

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF WORK VALUES AND JOB SATISFACTION  
AMONG SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

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## ABSTRACT

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### A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF WORK VALUES AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONG SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

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The aim of this study was to explore the impact of work values on job satisfaction among sign language interpreters due to an increased risk of burnout. A phenomenological approach was utilized to understand the experiences of nine participants through semi-structured interviews. Results revealed six themes: (1) Autonomy, (2) Altruism, (3) Relationships, (4) Achievement, (5) Safety-Comfort, and (6) Status. Empowerment was found to be encompassed within the themes of Altruism and Relationships. Results of this study were consistent with the Theory of Work Adjustment and Demand-Control Theory and were largely consistent with previous work values research. These results point to the importance of balancing autonomy in the workplace, achievement over time, and giving back to the community. Participants provided descriptions of the uniqueness of sign language interpreters' work lives that can be used to support greater job satisfaction for these professionals who support the deaf people they serve and empower.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

As of 2011, there were 1.2 million individuals who identify as deaf and approximately 22 million who are classified as hard of hearing (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2011). It is important to clarify at the onset of this research that deafness is often classified utilizing various categories, including the type of hearing loss, the cause of deafness, the age of onset of hearing loss, and the utilization of technology (i.e., hearing aids or cochlear implants) (Martin & Clark, 2003). While the current study does not necessarily emphasize the different categories of deafness, it may be necessary to clarify the researcher's intentions when writing the word *deaf* versus *Deaf*. When writing about individuals who are deaf, using a lowercase d indicates an inability to hear or the physiological condition of deafness (i.e., deaf), while it is appropriate to capitalize the letter D when the individual experiences an affiliation with the Deaf culture (i.e., Deaf) (Sacks, 1980).

Because sign language interpreters work between individuals who are both hearing and deaf, they serve a vital function in the lives of individuals who need to communicate on the job, in a doctor's office, or in any number of situations. Given the impact interpreters have on the lives of deaf and hearing consumers, it is important to understand interpreters' experiences of job satisfaction (Swartz, 1999). Very few studies



have examined the experience of job satisfaction of sign language interpreters. Swartz (1999) conducted one of the only studies to date directly assessing sign language interpreters' job satisfaction, while several other researchers have examined related factors, such as burnout and compassion fatigue, to which interpreters are vulnerable (Dean & Pollard, 2001; Harvey, 2001; Schwenke, Ashby, & Gnilka, 2010). Swartz (1999) examined both personal- and job-related factors of job satisfaction and found several important correlations: a high level of education was correlated with lower job satisfaction, while higher levels of autonomy significantly correlated with higher job satisfaction.

Sign language interpreters' experiences of job satisfaction can be understood through the lens of occupational stress and burnout. For example, research by Schwenke et al. (2010) highlighted the negative impact of interpersonal and emotional struggles on interpreters' job satisfaction. Harvey (2001) provided a powerful narrative that illustrates the experience of empathy, empowerment, and vicarious trauma in the work of sign language interpreters.

Karasek (1979) developed a model of control-demand to describe the impact of occupational stress on job satisfaction. This model emphasizes the need for balance between job demands and the ability to manage them. Dean and Pollard (2001) examined the role of occupational stress among sign language interpreters using demand-control theory. Based on this research, interpreters' experiences of job dissatisfaction can be understood by examining the effect of linguistic, environmental, and intrapersonal

factors. While there are very few studies illuminating the experience of interpreters' job satisfaction, previous research sets the foundation for the current research study. A clearer understanding of this experience would allow employers and fellow interpreters to support sign language interpreters in a way that is meaningful to the communities they serve.

### **Job Satisfaction in Related Fields**

Because very few studies have explored job satisfaction among sign language interpreters, the current study includes a review of research exploring spoken language interpreters' experiences of job satisfaction. Katan (2009) and Hale (2011) conducted studies on foreign language interpreters and job satisfaction and found several factors that impacted the experience of satisfaction at work, including themes of flexibility, effectiveness, helping others, and being challenged.

Also included in the current study is an exploration of research on job satisfaction among other helping professions: mental health professionals, nurses, occupational therapists, and volunteers. Reid, Johnson, Morant, Kuipers, Szmukler, Thornicroft, Bebbington, and Prosser conducted a qualitative study exploring the experience of job satisfaction and related stress factors for mental health professionals which described the importance of balancing responsibility and autonomy (1999). Research by Cunningham and Smalls (2014) found that counselors hold values of self-transcendence as well as self-enhancement and balance these differently in private practice and agency settings.

The research of Fagermoen (1997) on American nurses revealed the impact of

aligning work values and professional identities. Participants in this study highlighted upholding human dignity and receiving stimulation from their work as important to their job satisfaction. Ravari, Bazargan-Hejazi, Mirzaei, and Oshvandi (2012) studied Iranian nurses and discovered the importance of spiritual satisfaction, commitment to care, and inner harmony related to job satisfaction. In a study conducted on Australian nurses, Tuckett, Parker, Eley, and Hegney (2009) found several factors that negatively influence the experience of job satisfaction, including low levels of recognition, low salary, and poor working conditions.

Research on the job satisfaction of Australian occupational therapists conducted by Moore, Cruikshank, and Haas (2006) revealed that staff members who were satisfied with their work were less likely to change positions. These researchers concluded that pleasure and achievement in the workplace, in particular, contributed to a more positive experience of job satisfaction. Fitzpatrick, Edgar, Remmer, and Leimanis (2013) studied oncology volunteers working in Canada and elucidated several themes related to work satisfaction. These themes included personal growth and learning, experiencing challenges, and giving back to others.

### **Work Values**

Several person-environment fit theories have been established in the field of psychology to understand the experience of job satisfaction. Many of these theories emphasize the importance of compatibility between the individual and workplace on several factors, including skills, goals, and values (Lent, 2013). The Minnesota Theory

of Work Adjustment (TWA) provides a rich framework in which to understand the experience of job satisfaction (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Kristoff-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Six work values have been identified by the TWA to have a significant relationship to job satisfaction: (a) achievement, (b) comfort, (c) status, (d) altruism, (e) safety, and (f) autonomy (Rounds & Jin, 2013). While these values hold different significance for every individual, the current study will focus on these six identified work values to understand the experience of job satisfaction for sign language interpreters. Given that the role of the interpreter includes aspects of linguistic and cultural mediation as well as social advocacy (Moody, 2011), this study will also explore the emerging work value of *empowerment* in order to understand its impact on interpreters' job satisfaction. A glossary of terms is provided in Appendix A.

### **Empowerment**

Social and political changes within the Deaf community have brought increased attention to the role of power and control within the interpreting setting, with particular attention being paid to the use of empowerment by interpreters (Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996; McIntire & Sanderson, 1995). This deliberate distribution of power, or empowerment, has been defined by Mason and Ren (2012) as “providing support in order to allow individuals to use power that is naturally their own” (p. 243). Language is one way of communicating power dynamics; therefore, interpreters are consistently attempting to maintain neutrality, while balancing their visibility and invisibility, which can cause interpreters to be vulnerable to burnout and compassion fatigue (Bahadir,

2010). More information is needed regarding the use of empowerment by interpreters and its impact on job satisfaction, and the current study considered empowerment as an exploratory work value.

