Reflections & Experiences of Interpreter Education Program Graduates in Southern California

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A Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies and Communication Equity

St. Catherine University
St. Paul, Minnesota

May 2019

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Date: 5/27/19
Acknowledgements

To all of MAISCE C2: Adella, Liz, Sendy, Rose, Jen, Jolanta, Doug, Brayen, Peggy, Jamers, Stacy, and Kristina, thank you for everything through this journey. Learning from all of you was such an honor and has forever changed me as a person. To Dr. Erica Alley, thank you for your support and encouragement as I developed this research. To Dr. Eileen Forestal, I sincerely thank you for your expertise, feedback, encouragement. To Dr. Laura Maddux, thank you for your input, guidance, and taking the time to help shape my work. This process was a challenge and my committee’s encouragement along the way kept things going. To the research participants, thank you for taking the time to contribute your input and trusting me with your stories. To the communities who pushed my research along to look for the voices I was aiming to include, I appreciate every email response and forward. To my friends and colleagues who cheered me along and checked in (Zoe, mi amiga!), your kind words kept me going. Thank you to Mom & Dad for setting me on this path long before I knew it was even happening. To my sizzle Nikki for the love, support, and laughs. My bonus daughters, Samantha and Jenelle, thank you for your encouragement and love. My dear Kevin who kept me going through all of this. You encouraged me when I had doubt, you listened when I was often thinking aloud, and you always made me laugh. You fed me when that was the last thing on my mind, kept the lights on, kept everything going there when my focus was here. My sweet Ophelia, your patience, love, humor, sweet hugs, and the growing we did together filled my heart when this work got tough. I got to watch you experience your first year of school and I learned so much from you. I look forward to our adventures we have planned. Te amo, cariño.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Research within the sign language interpreter education field often does not include the perspectives and experiences of students and graduates. Within the Southern California area of Los Angeles, Orange, and Riverside counties, there exists 7 two-year Interpreter Education Programs (IEPs) for individuals to attend and receive education to become American Sign Language (ASL)-English interpreters. The titles of programs housed in community colleges have varied between “Interpreter Training Program” (ITP) and “Interpreter Preparation Program” (IPP) to emphasize the focus is for each specific location. This research will use “Interpreter Education Program” (IEP) in reference to any interpreting program for purposes of consistency and to align with the field movement toward an emphasis on education. Field standards have increased since the official inception of training programs and certification in the 1960s (Ball, 2007; Burch, 2002), currently with a Bachelor’s degree as the targeted minimum pursued by practitioners. For the local graduates of the 7 two-year IEPs housed in community colleges, what have been their experiences during their programs and since graduation? This research study aimed to collect graduate reflections and experiences as to how the two-year IEPs prepared the participants for their work after program completion. The collection and analysis of data was done in an effort to expand upon available research by providing the often-overlooked perspectives and feedback for local Southern California stakeholders.

The literature reviewed below explains the brief history of the sign language interpreting field with establishment of formal training and a certifying body for practitioners occurring as recently as the 1960’s (Ball, 2007; Burch, 2002). Initial studies showed that student perspectives have been infrequently collected and viewed as ineffective by the faculty due the novice status of the students (Kitchel, Robinson, & Jenkins, 2007). The limited research available on student
perspectives is not only present in ASL-English interpreting education, but also occurs within international spoken language programs (Li, 2002; Wang, 2015). The feedback collected has potential to shape future interpreter education program curriculum design.

The survey and interview portions of this research were designed to collect perspectives and experiences from graduates of Southern California two-year IEPs. A mixed-method approach was used for the research design in an effort to see experiences which emerged within the quantitative and qualitative responses. The phenomenological approach, which uses interviews as a means create a picture of shared meanings, was applied to the methodology since the sample size was small (Mapp, 2008). The data collected was analyzed and coded to find themes that consistently appeared within the responses of participants from the survey and interview portions. The research occurred within a concentrated area of Southern California and is not generalizable, but still revealed current interpreter education trends and student experiences from the Southern California area.

The conclusion and results from this research show the experiences of recent IEP graduates in the Southern California area and how these experiences have shaped the graduate’s individual journeys into the field of sign language interpreting. The feedback and recommendations from the research participants stemmed directly from their own lived experiences, and showed how participants reflected upon their time during and since their IEP involvement. While this research was performed in attempt to expand upon the limited amount of available research focusing on student perspectives, it was found that there is more to be explored within the topic on a larger scale and at a national level.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Review of the Literature

Perspectives from interpreter educators, field researchers, and interpreting students reflect the need for more time and training opportunities within interpreter education (Davis, 2005; Godfrey, 2010; Mo & Hale, 2014; NCIEC, 2008). Petronio & Hale (2009) call for more research focusing on Interpreter Education Programs (IEPs) to examine what is beneficial or unbeneficial. Findings by Stuard (2008) reveal an awareness that IEP graduates may not possess proficiency even for entry-level work directly after completion of their program. Feedback gathered from IEP graduates who had an opportunity to reflect on their programs can guide future curriculum design as to what is applicable to current field trends (Godfrey, 2010). This information can also inform stakeholders on what types of curricular and co-curricular experiences recent graduates had with their IEPs, how it prepared them for working in the field, and necessary adjustments for curriculum. As the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (Annarino & Stauffer, 2010) reports, changing student demographics, limited resources from programs, and financial limitations beyond the control of IEPs have been taking place, meaning the goals of improvement require the effort of perpetual research within interpreter education. To examine what is currently taking place within interpreter education, it is important to look at the beginnings and what influenced the establishment of early interpreter education.

Official Beginnings

The initiation of ASL-English interpreter education in the United States addressed a need that was apparent in society and reinforced by public policy. In 1964, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) was established (Winston & Cokely, 2009). This organization was the outcome of an interpreting workshop at Ball State Teachers College with involvement
from the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (Quigley, 1965). Interpreter training formally began in the 1960’s with the passing of the second Vocational Rehabilitation Act, enabling interested parties to receive institutional instruction, thus attempting to satisfy the need for prepared ASL interpreters (Ball, 2007; Burch, 2002). The Babbidge Report (1965) is a historical document showing the limited opportunities deaf\(^1\) individuals had for communication access in a variety of everyday settings such as post-secondary institutions, legal situations, mental health, and religious gatherings. Through this document, a paradox was noted as there was a public consensus for deaf individuals to have access to participate fully in everyday life, but there existed no formal educational or training standards for the interpreters who served as their communication medium (Babbidge, 1965).

The need and right of deaf individuals to have access to public offerings along with the establishment of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) both led to the proliferation of IEPs across the country. As Annarino & Stauffer (2010) noted, early programs lasted anywhere from six-weeks to two semesters and were comparable in time to vocational training. Interpreting was not viewed as a profession so students were not held to educational standards (Ball, 2007). As the demand for interpreting services increased, federal grants were given to develop programs at four-year universities such as California State University - Northridge, National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, New York, and St. Paul Technical Vocational Institute in Minnesota (NCIEC, 2008). Programs opened up in many states at two-year community colleges and evolved to offer Associate degrees and program certificates of completion. The national establishment of RID and implementation of post-secondary educational opportunities for people

\(^1\) The lowercase form of deaf is used throughout this document to be inclusive of all identities with deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, deafblind, and non-signing deaf peoples (Robinson, 2016).
to become ASL-English interpreters led to the societal perspective of ASL-English interpreting as a professional field. To describe what makes interpreting a “profession” rather than an occupation, Brunson (2006) outlines different field-wide perspectives: a) RID’s organizational decision to increase educational requirements, b) establishment of national organizations (i.e., RID) with practitioner membership, or simply because c) the act of ASL-English interpreter requires skills and specialized knowledge. Witter-Merithew & Johnson (2004) presented various characteristics that differentiate professions from occupations and came up with a list of traits as applied to the interpreting field, such as systematic theory, authority, credentials, induction, code of ethics, and continuing professional development to name a few. Even with the establishment of RID as a field authority of professionalization and certification, it was landmark federal legislation which created a large demand for interpreters within the general public and K-12 educational setting.

One example of public policy creating the demand for more interpreters is the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) which first appeared in 1975 as Public Law 94-142 (NCIEC, 2008). IDEA guaranteed full access to education and provided necessary supports to any child who was identified as deaf or hard-of-hearing, as having a disability of low incidence (2004). ASL-English interpreters are one form of support to provide access to the curriculum for students placed in an educational setting where instruction occurs in a spoken form. Highlighting the K-12 setting is important because IEPs and IEP students often view the K-12 educational setting as the most fitting option after graduation (Monikowski & Peterson, 2005). A similar demographic of respondents, as interviewed by Witter-Merithew & Johnson (2005), commented on the lack of preparedness for educational interpreting they experienced after completing IEPs. Quinto-Pozos (2005) points out that often in the educational setting,
interpreters serve as language models for younger or new deaf consumers who are acquiring ASL. This could lead to an unqualified interpreter being oblivious to their impact on the deaf consumers language acquisition as this role requires a sophistication of interpreting skills where facets of language use (e.g., classifiers, referential shifting, and constructed actions) cannot be a weakness (Quinto-Pozos, 2005). The necessary sophistication mentioned by Quinto-Pozos (2005) is unlikely to be acquired and/or mastered by new graduates of IEPs as reported by Witter-Merithew & Johnson (2005).

In 2003, RID voted to establish minimum educational requirements for National Interpreter Certification (NIC) testing. 2008 marked the beginning of Associate degree as a minimum requirement and 2012 began the increase to a Bachelor’s degree minimum, in any field (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2003). This decision to increase practitioner educational requirements is similar to standards in other practice professions such as early childhood development, respiratory therapy, and vocational rehabilitation (Davis, 2005; NCIEC, 2008; Young, 1985). The World Federation of the Deaf made a policy statement (Aquiline, 2000, as cited by Napier, 2005) that ASL-English interpreters should never provide interpreting services in settings of higher education than the interpreters have obtained themselves. For example, an interpreter who has obtained an IEP completion certificate or Associate degree should not accept interpreting assignments for a deaf student within a Bachelor program or higher. As Forestal (2015) states, deaf individuals have been achieving higher educational degrees over the past two decades. This statement is indicative of the necessity for increased educational levels of ASL-English interpreters. Aside from satisfying a perception of “professionalism”, the driving force for increased standards have developed as requisite from deaf consumers. Similarly, Burch (2002) notes a Bachelor’s degree is seen as an essential acquisition to enter the field and NCIEC
(2008) states that the RID decision to increase educational standards to a Bachelor’s degree was a demand from consumers and practitioners to evolve professionally and better satisfy the needs of the consumers. These perspectives show the consistent increase of educational achievements by deaf individuals, the need for an accompanying increase of standards for ASL-English interpreters, and what factors led the overall increase of minimum educational standards.

**Interpreter Education Options**

While the existing field consensus is that more four-year institutions of higher learning should offer degrees and programs for interpreter education (NCIEC, 2008), this does not mean that two-year programs no longer have a role in the development of the interpreter. Two-year programs can offer foundational education and support for interpreting students until they continue their education when they transfer to four-year universities to complete their degrees (Young, 1985). This would require articulation agreements to be established between two-year community colleges and four-year universities (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). As NCIEC explains (Anderson, Sun & Alfonso, 2006, in NCIEC, 2008), articulation agreements are binding support to the student transferring from one institution to another by ensuring that course content and credits are comparable between the schools. In post-secondary education in the U.S., students have the option to start at a two-year community college and transfer to a four-year university once all requirements are satisfied. Financial accessibility seems to be a driving force behind the preference of two-year programs, specifically the lower tuition costs as reported by students (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). Contrary to the student preference for affordable post-secondary educational access at community colleges, it is becoming less common for current professional fields to accept a two-year educational achievement as a minimum standard. This is done in effort to avoid stagnant requirements for practitioners as well as increase the level
of service provided by qualified practitioners (NCIEC, 2008; Young, 1985). The interpreting field has followed suit with increasing standards of education and professionalization taking place by way of certifying bodies, state licensure, and professional organizations (Brunson, 2006; Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2003). Even with this shift, programs involved with educating ASL-English interpreters at both two-year and four-year institutions report the inability to graduate students at certification ready level (Godfrey, 2010). The research shows that regardless of program length, there seems to be a common missing link of “hands on” experience within current IEPs, which has a profound impact on the graduates as they attempt to enter the field.

