 2012). As this case study views the experiences shared by DPOC as a vital and valid source of evidence of ASL–English interpreters’ behaviors, the methodology was central to this research.

### **Research Questions**

**Research question 1:** What racial microaggressions do ASL–English interpreters commit against DPOC?

**Research question 2:** What are some strategies to mitigate the occurrence of these racial microaggressions?

These research questions were born from stories and experiences that have been relayed to me by DPOC over the twenty-two years I have worked as an ASL–English interpreter. The stories were full of frustration, anger, fear and disappointment that a person who accepted a trusted and powerful role as an interpreter could use it to further marginalize a Deaf person. As I started to investigate this topic in interpreting research, I found very little to no academic work investigating interpreter-committed microaggressions against DPOC. As mentioned in the Literature Review, there is very little acknowledgment of race in the main text that guide the field of ASL–English interpreting or its foundational field of Deaf culture studies.

### **Methodology Design**

This research adopted an exploratory phenomenological approach focusing on two case studies. Data was obtained through semi-structured interviews (Hale & Napier, 2013). Understanding

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

human behavior is difficult to measure, observe and therefore generalize (Hale & Napier, 2013) this research is intended to understand the experiences of two participants so that ASL–English interpreters can critically reflect on their practice. Considering the purpose of a phenomenological approach is to understand the issue from everyday knowledge and experiences of the specific group (Hale & Napier, 2013), it is essential to document the lived experiences of DPOC, as told by DPOC, to serve as evidence of ASL–English interpreter behaviors.

Using a transformative research paradigm (Mertens, 2012), I engaged with members of Deaf Communities of Color during most every stage of this research. Following the epistemological assumption of transformative research, I talked informally with DPOC about the appropriateness of a non-member conducting this line of inquiry. From the local community members with whom I engaged, I had unanimous agreement that White hearing interpreters must take some responsibility investigating the racial microaggressions ASL–English interpreters commit. I also engaged with DPOC to developed interview questions, review aspects of the research processes, to get a general sense of the value of this research and during the final review of this research during committee review. I am thankful for their guidance and input, as the methodological assumptions of transformative research are vital.

Convenience sampling was used to recruit the participants (Hale & Napier, 2013). Over the past thirteen years I have developed the relationships of trust within the local Deaf community required to be able to recruit participants by convenience sampling. As a White hearing researcher, it would not be effective nor appropriate, within the timelines of this thesis study, to inquire in different communities of which I am not a member. As a non-member of any Deaf Community of Color, it took years of consistent relationship building to develop a level of

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

trust within my network of acquaintances to conduct this research. After the participants were recruited, two semi-structured interviews were conducted.

**Data Collection.** Two one-on-one interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview format (Hale & Napier, 2013). The interviews consisted of a brief explanation of the research focus, fifteen questions, five possible follow-up questions, and an example list of racial microaggressions to use if a participant needed prompting (See Appendix B). Both interviews were conducted in ASL and were video recorded. The video recording was then fully translated to printed English. The environment was warm and comfortable with snacks and refreshments. The semi-structured interview was planned to last about an hour. Both participants appeared comfortable answering questions, and were incredibly generous to share their many experiences with me. So much so, that led one interview to last an hour and a half, the second interview was over two hours. Both participants were aware of the time. I did not hasten their sharing of stories, but rather let them share at their pace, comfort of detail, and quantity of experiences. Both participants thanked me for asking the questions, and including them in the work. I believe they were willing to share because they see the value of interpreters taking a critical look at their own belief systems, behaviors, and comments.

As a non-member researcher of the community of which I was inquiring, I was aware that it may be easy to slip into the mindset to casually ask, “Any more examples?” or “What else?” People of Color (POC) experience microaggressions with such regularity and frequency, it may seem to a White person that it is easy to report a plethora of events. Yet in my experience, generally, after a few microaggressions have been named, the POC’s perspective is that the point has been made, and there is no need to hash out every single time they have experienced an oppressive act. There is also an aspect of self-preservation for the participant that must be

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

appreciated and respected in this process. It would not be culturally sensitive to persist in digging for a higher quantity of microaggressions, which primarily benefits my research and may simultaneously cause negative feelings or even serve to retraumatize a participant. As a researcher I was careful to balance their willingness to share experiences with my goal to document data. All of that being said, I am confident the reported data I was able to collect from the two participants is sufficient to serve as evidence of the racial microaggressions ASL–English interpreters commit.

**Data Analysis.** I translated the video recorded interviews conducted in ASL to printed English. In the translation time markers were added for reference, as well as descriptors of signs, and non-manual markers which are commonly used in ASL discourse. The printed translation was then analyzed by a two-step process. In the first phase of analysis I used an open coding approach to identify individual events that evidenced microaggressions by ASL–English interpreters. The participants shared a combined total of seventeen racial microaggression events. The participants insightfully identified four of those microaggression events from an intersectional lens.

The second phase of analysis used a focused coding approach to categorize similar individual events into racial microaggression themes. Sue et al.'s (2007) taxonomy of racial microaggression was used as a guide to document and categorize evidence of microaggressions. Thematic data analysis generated eight themes regarding how microaggressions were experienced by the participants. Based on the themes identified from the data, the microaggressions identified in this research supports previous research. Five microaggression themes that emerged from the analysis paralleled previous research, as well as three unique themes. As a result of six microaggressions which did not fit Sue et al.'s (2007) taxonomy, three

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

unique themes emerged. The eight themes which emerged include: Ascription of Intelligence, Second Class Citizen, Pathologizing Cultural Values, Alien in Own Land, Color Blindness (Sue et al., 2007), Infantilizing, Assumed Authority, and Taking Credit.

### **Limitations**

Initially, I attempted to conduct a focus group of DPOC that extended beyond the local Deaf community with whom I have worked and associated with for more than thirteen years. This focus group was intended to document the microaggressions committed by ASL–English interpreters from a large participant pool. The encouragement and support I had received from local DPOC to continue with this line of inquiry recognized that White hearing interpreters need to engage in this work to effect change. In order to work at dismantling systems of oppression, persons holding societal privileges must investigate their group's, and their individual, acts of oppression. Although I had local support, the extended geographical distance proved to be ineffective. This process reinforced the aspect of successful transformative research which requires the researcher to authentically establish trust with community members prior to conducting research (Mertens, 2007).

During this time, concerns were expressed regarding the appropriateness of a White hearing interpreter conducting this line of research and that the research expressed tokenism. These concerns reinforce the concept that non-members of a marginalized community must develop bonds of trust, over an extended period, to conduct this type of inquiry. It was not feasible to establish the bonds of trust with outside community members equal to what I have developed in my local community. I am grateful to Deaf Communities of Color for speaking up and setting boundaries when they are uncomfortable with non-members efforts to work with

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

their community. Because of this feedback, I was able to redesign the methodology to conduct case studies with DPOC whom I have long standing relationships of trust.

One of the overarching limitations of this study was the significantly shortened timeline from institutional research approval to conducting the interviews. Ideally, I would have liked to use a snowball effect (Hale & Napier, 2013) to include a broader base of participants for the focus group. This would have given a more robust picture of what microaggressions are experienced and possible additional mitigating factors that DPOC value. The more comprehensive and inclusive list of microaggressions that could be named, allows for the possibility that more ASL–English interpreters can see themselves in the examples and reflect on their own comments and behaviors to initiate change.

One of the challenges during the interviews was keeping the focus of the experiences on *interpreters* that committed microaggressions. People of Color experience microaggressions with such regular occurrence, once a space was offered to share, it seemed to become cathartic, and they relayed a great deal of everyday oppressions and microaggressions that they face. This appears to be indicative of the totality of their lived experience. Yosso, Smith, Ceja and Solórzano (2009) explain how “the accumulation of racial microaggressions can manifest as racial battle fatigue” (p. 675) and argue for more inquiry of the cumulative effects of racial microaggressions. It is naïve to think that I could neatly parse out, and select only interpreter microaggressions to analyze, as if in a petri dish. Oppression is a culmination of experiences for marginalized people. As a person with many societal privileges I can either interrupt that culminating experience, or I can add to it, there is no in between.

Considering the methodology was a case study, there was a lack of diversity in the participant pool. Many constellations of race, gender, age, and Deaf identity were not present in

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

this research. There are many lines of inquiry for future research to undertake. Each of which will contribute to the clarity and authentic nature of reporting sign language interpreters' behaviors and comments.