### **Qualitative Inquiry**

The current study has utilized qualitative inquiry, particularly phenomenological and heuristic approaches to gathering and organizing data (Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). The aim of qualitative inquiry is to understand the subjective experience of a particular group of people (Patton, 2015). The current author was not interested in analyzing causality or correlation but sought to utilize phenomenological exploration to illuminate the essence and meaning of a certain lived experience: work values and job satisfaction of sign language interpreters (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). The present study addressed the way interpreters make meaning of their work experience, particularly as it relates to the seven work values being studied in the current research. As a working interpreter and CODA (Child of Deaf Adults), I have utilized heuristic inquiry during the present study, which emphasizes the use of the researcher as a primary tool (Patton, 2015). The current study applied Giorgi's steps (1997) for qualitative inquiry, including (a) collecting data, (b) reading data, (c) breaking down data, (d) organizing the data, and (e) synthesizing data to present for discussion.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The current body of research on the experience of job satisfaction of interpreters is sparse. It is in the profession's best interest to know if its members are happy with

their work and work environments and to understand what factors contribute to satisfaction. Such feedback will better enable recruiters, trainers, and managers to address effective training of interpreters, hiring, and retention (Swartz, 1999). In order to further understand the work of sign language interpreters and their experiences of job satisfaction and ultimately to support hearing, deaf, and hard-of-hearing consumers, the current study sought to explore and describe sign language interpreters' work values and how they impact job satisfaction. Another aim of this study was to understand empowerment as a work value that may contribute to job satisfaction in a way that is similar to or different than altruism.

The current study addresses the following two research questions: First, how do sign language interpreters experience the following seven work values: (a) achievement, (b) comfort, (c) status, (d) altruism, (e) safety, (f) autonomy, and (g) empowerment? Second, how does each of these seven work values impact job satisfaction?

Given the complex nature of the interpreting profession, this study places its focus on the factors that influence individual interpreters' satisfaction with their work, particularly the values that drew them to the profession and keep them engaged. Sign language interpreters serve a vital function as providers of communication between the Deaf and hearing worlds. There is a paucity of existing research regarding interpreters and job satisfaction. Because little is known about this topic, it will be helpful to understand the experience of sign language interpreters in order to continue to support them in their work. If it is known how interpreters can be more satisfied with their jobs,

employers and fellow interpreters will be better able to prevent burnout and provide more support to individuals working within this profession. There is ample reason to believe that understanding the relationship between work values and job satisfaction would contribute to this endeavor.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Language interpretation may be one the oldest professions in the world (Katan, 2009), gaining increased visibility and prestige only as recently as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As long as humans have had a need to communicate with someone who spoke another language, there have been language assistants, translators, or interpreters. The work of interpreters began to be professionalized during the early establishment of the League of Nations (later named the United Nations) in which foreign language interpreters were increasingly utilized to communicate the needs of persons in global politics and international trade (Moody, 2011). The first professional interpreters began their work in 1919. These interpreters required specialized training, knowledge, and skills in order to perform their duties translating between various spoken languages. After the Second World War, interpreting organizations, accreditation procedures, and codes of professional conduct emerged as interpreters continued to gain professional status and pay commensurate with their work.

Early sign language interpreters consisted of friends and family members of the Deaf community, as well as educators, social workers, and religious interpreters (Moody, 2011). Pioneers of the sign language interpreting profession recognized the foundation of their work as helping people understand each other, which often meant incorporating



both linguistic and cultural information into their interpretations. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) was founded in 1964 with an emphasis on establishing a list of qualified interpreters nationwide, implementing an accreditation system, and publishing a professional code of ethics (Lane et al., 1996; Moody, 2011). Within a decade, the profession flourished and the demand for qualified sign language interpreters had increased as federal laws mandated educational and vocational services to be accessible to individuals returning from the Vietnam war as well as civilians with disabilities, which often meant providing sign language interpreting services for deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals in the realm of employment. This increased demand for interpreting services led to the development of several interpreter training programs across the nation throughout the late 20th century (Lane et al., 1996; Moody, 2011).

Moody (2001) separated the well-known and more visible conference interpreting from community interpreting by describing the shift from the higher prestige work on a global stage to the community realm, which included medical, educational, legal, and social service settings (RID, 2007a). Currently, interpreters are more likely to work in these community settings than on the stage and, more recently, interpreters have the option to work in a video relay setting in which they interpret telephone conversations between hearing and deaf/hard-of-hearing individuals via a video connection (Moody, 2011). Interpreters may be self-employed (free-lance or independent contractors) or employees of an agency, business, or school district.

The exact nature of a sign language interpreter's work may be unfamiliar to most people. Sign language interpreters work wherever there is a deaf or hard-of-hearing person who uses sign language to communicate with someone who is not able to fluently sign (RID, 2007a). Interpreters work in a variety of settings and utilize various abilities in their work, including linguistic, cognitive, and technical skills in both spoken English and American Sign Language (RID, 2007a; RID, 2007b; RID, 2010). These interpreters must possess a wide range of knowledge in order to interpret effectively in diverse environments. According to RID's (2007) *Standard Practice Paper: Professional Sign Language Interpreting*, interpreting involves complex work that requires self-monitoring in order to provide accurate interpretation, which is not a simple replacement of one word for another but a representation of concepts that include both cultural and linguistic information.

### **Demographics**

Information on the exact demographics of the interpreter workforce is limited, but what is known is that the field of sign language interpreting is made up of mostly women and individuals of European ethnic origin (Stauffer, Burch & Boone 1999; RID, 2015). RID's 2014 annual report showed that out of its 15,277 members, over 61 percent of RID's members are female. This annual report also showed that out of RID's national members, 10,044 individuals currently hold certifications through RID (i.e., Certificate of Interpretation/Certificate of Translation [CI/CT], Specialist Certificate: Legal [SL:C], and others), and 3,722 individuals hold the most recent certification, the National Interpreter

Certification (NIC). In a survey of sign language interpreters attending the Biennial Convention of RID in 1997, Stauffer et al. (1999) reported that out of 201 respondents, 35.8 percent held at least a bachelor's degree, 17.9 percent held a master's degree, and 1.5 percent held a doctorate degree. Although this statistic was not reported in 2014, it is important to note that as of July 1, 2012, in order to sit for the current RID certification exam, an applicant must possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree or an approved "alternative pathway."

### **The Work of Interpreters**

There has been very limited research related to the work values or job satisfaction of sign language interpreters. Only one research study has examined predictors of job satisfaction (Swartz, 1999), while there have been three research studies assessing burnout and other negative aspects of the job (Dean & Pollard, 2001; Harvey, 2001; Schwenke et al., 2010). Because there has been so little research on sign language interpreters, two studies examining job satisfaction for foreign language interpreters will be included (Hale, 2011; Katan, 2009), although generalizability to sign language interpreters may be limited.