With IEP curriculum and completion of minimum standards being a concern of the field, there is also a focus on the expectations of interpreter readiness after degrees are awarded and the student transitions to the professional realm. Recent investigations of interpreter instructional methods showed teaching activities related to theory and foundational information (Winston, 2005), yet national standards for exit from a program still do not exist. This creates a large variety in quality and expectations of graduates as they transition into the field (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). This transitional period is a time when there are few resources for graduates to gain further structured experience while posing little risk to consumers involved. This is commonly referred to as “the gap” (Cogen & Cokely, 2016; Godfrey, 2010; Humphrey, 2000; Pearce & Napier, 2010; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004). As defined by Pearce & Napier (2010), the “skills gap” (p. 62) occurs when an interpreter graduates from their program yet has not obtained professional experience or certification to progress in the field. This concept not only applies to ASL-English interpreting, but also spoken languages as noted by Wang (2015) of Hong Kong Polytechnic University in stating that practice for interpreting students outside of
class is imperative to bridge the experiential gap. Humphrey (2000) stated that although it is impossible for IEPs to teach students everything within two years, graduation portfolios were implemented as an approach to assess interpreter readiness and try to minimize the gap. Brunson (2002) succinctly notes that students must rely on deaf community members to bridge this gap as interpreting programs are too brief to accomplish this task. The role of deaf community members bridging the experiential gap emphasizes the importance for students to seek opportunities to use the language and learned skills outside of the classroom as well as having deaf instructors within IEPs. One impact of the missing deaf perspectives within IEPs, as explained by Forestal (2015), a deaf ASL-English interpreting instructor, results in the lack of opportunity for students to develop the necessary competencies of linguistic discourse and culture as they appear within the deaf community. By thoughtfully selecting qualified instructors and providing practice opportunities for students, different stakeholders (i.e., the Deaf community, working interpreters, local hiring entities of interpreters, or professional organizations) have potential to be involved with the processes of IEPs and educating ASL-English interpreting students. The ultimate goal of professional involvement and minimization of the gap is not solely the responsibility of one stakeholder, such as the educator or the student, but of all stakeholders.

The amount of time needed to develop competency is also of concern to students who attend two-year programs (NCIEC, 2008; Quinto-Pozos, 2005; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005) as they may feel unprepared for professional work. An interpreter educator interviewed by Witter-Merithew & Johnson (2005), expressed feeling forced to move to the next topic even though the students seemed to need more time to take in the topics before practice and mastery. One example of a competency noted as ineffectively addressed in interpreter education is team
interpreting and general teamwork, how to give and receive feedback in a teaming environment (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). Signed language interpreting programs in other countries, such as the Swedish programs as studied by Gustafsson, Norström, & Fioretos, (2012), have longer requirements than spoken language interpreting students in the same area, with three to four years as the full-time training standard. An issue stated by NCIEC (2008) is the short time span during which two-year programs are offered, resulting in a lack of opportunity to acquire skills and complete the liberal arts degree. In this same vein, traditional students often have few lived experiences upon graduation. A typical two-year student who likely learned ASL and interpreting at the same time would also have limited language exposure (NCIEC, 2008). This creates the issue of students not only being unfamiliar with life events experienced by older deaf community members, but also lacking practice of expressing such ideas through a manual language, linking back to Quinto-Pozos’ notion of necessary language sophistication (2005).

Language acquisition requirements and competencies are often a concern of students within programs and the interpreting field in general. A four-year program allows more time for foundations of language to be developed before beginning interpreting courses while two-year programs often teach the language and interpreting skills concurrently (NCIEC, 2008; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). A point discussed by Peterson in the 2008 NCIEC publication questions the time needed to develop proficiency. A typical four course sequence of ASL I-IV, Peterson (2008) explains, would provide a student approximately 180 instructional hours, yet spoken language guidelines suggest that 352 hours of instruction are needed for students to perform at a less-than-intermediate level. The American Council of Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) developed multiple detailed levels for proficiency in a variety of spoken languages. While ASL is not a language featured within the ACTFL proficiency guidelines, it is considered
a foreign language within secondary & post-secondary institutions and credited as such. ASL, a
language possessing linguistic features similar to spoken languages, satisfies the foreign
language requirement not because it is from a different nation, but because it is from a different
community (Rosen, 2008). The exclusive licensee for ACTFL, Language Testing International
(LTI), outlines expected levels of aptitude for full-time language learners instructed in a group of
1-4 students. Group I languages including (but not limited to) Spanish, Italian, French show a 16-
week training (480 hours) expecting a minimal aptitude of “intermediate high” (How Long Does
It Take To Become Proficient, n.d.). To compare intensity of instructions time between
Peterson’s aforementioned 180 hours and LTIs Group I language aptitudes is not an equivalent
comparison as IEP students typically do not take ASL courses in a full-time manner. An
assessment which does exist for ASL is called the American Sign Language Proficiency
Interview (ASLPI) offered through Gallaudet University. The ASLPI has 11 proficiency levels
ranging from 0-5 but it offers no guidelines as to how many hours of instruction it would take for
a person to reach this level (American Sign Language Proficiency Interview, n.d.). In reference
to how test takers can prepare for test day, the ASLPI website states that displayed proficiency,
in any language, varies between people and happens over time (Preparing for Test Day, n.d.).
The contrast between ACTFL and ASLPI is that ASL is a manual language occurring within a
community rather than a spoken language originating within in a specific geographic area. The
various approaches for ASL acquisition is something that has not always taken place within the
temporal confines of two-year academic institutions.

Two-year programs, typically housed in community colleges, offer a shorter period of
education and practice as compared to four-year universities that allow for an expanded
curriculum with language courses occurring during the first two years and interpreting courses
during the latter two years (NCIEC, 2008). For an idea of what type of numbers have been reported for two-year and four-year programs, as of the year 2006, 99 of a reported 125 programs surveyed by the NCIEC (2008) in the United States offered Associate degrees for ASL-English interpreting. The reporting of the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers emphasized the numbers of available programs and stated the possibility for great harm if there is lack of sensible and timely transition from two-year to four-year institutions (Peterson, 2006). The students who attend two-year programs outnumber four-year program attendees at a rate of three to one (Godfrey, 2010). With consideration to the rate of students attending two-year as compared to four-year programs, seeking the experiences of two-year program graduates is likely to garner a wide variety of feedback and experiences that can help shape similar two-year IEPs for future attendees.

Student Feedback & Needs

Generally, colleges conduct their own feedback of courses through evaluations administered to students near the end of the semester. Kitchel, Robinson, & Jenkins (2007) reveal that students do not always feel their course feedback is valued. While student perspectives are helpful to ensure the instructor is following through on the expectations of course activities, the research by Kitchel, et al., (2007) shows it is difficult for students to predict if the course content has practical application without possessing actual practical experience. In similar fashion, faculty have been known to view such feedback as insignificant due to the novice level of students (Kitchel, et al., 2007). Perspectives of students who have experienced IEPs are infrequently highlighted in research regarding interpreter education, resulting in less research available to influence and inform educators (Mo & Hale, 2014; Takeda, 2010).
Limited research utilizing interpreting student feedback is evident not only with the American Sign Language-English interpreting combination in the U.S., but also with other spoken language combinations on an international level (Li, 2002; Wang, 2015). The necessity of student feedback is to have a gauge of overall program benefit and is something that should occasionally take place to ensure programs are meeting the needs of their language communities (Stuard, 2008). Shaw & Craw (2007) held discussions with IEP students to inquire about what type of supports were most needed and beneficial as an approach to improving upon the experience for students in the future. From these discussions, it was found that peer mentoring supports between upper level and lower level students were perceived as beneficial, adding that instructors could serve as the intermediary with pairing students together based on individual strengths and weaknesses (Shaw & Craw, 2007). Roberson (2015) also noted that student perceptions have value in that their feedback can help improve upon the future of programs. The sparse availability of research focusing on student perspectives after completion of IEPs shows the necessity for such research to continue.

Research framed around the perspectives from graduates of ASL-English interpreting programs can explain how the curriculum and education impacted their professional experiences since completion. Translation programs offered in other countries show student feedback reporting students’ inability to apply theory to practice when the program only emphasizes theoretical instruction (Li, 2002). This feedback originated from translation students of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Li, 2002) echoes sentiments in research with US interpreting program students showing that practice outside the classroom is valuable to the overall development of the interpreter (Walker & Shaw, 2011). When students study a practice profession, there is more to consider than theoretical information that appears in a textbook or
during a classroom discussion. The proficiency and autonomous decision making which is evident in the application of knowledge and skills related to a specific task is the ultimate operation of a profession (Witter-Merithew & Maiorano, 1996 as cited by Napier, 2005). Dean & Pollard (2005) compare interpreting to the likes of medicine, law, and teaching in that it is a practice profession – requiring care in judgment and consideration of what would be effective work. Community involvement is one approach that exists within different IEPs, although how involvement occurs, as stated by Shaw’s case studies of interpreter education (2013), is at the discretion of each IEP. Some students receive vague instruction from their IEP to attend deaf events and write about what they observed (Winston, 2005) while others have slightly more structure through volunteering, service learning, or internships.

**Co-curricular Development**

Volunteering, while helpful to communities, is seen as having a one-sided benefit to the person providing the service to someone less fortunate (Shaw, 2013; Shaw & Roberson, 2009). In relation to deaf community involvement goals within IEPs and Deaf Studies programs, volunteering is not an activity that necessarily provides deeper reciprocity between the student and the community. Further, interpreter educators sometimes encourage volunteer interpreting, but these are not seen as proper learning opportunities for students as they do not yet possess the skills to autonomously meet community needs (Monikowski & Peterson, 2005). Although there may be some benefit to the recipient group of the volunteering, the relationship is typically loosely structured. There are also recommendations for internships, or practicums, with supervisors who possess practical field experience; in this role, they can serve as models for the students as well as provide feedback on their work and areas of strength or in need of improvement. Existing student feedback on internships within the deaf community report the
application of theoretical studies to practical, hands-on experience (Cooper, Emanuel, & Cripps, 2012).

Students report that they benefit greatly from internships with experienced mentors. Through this relationship, students are provided a supervised internship with a mentor to gain hands-on experience as well as time to debrief with supervisors and make deeper connections about anything that occurred during service provision. The hands-on experience aids in the transition from student to professional as well as boosting confidence, exposure to teaming/co-working, and the ability to manage situations (Pearce & Napier, 2010). Mentoring is not a one-sided phenomenon as there is potential reciprocity experienced between student and supervisor. Students can be a resource to the mentor by providing information on current curriculum, educational approaches, and field trends. While internships are valuable for the student to develop guided and supervised interpreting experience, the relationship focusing only solely on the student and mentor lacks the additional benefit of reciprocity between the student and the deaf community. A newer concept of community involvement is service learning, a membership based interaction with the deaf community which addresses more than just the needs of the IEP student.