**CHAPTER 4**

**Results and Discussion of Findings**

“One of the most vital ways we sustain ourselves is by building communities of resistance, places where we know we are not alone.”

-bell hooks

This study explored the racial microaggressions ASL–English interpreters commit against DPOC. Data were collected by documenting the lived experiences of DPOC’s interactions with ASL–English interpreters from semi-structured interviews. Seeing the lack of literature on microaggressions DPOC face, it is important to document ASL–English interpreters’ behaviors as evidenced by DPOC. The historic praxis of not validating the epistemology of marginalized communities until White researchers deem it so, is as detrimental to racial equity, as it is pervasive in occurrence. It may be uncomfortable for ASL–English interpreters to learn about the racial microaggressions perpetrated against DPOC, nevertheless it is a vital step in becoming agents of social justice.

This chapter will introduce the participants, share the microaggression events in aggregate, and name the microaggression theme categories. Next, I will share the some of the impacts the microaggression event had on the participants, as well as the participants’ desired behaviors of ASL–English interpreters. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the implications of this study, which examine possible steps ASL–English interpreter practitioners can take to mitigate future microaggressions. Because a case study, by definition, has a small participant pool (Hale & Napier, 2013), I used participant numbers in lieu of their names, and reported their experiences in aggregate to protect their confidentiality.

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

### **Participants**

This exploratory phenomenological research represents a snapshot of two peoples lived experiences. These case studies do not represent, nor intend to represent, a general or common experience of Deaf people, nor People of Color. The phenomenological case study methodology is taking an in-depth look at two people's experiences (Hale & Napier, 2013) with interpreters in the hopes of illuminating issues that warrant deeper inquiry. There is a severe paucity of research investigating interpreters' interactions with DPOC. This research is gathering some of the rich truth that is within reach if interpreters are courageous enough to be guided by the lived experiences of Deaf People of Color.

The two participants are representative of the intended population of the research. Both participants reside in northern California, use ASL–English interpreting services on a regular basis, and identify as Deaf People of Color. Both participants are currently living in the Northern California region, which includes large metropolitan areas such as the greater Sacramento area, and the extended San Francisco Bay area. In highly populated areas there are greater numbers of interpreters, therefore more access to interpreting services. Both participants use ASL–English interpreting services on a weekly basis. Participants report current typical uses of interpreting services to be at their personal medical appointments or workplace, appointments focused on other family member which they attend, public events, legal and social service appointments. Participant #1 identifies as a South East Asian woman, and Participant #2 identifies as a Mexican American woman.

The participants differ in their formative years regarding their educational setting experiences. Participant #1 attended an inclusion program (formerly known as mainstream programs), while Participant #2 attended one of the California Schools for the Deaf. California

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

serves about 14,000 Deaf and Hard of Hearing students; 800 of which receive their education at either of the two California Schools for the Deaf, Fremont or Riverside (Taylor, 2016). The California School for the Deaf, Fremont, located in Northern California, serves an entire Deaf and Hard of Hearing student body with a bilingual ASL and English academic environment which fosters a “holistic view of Deaf children as healthy individuals who are culturally distinct, have language rights, and deserve to be educated in a language-rich environment” (California School for the Deaf, n.d., para. 2). The remaining 13,200 Deaf and Hard of Hearing students are dispersed throughout the state’s roughly 1,000 school districts in a variety of educational programs such as inclusion programs with interpreting services, or a variety of other specialized educational settings (Taylor, 2016). The inclusion programs often do not have the critical mass of Deaf peers, Deaf adult role models, and native ASL users which the California Schools for Deaf offer. The educational background of the participants is important to differentiate because it may have influenced issues of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005), Deaf Community Cultural Wealth (Fleischer et al., 2015) and the onset, frequency and exposure to ASL–English interpreters.

### **Identified Themes**

From the two interviews, a total of seventeen individual microaggression events were identified (see Figure 1). Most fell into Sue’s categories of microinsults, which convey “rudeness, insensitivity and demeans a person’s racial heritage or identity” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 274) and microinvalidations, which disregard a Person of Color’s “thoughts, feelings or experiential reality” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 274). Finally, there were some events shared that did not particularly fit with the microaggressions as described in the literature (Sue et al., 2007). These

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

unique categories acknowledge an aspect of intersectionality with the overlapping identities of Deaf, race, and gender.

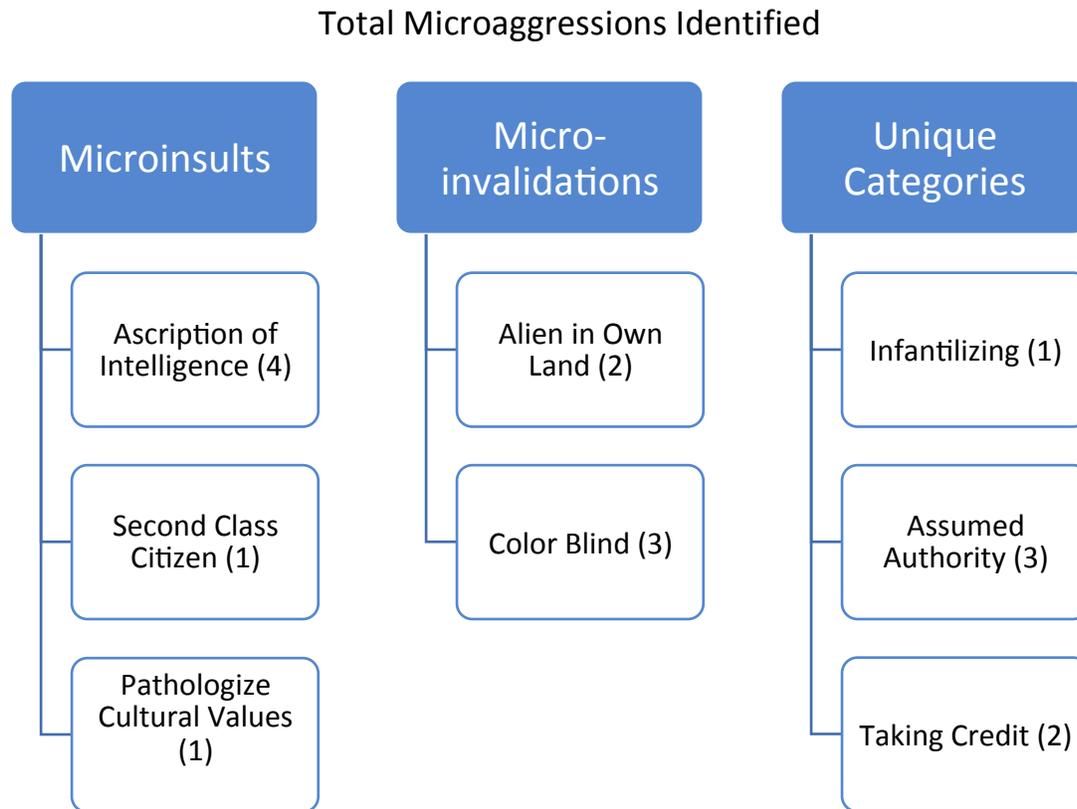


Figure 1. Total racial microaggressions identified in the case study

As with most microaggressions, both microinsults and microinvalidations are often unconsciously committed (Sue et al., 2007). The participants in this study supported that notion as well by commenting that they believed the ASL–English interpreters were not aware that their comments were negative, or the depth of the impact the comment or behavior had on the participant. Most of the themes of microaggressions identified in this research are categorized and based on the taxonomy developed by Sue et al. (2007). The microinsult themes identified were the Ascription of Intelligence, Second Class Citizen, and Pathologizing Cultural Values

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

(Sue et al., 2007). From the events shared there were two main themes of microinvalidations, Alien in Own Land, and Color Blindness (Sue et al., 2007). It should be noted that I recognize the ableist language in the term “Color Blindness”, and that it is used here to refer to the work of Sue et al. (2007). The three unique categories identified were Infantilizing, Assumed Authority, and Taking Credit for the DPOC’s Accomplishments. During the course of sharing the microaggression events, the Participants self-identified four times they viewed the microaggression through an intersectional lens (see Figure 2).