### **Sign Language Interpreters and Job Satisfaction**

The most recent study conducted on the topic of sign language interpreters and job satisfaction is Swartz's thesis study from over 15 years ago (1999), which points to the scarcity of previous research on this topic. This author emphasized the importance of job satisfaction for the profession of interpreting, given the increasing necessity of

interpreting services and the “far-reaching impact that interpreters have in the lives of deaf and hearing individuals” (Swartz, 1999, p. 3). Swartz conducted an online survey among sign language interpreters within the United States, most of whom were female (81.9%) and Caucasian (92.1%), a sample that is fairly consistent with the current demographics of the profession (Stauffer et al., 1999). Swartz found an interesting correlation between education, supervision, and work satisfaction for the participants in the study. Education was shown to be a strong predictor of work satisfaction in that interpreters with higher education levels experienced lower job satisfaction. The inverse was shown to be true for autonomy. Higher levels of autonomy were shown to be correlated with higher levels of work satisfaction. Swartz noted that education and support from a supervisor appeared to have a weaker relationship to job satisfaction than autonomy, pointing to the emphasis of independence and flexibility among sign language interpreters (1999).

### **Sign Language Interpreters, Burnout, and Vicarious Trauma**

While little is known about interpreters and their experience of job satisfaction, a link can be made between interpreter burnout and job dissatisfaction. Schwenke et al. (2010) studied 117 sign language interpreters and perceived causes of burnout. Participants in this study shared affective responses to uncertainty in the field and interpersonal struggles, particularly the difficulty in simply working with a variety of people. The themes that emerged from this study showed that interpreters experience emotional exhaustion, role conflict, and depersonalization that may lead to dissatisfaction

with their career choice. While high levels of occupational stress were shown to lead to higher rates of burnout, personal accomplishment was revealed to be an important factor that kept individuals in the field despite their struggles with stressful work conditions.

Karasek founded a model of demand-control related to job strain that takes into consideration job demands and decision latitude (1979). Job demands are considered as environmental stressors that possibly exceed the capacities of the individual worker, and decision latitude was as having control and discretion in the workplace. More specifically, Karasek found that low decision latitude and heavy job demands lead to job dissatisfaction. Karasek developed a 2x2 model of types of jobs (Passive, High Strain, Low Strain, and Active). Of particular interest is the author's discussion of intellectual demands as unrelated to job satisfaction. In other words, a worker who experiences high intellectual demand is not necessarily prone to burn out if they have the ability to make decisions within their work environment.

The demand-control theory was applied to sign language interpreters by Dean and Pollard (2001) to provide a framework for understanding how interpreters deal with occupational stress. Dean and Pollard documented the factors that contribute to burnout, including occupational stress, vicarious stress, and role conflict. These authors encouraged interpreters to recognize both the demands of the work as well as the factors over which interpreters have some sort of control. The demands described by Dean and Pollard (2001) included linguistic, environmental, interpersonal, and intrapersonal factors. In recognizing that interpreters have control over their output and can increase

these controls through gaining skills and resources, they are better able to reduce the effects of burnout.

Harvey (2001) provided a narrative of the experience of sign language interpreters to weave together themes of empathy, empowerment, and vicarious trauma. Through this narrative, readers may develop an increased understanding of how interpreters are exposed to the daily oppressions that deaf individuals face and how this can have a profound impact on the emotional experience of the sign language interpreter. Examples of oppressions witnessed range from hearing individuals talking over a deaf person to witnessing a deaf individual being denied services. Harvey described burnout as a gradual process of emotional exhaustion that can leave an interpreter vulnerable to experiencing vicarious trauma in which the interpreter is traumatized by witnessing and wanting to help a person who has been traumatized. The themes that emerged from Harvey's narrative included interpreters as victims, oppressors, and bystanders. Harvey warned that altruism can lead to co-dependency in which an interpreter may work under unhealthy conditions in order to provide a service to an individual who is deaf. Interpreters may also play the role of the oppressor when making decisions for deaf consumers interpreters believe to be in the best interest of the deaf individual. This behavior can further lead to feelings of victimization for interpreters upon recognizing their oppressive behaviors. Interpreters may also play the role of bystander, which Harvey described as a numbing of empathy, which is common among human service providers and can further lead to burnout and dissatisfaction with career choice.

## **Foreign Language Interpreters and Job Satisfaction**

Very few research studies have been performed in an attempt to understand spoken language interpreters' positive experiences of job satisfaction, and care must be taken in applying results to sign language interpreters. Katan (2009) and Hale (2011) conducted important qualitative studies from which the authors were able to glean further knowledge about the experience of spoken interpreters' job satisfaction. Katan (2009) surveyed 890 foreign language interpreters (spanning 25 countries) through an online questionnaire. Katan found that job satisfaction was related to perceived control over interpreter output, work flexibility, the ability to learn new things and be challenged, and finding *le mot just*, which loosely translates to "just the right word or translation" (2009, p. 205).

Hale (2011) interviewed 94 community interpreters (spanning 25 languages) and asked them to describe their experiences of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, while performing their work. The theme of lack of recognition in the interpreting profession emerged among many of the participants as well as an emphasis on intrinsic motivation as a more salient contributor to overall job satisfaction. When asked to name reasons for being a community interpreter, the top responses included helping others, rewarding work, challenging/interesting work, and making a contribution (Hale, 2011).

These studies have revealed several work values that are important to interpreters, although the language used throughout these studies differs from the work values described by the Theory of Work Adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). For example,

Katan noted the importance of achievement in the satisfaction of interpreters in that they enjoyed finding “just the right word” (2009, p. 205). Autonomy was a consistent theme as it relates to job satisfaction as shown by Katan (2009) and Swartz (1999). Hale’s study revealed the importance of status in the form of receiving recognition from non-interpreter professionals (2011). Hale also discovered that being challenged (which could be considered the opposite of comfort) and being helpful and providing a contribution (altruism) were important factors relating to interpreters’ experiences of their work life. While important information can be gleaned from these studies on foreign language interpreters’ experiences of job satisfaction, there has yet to be a study performed exploring the importance of work values as they relate to work satisfaction among sign language interpreters.

### **Work Values and Job Satisfaction**

Several major theories exist concerning career development, choice, and adjustment. Holland’s Theory of Vocational Adjustment emphasizes the influence of personal interests on individuals’ job satisfaction (Nauta, 2013). Social Cognitive Career Theory (SSCT) focuses on the reciprocal relationship between subjective experience and individuals’ environment and emphasizes the importance of individuals’ career interest, choice, and performance on job satisfaction (Lent, 2013). While some theories focus on career choice and development, others emphasize person-environment fit. Person-environment theories consider individual factors (i.e., personality characteristics, temperament, personal goals, and career outcome expectations) and environmental



factors, including job characteristics (i.e., amount of stress, role conflict, harassment or discrimination, conflict or support with peers and supervisors, and opportunity for meaningful work). The degree to which these individual and environmental expectations align is known as person-environment fit, or adjustment (Kristoff-Brown et al., 2005; Swanson & Schneider, 2013). Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) performed a meta-analysis of quantitative studies assessing person-environment fit. This study described four unique types of fit including Person-Job, Person-Organization, Person-Group, and Person-Supervisor and emphasized that individuals weigh various aspects of their job subjectively. Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) found that individuals were satisfied with their work when their needs were fulfilled and they experienced value-congruence in the workplace.

The Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) was chosen for this investigation as a theoretical framework within which to work because of its emphasis on the importance of both individual and workplace factors (i.e., values and skills) on job satisfaction. The TWA is a model of person-environment fit which can be used to predict the relationship between work values and job satisfaction. Established by Dawis and Lofquist (1984) and consistent with Person-Job fit described by Kristoff-Brown et al. (2005), the TWA provides a model for understanding the role of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in career adjustment (Swanson & Schneider, 2013). According to the TWA, adjustment has been achieved and career choice maximized when individuals are both satisfied with their employment and the employer is satisfied with the worker,

creating a state of equilibrium within their career (Swanson & Schneider, 2013).

Dissatisfaction may lead to the adjustment of expectations or change in skills or tasks on the part of employers and the employees. Employer dissatisfaction is likely to lead to environment change (i.e., increasing tasks or skills required for the position) or employee layoffs, while dissatisfaction on the part of the employees may serve as the impetus for changes within individuals (i.e., increasing skills) or leaving the job environment.

One of the main factors that influence individuals' experiences of job satisfaction is work values. Individuals are happier with their jobs when they are engaged in meaningful work (Swanson & Schneider, 2013) and, because of the complexities within the interpreting profession, TWA provides a valuable framework to understand the relationship between interpreter values (and the profession's reinforcement of these values) on their experience of job satisfaction, with an emphasis on work values and job satisfaction. Values are defined as "beliefs and standards that guide individual action and thought and motivate individuals to act in a manner that is expressive of the self" (Rounds & Jin, 2013, p. 421). These values are known to be fairly stable across contexts and time and have been understood by the TWA model as having six core clusters of values and needs. The six core values are achievement (feeling accomplished and using one's abilities); comfort (experiencing minimal levels of stress at work); status (achieving recognition and advancement); altruism (fostering harmony and being of service to others); safety (experiencing stability, order, and predictability at work); and autonomy

(the ability to be independent and creative at work and taking responsibility for the work produced) (Rounds & Jin, 2013).

Because people spend a large portion of their life at work, job satisfaction has major implications for overall life satisfaction, physical and mental health, and well-being. Happy workers are productive workers, in both formal (job tasks) and informal (personal contributions) areas (Swanson & Schneider, 2013). Job satisfaction is defined as the generally positive emotional state resulting from appraisal of work experiences, or put simply, the degree to which people like their job or work environment. According to the TWA, job satisfaction stems from the alignment between work values of the individual and environmental reinforcers. Job dissatisfaction, therefore, is the absence of something positive or the presence of something negative (Swanson & Schneider, 2013).

### **Work Values and Job Satisfaction in Helping Professions**

Several scholars have studied the work values and experience of job satisfaction of various professions; however, there is little previous research on the work values and job satisfaction for sign language interpreters. Several helping professions (i.e., mental health professionals, nurses, occupational therapists, and volunteers) have received attention in the area of work values and job satisfaction, and a few qualitative studies emerge as exploring the qualitative experience of these individuals.

Reid et al. (1999) conducted a qualitative study on 30 mental health professionals in the United Kingdom regarding their experiences of stress and job satisfaction. Mental health professionals of various levels and specialties were asked about the meaning they

made from their work lives and expressed different experiences based on where they worked. The results of this study showed that professionals who worked on-site at mental health institutions struggled with stressors related to lack of autonomy, while both ward and community staff expressed frustrations with overwhelming responsibility for their clients' well-being. Professionals working in community locations shared that developing relationships with clients had a positive impact on job satisfaction.

Cunningham and Smalls (2014) surveyed 135 counselors working in both private practice and agency settings about the influence of values on job satisfaction. Using a person-environment fit perspective, these researchers found that counselors appeared to balance competing values of self-enhancement and self-transcendence. The same values were found to be held by counselors working in private practice and agency environments: putting forth personal effort and achieving financial success (self-enhancement) as well as benevolence and helping others (self-transcendence). It was discovered, however, that agency employees experienced more stress and were more vulnerable to burnout due to the limited ability to adjust their schedules and environmental demands.

Fagermoen (1997) explored the personal and work values of medical nurses in the United States via a mixed methods study, including 767 surveys and six in-depth interviews. Hermeneutic and content analysis revealed the importance of aligning personal and work values upon nurses' professional identities. The researcher revealed that upholding human dignity was a core value that encouraged individuals to remain engaged in their work, as well as receiving intellectual and personal stimulation.

In a qualitative study of 30 Iranian nurses, investigators revealed altruism as a value important in their work (Ravari et al., 2012). The nurses who participated in this research expressed a belief that spiritual satisfaction may be obtained by being involved in a profession that aligns with their personal values. The nurses noted that commitment to care and inner harmony in the workplace contributed greatly to their overall job satisfaction.

Tuckett et al. (2009) provided open-ended surveys to 361 Australian aged-care nurses exploring the values important to them in their work. This study spanned various sectors of the nursing profession (i.e., public, private, corporate), and the research found that overall job satisfaction was low due to four factors: low morale within the profession, poor status and recognition of the profession (intrinsic values), low salary, and poor working conditions (extrinsic values). Nurses in this study noted that they valued the support they received from their supervisors.

In the interest of studying job satisfaction among occupational therapists in Australia, a study was conducted by Moore et al. (2006) to understand therapists' experiences. The researchers found that job dissatisfaction stemmed from the perceived low status of the profession, but that staff who were satisfied with their work overall were less likely to change positions and more likely to remain in their chosen career. The participants in this study noted that they experienced pleasure in their work and felt a sense of satisfaction and achievement when providing effective clinical care. The

occupational therapists expressed particular interest in making a difference with clients by encouraging personal improvement (Moore et al., 2006).

Fitzpatrick et al. (2013) studied oncology volunteers in Canada using a mixed methods research design. Themes of personal growth and learning, experiencing challenges, and giving back to others emerged as influential to their volunteer work. The authors of this study noted that giving back had a particularly positive influence on volunteer perceptions of their work and emerged as a strong factor relating length of work and commitment to patient care.

These studies reveal important themes related to work values among various helping professions, although each value was often described using different terms. Altruism appeared to be the work value most often mentioned throughout these studies, including an emphasis on being of service to others and upholding client dignity (Fagermoen, 1997), benevolence through self-transcendence (Cunningham & Smalls, 2014), feeling harmonious and spiritually fulfilled through work (Ravari et al., 2012), making a difference (Moore et al., 2006), and giving back to others (Fitzpatrick et al., 2013). Status was another work value that appeared to have an impact on job satisfaction for nurses and occupational therapists. The studies performed by Tuckett et al. (2009) and Moore et al. (2006) revealed that a lack of recognition both within the profession (low pay) and from outside the profession (non-health care professionals) led to lower job satisfaction. Conflicting data were found regarding work values related to comfort and autonomy. Tuckett et al. (2009) found that poor working conditions led to lower job

satisfaction for nurses, while the study performed by Fitzpatrick et al. (2013) revealed that oncology volunteers enjoyed the challenge of negotiating the stress involved in their work duties. Reid et al. (1999) found that autonomy and responsibility was both rewarding and stressful. Finally, achievement was revealed to be important to counselors and occupational therapists in that they felt satisfied when they believed they were able to be effective in their working lives (Cunningham & Smalls, 2014; Moore et al., 2006).