Service learning differentiates from the often-one-sided actions of volunteering and internships by way of reciprocity between IEP students and deaf communities. Reflection on this type of relationship is essential for students to learn about the importance of community membership through “reciprocity and the symbiotic nature of learning and living” (Monikowski & Peterson, 2005, p. 195). The word “service” often evokes the idea of volunteering and while it is not granted a specific definition, it constitutes a relationship based on working together and making space for the deaf community to be the leading entity (Shaw, 2013). This relationship
exhibits reciprocity as the students gain deeper understanding of and trust from the deaf community. At the same time, the deaf community sees this as a partnership to develop ideas for student involvement opportunities and have the final say in what is ultimately established and offered to participants (Shaw, 2013). Shaw (2013) showed that all 115 students surveyed on service learning experiences deemed it as something that could not be taught in a classroom. Shaw (2013) delves deeper into the boundaries between the interpreting community and deaf community, citing the misunderstanding that professional distance prohibits community connections. Service learning is an experience that can occur concurrently within IEPs and can transcend this timeframe as the student moves in the professional realm.

The service learning relationship has the potential to continue beyond the time constraints of the academic semesters, having reported a positive impact as Shaw (2013) described in one instance the deaf community was “sorry to see it end” (p. 140). When students were previously surveyed and interviewed on the overall benefit of service learning and mentorships, there was agreement on the merit of such arrangements. As it was previously stated about opportunities and application of theoretical and practical experience, service learning can aid in cultural and linguistic preparation of the student while simultaneously evolving to satisfy the needs of the community being served (Shaw & Roberson, 2009). With a frame of language acquisition, Quinto-Pozos (2005) explains that community involvement via service learning is a beneficial activity for IEP students that nicely complements academic instruction. Through research, service learning shows the attempt to meet the needs of IEP students via practical opportunities and the satisfy the goals of the Deaf community acting as the focus and guide of the experience (Monikowski & Peterson, 2005).
Conclusion

Many changes and shifts have occurred since the formal inception of interpreter education, but activities without progress are sometimes perceived as accomplishment (Monikowski, 2013). This perception could lead to a lack of refinement with IEP curriculum and educational approaches for newer generations of sign language interpreters as well as a shift further away from partnerships the deaf community. The action of establishing academic status within ASL-English interpreter education has shifted focus away from deaf community leadership and has led to newer generations of students with little-to-no community connections (Shaw, 2013). Even with educational standards rising to meet societal expectation of professional practices and programs changing from a “training” (ITP) to an “education” (IEP) focus, graduates are not reporting an experience of total preparation with completion of their IEPs. The needs of the deaf community are not singular, but exist on a wide spectrum. Connecting with the deaf community, making space for deaf instructors within IEPs, and applying theoretical concepts to practice will improve IEP students’ understanding of ASL and deaf culture (Brunson, 2006; Forestal, 2015). A deaf club president stated during an interview the importance of interpreting students learning that deaf people are not all the same as language is used differently amongst community members (Shaw, 2013). It is important for research exploring the benefit of different approaches to practical experience to continue as the process is more inclusive of not only the students, but the deaf community with which they collaborate.

Although certification and IEP degrees exist as tangible evidence of readiness for ASL-English interpreting, there is no guarantee that individuals who achieve either are indeed qualified for the work they aspire to do in the interpreting field (Stuard, 2008). The expansion of available research within interpreter education outlining the outcomes and reflections of
graduates can contribute to the field (Godfrey, 2010). After all, interpreter educators were once students themselves (either students of IEPs or students of the deaf community) and their experiences have shaped how they approach the education of new interpreters. This review of the literature demonstrates the field consensus on interpreter education shifting toward four-year educational institutions (Annarino & Stauffer, 2010; Burch, 2002; Gustaffson et al., 2012; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). The shift in educational standards leads to expanding the scope of what is conventionally included within interpreter education (Shaw, 2013) and moving toward a formalized induction system outside of the academic environment (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). Conducting the research and making student and graduate feedback available specifically to stakeholders of interpreter education will enable instructors to redesign their curriculum and, as Shaw & Craw (2007) explain, consider additional resources and opportunities for future students.
Chapter III: Methodology

Research Design

This research aimed to collect data from recent graduates (2014-2018) of the 7 two-year IEPs housed in community colleges in the Southern California area, specifically what their experiences were during their programs and have been since graduation. A mixed-method phenomenological approach was used to collect data in two phases: 1) an online survey and 2) a 1-hour interview with open-ended questions. Participants who opted to take the anonymous online survey had an opportunity to express interest to continue with the one-hour confidential recorded interview. The mixed-method approach uses qualitative and quantitative techniques with data collection as both of these methods are useful and important for creating a holistic view of the research at hand (Johnson & Onweugbuzie, 2004). Phenomenology studies the experiences and individual perspectives of communities, which directly applies to the research focus looking to collect data from IEP graduates about their experiences with their programs (Hale & Napier, 2014). With the incorporation of a phenomenological approach, the purposeful sampling of specific participants resulted in a smaller sample size (Mapp, 2008). To support this work, the semi-structured interview had prompt questions for the discussion to be guided while allowing the interviewee to express their thoughts and ideas without restraints (Hale & Napier, 2014). The purposeful sampling, an approach often used with qualitative research, aimed to include participants on the basis of a particular set of attributes (Stringer, 2014). The specific attributes established for targeted participants, IEP attended and year of completion, are representative of the extent to which graduate experiences were affected by and graduate preparation had an effect on the community receiving the services. For participants, the survey respondents would have to satisfy the requirements of being at least age 18, completion of a two-
year Interpreter Education Program (IEP) anytime between the years of 2014-2018, and completion from one of the seven programs listed from the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, or Riverside. Attributes such as IEP program start date, demographic information, or employment status held no bearing on the respondent’s access to either the survey and the interview.

As the experience of any individual who goes through an IEP is personal, the phenomenological approach was utilized since behaviors and experiences are not easy to measure (Hale & Napier, 2014). A phenomenological approach lends itself to the focus of the lived experience of specific individuals as only they would have this knowledge to be able to provide a vivid description if their experiences (Mapp, 2008). While the survey collected basic information about the general population of participants and surface-level experiences and feedback, the interview process allowed participants to tell their stories by giving answers to open ended questions. The researcher incorporated techniques such as listening, avoiding leading questions, sharing of researcher experiences sparingly, allowing silence, and following hunches into the interviews (Hale & Napier, 2014). As this researcher is an ASL-English interpreter who often works in the local Southern California area, it was important to exercise self-positioning appropriately with this process. Self-positioning may include sharing of professional-related information such as educational qualifications, types of involvement in the interpreting community, and what led to the formulation of this particular research question (Hale & Napier, 2014).

For the first portion of data collection, an anonymous survey was administered online through a Qualtrics survey instrument, consisting of 30-43 questions including three qualifying demographic questions (age, graduation year, and IEP location). Question types were multiple choice, open response, and a Likert-scale (see Appendix A). The survey experience was unique
for each respondent as the skip-logic presented particular questions based on which answers were chosen. For example, if a respondent stated that they were not working as an interpreter, the survey would then skip the question asking what type of interpreting work performed and the question asking how many hours were typically worked per week. This specific respondent would see the question asking reasons why they are not a working interpreter. The survey did not require responses for each for participants to proceed through to the of the survey.

The Qualtrics survey instrument was piloted by five colleagues who did not meet all of the parameters for the target participant group. The aim of the pilot was to ensure accuracy with the survey flow and that the questions made sense as pilot participants progressed through until arriving at the end, even progressing to the interview interest form. Once the pilot group reported satisfaction with the entire survey experience, the researcher proceeded to disseminate the survey to the target participants.

Participants

For this study, the goal was to collect data from people who satisfied all of three established requirements: above age 18, completed an IEP between 2014-2018 with an Associate or Certificate, and that the completed two-year IEP was located within Los Angeles County, Orange County, or Riverside County.
Figure 1. Seven featured two-year IEPs in the Southern California area

While the aim was for all participants who completed a program, there was no requirement for the participant to be working in the field of sign language interpreting. The methods in which the survey was distributed was mainly by emailing directly to individuals that are likely actively involved in interpreting such as RID California membership lists, Southern California RID chapter, community colleges employing interpreters, Reddit ASL Interpreter forum, and a Facebook local interpreting page. Community colleges within the three counties which mentioned either “ASL interpreting services” or “Deaf/ Hard of Hearing student services” were emailed and asked to forward the recruitment flyer (see Appendix F) to their ASL-English
interpreting staff. In addition, emailing the college program directly was the only assured way for the research to reach individuals (via snowballing) who are not working as interpreters, but who did complete the two-year IEPs. In total, 1,374 emails were disseminated which garnered 22 qualifying responses, a response rate of 1.6%. It is important to recognize that while the bulk of the email reach spanned the whole state of California (via RID lists), there was a high possibility that many of the recipients would not satisfy the desired group of participants.

Email contact was made two different ways through the RID membership. A filter search was made for members who identified as “Certified” and living in California, totaling 949 email addresses. Certification of any kind was not a requirement for this research, but because the state of California does not host any sort of ASL-English interpreter directory, this was just one approach for recruitment. Another filter search was made for members who identified as “Associate” and living in California, totaling 220 email addresses. Since there is no way to filter out Southern California from other areas, the emails (see Appendix D) were sent to all members who identify “California” as their residence state. The Southern California RID chapter membership was also emailed (see Appendix D) as some members may or may not be RID members, totaling 155 email addresses. The seven local two-year IEPs were emailed (see Appendix F) and asked to forward the flyer (see Appendix E) to their alumni from the years of 2014-2018. Community colleges within the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, and Riverside who listed public contact information on their websites for “student accessibility” or “disabled student services” that might employ ASL-English interpreters were emailed (see Appendix G), asking them to share the flyer information with their sign language interpreters. There were 34 community colleges emailed in total. The recruitment flyer (see Appendix E) was also shared on
Facebook and Reddit within communities of ASL interpreters in hopes to reach the target participants.

**Data Collection**

The first part of data collection was a survey that was initially disseminated via email in January 2019 with one reminder email sent out in February 2019. Once the online survey was closed, a total of 29 responses were recorded. Seven of the 29 responses were directed to the end of survey for one of two reasons: not yet completing their IEP or having completed an IEP that is not from the area under research. Of the 22 remaining responses, 4 responses were collected as “incomplete”, having answered just over half of the survey questions. Although the participants did not answer until the end of the survey, the recorded responses were still included in the data analysis. With 18 participants completing the survey to arrive at the “end of survey message”, five participants expressed interest in a separate 1-hour video-recorded interview. Interested participants then provided their contact information (name, email address, and optional phone number) on a Google Form. The survey was completely anonymous and was not linked to the Google Form, so the participants could not have been asked any follow-up questions stemming directly from their survey responses. Although the overall response rate may seem low, this action research occurred on a smaller, local level within three Southern California counties rather than at a state-wide or national level. The participant responses collected were analyzed and led to the categorization of results that were significant to their lived experiences from the local IEPs as related to the research focus, but not found to be generalizable to larger populations on a national scale.

From the five participants who expressed interest in the second part of the data collection, the semi-structured interview, contact was attempted through email. From this contact, three
participants agreed to proceed with interviews while two did not reciprocate contact. One interview was conducted in person at a local library using a video camera for recording and two interviews were conducted online (one through the Zoom video conferencing platform and the other through FaceTime) and recorded locally on the researcher’s computer via QuickTime screen record. The semi-structured interviews consisted of 14 open-ended questions (see Appendix C). A guided-tour approach was used with the interview question designed for the participants to show the researcher around their experiences as compared to the questions being the overall focus of the research (Stringer, 2014). This approach, as explained by Stringer (2014), also allowed the researcher to ask questions to participants during the course of interview, such as “tell me more about …” and “can you elaborate on that?” The participants were compensated $20 each from the researcher in appreciation for their time and sharing their lived experiences.