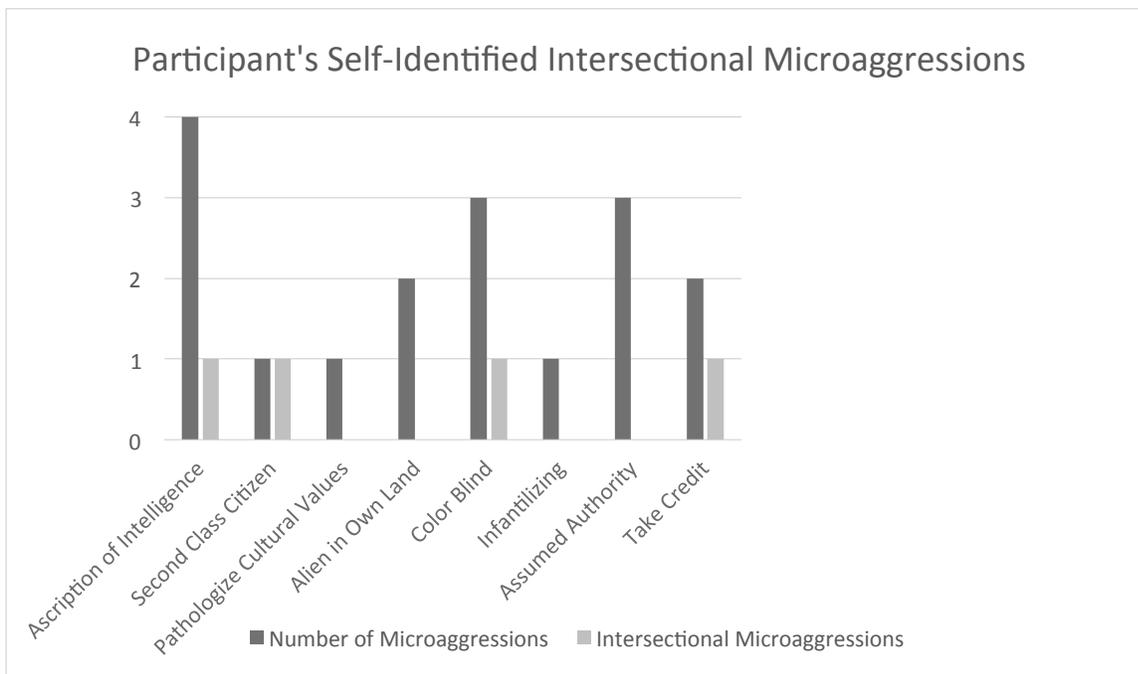


Figure 2. Categories of intersectional microaggressions identified by the Participants

**Microinsults.** The microinsult themes of Ascription of Intelligence, Second Class Citizen, and Pathologizing Cultural Values (Sue et al., 2007) were identified by six events within the data collected (see Figure 1). There were four events that fit in the category Ascription of Intelligence (Sue et al., 2007). This theme had the highest number of events identified of all the microaggressions in this research. The four events were comments by ASL–English interpreters

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

who worked in an educational setting, varying from elementary school through college.

Comments by ASL–English interpreters included: a) surprise the student could spell as well as they did; b) conversely, assumed the student should be good at math exhibiting the Model Minority Myth stereotype (Yi & Museus, 2016); c) told the student their writing was better than that of students at the schools for the Deaf; which the student later learned was not true; and d) asserted that they knew ASL signs for concepts in a science class and was unwilling to negotiate with the DPOC or other interpreters.

The Model Minority Myth is a stereotype that proposes all Asian Americans have great academic and professional success (Yi & Museus, 2016). This stereotype is highly problematic for many reasons including the fact that it ignores the challenges faced by underrepresented Asian American ethnicities and it flattens the experience of a richly diverse population (Yi & Museus, 2016). Participant #1 recognized the third event, noting their writing was better than students attending a school for the Deaf, through an intersectional lens, in that her race and Deaf identity were marginalized in one event. The participant reported that the comments served to isolate a Deaf student in a local mainstream school from her community of Deaf peers. She learned about her writing proficiency, and short comings, when she attended Gallaudet University, an educational setting of majority Deaf peers, and the only liberal arts college serving predominantly Deaf and Hard of Hearing students in the world.

In the final example, Participant #2 encountered an ASL–English interpreter in a college environment. Upon meeting each other for the first time, the ASL–English interpreter asserted what ASL signs would be used for specific English concepts in the course. The ASL–English interpreter did not ask if Participant #2 had any experience with this subject, or established ASL signs which may have been used before. The ASL–English interpreter refused to engage in any

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

dialogue with Participant #2, or the other ASL–English interpreter, to negotiate vocabulary usage. The ASL–English interpreter was adamant in asserting that they knew about this subject matter. Participant #2 recognized the sign choices as inappropriate and not conveying the conceptual meaning of the English concept. Participant #2 used her agency in the situation to advise the other ASL–English interpreter, “after she was done, and had turned away, I motioned to [the other interpreter] ‘No way, do not use that!’”

One event which was shared fit into the microinsult theme of Second Class Citizen (Sue et al., 2007). Participant #1 noted that she viewed this microaggression from an intersectional lens. Educational (K-12) interpreters often labeled her as “shy”, “quiet”, “weak”, and “innocent”. She explained that these stereotypes were ascribed to her because of both her race and Deaf identity. She also explained how infantilizing this felt as they were not accurate descriptions of who she was as a young person.

In the microinsult theme of Pathologizing Cultural Values (Sue et al., 2007), one event was identified. Participant #1 described how her South East Asian family highly values family connections. Encompassed in that value, was a deep sense of care and love, wanting the best for the next generation. She described how her family wanted to attain what is commonly known as the American dream, meaning a comfortable lifestyle. She explained how ASL–English interpreters misunderstood this and judged her cultural values through a White American lens, expressing pity for her because of what they believed to be her family’s unreasonably high expectations.

**Microinvalidations.** The microinvalidation themes of an Alien in Own Land, and Color Blindness (Sue et al., 2007) were distributed over 5 events (see Figure 1). The theme of an Alien in Own Land was identified by two events. Participant #1 recognized a double standard in value

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

systems, and resisted the assumption that “all brown people are immigrants.” Participant #1 explains the double standard by saying:

What’s strange is you know the phrase, “Southern hospitality”? Why is that acceptable, but ours is labeled “obedient or submissive?” “Oh, that’s your culture to be that way” [as in a patronizing persona of an interpreter] What’s the difference? But that’s how we show it. It’s the same concept. We make sure to take care of each other, to be sure everyone is alright.

The second example identified of an Alien in Own Land (Sue et al., 2007) was frequently encountered by Participant #1. She noticed that when ASL–English interpreters first meet her, many have automatically assumed that she is an immigrant. Without her making any comments about her background, interpreters will say with intention and confidence, “Oh, I have worked with students that are immigrants” or “I have a lot of experience working with Deaf students whose families are immigrants.”

The last theme of microinvalidations, Color Blindness (Sue et al., 2007), was evidenced by three events. Sue et al. (2007) names Color Blindness as one of the most common microaggressions experienced. While this study did not bear that same result, it was the theme with the second highest number of events identified. Participant #2 experienced this when a White Deaf person made decisions regarding the interpreting process and DPOC specifically. The ASL–English interpreter followed the decisions made by White Deaf people, without checking with the DPOC on the appropriateness of this decision. This decision was not only *not* their preference, but was offensive to the DPOC.

Participant #2 also experienced Color Blind microinvalidation with a White ASL – English interpreter became visibly agitated when the DPOC asked to primarily use a Deaf

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

Interpreter of Color. It was Participant #2's understanding that the ASL–English interpreter became hostile to the fact that the DPOC wanted to use the service of the Deaf Interpreter of Color. The last microinvalidation in the theme of Color Blindness (Sue et al., 2007) was perceived by Participant #2 as an intersectional microaggression. A White ASL–English interpreter allowed the White hearing participant to constantly interrupt the DPOC. The DPOC described that experience as dismissive to the goals of a Deaf person and a disrespectful form of communication with her as a POC in the conversation.

**Unique Categories.** There were three themes identified, by six events from the participants' experiences, that did not fit with Sue et al.'s (2007) themes of microaggressions; Infantilizing, Assumed Authority, and Taking Credit for the DPOC's Accomplishments (see Figure 1). The theme of Infantilizing was identified in the research by the assumption that the DPOC could not understand or handle the given situation. Participant #2 identified an event when the ASL–English interpreter changed racial slurs used to euphemisms. The DPOC was angry that they were not given the message in its entirety.