### **Empowerment as an Emerging Work Value**

According to RID (2007), it is the sole responsibility of the interpreter to provide individuals with the opportunity to communicate freely with one another to the utmost of their ability. The RID professional code of conduct requires interpreters to uphold confidentiality, hold appropriate credentials and qualifications for the job, and to provide unbiased interpretations (RID, 2007). Bahadir (2010), however, questioned interpreters' ability to be impartial mediators given that there is no completely objective way to perceive, analyze, and process information. In order to be faithful to the intent and goals of each speaker, interpreters often mediate between languages as well as cultures and must hold multiple perspectives at once. Moody identified the interpreter in this the role as the cultural broker (2011). Because language is a powerful way for individuals to communicate power dynamics, and interpreters are consistently balancing their visibility and invisibility, the line between interpreter and advocate is often blurred (Badahir, 2010). The inherent power imbalance that exists by using an interpreter allows for the interpreter to literally speak for a person who is being oppressed.

Interpreters have unique access to both English and American Sign Language (ASL) and to both the hearing and Deaf worlds and, therefore, are capable of empowering consumers to make decisions for themselves (Mason & Ren, 2012). McIntire and Sanderson (1995) encouraged interpreters to consider where deaf consumers are in their own empowerment process, given the recent social changes in the Deaf community. Ideas regarding rights and empowerment have shifted since the Deaf President Now movement in 1988 which provided a platform for the Deaf community to voice their concerns. The Americans with Disabilities Act, passed in 1990, was one of many state and federal regulations implemented requiring linguistic access to the public world (McIntire & Sanderson, 1995).

Empowerment in the interpreting setting has been defined as “providing support in order to allow individuals to use power that is naturally their own” (Mason & Ren, 2012, p.11) and may be comprised of utilizing verbal and non-verbal strategies to allow disadvantaged individuals better access to information and power within any given situation. Examples of empowerment on the part of interpreters may include reminding deaf consumers of their rights to ask their medical provider for information about the medications being prescribed or to approach a speaker after a lengthy presentation with additional questions (Mason & Ren, 2012).

Interpreters are service providers and, as with teachers and health care professionals, they possess a certain degree of humanitarianism and altruism, which leaves them vulnerable to experiencing burnout, if they do not critically reflect upon their



role as participant observers (Bahadir, 2010). Empowerment and altruism are similar concepts, but may also be distinct. Altruism may be likened to giving a hungry person a fish, while empowerment may represent teaching someone to fish. Very few scholars have explored the topic of empowerment within the field of interpreting and its impact on burnout and job satisfaction (Bahadir, 2010; Mason & Ren, 2012).

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the way sign language interpreters experience six work values (defined by the Theory of Work Adjustment) and how these values may contribute to job satisfaction. A secondary purpose was to explore empowerment as an emerging work value that may impact job satisfaction in a way similar to or different from altruism. The current study addresses the following two research questions: First, how do sign language interpreters experience the following seven work values: (a) achievement, (b) comfort, (c) status, (d) altruism, (e) safety, (f) autonomy, and (g) empowerment? Second, how does each of these seven work values impact job satisfaction?

CHAPTER III  
METHODOLOGY

**Researcher Qualifications**

For this study, I have employed a heuristic approach to qualitative inquiry, which utilizes the researcher as the primary instrument in gathering and analyzing data (Patton, 2015). Therefore, I begin with an introduction of myself as the researcher, and as is customary in Deaf culture, I will describe myself in terms of my experience within the Deaf community. Both of my biological parents are Deaf, and I consider myself bilingual, with both American Sign Language (ASL) and English as native languages. Growing up, I was exposed to the Deaf world through my parents, my grandparents (who were professional interpreters), and my extended family members, all of whom used ASL fluently at family functions. I have worked as a professional interpreter for 13 years in a variety of settings (i.e., medical, educational, government, mental health, and video relay) and have performed various roles within the interpreting community (educator, mentor, and coordinator). I hold both state (Board of Evaluation of Interpreters [BEI] Level IV) and national (National Interpreter Certification [NIC] Master Level) certifications. I have earned an associate's degree in Sign Language Interpreting and a bachelor's degree in Psychology. My interest in a qualitative approach to research began in graduate school during a study exploring CODA's (children of deaf adults) experiences of identity as it

related to living between Deaf and hearing worlds. As a co-researcher, I have served on a Consensual Qualitative Research team exploring the experiences of faculty members with multiple minority identity statuses in teaching diversity-related courses (Aranda, 2014).

### **Researcher Biases**

The current project developed out of a personal interest and curiosity regarding the factors that motivate interpreters to feel satisfied in their professional lives despite work-related demands and stressors. My connection to the experience of sign language interpreters served as a strength and led to my credibility with participants (Patton, 2015). However, because I have been involved in prolonged engagement with the Deaf culture and the field of interpreting, I began this project with some personal biases that were explicitly outlined in order to remain open to experiences different from my own and to prevent confirming my expectations.

In my professional life, I value altruism, autonomy, and empowerment as important work values. When I feel autonomous, that I have made a difference, and I am in control of the output of my work, I have a sense of satisfaction with my choice to stay in the interpreting profession. Furthermore, I have recognized a desire to offer a sense of empowerment to the Deaf and hard-of-hearing clients with whom I work by providing them equal access to their world. Through discussions with colleagues and clients over the years, I believe that making connections with others is what drives interpreters to continue working despite job stressors. My personal work values of altruism, autonomy, and empowerment have served as my motivation to continue in this field despite

frustrations with various elements of the job itself (i.e., paperwork, justification of services, and negotiation of rates). It was my bias at the outset of this research that interpreters do not go through the physical, mental, and emotional demands of this career simply for status or comfort. It was be imperative, however, to implement triangulation techniques (Patton, 2015) (discussed later in this chapter) to reduce the impact of my personal biases.

### **Predictions**

Going into this research project, it was important not only to identify biases I hold but to also explicitly describe the expectations I had regarding the results of this study (Patton, 2015). Given my previous exposure to the phenomenon of interest via research and personal lived experience, I predicted that interpreters who value altruism and feel that their jobs provide the opportunity to be of service to others will feel more satisfied with their job. I also expected that I will find a variety of responses to personal work values, such as status and comfort, and that interpreters may view these values differently among their different work environments and over time. For example, independent contract interpreters may value autonomy more than full-time educational interpreters, while K-12 interpreters may value comfort over achievement. I believed that I would notice a work value of empowerment emerge in the context of interpreters' role as social justice advocates. I predicted that interpreters who value empowerment will experience more satisfaction in their work, although I expected that this emerging work value would be difficult for interpreters to articulate.