**Data Analysis**

Once both phases of the data collection were complete, the results of the survey were tabulated on a spreadsheet. As the sample size was small (n=22), there showed to be no statistical significance with the data, but still satisfied the research goal of collecting local two-year IEP graduate experiences. The survey responses were analyzed on the spreadsheet and the most significant information appeared with the demographic information (see Table 1, Table 2, & Figure 2) revealing the participants were of various backgrounds. Next, the interview content was then transcribed and analyzed. The process of analysis, as explained by Stringer (2014), involves multiple steps including: review of the data, unitizing ideas, categorizing & coding, identification of themes, organization of categories, and developing a report framework. The aim of this approach was to categorize the data by identification of significant themes that make up the experiences and perceptions of the participants (Stringer, 2014). Themes were identified by
frequency of appearance throughout both the survey and interview. When all data tabulation and transcription was completed, the resulting themes from the interviews were supported by quantitative and qualitative data found within the survey.

**Limitations**

With this action research taking place in a small geographic area and limited to participants within a specific 5-year period, there were a few limitations to the reach of the recruitment distribution. California interpreters are not listed in any kind of registry due to no state-mandated licensure requirements, so there were difficulties with reaching a large number of the target group. When considering methods of recruitment, cognizance that not all interpreters are certified, members of RID, members of SCRID, use social media, working in the field, or maintain alumni connection with their two-year IEP. Utilizing the snowballing method of participant recruitment through contact of IEPs can prove to be effective and inclusive of a variety of experiences and perspectives (Stringer, 2014), but there exist unknowns as to which original contacts forwarded the emails to the target participants. There were a few instances within the distribution where the recipient copied the researcher on the email making the snowballing attempt visible.

Limiting the research to “graduates only” ultimately left out perspectives of two different groups of people – the students who attended IEPs and ultimately stopped as well as students who partially completed an IEP at a two-year school and eventually transferred to a four-year school to continue their interpreter education. In relation to the research question of overall experiences of students within IEPs, both of these perspectives would have added to the collection of data as they could very well be local working interpreters. Future research
endeavors should consider this when looking at overall experiences as to not limit the desired perspectives.
Chapter IV: Results

Analysis

This study explored the overall experiences of two-year IEP graduates between 2014 – 2018 in the Southern California area. Specifically, data was collected from seven programs within the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, and Riverside. The first part of this study utilized an anonymous online survey and the second part was an interview offered to survey participants who expressed interest. For the purposes of this research, the focus of the results was on the themes which either emerged consistently between the survey and interview portions of the data collection or were found frequently in either part. Participants were recruited via two email distributions over a 3-week period between January 2019 and February 2019, resulting in the inclusion of 22 participants. This final count was slightly below the researcher’s aim of at least 30 survey participants. From the 29 participants that attempted the survey, 7 participants were guided to the end of survey for not satisfying all of the qualifying criteria: age 18 or above, attendance to a specific program within the counties of interest, and program graduation between 2014-2018. While all 29 participants satisfied the age requirement of being 18 and above, 5 participants answered attendance to a two-year IEP outside of the focused area in the counties of interest and 2 participants reported not yet completing their program. Any qualifying portions of the responses from the 7 participants were not included in the calculation of the results. Of the 22 participants who progressed beyond the initial qualifying questions, 4 participants completed a portion of the survey ranging from 51% completion to 60% completion. Any answers provided by these 4 participants were used in the results and analysis sections.
Demographics

The survey participants showed a range in program attendance (see Table 1). Of the 22 qualifying participants, the distribution shows most respondents from El Camino College (ECC) followed by Pierce College (Pierce), Golden West College (GWC), Riverside City College (RCC), Antelope Valley College (AVC), and Mt. San Antonio College (M). There were no survey participants reported from College of the Canyons (COC) in Santa Clarita.

Table 1

Two-Year IEPs Attended by Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two-Year Interpreter Education Program</th>
<th># of Survey Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antelope Valley College: Lancaster, CA</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of the Canyons: Santa Clarita, CA</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Camino College: Torrance, CA</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden West College: Huntington Beach, CA</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. San Antonio College: Walnut, CA</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierce College: Los Angeles, CA</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside City College: Riverside, CA</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Participants</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IEP completion date distribution (see Table 2) of participants shows equal counts of five participants from 2015, 2017, and 2018 followed by four participants from 2016 and three participants from 2014.
The research aimed to collect responses from a variety of locations and years. While the data showed a low response rate of 22 participants, the variety between locations (see Table 1) and years of completion (see Table 2) satisfied the goal of data collection. The participants also provided information regarding their start and end time of their two-year IEPs (see Figure 3) which gave insight to the length of experience for students.

**Table 2**

*Two-Year IEP Completion Dates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Completion</th>
<th># of Survey Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Participants</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Figure 4. Reported start-to-finish time (in years) of two-year IEP graduates**
The participants were asked questions about their education including: a) their educational level prior to starting their IEP, b) if they completed their program with an Associate degree or certificate of completion, c) what additional education they had attempted and/or completed after the program, and d) reasons why they pursued higher education. The largest number of participants (10) had stated their highest level of education prior to starting the IEP was a high school diploma. 7 participants stated they began their IEP with a Bachelor’s degree, 3 participants stated they began their IEP with a Master’s degree. Most participants (10) reported completing their IEP with an Associate degree while other participants (8) reported completing their IEP with a certificate. Of the 10 participants who completed with an Associate degree, 5 participants had a high school diploma prior to beginning, 4 participants had Bachelor degrees prior to beginning, and 1 participant had an Associate degree prior to beginning their program. Of the 8 participants who reported completion with a certificate, 3 participants had a Bachelor degree prior to beginning program, 3 participants had a Master’s degree prior to beginning program, and 2 participants had a high school diploma prior to beginning their program. At the time of the survey, 13 of 22 participants reported possessing at least a Bachelors level education, 8 participants reported possessing an Associate level education, and 1 participant reported having certificate level education.

The reported age range of participants revealed that the majority (12) were between 25 – 34, with 35 – 44 as the second most selected age range (6 participants), and least chosen (4) age range was 18 – 24. The noted genders of participants revealed a majority of 17 female participants and minority of 5 male participants. Native language selection revealed the majority (19) of participants with English as their first language, 1 participant selected “other” and stated
“English/Spanish, I grew up fully bilingual”, 1 participant selected Spanish, and 1 participant selected ASL. The ethnicity of the participants (see Figure 2) shows the majority of respondents as Hispanic/Latinx, White as second, “prefer not to answer” as third, Black/African American as forth, “other” as fifth (responses reported as “biracial” and “Hispanic & white”), and Native American as sixth.

**Figure 2. Selected ethnicities by survey participants**

In comparison, the most recent demographics by Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (2018) reveal that “European American/White” consisted of 87.15% of ethnicity self-reported by members, followed by “Hispanic/Latino(a)” reporting 4.92%, “African American/Black” reporting 4.87%, “Asian American/ Pacific Islander” reporting 1.84%, and “American Indian/Alaskan Native” reporting 1.23%. The answers provided for the demographic questions
show a wider variety of ethnicities than is common within the field of ASL/English interpreting, often showing White as the majority ethnicity. A majority of participants (19) identified as “hearing” and a small number (3) identified as “deaf”.

Interviews were conducted with 3 participants who expressed willingness to proceed with the second part of the study. The first interview was conducted online in English with Kate*, a hearing interpreter. The second interview was conducted in-person in English with Carly*, a hearing interpreter. The third interview was conducted online in ASL with Joe Smith*, a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI). As demographic information for participants was previously collected in the survey, the purpose of the interview was to collect more information regarding graduates’ experiences rather than demographic information. With the demographic information outlined above, the next section will address a blend of the survey and interview data as related with corresponding identified themes.

**Internship Lacking**

Between the survey and interview phases of data collection, the theme of “internship lacking” was discussed most frequently. Survey data showed a notable difference between two-year IEP provision of volunteer opportunities as compared to internship opportunities. Interview analysis found the most mentioned theme as “internship lacking”. The topic of internship, having emerged in a deductive manner within questions (survey and interview), appeared the most frequently in other questions throughout the interview. The sub-categories that were found within the theme of “internship lacking the interviews were “required”, “variety”, “available”, and “the gap”. Participants were asked about volunteer opportunities and internship opportunities as these are often incorporated into most IEP curriculum as a way for students to obtain “hands-on” experience in the field.

* Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the interview participants
In the survey, volunteer opportunities were described as “an informal arrangement, possibly short-term/one-time, could be either interpreting or non-interpreting within the deaf community”. Participants were asked, “did your IEP facilitate/provide volunteer opportunities for students in the local deaf community?” 20 participants responded “yes” and all 20 participants reported that they participated in such opportunities. There was 1 participant from Pierce who answered “no” and 1 participant from RCC who was unsure if volunteer opportunities were provided within their IEP. Next, participants were asked about internship opportunities. In the survey, *internship* was defined as “a formally agreed-upon ongoing professional relationship which has documentation, a supervisor and/or mentor who provides support to the student.” When asked if their IEP provided internship opportunities for students, 10 answered “yes”, 9 answered “no”, and 3 answered “I’m not sure”. Of the 10 participants who stated their IEPs provided internship opportunities, 9 reported that they did participate in such opportunities and 1 person reported that they did not participate in any provided internship opportunities.

Table 3

*Volunteer & Internship Quantitative Survey Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did your IEP facilitate/provide volunteer opportunities?</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you participate in volunteer opportunities from IEP?</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you seek your own volunteer opportunities?</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did your IEP facilitate/provide internship opportunities?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9*</td>
<td>3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you participate in internship opportunities from IEP?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you seek your own internship opportunities?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The “no” or “not sure” response triggered skip-logic in the survey; these participants were not shown the next question listed
- only options available were “yes” or “no”. Please see Appendix A for survey questions in full context*
When asked if participants looked for their own volunteer opportunities, 16 participants answered “yes” and 6 participants answered “no”. Methods by which the 16 participants searched for volunteer opportunities on their own were asking around to family and friends, referring to connections within the deaf community, looking online, reaching out to local organizations, and a “other” response where the participant stated their employment at a local interpreting agency gave them access to resources about deaf events (see Figure 4). From the 22 participants, 9 reported looking for their own internship opportunities while 13 participants reported not looking for their own internship opportunities. The methods by which participants searched for their own internship opportunities are as follows: asking around to friends, family, staff reaching out to local organizations, looking online, and referring to connections within the deaf community (see Figure 4). This question was open for participants to select all responses which applied.

*1 “other” response: access to resources via employment at local interpreting agency
The numbers reported between IEP facilitated volunteer opportunities, 20, and IEP facilitated internship opportunities, 10, show a difference of half. Lastly, when participants were asked if volunteer, internship, both volunteer and internship, or neither was required for graduation from the IEP, 7 participants answered internship hours, 13 participants answered volunteer hours, 1 participant said both volunteer and internship hours and 1 participant said neither.

Within the interview portion of the data collection, the three participants (Kate, Carly, and Joe) provided responses that most often touched on “internship lacking” as a topic aside from the two direct questions asking about both volunteer and internship experiences. “Volunteer” was mentioned within similar contexts and will be explained in relation to the results for “internship lacking”. The theme of “internship lacking” had several specifics mentioned. In regards to “required” and “available” Kate stated that in regards to internship opportunities and experiences, she did not have any in her two-year program but there were volunteer opportunities. Joe expressed that at his IEP, only 20 hours was required of students for volunteering, stating that finding internship opportunities in the local area was difficult. He added later in the interview that more internship hours are needed. He reported looking for his own internship opportunities, such as a local amusement park. Joe also mentioned an internship with a local seasonal historical fair, but expressed negative feelings about how the program was run and expressed that he did not agree with students working anywhere between 8-hour and 16-hour shifts.
Carly expressed there were not many hours of internship required of graduates, stating “the practicum requirement at [my IEP] is 40 hours, which is nothing.” Carly also explained that her two-year IEP previously had an internship program on campus (post-secondary experience), but it was stopped one semester before she was to begin practicum because there wasn’t enough work. Carly stated her program had no internship to offer students and “it was basically, you’re on your own”. Since Carly reported limited resources and assistance with how they could get hours, she set up her own internship through her workplace, an interpreting agency in the Los Angeles area, as well as local seasonal historical fair. She was able to get over 100 hours of internship experience mainly from those two internships as well as other settings; volunteering with deafblind consumers providing tactile interpreting was one specific experience, but she reported not having any formal education on working with the deafblind community from her IEP. To provide context, tactile provision of American Sign Language with deafblind individuals is a specialized area of interpreting which is typically is performed by seasoned interpreters (Frankel, 2002). After graduation, Carly said she applied to an internship at a deaf university on the East coast, but was waitlisted. She then applied for a different internship, also on the East coast, and was accepted. It was a paid 3-month internship that she moved for temporarily and had a positive, beneficial experience during, but adds that she shouldn’t have to go across the country to get an internship.