The theme of Assumed Authority was identified by three events in one setting when a White ASL–English interpreter asserted they knew more about the Participant #1's culture than the DPOC. The ASL–English interpreter insisted that Participant #1's last name was common. Participant #1 explained that it wasn't, and the interpreter became more intent that it was a common last name. The third event was when the interpreter went so far as to try to use evidence to prove she was correct, by naming two other people with the same last name. The interpreter didn't retreat until Participant #1 explained the other two people were her siblings. Participant #1's frustration was understandable when she stated,

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

Really, she doesn't know what a common last name is in my culture! Because she doesn't know, if I say it's not, it's over! It's not even her culture! But she wanted to act like the expert that she knew all about it. When really, you're *not*!

The final theme of Taking Credit for the DPOC's Accomplishments was identified when the ASL–English interpreter in the room was given kudos for the DPOC's academic success. Other hearing people in the room even told Participant #1 she should thank the interpreter present. The interpreter was not the academic interpreter for the DPOC, they just happened to be a practitioner in the room, yet did not correct or stop the accolades.

### **Impacts of Microaggressions**

Considering most microaggressions are committed unconsciously, it is logical to conclude that the impact or consequences of racial microaggressions also goes without recognition to the perpetrator. It is important to share the participants perspective of how the microaggressions impacted them to illuminate possible outcomes that ASL–English interpreters may not acknowledge. When we become aware of the impacts to our individual actions, we have the opportunity to make positive change.

The impacts shared by the participants paralleled the immediate impacts reported in the literature (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue et al., 2007; Yosso et al., 2009; Wong, Derthick, David, Saw, & Okazaki, 2014). While racial microaggressions are pervasive, the detailed documented impacts are less known to researchers and warrant deeper inquiry (Solórzano et al., 2000; Wong et al., 2014). Wong et al. (2014) discusses one study that explored the long-term effects of racial microaggressions and found that the cumulative effects of racial microaggressions over a lifespan are decidedly negative, yet they are not defined in their entirety (Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010). Many researchers agree that there may be ambiguity in the

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

details of how microaggressions are initiated, and questions are left unanswered as to the long-term effects, but there is overwhelming consensus that racial microaggressions have long lasting negative effects on People of Color (Solórzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2007; Yosso et al., 2009; Wong et al., 2014). From a substantial review of microaggression research, Wong et al. (2014) found

that perceived psychological distress in ethnic and racial minority groups (e.g., anxiety, diminished self-esteem, diminished self-efficacy, etc.) as the result of experiencing racial microaggressions has been documented in several settings, namely therapy, clinical supervision, academia, university classrooms and environment and the community (p. 8).

Participant #1 and Participant #2 reported experiencing a range of feelings from the racial microaggressions committed by ASL–English interpreters. Most of Participant #1’s experiences shared were from her elementary education, whereas, most of Participant #2’s experiences were from her adult life. The most common impacts between the participants were feelings of shock and confusion as to why an ASL–English interpreter would think that way, as well as feelings of insult, anger and frustration. At times, Participant #1 reported she internalized the beliefs expressed by the microaggressions. By virtue of racial microaggressions being mostly unconscious acts by the perpetrator, it is logical to assume they were also not conscious of the impacts to the DPOC. While any of the impacts named by the DPOC in this section do not have a direct statistical correlation to the actions of the ASL–English interpreter, this reporting does shed light on an opportunity for practitioners to look at the impacts of their actions that have previously gone unrecognized.

Participant #1 reported internalizing the beliefs supporting the Model Minority Myth stereotypes of excelling in academics (Yi & Museus, 2016) and the Second Class Citizen theme

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

(Sue et al., 2007) attributing being “shy”, “quiet”, “weak”, and “innocent” to her race. She felt the need to change her presentation of self in dramatic ways. To resist these racialized character labels, Participant #1 reported that she felt added pressure to perform well academically and to change how she would have naturally presented herself. Participant #1 reported the added pressure instituted by the ASL–English interpreter’s expectations stifled her ability to ask questions seeking clarity or to seek out and try new interests. These two facets, asking questions and trying new things, play a critical role in the development of critical thinking skills. She also reported a change in how she presented herself to resist the labels of “shy”, “quiet”, “weak”, and “innocent” attributed by ASL–English interpreters. To resist these labels, she became more verbally confrontational, even getting involved in a few physical fights.

Participant #1 reported feeling angry, insulted and a sense of disbelief regarding two events. One, when the ASL–English interpreter Assumed Authority about her culture insisting that her last name was common, and when the ASL–English interpreter Took Credit for her academic accomplishments and wasn’t even the ASL–English interpreter for her school. In both of these events the ASL–English interpreter showed an incredible sense of self-importance and arrogance.

Participant #2 reported a range of feelings including shock, anger and frustration from the microaggressions committed by ASL–English interpreters that paralleled Participant #1 and those described in the literature. Participant #2 reported feeling shock and anger when the White ASL–English interpreter chose to change how they would interpret culturally laden language regarding POC *without* consulting the DPOC in the event. The unilateral decision made between a White Deaf person and the White ASL–English interpreter was an example of decisions that centered on White norms and disregarded the DPOC as autonomous racial beings.

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

Feeling isolated and the weight of a White dominated system was reported by Participant #2 when a White ASL–English interpreter allowed a White professor to continually interrupt her comments. Participant #2 examined this microaggression event from an intersectional lens. The ASL–English interpreter could have acquiesced to the White professor because of hearing privilege, unconsciously disregarding the DPOC’s comments as valuable, both, or any number of other reasons. The important point here for ASL–English interpreters to recognize is that the interchange was unequal, frustrating and stifling to the DPOC. This example of the Color Blind microaggression discounts the impact to a Person of Color. The ASL–English interpreter’s actions reinforced systems of oppression, rather than interrupted them.

### **Desired Alternative Behaviors**

When inquiring about alternative behaviors and comments from ASL–English interpreters, the participants had a few parallel sentiments that illustrate their preferences; to be treated with equity, that interpreters would listen more than share, and assume more humility. They also encourage interpreters to act on what they learn regarding working toward social justice goals. To continuously be self-reflective, make changes to their practice and engage in dialogue with DPOC are initial steps toward the actions ASL–English interpreters can do as social justice agents.

**Listen, learn, act.** The participants own comments are deeply moving and poignant. Participant #1 concludes by suggesting,

I would say listen more than run your mouth. From listening, you learn. By listening, you develop more cultural competency. By listening you learn about their culture authentically. I will share that treasured part of myself with you [5 claw handshape, palm

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

up, HEART-GIVE]. They will share with you on their time. It's as simple as that, just listen.

Participant #2 encouraged ASL–English interpreters to increase their awareness by learning more about the lived experiences of DPOC in authentic ways. Her values are identified when she says,

Interpreters need more awareness . . .real awareness. Do not just give it lip service, I don't care about that. What you say, and your actions, will be different. Interpreters should be vulnerable, not ego driven. Vulnerability is so important.

Seeing DPOC as equals requires the ASL–English interpreter to learn more about Deaf Communities of Color as holistic complex beings. While the NMIP (Mooney, 2000) offers an introduction to learn about various Deaf Communities of Color, interpreters are encouraged to invest in local chapters of organizations that celebrate the richly diverse Deaf communities. Local organizations such as Asian American Deaf Council, Black Deaf Advocates, Council de Manos, Global Deaf Muslims, and the Intertribal Deaf Council offer a valued opportunity to learn about a different culture, from community members. Resources found online and in social media sites may also provide initial access to learn about Deaf Communities of Color.

Participants desired behaviors are aligned with leading authors' strategies to dismantle racism and promote equity (DiAngelo, 2011; Freire, 2000; Hooks, 1994; Kivel, 2017; Nieto et al., 2010; Sue et al., 2007). The process of the Agent (Nieto et al., 2010) resisting the systemic indoctrination to be the center and embody the standard is laborious work. It requires significant investment and commitment of the Agent to want and need liberation for all. If ASL–English interpreters invest in authentic relationships with Deaf Communities of Color they may increase the breadth and depth of opportunities to practice with equity and act as social justice agents.

**CHAPTER 5**

**Conclusion**

“I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept”

-Angela Davis

**Summary**

Authors who work to dismantle racism agree that racism is pervasive and infiltrates most every institution in America (DiAngelo, 2011; Kendall, 2001; Kivel, 2017; Lucal, 1996; McIntosh, 2015, 2016; Solórzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2007, 2015; Tatum, 1994; Yosso, 2005). Overt intentional racism is not as common today as are more subtle forms of racism defined as racial microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007). Racial microaggressions are most often committed unconsciously, by well-intentioned people with societal privileges (Sue et al., 2007). The very nature of racial privilege is the centering, and assumption of normalcy and rightness of White ways of knowing and being in society.