## **Data Collection**

### **Participants**

For this study, participants were selected via purposive sampling in which the population of interest was sign language interpreters who possess a National Interpreter Certification (NIC) with the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). Patton (2015) recommended utilizing criteria sampling in order to establish procedures that will illuminate participants' varied experiences and reveal meaningful data that represents the population of interest. Consistent with phenomenological inquiry (Moustakas, 1994), the present study sought to interview 8-12 participants who hold an NIC certification, have a genuine interest in exploring the topic of interpreter work values and job satisfaction, and who are representative of the general interpreting population in the United States.

### **Instrumentation**

#### **Pre-Screening and Interview Guide**

Before the interview process began, participants were asked to complete a pre-screening questionnaire online (Appendix B) in which they provided their preferred contact information as well as demographic information (i.e., age, gender, employment status (contract, full time), where they work (community, education [K-12, post-secondary], mental health, government, legal, video relay), their years of experience at each setting, and overall years of experience.

Individuals who were chosen to participate in the study were also given access to the interview guide (Appendix C), which included the specific questions that were to be asked during the semi-structured interview. Participants were asked to consider their response in advance in order to allow time to reflect on their experience of work satisfaction. When individuals indicated that they were interested and available for the second portion of the study, the semi-structured interview process began.

### **Semi-Structured Interview**

This study utilized a semi-structured interview (Appendix D) in order to gain a deeper understanding of job satisfaction among sign language interpreters. The semi-structured interview was an informal and interactive process in which all participants were asked the same open-ended questions to ensure that important topics are covered, while allowing participants the freedom to discuss their individual experiences. As the interviewer, I had the flexibility to obtain more in-depth information via follow-up questions. The interview questions were developed utilizing several theoretical resources, including concepts from the Minnesota Theory of Work Values which cover the six core work values of interest (achievement, comfort, status, altruism, safety, autonomy) and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) to explore facets related to both work values and job satisfaction (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). As suggested by Moustakas (1994), the participants were asked broad questions that addressed the experience of the phenomenon itself as well as the contexts and situations that affect the experience of work values and job satisfaction. The semi-structured interview defined

each of the seven work values (i.e. achievement, comfort, status, altruism, safety, autonomy, and empowerment) and asked each participant to describe their experience of each of these as they relate to job satisfaction. The following questions were prepared as follow-up inquiries in order to gain clarity: (1) Are you able to provide an example of how safety [or another value] plays out in your work? (2) What stands out to you as important about status [or another value]? (3) How did you feel about that?

### **Procedure**

Upon receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I distributed a description of the study and an invitation to participate through RID's monthly newsletter and Facebook page. The invitation began with an introduction of the researcher, an introduction to the study, and a web link to participate in the pre-screening process (Appendix B). Individuals who were interested in participating followed the link to the informed consent (Appendix E) and pre-screening questionnaire. Participants were asked to provide an electronic signature as part of the consent process and they were asked to respond within two weeks.

Consistent with phenomenological inquiry (Patton, 2015), the intention of this study was to implement maximum variability sampling, if possible, and to choose 8-12 participants with varying demographic backgrounds. Nine individuals volunteered to participate in the study, and all nine were contacted to establish a time to begin the interview. Once an interview time was set, I shared the interview guide via email with the participants in order to allow them time to consider their previous experiences and

feelings of job satisfaction related to work values. On the day of the interview, I contacted the participant via phone and began the interview process with verbal informed consent.

Once consent was verbally reviewed with the participant, the semi-structured interview began. Interviews were conducted via phone, and all interviews were audio recorded. During the interviews, I took notes in order to keep track of participant responses, emerging themes, and potential follow-up questions. I also recorded my thoughts and reactions after each interview in an attempt to identify biases and develop follow-up questions for future interviews. These follow-up questions were included in later interviews which specifically aimed to gather further examples and details from participants about their experiences of each work value.

All interviews were transcribed by the main researcher in order to provide immersion into the data, and all audio files were be transcribed and password-protected. Each participant was provided a matching pseudonym, which was kept in a separate password-protected document. The participants were informed that if they chose to discontinue the study, data from those who dropped out or did not complete the interview would not be used in data analysis, and their files and information will be deleted. All participants chose to complete the entire interview. After themes were organized, participants were provided an opportunity to review the list of themes that emerged from the data and to provide feedback. This is called a member check and provides enhancement to the quality of the study (Patton, 2015; see section below on



Triangulation). Participant feedback was included in the final data analysis. Any email correspondence with participants was immediately deleted and feedback data was coded with a pseudonym or destroyed in order to maintain confidentiality. As suggested by Patton (2015), after the first few interviews, as the researcher, I recorded my own answers so as to attempt to separate my thoughts from the participants' data.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Phenomenological Approach**

There is a need to understand sign language interpreters' experiences of job satisfaction due to the potential of burnout and the high demand for interpreters. For this research project, data analysis was guided by phenomenological principles utilizing several sources of data. The past experience of the researcher as well as existing psychological theories were utilized to understand the essence of work values and job satisfaction. By incorporating these data with semi-structured interviews among working sign language interpreters, the goal of this research was to provide a rich description of the experience of interpreters and to uncover the phenomenon of work satisfaction.

A phenomenological qualitative investigation begins with a topic and research question that has both social and personal meaning and significance (Moustakas, 1994), and this study begins with the experience of the sign language interpreter. The aim of the study was not to find a causal relationship but to reveal the essence and meaning of interpreters' experiences through a careful, methodical qualitative analysis of the

descriptions provided by participants. The current research is framed within a constructivist paradigm, which posits that the meaning of reality is created through subjective, not objective, experiences (Patton, 2015). By using a phenomenological approach, this study has sought to understand the way individuals create meaning based on their experience of reality, which further shapes their subsequent experiences (Patton, 2015). Keeping this approach central to the study, this research focused on understanding the meaning behind interpreters' past work experiences in order to understand their present experiences of work values and job satisfaction (Patton, 2015).

This study utilized a hermeneutic approach, which considers the interpretation of experiences central to understanding individuals and the groups to which they belong. That is to say that, although each person has a unique set of experiences that constitutes their reality and determines their individual behavior, it is safe to assume that commonalities can be identified in order to reveal a meaningful, shared experience (Patton, 2015). This study has also made use of heuristic inquiry, which explicitly incorporates the experience, insights, and curiosity of the researcher's experience of the phenomenon of interest (Moustakas, 1994). My experiences and biases have been present throughout the research process and, in order to ensure participants' experiences are accurately described, the data analysis was performed via a phenomenological framework by utilizing Giorgi's (1997) five steps of qualitative inquiry: (1) collecting data, (2) reading data, (3) breaking down data, (4) organizing the data, and (5) synthesizing data to present for discussion.

### **Collecting and Reading Data**

In keeping with Giorgi's (1997) steps of qualitative inquiry, I began the research process by conducting the semi-structured interviews and personally transcribing each of them. In collecting and reading the data, I utilized my previous knowledge from the literature and my personal experience as an interpreter to attempt to understand what participants were trying to convey. Throughout the interview and transcription process, I kept personal memos to keep track of emerging themes and to document my own reflections of the emerging research process.