The theme of experience of “variety” was something noted by two interview participants. Carly mentioned about the on-campus internship once offered by her IEP, but later explained later she doubted of the benefit to an internship only offering community college work as it wouldn’t expose students to any community work, which she expressed as her preferred work setting. Joe expressed that more variety with skill and settings other than religious and theme...
park experience was needed. He said that there should be, for example, one-on-one opportunities such as taxes, but also believed that serious settings like medical should not be used for student experience. Joe also mentioned that as a CDI, most people imagine that deafblind interpreting is the setting most frequently worked in, but he was surprised to find no internship opportunities with deafblind consumers. Carly mentioned volunteering with deafblind people earlier, but this opportunity was facilitated through a friend. Kate also mentioned having a volunteer opportunity with the deafblind community as she was invited by a deaf teacher. She reports having been taught some tactile sign and was promised more training before the initial event, but did not receive this training and experienced on-the-job learning.

Another sub-category of “internship lacking” that appeared often in the interviews was “the gap” (Pearce & Napier, 2010). Specifically, the mention referred to the time between IEP completion and professional work and how the lack of hands-on experience impacts “the gap.” Kate mentioned there is definitely a gap, which was the reason why she continued her interpreting education at a four-year university. She had been hired with a local agency before her graduation from her IEP, but felt hesitant towards being ready to work as she believed she wasn’t at the level she wanted to be at for ASL-English interpreting work. Kate adds that there should be a way to bridge the gap, such as a post-graduation internship, since interpreting is a skill that doesn’t persist if not practiced. In an effort to smooth the transition from student to working interpreter, Carly expressed being afraid of the gap which “very much exists”. This was her motivation for attending the post-graduation internship on the East Coast, as mentioned previously. When asked about feedback toward IEPs in the Southern California area, she stated that the biggest thing that impacted her was “the gap, that transition”. As to why “the gap” is a sub-category of “internship lacking”, specific experiences of what gaps existed were provided by
Carly. She mentioned that while her two-year IEP did cover information about how to assess and provide feedback to other interpreters, she did not learn much about teaming from the academic environment, crediting her experiences to her post-graduation internship. She discovered that working in a team happens more often than students think, emphasizing the importance to know how to provide that type of support. Nursing residency was something that Carly compared to smoothing the transition for students becoming practitioners, stating that there must be a better way to becoming a working interpreter.

**Support**

Another theme that occurred throughout data analysis was support. Support from different communities was mentioned by all interviewees and by a survey participant. Kate mentioned being supported by a deaf friend and his mother with their encouragement for her to pursue interpreting. Carly mentioned the patience and support from the deaf community that ultimately resulted in improvement and skill building. Having a deaf friend, her initial motivation to pursue interpreting, was something she mentioned as having a good and helpful connection during her time in the program. Joe mentioned that he experienced support from CODAs (Child of Deaf Adults), but not specifically from the local deaf community. One interview participant expressed that supportive people they met through the years motivated them to continue pursuit of a personal connection with the deaf community.

Support from, and positive experiences with, professors/instructors was another sub-category found often within both phases of the data. Kate stated she experienced support from interpreting and Deaf Studies teachers related to her pursuit of the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) while in her IEP. After receiving her score and sharing with her teachers, they were supportive of her efforts and felt she assessed appropriately at the level she
received (below 4.0, the minimum EIPA score recognized in California). She mentioned feeling supported with her interpreting instructor as he exhibited very clear boundaries between students and instructors, but was always willing to address any questions in a prompt manner. Other Deaf Studies professors would be available during office hours to discuss any issues or translation work. One professor in particular is someone she mentions still keeping in contact with since graduation from her IEP. Carly mentioned that the professors provided a lot of encouragement and positive reinforcement for students to venture out and involve themselves in the deaf community. The professors also would provide support to students by informing them of any opportunities or events they could be involved with. The small size of the classes, as Carly mentioned, assisted in getting to know the professors at the college as they were very supportive and encouraging, something she really enjoyed.

Joe mentioned feeling fortunate with the support he received from his professors at his IEP in relation to his goal to pass the written portion of the CDI examination. This was a success for him and he expressed positive feelings of support towards the instructors from his IEP. He also mentioned support from instructors with receiving referrals to agencies and flexibility with interpreting classes. One survey participant mentioned their professors being positive and open minded, being able to see things in the students they couldn’t see in themselves. This participant continued, explaining that the environment at ECC was strict, but also friendly and helped them grow as a professional. On the other hand, a different survey participant stated the only negative professor-related experience from ECC, expressing they were not great listeners and self-centered with interpreting because they weren’t open to realizing “there is more than one way of doing signs and expressions.”
Within support, there were positive and negative instances of “peer support” mentioned by interview participants. Kate mentioned a lot of fighting within her cohort and often socialized among smaller groups of people, hearing about the bickering and fighting after the fact. On a positive note, she mentioned that she was friends with some further progressed/older interpreting students and her peers did provide positive academic support as everyone recognized the difficulties they all experienced in class. Carly reported no negative experiences and mentioned that socially and academically, she felt support from her peers. They shared opportunities and resources with each other and the small class size helped them learn more about one another’s strengths and weaknesses. They interacted socially and showed further support, even after graduation by keeping in contact about what they were doing. Joe reported a different experience from what Kate and Carly had stated. He felt that most of his peers were coming into the IEP unsure about what goals they had and they did not listen to his ideas or advice, leading him to keep his opinion to himself. He stated that while they got along, the different motivations between himself and his peers led to feeling a lack of support.

Foundational Skills

A topic which emerged from both survey and interview responses was related to “foundational skills”, specifically how the participants felt their IEPs prepared them for work after completion. When asked in the survey if participants felt their IEPs prepared them for entry level work as an ASL/English interpreter, 12 participants selected “definitely” while 4 participants selected “somewhat”. One of the 4 participants who answered “somewhat yes” stated in the following open field response for elaboration: “I learned a lot from my program and I was able to get a job as an interpreter before I actually graduated. However, I was not at the
level of interpreting that I wanted to be at, so I continued my interpreter training at a four-year university.” One participant from ECC responded “somewhat no” to the question of their IEP preparing them for entry-level work. This participant reported an overall neutral satisfaction with their IEP and expressed they would not attend their IEP again if they had the chance.

During the interview, Kate mentioned that her IEP did a really good job providing her with foundational skills that were further built upon and refined later when she transferred to a Bachelor degree interpreting program at a four-year university. She commented that it was hard to differentiate what skills specifically came from which program. Her two-year IEP helped her develop a “tougher skin” in regard to accepting criticism about her work since the program is very “sink or swim”. Carly stated that her IEP prepared her well for the knowledge portion (part 1) of the National Interpreter Certification (NIC) examination as well as how to give appropriate feedback to other interpreters since it is a difficult to do in general. Building on the skill of feedback, Carly stated that her IEP did not cover enough about teaming, something that was mentioned earlier with her post-graduation internship experience through an interpreting agency on the East coast. Her concept of teaming during her IEP was one person as “on” and one person as “off”, which was not something she later came to learn as a reality of the field. This connects to team interpreting and general teamwork as they were found to be ineffectively addressed competencies within interpreter education as reported by Witter-Merithew & Johnson (2005). Carly also mentions that foundational development occurs through socializing with deaf people, something she reported feeling supported by her instructors and the deaf community. Joe reported feeling prepared with foundational skills; the importance of following ethics, customer service, professional presentation through attire by matching the consumer. Negotiation with agencies (pay rate, drive time, cancellation) is another foundational skill Joe felt his two-year
IEP prepared him with as he has reported encountering corrupt agencies that have refused to pay his invoices.

**Challenges**

Participants talked about what types of challenges they experienced and although different for each person, the recurrence of “challenge” was of note. Survey participants expressed challenges with certification preparation and job outlook. One participant stated that speaking as a CDI, to be prepared for the performance test they had to look for workshops in addition to their IEP. One survey participant expressed a challenge with finding work due to degree requirements for most jobs, stating that it would be nice to have information on up-to-date career expectations within the IEP.

During the interview, Kate explained living 25 miles away from the program and commuting by bus presented challenges with being able to attend events, social gatherings, and do volunteering. She also mentioned a challenge with keeping nervousness at bay when going into the class as her instructor believed in “baptism by fire”. The instructor would have students interpret in front of the class and subsequently conduct an open discussion about their work. As each semester passed, the fear she experienced diminished quicker than before. Kate expressed a challenge related to volunteering when she coordinated interpreters for a friend attending a play, but when all the interpreters cancelled last minute, she was asked to step in and felt completely unprepared. From this, she learned a good lesson about knowing her limits and being able to assess her abilities in relation to assignments. Another challenge that Kate experienced was with an incorrectly classified freelance job; had she known what the assignment actually consisted of, she would have declined. Being the interpreter there at the moment, the deaf consumer asked her to proceed and she was comfortable in knowing that she was able to handle the setting, but knew
that it was outside of her skills at the time. She mentioned that they (consumers both deaf and hearing) knew she wouldn’t do the best possible job as she was not the ideal interpreter, but did her best possible work.

Carly mentioned a challenge related to volunteering for a booth at a deaf event passing out flyers and helping out. She was asked to interpret by an agency representative with a student who wanted to interview them, but was challenged by the interpreting process as she was early in her program at that point. Another challenge mentioned by Carly was when she had been asked to provide tactile interpreting on a panel discussion, teaming with a professor as they had learned she had some experience interpreting with the deafblind community. While she trusted she had a good team in her professor, she reflects that she was way out of her league and should have never done that assignment. She wouldn’t have accepted it if she knew then what she knows now, but peer pressure and “being a young student interpreter, doing what you’re told” played a role in her participation of that assignment. Working through self-doubt and lack of confidence is a challenge Carly mentioned that happened not only during her program, but afterward during her post-graduation internship. She found that continuing deliberate practice on her own would eliminate that, but added that her internship was explicit that work time was not to be used for practice.

Joe, as a CDI, expressed challenges different than mentioned by Kate and Carly. He explained that his IEP seemed inept to what a CDI actually entailed as he recalled the interesting experience of being their first, but they provided flexibility and adjustment with the program. Another challenge Joe mentioned was regarding the many different masks he wears as a deaf community member and interpreter. Boundaries with his work and socialization were expressed
as important, but at the same time, tough to manage. He mentioned having to limit his time socializing within the deaf community and establish careful boundaries.

Participant Recommendations

From the data in this study, several recommendations were made by participants, based on their lived experiences, on how local Southern California IEPs can improve their programs. Through the survey, several participants suggested specific recommendations such as: more focus on educational interpreting since there is potential for more opportunity to improve the education of deaf student’s than teacher for deaf, up to date career expectations, and “should have focused on learning with more practice with the weaknesses that students have instead of just teaching lessons without actually learning the material”. One participant provided a specific educational recommendation that people should have a Bachelor’s degree before starting a two-year IEP. Interestingly, in the survey responses, 7 participants stated they began their IEP with a bachelor’s degree while 10 participants reported beginning with a high school diploma, 2 participants began with an Associate degree, and 3 participants began with a Master’s degree.