While the institutions of human services such as public education, psychology and ASL–English interpreting aim to improve the lives of those they serve, practitioners are not immune to the issues of race that impact any other institution in America. To be effective human service providers in these fields, practitioners must be keenly aware of their identity’s impact on those they serve, as well as the environment in which they work. These fields have an intriguing similarity; at least 83% of psychologists, 82% of public school teachers, 77% of college faculty, and 87% of ASL–English interpreters are White (APA, 2015; US Department of Education, 2016; US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; RID, 2017).

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

**Historical context to today's practitioner.** Much of the training in these fields of human service do not sufficiently address racial inequity and the power differential between practitioner and consumer (Sue et al., 2007; Nieto, S., 2000; Fernandes & Meyers, 2010). Understanding the high percentage of practitioners who are White, therefore lacking the lived experience of racial minorities, and the lack of training in their respective fields of study, it is more than likely that they are susceptible to committing microaggressions against those they serve. While there has been research regarding microaggressions committed by practitioners in the fields of education and psychology, the field of ASL–English interpretation has not had an academic inquiry of interpreter committed racial microaggressions. This research aims to address that gap and draw on the experiences and research reported from the fields of education and psychology.

The most common forms of racism today are microaggressions, which are subtle comments and behaviors that reinforce a White dominated system (Sue et al., 2007). In large part, the fields of ASL–English interpretation and interpreter education have yet to critically examine and embrace how race impacts the provision of services. The prevalent amount of what is known in these two fields in terms of cultural competency is based on a White dominated epistemology. This praxis has also occurred in the field of Deaf cultural studies (Fernandes & Meyers, 2010), which is a foundation to the field of ASL–English interpreting.

The fields of Deaf cultural studies, ASL–English interpreter education, and ASL–English interpretation continue to narrowly construe issues of cultural competence from a Deaf/hearing binary. Most major works used in the training and guidance of ASL–English interpreters does not address DPOC's ways of knowing and being in society (Bauman, 2008; Dean & Pollard, 2013; Holcomb, 2013; Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007; Ladd, 2003; Mindess, 2006). While there are a few notable works that bring the intersection of DPOC's epistemology and the practice of

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

ASL–English interpreter to light, such as the NMIP (Mooney, 2000), and the NCIEC curriculum, *Social Justice in Interpreting* (Coyne & Hill, 2014), all too often DPOC’s experiences and perspectives have been ignored, or relegated to minor chapters. This deficiency continues the cycle of centering White ways of knowing, whether they are Deaf or that of the ASL–English interpreter.

Interpreters have a long history of examining many facets of their own work. They can examine ethical decisions, conceptual accuracy, and new innovations for enhanced provision of services. Yet, considering that microaggressions are committed in large part unconsciously (Sue et al., 2007), it is logical to assume that interpreters are not proficient at identifying their own oppressive or discriminatory comments and behaviors. The most accurate data that will reflect the occurrences and impact of ASL–English interpreter racial microaggressions is reported from Deaf People of Color.

**Research findings.** The findings of this research exemplify that ASL–English interpreters commit racial microaggressions. At this time, the extent to which racial microaggressions are committed by ASL–English interpreters is unknown and warrants further study. The examples shared by the participants varied in settings where microaggressions occurred, as well as the age they experienced the microaggression. Participants shared experiences from youth to adulthood, in education, employment and medical settings, where ASL–English interpreters’ racial derogatory comments and behaviors had a negative impact on the DPOC.

The racial microaggressions shared by the participants paralleled many themes identified in previous research (Sue et al., 2007). While it was the second most prevalent occurring microaggression in this study, previous research identifies Color Blindness as the most prevalent

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

microaggression (Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000; Sue et al., 2007; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). The majority of events shared by the participants of this study fell into the category of Ascription of Intelligence (Sue et al., 2007). Considering the participants acknowledged several microaggressions from intersectional perspectives further clarifies that quick and simple remedies will not be effective. Readers of this research would be remiss to attempt developing strategies to mitigate racial microaggressions committed by ASL–English interpreters without considering the multiple intersections of identity (e.g., Deaf, race, gender, etc.).

The participants of this study offered several desired behaviors ASL–English interpreters can undertake to promote equity. Their suggestions are aligned with the recommendations and perspectives from researchers and authors working to dismantle racism (Kivel, 2017, DiAngelo, 2011). Participants of this research encourage ASL–English interpreters to approach DPOC from a place of humility, to listen and learn. This act of listening will have a two-fold effect. One effect is the ASL–English interpreter will learn about another racial identity *from* the DPOC. This approach to learning is by far the most authentic. The second effect is simply, to show a greater level of respect to a marginalized community. This act of civility may build greater bonds of trust between DPOC and ASL–English interpreters.

Participants also suggested practitioners view DPOC as equals. This includes learning more about different races and cultures than the ASL–English interpreters'. It has been said that “A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.” While ASL–English interpreters and can access trainings, or interact with community events to learn about other races and cultures, the DPOC is the expert on their culture. Participants want ASL–English interpreters to listen more than assert their perceived expertise. It is beneficial when ASL–English interpreters do not center

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

themselves regarding content knowledge, cultural awareness of others and positions of authority. Furthermore, when ASL–English interpreters are in the role of practitioner, it is an inappropriate time to assert one’s perceived expertise, especially regarding another persons’ culture. One way to show more cultural competency is to center the Deaf and hearing people while in the role of an ASL–English interpreter.

The microaggressions described by participants may also be attributed to a lack of cultural competency on the part of those committing the microaggressions. Systemically, people with social privilege are taught that their lived experience is to be centered, and is the standard. By in large, their lack of understanding marginalized communities is not out of malice, but a product of systemic practices of centering Whiteness (DiAngelo, 2011; McIntosh, 2015). Some influencing factors to the lack of cultural competency could be from their lived experience, or from professional training and how they conceptualize the role of an ASL–English interpreter, or a combination of all the above. A lack of authentic experiences with Communities of Color maintains practitioner centered epistemology. RID’s newly required Power Privilege and Oppression CEU (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2015) is one effort to address this deficit.

This research cannot propose one simple answer to solve issues of racism and privilege in the field of ASL–English interpretation. This research recognizes the complexity of intersectional identities and the power structure represented by ASL–English interpreters. Simply participating in trainings on awareness of marginalized cultures is not enough to remedy issues of oppression and discrimination (Sue et al., 2007; DiAngelo, 2011; Sue, 2015; Kivel, 2017). Recognition of personally held privileges are significant first steps. For ASL–English interpreters to recognize the microaggressions they commit in their practice will require deep reflective and interactive work. ASL–English interpreters must move outside of their racial comfort zone to

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

build the constructive response skills required to make strides in reducing racial oppression and discriminatory acts.

### **Recommendations to Interrupt Racism**

There is a myriad of ways practitioners can work to interrupt racism. This section will offer a conceptual framework and a few accessible resources to this goal. Readers are encouraged view this as a starting place, rather than definitive answers to mitigate racial microaggressions. This work can be approached both individually and collectively. ASL–English interpreter practitioners, and those in the field of ASL–English interpreter education, have current resources, both formal and informal, at their disposal to interrupt racism and increase their cultural competency with Deaf Communities of Color.

**The work starts with self.** The first recommendation is to reframe the conceptualized role of the ASL–English interpreter as an agent of social justice; which will require deep reflective work. The reconceptualization may yield significant increases in equity for DPOC. The first steps to anti-oppression work is for those that embody societal privileges to look inward. There are a great number of benefits for ASL–English interpreters to recognize their privileges and how they impact their daily lives. This is no small or quick task to accomplish. Critical ongoing examination of how an individual is situated in systems of power may lead to increased reflective practices. Investing in learning more about the host of privileges interpreters embody, beyond a Deaf/hearing binary, could contribute to reducing the microaggressions committed by ASL–English interpreters.

Being that roughly 88% of sign language interpreters identify as White, significant efforts to address issues of White Fragility (DiAngelo, 2011) is another recommendation that would be highly beneficial. White Fragility is not a state of weakness, but rather the inability of White

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

people to constructively respond to racial stress (DiAngelo, 2011). When White interpreters have a better understanding of the responses they have toward racial stress, it could contribute to reducing racial microaggressions and responses that hinder their growth. At its core, the theory of White Fragility may seem simple enough. As practitioners dig deeper to identify examples when they feel challenged by issues regarding race, is when they may gain a better understanding of the deeply rooted system of Whiteness.