### **Breaking Down Data**

The ultimate goal in phenomenological inquiry is to reduce data down to essential themes or universal essences, revisiting themes often throughout the study (Moustakas, 1994). This process was accomplished by identifying units of meaning and clustering important themes into meaningful units of data related to job satisfaction and work values. Interviews were first coded by hand identifying holistic and in-vivo codes directly onto the transcripts, as suggested by Saldaña (2013). Using a Word processing program, codes were further broken down into in-vivo codes, (e.g., I HAVE CONTROL, CHOOSE ASSIGNMENTS, SPLIT-SECOND DECISIONS), with the intention of emphasizing verbatim participant responses that stood out to the researcher. Holistic coding was also used to attempt to grasp basic themes that emerged in the data by grouping them with other similar theme (e.g., DECISION-MAKING). At first, every statement was treated as an equal meaning unit in which all comments were covered and

summarized before organizing and synthesizing the data into larger themes (Moustakas, 1994). Throughout this process, a cross-coder was utilized to simultaneously code several of the interviews in order to increase validity (Patton, 2015).

### **Organizing and Synthesizing Data**

The pieces of data previously broken down were categorized into themes, which are used to develop descriptions of the essence of work values and job satisfaction among sign language interpreters (Giorgi, 1997). As codes emerged, they were combined across interviews and coded into larger chunks relevant to the fields of interpreting and psychology. For example, themes of altruism and selflessness were expected to emerge across interviews, as well as various responses to work conditions related to comfort and status. These themes were coded in terms of the seven work value categories. Other data emerged that did not fit into these pre-established themes and other themes were needed created to encompass these data. Saturation was reached during the ninth and final interview when no new data or themes, all data was able to be categorized, and all key concepts were defined (Patton, 2015). The main themes discovered throughout the data collection process were then be organized in a way that allows the reader to understand the essence of the experience of sign language interpreters and job satisfaction. For this study, a presentation of themes and codes has been provided as well as corresponding verbatim quotes to highlight the themes.

### **Triangulation**

Triangulation is a process utilized in qualitative research to enhance credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis by utilizing multiple sources of analysis (Patton, 2015). Four sources of triangulation were utilized in the present study in order to verify themes that emerged within the data and to enhance the quality of the study. The first form of triangulation is source triangulation, which involves the use of multiple interviewees in order to provide a variety of data from which to work.

A second form of triangulation that was utilized is analyst triangulation, or the use of multiple analysts. The current study utilized a cross-coder in order to achieve confirmability, or an agreement of the meaning and relevance of data among two independent people. The cross-coder was a graduate student in the Counseling Psychology program who has taken a qualitative research methods course and who was given foundational knowledge of the nature and purpose of the present research. Without discussing established codes with the main researcher and without foundational knowledge of Deaf culture and interpreting (in order to prevent cross-coder biases), the cross-coder applied codes to five of the interviews. She utilized the chunking and splitting process of coding as described earlier in which codes and themes were clustered into meaningful units and revisited often throughout the analysis process to ensure all participant comments were synthesized (Moustakas, 1994). Thematic findings were collected in a code chart, and verbatim examples that support each theme are included in the results chapter.

The member check is a third form of triangulation that was used, in which participants were invited to respond to the themes discovered through the analysis process. The credibility of data analysis is strengthened by seeking reactions from participants, as they have had the opportunity to provide feedback about their own experience of the interview and to respond to overall themes (Moustakas, 1994). Three participants responded to the feedback request, and each provided confirmation that the themes did in fact incorporate their experiences. No new data emerged from the member check process, therefore no new codes or themes were included in the final analysis.

Fourth, triangulation occurred at the heuristic level, where I, as the researcher, have been used as a form of triangulation. Throughout the project, I sought to find disconfirming evidence of my personal expectations that interpreters would value altruism and empowerment over status and comfort. After each interview, I processed my personal reactions in a journal and discussed these reactions, interpretations, and themes with my thesis advisor. After three interviews were successfully conducted, I recorded my own answers to the interview questions so as to attempt to separate my thoughts from the participants' data. While my experience could serve as a valuable instrument in data collection, it could also complicate the interpretation of data. To prevent my subjective bias from skewing data analysis, personal memos were kept throughout the process to help separate my biases from themes that emerge in the research process. An audit trail was kept by creating analytic memos, which documented emerging themes and sub-categories (Moustakas, 1994). When a dominant theme

emerged, I reviewed participant narratives for disconfirming evidence and varying experiences as they relate to overall themes being developed. For example, I considered the possibility that one participant might express that receiving recognition is relevant to their job satisfaction and that it would be vital for me to seek data (within this particular interview or another) that may contradict this participants' experience. This recursive process of cycling through the coding of transcripts multiple times is characteristic of qualitative analysis (Patton, 2015).

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### **Participant Information**

The final analysis includes data from nine participants. All individuals who volunteered for the study were interviewed and included in the study. Table 1 presents demographic information regarding the nine participants. To summarize, eight participants identified as female, and one identified as male, and their ages ranged from 25 to 57. Six participants identified as White/Caucasian, one as White/Hispanic, and two identified as having mixed ethnicity (Irish/Hawaiian and Trinidadian/Scottish). Two participants had both deaf parents and deaf family members, while one had only a deaf family member (husband), and six participants had neither deaf parents nor deaf family members.

Years of work as a sign language interpreter ranged from 7 to 33. Five participants identified as freelance interpreters, and four work as full time interpreters. All of the participants had interpreting experience in community and post-secondary educational settings, and all but one participant had experience working in a K-12 educational setting. The least common settings were VRS (Video Relay Service) and VRI (Video Remote Interpreting) with only half of the participants having experience in each of these. Six of the nine participants held certifications other than the National



Interpreter Certification (NIC) required for participation in the current study, including CI/CT (Certificate of Interpreting and Translation), EIPA (Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment), and SC:L (Specialist Certificate: Legal).

Table 1

*Participant Demographic Information*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Deaf Family</b>	<b>Deaf Parents</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Current Setting(s)</b>
<b>Maria</b>	40	Female	White	No	No	9	Freelance	Community, College
<b>Elizabeth</b>	37	Female	White	Yes	No	16	Freelance	VRS, College
<b>Wanda</b>	57	Female	White/ Hispanic	No	No	33	Freelance	Community, Legal
<b>Lucy</b>	29	Female	Irish/ Hawaiian	No	No	7	Full Time	K-12
<b>Cathy</b>	44	Female	White	No	No	23	Full Time	Community
<b>Layla</b>	29	Female	White	No	No	7	Full Time	Community
<b>Mark</b>	33	Male	White	Yes	Yes	10	Full Time	VRS, VRI, Community
<b>Teresa</b>	48	Female	Trinidadian/ Scottish	Yes	Yes	20	Freelance	Community, Legal
<b>Heather</b>	28	Female	White	No	No	10	Freelance	Community

Note: VRS (Video Relay Service), VRI (Video Remote Interpreting).