Kate expressed recommendations of more hands-on opportunities for internship, possibly a post-graduation internship. While she mentions having a lot of in-class practice, she expressed earlier in the results that her IEP did not offer any internship. Carly expressed that while no IEP will ever be perfect, she wished there was more explanation about deliberate practice and the importance of not using work to gain practice; you were to show up ready as this will eliminate fear. Another recommendation from Carly was about internships needing to be available locally, for all, and preferably paid. Practice with teaming was another comment Carly mentioned that would have been nice to have within the IEP.
Joe provided a recommendation about IEPs needing to consider a larger variety of internships beyond religious and amusement park assignment for students. Also, he stated that deaf individuals, as they possess a deaf perspective, absolutely should have a place within IEPs to teach interpreting (noting that they should also have prior interpreting experience). Similarly, within the survey, one participant stated their IEP hired many deaf professors in the interpreting program and they were amazed that voicing skills were better taught by their deaf teacher than hearing teacher. Joe also mentioned that any IEP instructor should be screened for the position, adding that many years of experience and qualifying background are important to consider. He added that interpreting within a community college setting for many years does not equate to being qualified, as close relations with college administrators can hurt a candidate’s qualifications for instructing within an IEP.

**Discussion**

The resulting themes which emerged from both the survey and interview participants show information regarding student experiences as related to IEPs. This data, once analyzed, revealed information about how participant experiences (foundational skills, support, and internship) prepared them for interpreting work in the field after IEP graduation. While the initial research question regarding participant experiences was broad, the survey and interview prompts provided more focus to build on previous field research as mentioned in the literature review. The following discussion connects ideas from previous research to the data collected with specific examples provided from participant responses.

One driving force behind the research question of the student perspective regarding IEP experience was the limited amount of available data highlighting such a perspective. Reflection on experiences from participants has uncovered feedback that is valuable to improve the future
of the programs (Roberson, 2015). The feedback provided by participants in the anonymous survey and the confidential interview of this research was analyzed in an attempt to make resources available to inform and influence educators (Mo & Hale, 2014; Takeda, 2010). While the participant response rate was small and the research focused on a geographically concentrated area, the feedback provided by participants was supported by findings from previous research which happened on a larger scale.

Educational levels of participants showed an interesting trend. While 10 participants stated they entered their IEP with a high school level education, 10 participants stated they entered their IEP with at least a Bachelor’s level education (specifically, 7 with a Bachelor’s and 3 with a Master’s). One participant expressed that they felt people should possess a Bachelor’s degree before starting an IEP and it seems other participants reflected this as reality. This finding reflects the increase of minimum educational standards within the field of sign language interpreting as expressed by the 2003 vote by RID (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2003). An important note is that within the state of California, individuals are not solely required to possess RID certification to interpret. In addition to the 10 participants who entered into their IEP having completed at least a Bachelor’s degree, 7 participants reported pursuing higher education after completing their IEP. Of the 7 participants who answered what their motivation was for pursuing higher education, “personal goal” was the only option consistently selected. The idea from Burch (2002) stating that a Bachelor’s degree is seen as vital in the interpreting field is supported from some of the educational levels noted by participants, both before and after their IEP. Similarly related to education that continues beyond a two-year time frame, data represented in Figure 3 shows that it sometimes takes students longer than two years to finish a “two-year” program.
Interpreter education in the Southern California area has several opportunities for improvement within two-year community college settings. Support and foundational skills were two sub-categories that were present within more complex themes of internship and recommendations. Participant experiences have revealed that within these locations, foundational skills were developed with support from instructors and peers. Previous research from Shaw & Craw (2007) revealed that peer mentor supports were desired between upper and lower division students. Connections with higher level interpreting students is something Kate mentioned as a type of positive support she experienced during her IEP. Kate expressed that while she did develop the basics of interpreting and American Sign Language within this setting, she did not feel that upon completion, she was at the level she wanted to be working at. This determination prompted her decision to pursue interpreter education at a four-year university, which supports a statement by Young (1985) about the role of two-year programs. The idea mentioned by NCIEC (2008), Quinto-Pozos (2005), and Witter-Merithew & Johnson (2005) that development of competencies is of concern to students within two-year programs, leaving them feeling unprepared for professional work was reflected with Carly’s pursuit of a post-graduation internship. Additionally, the interview participant who recommended that programs should focus on student areas of weakness rather than teaching lessons without learning the curriculum corresponds to the interpreter educator who reported feeling forced to move along in curriculum regardless of proficiency (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005). With the supports experienced in IEPs, ultimately it was noted the practice outside of the classroom was what greatly aided in preparing them with post-graduation skills. Walker & Shaw (2011) found that practice outside the classroom is valuable to the overall development of interpreters.
Internship opportunities in conjunction with IEPs were limited, as reported in phase I and phase II through quantitative and qualitative data collected. Previous research (Cogen & Cokely, 2016; Godfrey, 2010; Humphrey, 2000; Pearce & Napier, 2010; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004) revealed that “the gap” exists within the interpreting field and is not only limited to sign language interpreting, but other languages as well (Wang, 2015). Not only was the limited opportunity for internships of note, but so was the lack of variety for interpreting students to gain exposure. Kate mentioned having no internship opportunities during her IEP and ultimately continued education at a four-year university to obtain the level of preparation she desired. Carly mentioned having very limited internship opportunities and eventually sought more experience, which she found in a post-graduation internship across the country. Dean & Pollard (2005) explained that interpreting is similar to other practice professions, such as law, teaching, and medicine; similarly, Carly mentioned that a residency similar to what nurses’ experience is what should be taking place in the field. Joe commented about the lack of variety in internship settings for students to gain experience, but cautioned that high-risk settings should not be used for student practice. He also commented about one local internship that seemed to require a lot from students, often interning full 8-hour shifts, sometimes 16-hours a weekend during the fair season. The internship setting should be a transitional setting which poses little risk to those involved, both consumers and students.

Brunson (2002) explained that students must rely on deaf community members to bridge the gap as interpreting program time frames are too brief to accomplish experience acquisition. Carly explained the importance of students getting out in the deaf community and socializing with people, emphasizing the importance for students to not be afraid of talking with people and asking them to slow down as one acquires receptive language fluency. While socializing with the
deaf community does not provide a student with interpreting experience, it does provide foundations for connections to future internships and partnerships. Service learning is a concept in the interpreting field that research has shown to attempt to meet the needs of IEP students and satisfy the goals of the deaf community by making the community members the guide and focus of the experience (Monikowski & Peterson, 2005). Service learning satisfies the lack of deaf community connection within an IEP student’s experience, but this also leads to the lack of deaf professionals within the IEP setting. Joe expressed that deaf individuals, preferably with interpreting experience, absolutely should be involved within IEPs. One survey participant stated that their IEP with ECC hiring a lot of deaf professors in the interpreting program, leading to their amazement that a deaf teacher taught them to voice better than a hearing teacher. Another survey participant expressed the desire for a CDI to be present as an instructor. This commentary from the survey participant highlights the impact of representation within programs for the variety of students which exist in the local area. The role of deaf individuals in IEPs as both student and instructor appeared in this research as something that is not prevalent in the local community, but is a suggestion of a graduate and was seen as beneficial when experienced. This leaves more to be desired with research on positions that deaf people have within ASL-English interpreter education and developments that could occur in the future. Inclusion of deaf individuals within local IEPs as instructors and leaders for service learning satisfies needs of both students to bridge the existing gap and the deaf community as language, community, and cultural guides.

**Participant Recommendations**

The survey and interview data revealed different recommendations from graduates of local Southern California two-year IEPs which align with the themes discovered throughout the
The theme of “foundational skills” revealed recommendations in the survey portion such as the need for learning through more practice with weaknesses that students have rather than teaching lessons without learning of the material, beginning an IEP with a Bachelor’s degree, and having up-to-date career expectations to aid in finding a job after graduation. In phase II, instruction related to teaming to supplement the foundational skill of feedback was mentioned during Carly’s interview. A recommendation from Joe suggesting a need for increased presence of deaf instructors within an IEP is supported by the feedback from a survey participant who said her deaf instructor taught her to voice better than her hearing instructor.

The other theme of “internship lacking” and the sub-categories of “required”, “variety”, “available”, and “the gap” appeared within interview participant recommendations. Carly and Kate both mentioned “the gap” and the benefit that a post-graduation internship could offer to IEP graduates that is accessible by all, local to the individuals, and preferably paid. While two-year IEPs offer courses which curriculum can be developed and credit granted to the students, the idea of a post-graduation internship is not something that would ultimately be the responsibility of the institutional program. This concept of post-graduation internships reinforces the notion that the total preparation of IEP students is the responsibility of all stakeholders, not solely the student or the IEP. The CATIE Center at St. Catherine University currently offers a program called “Graduation to Certification”, specifically designed for recent IEP graduates who are seeking RID certification and have passed the knowledge portion of National Interpreter Certification (Graduation to Certification, 2017). The establishment of this program is a beginning step for stakeholders of the field to offer supports to newer interpreters beyond the classroom. Comments by Joe and Carly about the minimal number of hours required of graduates adds to the emphasis of importance upon IEPs to the developing interpreter. Not only
were there not many hours required of graduates (reported from 0 to 20 to 40), but lack of variety with what opportunities were available at the time or had previously been available to students. Carly did not feel post-secondary was enough to prepare students for the variety of work that was available out in the local community and, similarly, Joe did not feel that amusement parks and religious settings adequately prepared students for work beyond the IEP.

**Conclusion**

The data collected and analyzed from participants to both parts of this research has answered a call put out by previous research to continue looking for the student perspectives and experiences (Stuard, 2008). Student perspectives are not only infrequently considered and valued (Kitchel, et al., 2007), but even less often solicited, even within internationally spoken modalities of interpreter education (Li, 2002; Wang, 2015). As participants provided their own recommendations as to how IEPs in the Southern California area can improve for future participants, this research revealed the importance and need of ongoing input from graduates. Previous research from Kitchel, Robinson, & Jenkins (2007) revealed that students cannot always predict if their course content will have practical applications as well as a feeling that their input is not valued. The two recommendations from this research are first, for student perspectives and experiences to continue to be a focus of interpreter research. Second, for ASL-English IEPs to solicit and place value on the experiences and input of the individuals within their programs after they graduate, having some time to apply the skills developed and education acquired.
Chapter V: Conclusion

While the field of American Sign Language interpreting has experienced a shift towards a Bachelor’s degree as the minimum educational standard, there remain many two-year training and educational opportunities (Monikowski, 2013). At the time of this action research, the Southern California area of Los Angeles county, Orange County, and Riverside County had 7 different two-year Interpreter Education Programs (IEPs) housed within community colleges. With the various options people have to attend two-year IEPs in the Southern California area, the focus of this research was to inquire about the experiences of graduates from any of the mentioned two-year programs within the specific area who completed between 2014 – 2018. Student perspectives, in general, have been missing from interpreting research (Li, 2002; Mo & Hale, 2014; Takeda, 2010; Wang, 2015).

This study emerged with a goal to add to available research focusing on what is beneficial and/or ineffective within IEPs (Petronio & Hale, 2009) by using a mixed-method, phenomenological approach (Mapp, 2008) to collect data about experiences. The first part of the data collection, the anonymous survey, collected quantitative and qualitative responses about the target group of participants while the second part of the data collection, the confidential interviews, documented qualitative responses. The recruitment of participants included two emails to the seven highlighted IEPs, professional interpreting membership directories, community colleges which might employ ASL-English interpreters, and online posts to interpreter-related forums. This recruitment outreach ultimately resulted in 22 survey participants from six of the seven two-year IEPs and from these participants, three interviews were completed.
The analysis of the survey and interview data showed themes which emerged consistently from the experiences of recent IEP graduates. The demographics of the participants reflected a wider variety of ethnicities than RID has reported within recent membership, reflecting a variety of individuals within the Southern California area. While the survey and interview questions were designed as guided-tour to inquire about graduate experiences, the theme which emerged the most throughout all data collection was regarding insight into internship opportunities. Subcategories which support the overall theme of “internship lacking” were found to be foundational skills, support, and challenges. The impact of internship lacking variety, internship lacking hours available, not many hours required for program completion, all seemed to add to “the gap” of skills between student and practitioner (Pearce & Napier, 2010). As students did complete their programs, there were positive supports mentioned from peers and instructors that did provide them encouragement and optimism as well as acquisition of foundational skills which helped them in their time after graduation. Supports in the post-graduation time were found to be valuable for the experience of the interview participants.