**Current practitioners and interpreter education.** Practitioners may also increase their reflexive practice by examining texts on transformative pedagogy. This recommendation may also be beneficial in ASL–English interpreter education at all levels, e.g., traditional college settings, professional trainings, workshops, and conferences. While there is a plethora of resources in the fields of anti-oppression and social justice to which practitioners can avail themselves, works of Nieto (2010) and Brown (2004) are suggested as a starting place for those interested in how shift to a transformative framework for both the practice of interpreting as well as interpreter education. Nieto (2010) and Brown (2004) both demonstrate how a social justice lens can be transformative.

Nieto’s book, *Beyond Inclusion, Beyond Empowerment*, is a critical analysis of oppression, how it impacts our daily lives, and its pervasive hold on society (Nieto, Boyer, Goodwin, Johnson, & Smith, 2010). *Beyond Inclusion, Beyond Empowerment* is an accessible theoretical framework and constructive guide for those intent on anti-oppression work. She artfully guides readers through theoretical approaches and individual and group activities that aim to teach to liberation. Nieto et al., (2010) explains the nine categories of Rank as socially ascribed fixed marker categories. All people embody either Agent Rank roles, which “are overvalued and [the members] receive unearned advantage and benefits” (Nieto et al., 2010, p.

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

29), or Target Rank roles which “are undervalued and subject to marginalization” (Nieto et al., 2010, p. 30). As these roles are not examined as a binary, ASL–English interpreters and interpreter educators can explore their own complex constellation of identity and that of DPOC.

Along with Nieto’s (2010) work, Brown (2004) offers a discussion of theoretical approaches of Adult Learning Theory, Transformative Learning Theory and Critical Social Theory as a foundation for the need for teachers to reframe their practice to include issues of power and privilege (Brown, 2004). This information is also beneficial to ASL–English interpreters interested in shifting their practice. Brown (2004) outlines concrete activities to enhance learners’ cultural competency. These activities could be used as described, or modified to specially address the field of ASL–English interpretation. When the critical and reflexive examination of ASL–English interpreter practice and interpreter education curriculum shift to a transformative center, the potential for enhanced equity to Deaf consumers is heightened.

Actionable steps to interrupt systematic racism also include an individual building their cultural competence and social capital. Social capital includes the networks of people and community resources an individual may use to navigate social institutions (Yosso, 2005). Individual practitioners can begin learning about Deaf Communities of Color by utilizing current resources that are free and readily available to all, such as the NMIP curriculum (Mooney, 2000), as well as current online resources and social media outlets. There are also a host of Deaf social organizations that could offer information and events from which non-community members could attend to learn more. As a starting point, some of the more well-known organizations such as Asian American Deaf Council, Black Deaf Advocates, Council de Manos, Global Deaf Muslim, and Intertribal Deaf Council invite non-community members to specific events to learn more about their culture. The Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) and Deaf Community

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

Cultural Wealth (Fleischer et al., 2015) models are other effective first steps any practitioner or student in the field of ASL–English interpretation can investigate to continue building cultural competencies.

Finally, investing in new ways to conceptualize the role of ASL–English interpreters as social justice agents can be guided by the Integrative Justice Model (IJM) (Santos et al., 2015). The IJM is a tangible approach for the practitioner to move from merely a service provider, who does not have authentic engagement with the communities they serve, to an accomplice working toward liberation. The IJM is a culmination of self-reflection and actionable steps applied to a business model (Santos et al., 2015). The IJM is one example that shows working as social justice agents does not have to come from a benevolent, charitable state. Rather, ASL–English interpreters can view their work as agents of social justice as good business sense.

**Courageous conversations.** Addressing the impacts and structures of racism to those with privilege can be a heavy and daunting endeavor. Engaging White people in difficult conversations about race is not a new concept. The field of ASL–English interpretation can utilize those authors and activists that work to dismantle racism and apply their teachings to this field. The field of ASL–English interpretation has a foundation on which to build cultural competency beyond one’s own lived experience. The majority of ASL–English interpreting practitioners today are not native to the Deaf community and ASL (*RID Annual Report*, 2017). The field of ASL–English interpretation has engaged with Deaf people and their family members, as well as allies of the Deaf community to build competencies that navigate cultural boundaries. These are key concepts to approach becoming culturally competent regarding issues of race. Keeping the ideas of hope and transformation at the forefront are key to successful

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

change (hooks, 1994; Tatum, 1994). Developing effective strategies to these conversations and teachings requires community building of allies and an intentional framework.

### **Future Research**

Potential future directions for this research primarily include the collection of more data on every aspect. A primary need of future research is a broad base inquiry to document the racial microaggressions ASL–English interpreters commit. A more diverse representation of DPOC’s experiences interacting with ASL–English interpreters would give a more complete understanding of the microaggressions committed. Practitioners could use that information straightaway to recognize comments and behaviors to avoid. Documenting a broad range of experiences DPOC have may also illuminate opportunities for ASL–English interpreters to work as agents of social justice.

There is also great value in collecting more data to appreciate the baseline of sign language interpreters’ understanding of racial microaggressions. It would be important to identify what ASL–English interpreters believe are microaggressions both from personal self-reflection about their comments and behaviors, as well as what they may have witnessed. Knowing that no one identity is immune from committing oppressive acts, it would be important to inquire with all races of ASL–English interpreters, as well as White Deaf interpreters and Deaf interpreters of color regarding racial microaggressions. All of the lines of inquiry named above may yield considerable beneficial information for both current practitioners and future generations of sign language interpreters. This data could be used to appropriately shift curricula in formative interpreter education, as well as to target trainings for current practitioners.

There are opportunities of great value for each unique Deaf Community of Color to inquire within to evaluate and document their own experiences, needs and desires when working

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

with ASL–English interpreters. Deaf Communities of Color can utilize their agency to guide the field of sign language interpretation on ways to mitigate racial microaggressions.

### **Closing Thoughts**

Some of the actionable steps for current practitioners and interpreter educators is to reflect with intention. Reflection with the intent to take positive action to change will have far reaching benefits. ASL–English interpreters have resources readily and freely available they can utilize and infuse in their daily practice.

It is my hope that this research is the beginning of an authentic dialogue with DPOC to seek out avenues that increase cultural competency for ASL–English interpreters. The field of ASL–English interpretation needs more research documented by Deaf Communities of Color about their experiences. It will require practitioners and consumers of services to work together to make strides in transformative justice.

Talking about issues of race or being directly confronted with the conversation makes many people uncomfortable and unsure of how to proceed (DiAngelo, 2011; Orelus, 2013; Kivel, 2017). Reflective work investigating the theory of White Fragility (DiAngelo, 2011), clear understandings of the impact and influence of the Agent/Target roles (Nieto et al., 2010), and engaging with education as the practice of freedom (hooks, 1994) has the potential to bring the field of ASL–English interpretation closer to transformative justice and serving DPOC with more equity.

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

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com.pearl.stkate.edu/docview/212300985?accountid=26879](http://pearl.stkate.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.pearl.stkate.edu/docview/212300985?accountid=26879)

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

### Appendix A

Journal of Interpretation: 1981 – 2010 <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

Journal of Interpretation 2011 – 2016 <https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/joi/>

144 total articles

31 concerned with topics regarding diversity, cultural identity, cross-cultural interactions, or norms of native ASL usage

1 addressed racial identity as an influencing factor

1981 – 4 articles total: none on diversity, cultural identity, cross-cultural interactions, or native usage of ASL

1982 – 4 articles total: none on diversity, cultural identity, cross-cultural interactions, or native usage of ASL

1985 – 13 articles total:

Seal, B. and Shortell, S. (1985). The Professional's Point of View. *Journal of Interpretation*, 5-14. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

1986 – 7 articles total:

Roy, C. (1986). Who is a Native Speaker? *Journal of Interpretation*, 63-66. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

1987 – 11 articles total:

Bienvenu, MJ. (1987). Third Culture: Working Together. *Journal of Interpretation*, 1-12. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

1992 – 6 articles total:

Mindess, A. (1992). Cross Cultural Sensitivity: More than a 9-5 job. *Journal of Interpretation*, 91-94. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

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1993 – 5 articles total:

Page, J. (1993). In the sandwich or on the side? Cultural variability and the interpreter's role.

*Journal of Interpretation*, 107-126. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

1995 – 7 articles total:

Coppock, P. (1995). Intra-cultural aspects of interpreting for Deaf people. *Journal of*

*Interpretation*, 73-88. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

McIntire, M. and Sanderson, G. (1995). Who's in charge here?: Perceptions of empowerment and role in the setting. *Journal of Interpretation*, 99-113. Available at:

<https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

1997 – 8 articles total

Moore, J. (1997). Looking at RID and NAD interpreter evaluations through an intercultural lens.

*Journal of Interpretation*, 9-22. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

1999 – 6 articles total

Hoza, J. (1999). Saving face: The interpreter and politeness. *Journal of Interpretation*, 39-67.

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Stauffer, L.K., Birch, D. D., & Boone, S. E. (1999). A study of the demographics of attendees at the 1997 biennial convention of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. 105-116.

Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

2000 – 7 articles total

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Birch, D.D. (2000). American Sign Language interpreters: Diversity in Progress. *Journal of Interpretation*, 3-12. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

2001 – 5 articles total

Harvey, M. (2001). Vicarious emotional trauma of interpreters: A clinical psychologist's perspective. *Journal of Interpretation*, 85-98. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

Springarn, T. (2001). Knowledge of Deaf community-related words, symbols and acronyms among hearing people: Implications for the production of an equivalent interpretation. *Journal of Interpretation*, 69-84. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

Cokely, D. (2001). Interpreting culturally rich realities: Research implications for successful interpretations. *Journal of Interpretation*, 1-39. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

2002 – 6 articles total

De Los Santos Rodriguez, E. & Reguera, A. (2002). An international perspective: What are ethics for sign language interpreters? A comparative study among different codes of ethics. *Journal of Interpretation*, 49-61. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

2003 – 4 articles total: none on diversity, cultural identity, cross-cultural interactions, or native usage of ASL

2004 – 5 articles total: none on diversity, cultural identity, cross-cultural interactions, or native usage of ASL

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2005 – 5 articles total

Finton, L. & Smith, R. (2005). Compression strategies: ASL to English interpreting. *Journal of Interpretation*, 49-63. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

Labath, J. (2005). Features at discourse boundaries in American Sign Language narratives. *Journal of Interpretation*, 65-78. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

2006 – 5 articles total

Swartz, D. (2006). Job satisfaction among sign language interpreters. *Journal of Interpretation*, 47-82. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

McCartney, J. (2006). Burnout of sign language interpreters: A comparative study of K-12, postsecondary and community interpreters. *Journal of Interpretation*, 65-91. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

2007 – 3 articles total: none on diversity, cultural identity, cross-cultural interactions, or native usage of ASL

Hoza, J. (2007). How interpreters convey social meaning: Implications for interpreted interactions. *Journal of Interpretation*, Article 2. Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

2008/2009 – 4 articles total: none on diversity, cultural identity, cross-cultural interactions, or native usage of ASL

2010 – 4 articles total

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Hale, K. (2010). Educational interpreter's salaries: Correlations with demographic and employment characteristics. *Journal of Interpretation*, 9-30. Available at:

<https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

Schwenke, Y. (2010). Sign language interpreters and burnout. *Journal of Interpretation*, 31-54.

Available at: <https://www.rid.org/journal-of-interpretation-joi-archives/>

2011 – 7 articles total: none on diversity, cultural identity, cross-cultural interactions, or native usage of ASL

2012 – 4 articles total:

Bentley-Sassaman, J. & Dawson, C. (2012). Deaf-Hearing interpreter teams: A teamwork approach. *Journal of Interpretation: Vol. 22: Iss. 1, Article 2.*

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/joi/vol22/iss1/2>

Kent, S. (2012). Deaf voice and the invention of community interpreting. *Journal of Interpretation: Vol. 22: Iss. 1, Article 3.*

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/joi/vol22/iss1/3>

2014 – 5 articles total:

McDermid, C. (2014). Evidence of a "Hearing" dialect of ASL while interpreting. *Journal of Interpretation: Vol. 23: Iss. 1, Article 2.*

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/joi/vol23/iss1/2>

2015 – 6 articles total:

Bower, K. (2015). Stress and burnout in video relay service (VRS) interpreting. *Journal of Interpretation: Vol. 24: Iss. 1, Article 2.* Available at:

<https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/joi/vol24/iss1/2>

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Gajewski Mickelson, P. L. & Gordon, P. (2015). Intentional teaming: Experiences from the second national healthcare symposium. *Journal of Interpretation*: Vol. 24: Iss. 1, Article 5. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/joi/vol24/iss1/5>

2016 – 9 articles total:

Hensley, J.S. (2016). Blurred boundaries: Interpreters as researchers in cross-cultural settings. *Journal of Interpretation*: Vol. 25: Iss. 1, Article 5.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/joi/vol25/iss1/5>

Russell, D. & Shaw, R. (2016). Power and privilege: An exploration of decision-making of interpreters *Journal of Interpretation*: Vol. 25: Iss. 1, Article 7.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/joi/vol25/iss1/7>

Sheneman, N. (2016). Deaf interpreters' ethics: Reflections on training and decision-making. *Journal of Interpretation*: Vol. 25: Iss. 1, Article 8.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/joi/vol25/iss1/8>

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

### Appendix B Semi-Structured Interview Questions (English Version)

Thank you so much for meeting with me today! I am honored to have you here. Today I want to ask about your experiences when an interpreter commented or behaved in a way that racially discriminated, oppressed or excluded you as a Deaf POC. There is no *need* to use names or places. But if you do, that is fine since everything here is confidential. I also want to open up space for your thoughts on what interpreters should've done, or need to do in the future, to show more cultural competence. I acknowledge that all of this may bring up different emotions for you.

It is important that you know at any time you can take a break, choose not to answer any question, or stop. I will respect those decisions. Those decisions will have no effect on our relationship now, or in the future. Any questions before we begin?

First, I wanted to talk a little about microaggressions. They are different types of discrimination or oppression than overt racism. It's those brief, every day comments, actions or things we see in the environment that tell us hostile, derogatory, or negative racial insults about POC. They can be intentional or not. Usually, it's from folks with good intentions, but they don't understand the impact of their comment/actions.

Sometime people can say or do things that make us wonder. . .

- “Did that just happen?”
- “Did I take that the wrong way?”
- “Did they just say that because I'm \_\_\_?”
- “Wow. Now I know to be cautious of you!”
- “How should I respond?”

Some impacts or possible meanings....

- “I don't belong.”
- “I feel powerless.”
- “I am abnormal.”
- “I am invisible.”

Just to give you an idea of some general examples of comments or behaviors can be:

- On purpose to hurt or attack you. Examples such as racial slurs or old ASL signs that inappropriately name a culture, or repeatedly interpreting White Deaf comments into English before yours, even though you should have been first.
- By interpreters' comments that are rude, or subtle racial/cultural snubs. Often the interpreter may not realize it, but there is a clear racially/culturally insulting message to you. Or through behaviors, if the interpreter does not make eye contact with or ignores you.
- When an interpreter dismisses, downplays or doesn't believe your thoughts or experience. Examples such as “I don't see color” or, “Don't be so sensitive.”

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

### QUESTIONS

1. How do you identify or describe yourself culturally and racially?
2. What are the most important aspects of your cultural and/or racial identities or experiences?
3. In your culture, what are some examples of disrespect?
4. In your culture, how does someone show respect?
5. What would you say is the most commonly held misconception about people of your culture?
6. What interpreter qualities or characteristics are important to you?
7. In thinking of your encounters with interpreters, can you describe any racial microaggressions you have encountered? What was the context of how that occurred?
8. What was the setting?
9. How old were you at that time?
10. How often have you had that experience?
11. Can you recall the race of that interpreter?
12. In any instance were you able to respond?
  - a. If yes, what feelings led you to do so?
13. What could or should the interpreter have done to make the environment more comfortable?
14. How would you describe the impact of microaggressions on your overall experience with interpreters?
15. Is there anything else you would like to share or add to previous comments?

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

[# 7 - #13 will repeat to draw out as many examples as possible]

### ***Potential follow-up questions:***

1. Please tell me more about that.
2. Why do you think that is?
3. How did that make you feel?
4. If you could go back, what would you to say/do?
5. Please share specific examples.

**If a participant is struggling to think of any examples, the following is a list of options:**

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

Based on your race, have you experienced any of the following by an interpreter?