Recommendations reported from the research participants revealed a majority of internship-related suggestions. Post-graduation internship opportunities were mentioned by participants and one person specifically explained the direct benefit she received from participation in such a structured program. While there does exist a program to provide support for the “graduation to certification” in the CATIE Center at St. Catherine University (Graduation to Certification, 2017), it is specifically designed for interpreters who have passed the knowledge portion of National Interpreter Certification. Feedback about post-graduation opportunities expressed a need for a variety of local opportunities available to any interested participants to assist in ongoing exposure and practice of skills. Variety of internship opportunities beyond
amusement parks, post-secondary, and religious settings was a suggestion specifically mentioned when participants were asked for feedback for local IEPs. Another suggestion which emerged from participants was inclusion of deaf individuals as instructors within IEPs. While only one participant in the survey mentioned the skill and benefit they experienced with having a deaf instructor within their IEP, one interview participant, a Certified Deaf Interpreter, expressed the benefit for having such an individual as the perspective is needed, but ultimately rare. Research has shown that partnerships between IEPs and deaf community members was seen as beneficial for both through service learning as it transcends beyond what can be taught in a classroom (Shaw, 2013). Bridging the classroom and community together is something that can be done by opening IEPs to deaf individuals to be the leaders and shape curricular and co-curricular offerings for future students.

As this research aimed to add student perspectives to consideration for IEPs and future design, the impacts of reported experiences have shown the need for improvements with opportunities to prepare students. Since the phenomenological approach was utilized and data was not found be generalizable (Mapp, 2008), the collected responses were examined in depth and found to be of value to the future of the very two-year IEPs from which the participants recently graduated. The limitations of this action research to the local Southern California area and within a 5-year window of recent graduates leads to the recommendation for future research on student perspectives to be ongoing. Research occurring in different geographical areas as IEPs are often shaped by the instructors who design the curriculum and less by the students who graduated, as well as the local deaf community for which they aim to provide services.
References


Appendix A: Survey Questions

Qualifying Section
1. What IEP did you attend?
   a. Antelope Valley College: Lancaster, CA
   b. College of the Canyons: Santa Clarita, CA
   c. El Camino College: Torrance, CA
   d. Golden West Community College: Huntington Beach, CA
   e. Mt San Antonio College: Walnut, CA
   f. Pierce College: Los Angeles, CA
   g. Riverside City College: Riverside, CA
   h. None of the above (Skip logic to “Disqualification from Survey Message”)

2. What year did you complete the IEP with an Associate degree (AA/AS) or certificate?
   a. 2014
   b. 2015
   c. 2016
   d. 2017
   e. 2018
   f. I have not completed my IEP yet (Skip logic to “Disqualification from Survey Message”)

3. Are you above the age of 18?
   a. Yes
   b. No (Skip logic to “Disqualification from Survey Message”)

Disqualification from Survey Message:
“Due to one or more "no" responses in the qualifying section, you do not meet the qualifications to continue with this survey.

Thank you for your time and interest in participating in this survey.

Sincerely,

Lauren Barbosa, NIC
lmbarbosa864@stkate.edu

Participant Demographic Information
4. What is your age?
   a. 18-24
   b. 25-34
   c. 35-44
   d. 45-54
   e. 55+
5. What is your gender?
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. Transgender Male
   d. Transgender Female
   e. Non-binary
   f. Other - (open field)
   g. Prefer not to answer

6. What is your native (first) language?
   a. ASL
   b. English
   c. Spanish
   d. Other - (open field)

7. What is your ethnicity?
   a. Asian
   b. Black/ African American
   c. Hispanic/Latinx
   d. Native American
   e. Pacific Islander
   f. White
   g. Other - (open field)
   h. Prefer not to answer

8. Are you:
   a. Hearing
   b. Hard of Hearing
   c. Deaf
   d. Prefer not to answer

9. What is your current educational level?
   a. Associate (AA/AS)
   b. Bachelor (BA/BS)
   c. Master (MA/MS)
   d. Other - (open field)

Pre-ITP Questions
10. What was your highest educational level before starting your IEP?
    a. High school
    b. Associate (AA/AS)
    c. Bachelor (BA/BS)
    d. Master (MA/MS)
    e. Other – (open field)

11. Why did you pick this program? Please choose all that apply:
a. Advertised information: found in a publication, website information
b. Faculty: familiar with faculty, liked faculty/faculty qualifications
c. Location: close to home, in an area I liked, in an area I knew, in an area with work opportunities after completion
d. Opportunities: good work opportunities, good volunteer/internship opportunities,
e. Referral: friend/family/person encouraged me to enroll
f. Reputation: program had good reputation
g. No specific reason why I picked this program
h. Other - (open field)

12. What year did you begin your program?
   a. 2011
   b. 2012
   c. 2013
   d. 2014
   e. 2015
   f. 2016
   g. Other: (open field)

13. What was your fluency with ASL prior to starting your IEP?
   a. None: learned ASL while in IEP
   b. Very little: started learning ASL prior to IEP, 1-2 years experience
   c. Somewhat: foundational ASL, 3+ years experience
   d. Native: My first language

For the following question (#14), volunteer refers to unpaid, short-term/one-time/ongoing ASL-English interpreting. Professional refers to paid ASL-English interpreting work, typically ongoing/long-term.

14. Which option best describes your experience with ASL-English interpreting prior to starting your IEP?
   a. None
   b. Volunteer 0-2 years
   c. Volunteer 3-5 years
   d. Volunteer 6+ years
   e. Professional 0-2 years
   f. Professional 3-5 years
   g. Professional 6+ years

During ITP Questions
15. Are you a Deaf-parented individual?
   a. Yes
   b. No (skip logic to #17)
16. As many IEP students learn ASL as a second language while learning interpreting skills, did you feel your program had curriculum that could support your native linguistic experience level as a Deaf-parented individual?
   a. Yes
   b. No

For the following section (questions 17-20), volunteer refers to an informal arrangement, possibly short-term/one-time, could be either interpreting or non-interpreting within the Deaf community.

17. Did your IEP facilitate/provide volunteer opportunities for students in the local Deaf community?
   a. Yes
   b. No (skip logic to #19)
   c. I’m not sure (skip logic to #19)

18. Did you participate in any volunteer opportunities within the Deaf community facilitated by your IEP?
   a. Yes
   b. No

19. Did you seek/find and participate in your own volunteer opportunities within the Deaf community?
   a. Yes
   b. No (skip logic to #21)

20. How did you find your own volunteer opportunities within the Deaf community?
   1. Looked online
   2. Asked around to friends, family, faculty, staff, etc.
   3. Referred to connections within Deaf community
   4. Reached out to local organizations
   5. Other: open field

For the following section (questions 21-24), internship refers to a formally agreed-upon ongoing professional relationship which has documentation, a supervisor and/or mentor who provides support to the student.

21. Did your IEP provide internship opportunities for students?
   a. Yes
   b. No (skip logic to #23)
   c. I don’t know (skip logic to #23)

22. Did you participate in any internship opportunities facilitated by your IEP?
   a. Yes
   b. No
23. Did you seek your own internship opportunities within the Deaf community?
   a. Yes
   b. No (skip logic to #25)

24. How did you find your own internship opportunities within the Deaf community?
   a. Looked online
   b. Asked around to friends, faculty, staff, etc.
   c. Referred to connections within Deaf/interpreting community
   d. Reached out to local organizations

25. Did your IEP require completion of volunteer or internship hours as a condition for receiving your certificate/Associate degree?
   a. Yes, there was a requirement of internship hours
   b. Yes, there was a requirement of volunteer hours
   c. Yes, there was a requirement of both internship and volunteer hours
   d. No, there was not a requirement of either internship or volunteer hours

26. Aside from volunteer & internship opportunities, did you have interaction with the Deaf community which you felt was meaningful?
   a. Yes
   b. No (skip logic to #28)

27. Can you please elaborate on your meaningful interactions?
   a. Open field for response; if no response, please put “N/A”

28. (Likert-style rating chart below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My IEP …</th>
<th>Definitely</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Definitely</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>provided curriculum relevant to my current experiences as an ASL-English interpreter.</td>
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<td>prepared me for entry-level work as an ASL-English interpreter.</td>
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<td>prepared me for the specialization I work in most frequently (K-12, VRS, medical, legal, etc.)</td>
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<td>focused on language skills and interpreting skills separately.</td>
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<td>had up-to-date information in the curriculum.</td>
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<td>was accurate about the current realities in the interpreting field.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
was successful with their claimed learning outcomes for students.

had instructors with recent ASL-English interpreting experience.

had instructors with relevant experience to the courses they taught.

is a program I would recommend aspiring interpreters to attend.

29. If you would like to elaborate on any of the statements from #28, please type below. (#28 & #29 on the same page)
   a. Open field 250 words max response; can be left blank to proceed.

Post IEP Questions
30. Which did you complete your IEP with:
   a. Associates degree (AA/AS)
   b. Certificate

31. Did you pursue a higher educational degree after completion of your IEP?
   a. Yes
   b. No (skip logic to #34)

32. What degree did you complete OR are you in the process of completing? Please select all that apply.
   a. Associate degree (AA/AS)
   b. Bachelor’s degree
   c. Master’s degree
   d. Ph.D. / Doctoral
   e. Other: open field

33. Why did you pursue a higher educational degree? Please select all that apply:
   a. I was advised to by someone in my personal life
   b. I was advised to by someone related to my IEP
   c. It was a personal goal
   d. I had a specific career in mind that requires the degree I am in pursuit of/have pursued.
   e. I enjoy school and wanted to continue
   f. Other: open field

34. Did you pursue certification any time since completing your program?
   a. Yes
   b. No (skip logic to #38)
35. Which did you pursue? Please select all that apply.
   a. RID NIC (performance and/or knowledge)
   b. EIPA
   c. E.S.S.E.
   d. BEI
   e. CDI
   f. SC: L
   g. SC:PA
   h. Other - (open field)

36. Did you pass certification?
   a. Yes (Skip logic to #39)
   b. No, but planning to take again (Skip logic to #39)
   c. No, not planning to take again (Skip logic to #39)
   d. No, planning to take a different certification (Skip logic to #39)
   e. Not sure, recently attempted and have not received results

37. If your results are not passing, do you plan on taking certification again? (all skip logic to #39)
   a. Yes, will take the same certification
   b. Yes, will take a different certification
   c. No

38. Why have you not yet pursued certification? Please select all that apply.
   a. Did not feel ready, decided for self
   b. Was advised not to by another person
   c. Cannot afford
   d. Not interested
   e. Not required for current position
   f. Continuing education (Bachelors, Masters, etc.)
   g. Continuing experience (working, volunteering, mentorship, etc.)
   h. Other - (open field)

39. Do you currently work as an ASL interpreter (paid positions either full-time, part-time, freelance)?
   a. Yes
   b. No (skip logic to #42)

40. What type of interpreting work have you been involved in? Please select all that apply
   a. Freelance
   b. Agency Staff Interpreter
   c. Other staff interpreter (hospital, DOR, EDD, etc.)
   d. K-12 (instructional aide / interpreter / etc.)
   e. Post-secondary
   f. Designated Interpreter
   g. VRS/VRI
41. How many hours do you typically work a week as an interpreter? (all responses skip logic to #43)
   a. 1-10
   b. 11-20
   c. 21-30
   d. 31-40
   e. 40+

42. What response (if any) best match why you are not a currently-working interpreter:
   a. Continuing education, still in school
   b. Decided to pursue another career
   c. Still looking for work, plan to remain in field
   d. Worked previously as an ASL-English interpreter, but taking a break
   e. Work with the Deaf community but not as an interpreter
   f. Other – please explain (open field)

43. Upon reflection of your IEP, would you attend again if you had the chance?
   a. Yes
   b. No

44. (Likert-style rating chart below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely satisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat satisfied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat dissatisfied</th>
<th>Extremely dissatisfied</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your overall satisfaction with your ITP experience?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

45. Do you have any specific comments to leave about your IEP experience that was not covered by any of the questions above?
   a. Open field for 250-word response; no response required to proceed
   b. “Submit” button will lead participant to “End of Survey Message: Successful Completion”

End of Survey Message: Successful Completion (participants will arrive here after completion of the survey at #45):

“Thank you for your participation in this survey as your time and responses are greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact Lauren Barbosa at
Your survey responses are anonymous and no identifying information is attached or able to be discovered.