- Being overlooked, ignored, not served
- Treated rudely / disrespectful
- Accused of something / treated suspiciously
- Being talked down to
- Your opinions minimized / ignored / devalued / derailed
- Saw offensive jokes
- Insulted / called a slur / saw an old ASL sign to represent a minority race culture
- Others expecting your work to be inferior
- Not taken seriously
- Overly friendly in a superficial way
- Being avoided / people move away
- Laughed at / made fun of / taunted
- Mistaken for another person of your race
- Being asked to represent your race
- Considered exotic / fascinating

**Appendix C**

**Survey Questions**  
(English version)

**In what city and state do you live:**

---

**How would you describe yourself? Please choose all options that apply**

African American / Black

Alaskan Native

American Indian

Arab American / Middle Eastern

Asian American

Latino/x or Chicano/x or Hispanic

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

South East Asian American

White / Euro American

Other please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Which of the following social identity groups best fits your identity?**

Deaf

DeafBlind

DeafDisabled

Hard of Hearing

**Please indicate your gender identity?**

---

**What is your age range?**

18-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61-70

71-80

EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

**Do you use interpreting services?**

Yes  No

**How often do you use interpreting services?**

Daily  Weekly  Monthly  Once every 3-4 months  A few times a year

**Please rank the top 3 settings you use interpreting services most often?**

**(1= often, 2= sometimes, 3= rarely)**

My workplace  Public events (theater, rallies, community events, etc)

My medical appointments  Legal environment

My school  Social service appointments (SSA, WIC, housing, etc)

My child's school  VRS

Family member's medical appointments

Other please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**When you use interpreting services, how often are the interpreters of your same race?**

1 often  2 sometimes  3 rarely  4 never

**Appendix D**

**Recruitment Message**

(English version)

Hi \_\_\_\_\_. As you know I am a graduate student at St Catherine University in Minnesota. It's called the Masters of Arts Interpreting Studies and Communication Equity. What that means is we examine how interpreting and social justice topics come together.

With my research I've chosen to take a deeper look at interpreters' comments and behaviors with Deaf People of Color (POC); specifically, how interpreters may racially discriminate, oppress, or exclude Deaf POC.

As a Deaf POC, I would like to invite you to participate in this research. I am conducting a case study on the racial microaggressions (ways of discrimination, oppression or exclusion) interpreters commit. I would be honored to have you participate. I know that your experiences do not represent ALL Deaf people, nor ALL POC. The purpose of this study is to document the lived experiences of Deaf POC so that interpreters may take a deeper look at their own comments and behaviors. My goal is that interpreters may recognize real life examples - not examples from some book, or abstract theory - so that we can be more reflective to understand the impact of our comments and actions.

This research will be strictly confidential. I will never use your name, or identifiable information linking back to you. If you would like to participate, the interview would take an hour or less. I will record it, so that I can transcribe the information. Again, the transcription will not have your name or any identifiable information included. If you would like to participate, let me know a time that best fits your schedule.

You can always contact me with any questions or concerns on Glide or at [cagallon@stkate.edu](mailto:cagallon@stkate.edu). You may also contact my program director, Dr. Erica Alley, at [elalley@stkate.edu](mailto:elalley@stkate.edu) or (612) 225-3386 (Direct VP).

I look forward to your response. Take care!

Cheryl

ASL Version timed at under 4 minutes. This is an appropriate time length for an ASL message to be sent/viewed.

**Appendix E**

**ST CATHERINE UNIVERSITY  
Informed Consent for a Research Study**

**Study Title:** Exploring Microaggressions American Sign Language-English Interpreters Commit Against Deaf People of Color

**Researcher(s):** Cheryl Gallon CI, CT, NAD V

You are invited to participate in a research study. This study is called Exploring Microaggressions American Sign Language-English Interpreters Commit Against Deaf People of Color. The study is being conducted by Cheryl Gallon, a Masters' candidate student at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, MN. The faculty advisor for this study is Dr. Erica Alley, Director of Masters of Arts Interpreting Studies and Communication Equity at St. Catherine University.

The purpose of this case study is to explore acts of racial discrimination, oppression or exclusion you may have experienced by an interpreter. I would also like to know any ideas or thoughts you may have on how to reduce this behavior from interpreters. Your lived experience is valid and important to document. The impact of interpreters' behaviors can only be truly known by Deaf consumers. This study is important because learning about your experiences is a vital part of reducing interpreter behaviors that discriminate, oppress or exclude Deaf People of Color. Your input could lead to increase interpreters' awareness of their impact and enhance their cultural competency. It is the desire of this study to improve the overall experience of people who use interpreting services.

Two people are expected to participate in this research. Below, you will find answers to the most commonly asked questions about participating in a research study. Please read this entire document and ask questions you have before you agree to be in the study.

**Why have I been asked to be in this study?**

This study is interested in the experience of adult (18+ years of age) Deaf people of color that use interpreting services.

**If I decide to participate, what will I be asked to do?**

If you meet the criteria and agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do these things:

- Complete a basic demographic survey (3-5 minutes)
- Participate in an interview to share any experiences when an interpreter may have oppressed or excluded you, or discriminated against you. The interview will be conducted in American Sign Language and recorded. You will also be asked

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

to share any ideas or thoughts on how to reduce these actions. In total, this study will take less than 60 minutes in one session.

### **What if I decide I don't want to be in this study?**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide you do not want to participate in this study, please feel free to say so, and do not sign this form. If you decide to participate in this study, but later change your mind and want to withdraw, simply notify me and you will be removed immediately. You may withdraw until the conclusion of the interview, after which time withdrawal will no longer be possible. Your decision of whether or not to participate will have no negative or positive impact on your relationship with St. Catherine University, nor with any of the students or faculty involved in the research.

### **What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?**

You will be asked to recount personal experiences of racial discrimination, oppression and/or exclusion as committed by interpreters. While conducting the interview, the utmost care and sensitivity will be taken to avoid any further trauma. The process of relaying your experiences may cause a range of feelings (e.g., disheartened, depression, anger, etc.). It is anticipated that these feelings will be short lived. You will also be asked about strategies you value that may reduce future oppressive acts. By participating in this process, it is the intention that participants leave with a sense of empowerment and confidence.

The interviews will be videotaped. To ensure confidentiality, participants' name, location and any identifying information will not be used in the final thesis. Participants can choose a pseudonym if they wish to be used in the analysis or future use of the data collected. When filming has been completed the video will be safeguarded by being stored on a password protected computer, solely in my possession.

There will be no physical risk of any kind.

### **What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study?**

Study participants will benefit from knowing that their shared stories helped to further research, and possibly lead to enhanced equity for not only DPOC, but for all consumers of interpreting services. While there are no direct benefits to participation in this study, the overall impact on the field of ASL—English interpreting may be great. With enhanced critical inquiry in the topic areas of power, privilege and oppression ASL—English interpreters can work toward equity for all consumers and practitioners. The most powerful way to understand oppression and mitigate its future occurrence is to learn from marginalized communities.

### **Will I receive any compensation for participating in this study?**

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

In appreciation for your participation, you will be given a \$25 Visa gift card.

### **What will you do with the information you get from me and how will you protect my privacy?**

The information that you provide in this study will be video recorded and transcribed into English. The transcription will not contain your name or any identifying information about you. You can choose a pseudonym if you wish. The pseudonym may be used in future use of the data. I will keep the research results in a password protected computer and only my research advisor and myself will have access to the records while I work on this project. I will finish analyzing the data by June 2018. All original videos and any documents with identifying information will be destroyed within three years of the conclusion of the research.

Any information that you provide will be kept confidential, which means that you will not be identified or identifiable in the any written reports or publications. If it becomes useful to disclose any of your information, I will seek your permission and tell you the persons or agencies to whom the information will be shared, the nature of the information to be shared, and the purpose of the disclosure; you will have the right to grant or deny permission for this to happen. If you do not grant permission, the information will remain confidential and will not be released.

### **Are there possible changes to the study once it gets started?**

If during the course of this research study I learn about new findings that might influence your willingness to continue participating in the study, I will inform you of these findings.

### **How can I get more information?**

If you have any questions, you can ask them before you sign this form. You can also feel free to contact me at [cagallon@stkate.edu](mailto:cagallon@stkate.edu). If you have any additional questions later and would like to talk to the faculty advisor, please contact Dr. Erica Alley at (612) 225-3386 (Direct VP); (651) 690-6018 (Direct phone); or [elalley@stkate.edu](mailto:elalley@stkate.edu). If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at (651) 690-7739 or [jsschmitt@stkate.edu](mailto:jsschmitt@stkate.edu).

## EXPLORING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I consent to participate in the study and agree to be videotaped.

My signature indicates that I have read this information and my questions have been answered. I also know that even after signing this form, I may withdraw from the study by informing the researcher(s).

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Signature of Participant

Date

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Signature of Researcher

Date