If you are interested in participating in an optional follow-up interview, please click the Google Form link below to enter your contact information. Your anonymous survey responses are no way linked to the follow-up interview if you choose to participate.

https://goo.gl/forms/xsjkUEuSah7Fd5Db2 (Appendix H for “Google Forms: Interview Interest”)

Sincerely,

Lauren Barbosa, NIC
lmbarbosa864@stkate.edu
St. Catherine University

Appendix B: Informed Consent & Video Release Form

Study Title: Graduate reflections of Interpreter Education Program experiences in Southern California

Researcher: Lauren Barbosa
You are invited to participate in a research study exploring the curricular, co-curricular, and professional experiences of Interpreter Education Program (IEP) students who graduated
between the years of 2014-2018 in the Southern California area. The study is being done by Lauren Barbosa, a Masters’ candidate at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, MN. The faculty advisor for this study is Dr. Erica Alley at St. Catherine University. The purpose of this study is to explore experiences and perspectives of graduates as they reflect on their IEPs in Southern California. This study is important because the student perspective is often absent from interpreter education research and the number of 2-year IEPs in Southern California create opportunities for a large number of people to attend every year. Approximately five people are expected to participate in the interview portion of 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 any questions you have before you agree to participate in the study.

Why have I been asked to be in this study?
You have been asked because you are above age 18, completed an IEP between 2014-2018 with a certificate or Associate degree from a community college located in either Los Angeles County, Orange County, or Riverside County, and you expressed interest at the end of the initial survey.

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 schedule an interview either in person or remotely via video, whichever is more convenient for you. In total, this study will take approximately 1 hour over one session. The video-recorded interview would last approximately 1-hour and provides an opportunity for you to talk about your curricular/co-curricular experiences, reflections, and opinions about your time in your IEP.

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, please feel free to say so and do not sign this form. If you decide to participate in this study, but change your mind during the course of the interview and want to withdraw, simply notify me and we can end the interview immediately. You may withdraw until the completion 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?
Possible risks could involve discomforts of recalling negative experiences or memories that possibly happened during the IEP or in the time after as related to the interview prompts as well as the filming of the interview.

What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study?
Individual benefits to participation are to reflect upon your experience with your IEP and connect with your current role, to assess if what you learned during your time in your program has proved to be applicable to your current work. The information compiled, while not generalizable, will give local stakeholders a glimpse into the experience of recent graduates and inform programs about student feedback between different sites in the same local area. The amount of student perspective within interpreter education research is limited, so your responses will add to
available publications in the field of sign language interpreter education.

**Will I receive any compensation for participating in this study?**
Yes, an incentive of a $20 gift card will be offered for participants in the interview portion of this study.

**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 recorded in person or via web interview, whichever you prefer. The in-person interviews will be recorded with a video-recorder. The web interviews will be conducted via Zoom while being locally recorded on the researcher’s computer through a screen record option. Prior to the recorded portion, you will be prompted to pick a pseudonym so any identifying information, other than your physical appearance, will not be recorded. The information will be transcribed and analyzed to identify themes. Your identifying information (real name, etc.) will not be connected to any data as the pseudonym chosen will be used for labeling purposes in both video and transcription. The transcripts and video recordings will be held on an external hard drive, which will be stored in a locked cabinet while not in use. The researcher and research advisor are the only people who will have access to the records while this project is in process. The data analysis will be completed by May 31st, 2019, after which all original reports and identifying information that can be linked back to you will be destroyed. Data from the anonymous surveys will be kept indefinitely as this material contains no identifying information. The video recording will only be accessible to the researcher and advisor and will not be presented to others for any purposes. The video recordings of the interview will be destroyed upon transcription of interview, at the latest by May 31st, 2019. 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. The final product from this research will be submitted for publication consideration to the Journal of Interpreting Studies and Communication Equity (JISCE), hosted by St. Catherine University. It will also be available to be shared with anyone upon request.

**Are there possible changes to the study once it gets started?**
No changes are anticipated, but if during the course of this research study it is discovered there are new findings that might influence your willingness to continue participating in the study, you will be informed 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 (909) 576-3123 or lmbarbosa864@stkate.edu. If you have any additional questions later and would like to talk to the faculty advisor, please contact Dr. Erica Alley at (650) 690-6018 (v), (612) 255-3386 (vp) or elalley@stkate.edu. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at (651) 690-7739 or jsschmitt@stkate.edu.

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, but before the completion of the interview, I may withdraw from the study by informing the researcher(s).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Participant</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Researcher</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix C: Interview Script & Interview Questions

Lauren: Hello and thank you for joining me today. I appreciate your time for this interview regarding your experiences during and since your IEP. In a few moments, we will begin the recording. You previously signed a consent form agreeing to participate in as well as being filmed for this interview. Do you have any additional questions about the forms before we begin? If you have any questions, feel free to ask at any time. Prior to beginning the recording, please pick a pseudonym which will be used as your identifier during recording and within my research publication.

( Participant will pick pseudonym.)

Lauren: Thank you. We will now begin recording.

**Begin recording**

**ITP Graduate Interview Questions**

1. Tell me about your time during your IEP.
2. What were your expectations of the program you attended prior to beginning?
3. Tell me about your internship opportunities and experiences during your IEP.
4. Tell me about your volunteer opportunities and experiences during your IEP.
5. Tell me about your Deaf community experiences during and since your IEP.
6. What has been your experience after completion of your IEP?
7. How has your IEP prepared you for your current work?
8. Can you tell me about the most successful experience you had during your IEP?
9. Can you tell me about the most challenging experience you had during your IEP?
10. What do you feel could be improved upon?
11. In what ways were you supported by instructors?
12. In what ways were you supported by peers?
13. Is there any feedback you have regarding the current state of IEPs in the Southern California area?
14. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Extension Question Options:
   1. Tell me more about…
   2. Is there anything you can tell me about …? 
   3. Can you please elaborate on that?

Upon completion of the interview:

**Lauren:** That concludes the interview questions. Thank you for your time today and if you would like a copy of the research findings, let me know and I will email that to you upon completion. If you have any questions later, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Stop recording**
Appendix D: RID/SCRID Recruitment Email

Dear RID Certified Member / RID Associate Member / SCRID Member,

My name is Lauren Barbosa and I am a Master’s student in the Interpreting Studies and Communication Equity program at St. Catherine University. I am conducting my research on the curricular and co-curricular reflections as well as professional interpreting experiences of recent 2-year Interpreter Education Program (IEP) graduates in the Southern California area. As part of my research, I created an anonymous 30 – 43 question survey which should take approximately 20 minutes of your time. Upon completion of the survey, there is an option to express interest in participating in a confidential interview scheduled at time convenient for you. The video-recorded interview would last approximately 1-hour and provides an opportunity for you to talk about your curricular/co-curricular experiences, reflections, and opinions about your time in your IEP. Participation in the interview is not required in order to participate in the survey.

You are receiving this email because your information was found on the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) public member section as an interpreter who is listed as a Certified/Associate member living in California / public member section of the Southern California chapter of Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (SCRID) and I am requesting your participation in the survey.

There are three requirements to be able to participate in the survey:

1. Graduated with an Associate (AA/AS) or certificate from an IEP in Los Angeles County, Riverside County, or Orange County
2. Graduated anytime between 2014-2018
3. Age 18 or above

If you meet the above criteria and are interested in participating, please click the link below and proceed with the survey. If you know of anyone who might be interested in the survey, I would appreciate if you could forward this email to them. Please note, it is not a requirement for participants to be currently involved in the field of interpreting.

Link to survey

This study has been approved by the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board (#1173). You may contact the IRB office with any questions at (651) 690-6204 or irb@stkate.edu. My thesis supervisor is Dr. Erica Alley who you can contact at (650) 690-6018 (v), (612) 255-3386 (vp) or elalley@stkate.edu.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your participation.

Sincerely,

Lauren Barbosa, NIC
lmbarbosa864@stkate.edu
Appendix E: Recruitment Flyer

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS WANTED

- Have you completed an ASL-English interpreting program with an Associates degree or certificate between 2014-2018?
- Was your program located in the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, or Riverside?
- Are you age 18 or above?

If so, we want to hear from you! Lauren Barbosa, a Master’s student in the Interpreting Studies and Communication Equity program at St. Catherine University, is conducting research on graduate experiences as student feedback is often not included in field research.

The 30-43 question anonymous survey should take approximately 20 minutes of your time. It is available by clicking this flyer or by using the link below:
http://stkate.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0U6dzSDCcmw86Md

At the end of the survey, you can express interest in a separate 1-hour video-recorded interview to share your unique experiences, reflections, and opinions about your program.

APPROVED BY THE IRB AT ST. CATHERINE UNIVERSITY IRB #1173

LAUREN BARBOSA LMBARBOSA864@STKATE.EDU
Dear (College Contact Person Name),

My name is Lauren Barbosa and I am a Master’s student in the Interpreting Studies and Communication Equity program at St. Catherine University. I am conducting my research on the curricular and co-curricular reflections as well as professional interpreting experiences of recent 2-year Interpreter Education Program (IEP) graduates in the Southern California area.

I am requesting for this email and attached flyer to be forwarded to any alumni you have from your Interpreter Education Program (or specific program name I have on a list) who completed with an Associate degree or certificate between the years of 2014-2018.

This study has been approved by the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board (#1173). You may contact the IRB office with any questions at (651) 690-6204 or irb@stkate.edu. My thesis supervisor is Dr. Erica Alley who you can contact at (650) 690-6018 (v), (612) 255-3386 (vp) or elalley@stkate.edu.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your participation.

Sincerely,

Lauren Barbosa, NIC
lmbarbosa864@stkate.edu

(Recruitment flyer attached)
Appendix G: Recruitment Email to Colleges Employing Interpreters In the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, and Riverside

Greetings,

My name is Lauren Barbosa and I am a Master’s student in the Interpreting Studies and Communication Equity program at St. Catherine University. I am conducting my research on the curricular and co-curricular reflections as well as professional interpreting experiences of recent 2-year Interpreter Education Program (IEP) graduates in the Southern California area.

I am requesting for this attached flyer to be forwarded to your staff ASL-English interpreters who may possibly meet the requirements for the research I am conducting.

This study has been approved by the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board (#1173). You may contact the IRB office with any questions at (651) 690-6204 or irb@stkate.edu. My thesis supervisor is Dr. Erica Alley who you can contact at (650) 690-6018 (v), (612) 255-3386 (vp) or elalley@stkate.edu.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your participation.

Sincerely,

Lauren Barbosa, NIC
Lmbarbosa864@stkate.edu

(Recruitment flyer attached)