**Impact of Values on Job Satisfaction**

Participants were asked to choose the top two or three values that impacted their job satisfaction. Eight of the nine participants in this study chose autonomy as one of the most salient values. Empowerment was chosen by seven participants, followed by Altruism, Status, and Achievement. Status was the only value that was not chosen to be related to job satisfaction (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Salient Values by Participant Ranking*

<b>Work Values</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
Autonomy	8
Empowerment	7
Altruism	5
Achievement	4
Comfort	3
Safety	3
Status	0

Note: Quantitative summary of salient values.

**Analysis of Results**

During telephone interviews, participants provided verbal comments regarding a range of experiences with various work values and with various factors affecting job satisfaction. Participant responses were combined to create a visual word cloud (using Wordle) in which the most common words appeared in bigger font while less frequent words appeared smaller. The researcher initially utilized these word clouds to gather a broad idea of which words were used most often while understanding that larger words do not necessarily imply salience or importance. Examples of words that stood out were COMMUNITY, TEAM, and PEOPLE. See Appendix F for samples.

Data were analyzed using Giorgi's phenomenological approach to qualitative research (1997). The aim was not to fit data into the existing Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) but to illuminate the impact of work values on job satisfaction in the lived experiences of each participant. A secondary goal was to explore whether empowerment would emerge as a separate work value. In accordance with the phenomenological approach to qualitative studies, the researcher sought to describe how participants understand their past experiences and create meaningful work lives (Patton, 2015). After reading each transcript carefully, all meaning units were categorized into one of the seven initial work value codes (the six TWA values and empowerment). The researcher used in vivo coding, searching for meaningful language and experiences. Although the original interview questions were structured based on the values outlined by the TWA, many participants also described salient experiences related to emotions and social connections. After reviewing final codes, the theme of Relationships emerged as separate from the initial TWA work values, and TWA themes were combined to reflect overlapping elements. The final six themes that were developed to represent the broader concepts represented in the interviews were: (1) Autonomy, (2) Altruism, (3) Relationships, (4) Achievement, (5) Comfort-Safety, and (6) Status. Table 3 provides a list of themes and subthemes found in the data.

The first theme includes ideas about the presence and absence of Autonomy and describes decision-making and personal control, independence, creativity, and taking responsibility. Theme two describes Altruism in terms of serving the deaf and interpreting communities

and fostering harmony between deaf and hearing clients. Empowerment was found to be an extension of altruism, with an emphasis on awareness of power dynamics when serving others. The theme of Relationships emerged as separate from the initial work values. This theme includes positive and negative aspects of relationships with peers, agencies, deaf and hearing clients, and involvement in other roles (i.e., interpreter training instructors, ministry-related work, and family roles). The fourth theme describes participants' experiences with Achievement, including using one's abilities, development over time, and elements of recognition and reputation. Theme five combines overlapping aspects of Comfort and Safety including variety, stability, and predictability. Stress and coping factors were described, which included accounts of various types of stress encountered by interpreters as well as coping strategies used. The sixth theme focuses on Status factors related to compensation, demographic and social status, and personality. Each code and theme was endorsed by at least two participants.

Table 3

*List of Themes and Subthemes*

<b>Theme 1</b>	<b>Autonomy</b>
	1.1 Decision Making and Personal Control
	1.2 Independence
	1.3 Creativity
	1.4 Taking Responsibility
<b>Theme 2</b>	<b>Altruism</b>
	2.1 Fostering Harmony
	2.2 Serving the Deaf Community
	2.3 Empowering Deaf Clients
	2.4 Serving Other Interpreters

<b>Theme 3</b>	<b>Relationships</b>
	3.1 Relationships Within the Interpreting Community
	3.2 Being Empowered by Peers and Supervisors
	3.3 Relationships with Clients
	3.4 Other Roles and Relationships
<b>Theme 4</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
	4.1 Using One’s Abilities
	4.2 Development Over Time
	4.3 Recognition and Reputation
	4.4 Interpreting as a Calling
<b>Theme 5</b>	<b>Comfort-Safety</b>
	5.1 Variety
	5.2 Stability and Predictability
	5.3 Stress and Coping
<b>Theme 6</b>	<b>Status</b>
	6.1 Compensation
	6.2 Demographic Factors and Social Status
	6.3 Personality Factors

### **Theme 1: Autonomy**

This theme reflects participants’ experiences with decision-making and personal control, independence, creativity, and taking responsibility for the work product. These interpreters described implications of working within environments that allow autonomous decision-making and those that do not encourage independence. They shared experiences of utilizing creativity at work and opportunities to take responsibility for making mistakes.

#### **1.1 Decision-Making and Personal Control**

Six participants discussed decision-making aspects of interpreting. Heather stated, “We make hundreds of decisions every day.” Layla both shared ideas about the value of being able to make personal and professional decisions:

Interpreting, it's a field where we have to make decisions, almost split-second decisions that are not easy, so we just have to make the best decision and the best judgement call we can with our professional guidelines that the CPC gives us.

Several participants talked about specific decisions, such as choosing which assignments to take, which settings in which to work, and with which clients they prefer to work. Heather shared that as a freelance interpreter, "I can make my own schedule, and I can pick and choose what assignments work for me, maybe what clients I prefer to work with." Wanda expressed a similar sentiment and added that unlike a university or VRS setting, in freelance work, "I like that fact that I have more control over a variety of aspects of my interpreting work." She continued, "I think those are some of the things I enjoy about being freelance, is I get to make decisions. I call the shots." Elizabeth emphasized that she is able to take a month off work if she wanted to. Mark added that interpreters are able to not only build their schedule based on their personal availability but also based on interest, sharing that he would take a sports assignment over a medical assignment if the choice were available. Maria added, even within the VRS environment, there is some choice over which shifts worked and therefore what types of calls are received. For example, daytime shifts may dictate more structured business-type calls while evening shifts may include more informal call scenarios. Elizabeth noted that even within the post-secondary environment which dictates a weekly schedule, it is still "semi-permanent" in that it will change the next semester. She also shared, "If I'm getting burned out in VRS and want to do something else, I can."

Four participants discussed experiencing a lack of autonomy and personal-control in certain situations. For example, Wanda described “not having the autonomy I felt like I needed” at the school district. Heather added that working in the educational system often means working within the same schedule for an entire semester, including working with the same students and staff. Wanda noted that there is a lack of flexibility and autonomy within the VRS environment as well. Teresa spoke to the lack of control over referral agencies and RID (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf), the national interpreting agency. She stated, “Quite frankly, I have to feed my kids” and noted that she felt she cannot afford to disagree with their policies because of this. She added, “So it kind of takes the human side out of it, which is what we do.” Speaking of RID owning her certifications, Teresa stated, “That’s not fair. That’s not right. I earned it. I did the work. You don’t own my work.” Both Teresa and Heather described dissatisfaction with blanket statements that do not apply to all situations (i.e., some agencies requiring a CDI [certified deaf interpreter] in all court cases). Heather emphasized that these generalized statement can “squash” professional decision-making and lead to decreased satisfaction.

## **1.2 Independence**

Seven interpreters spoke about experiencing independence in their work. Teresa shared, “I like working for me.” Lucy noted, “I’m in charge of myself.” Wanda stated, “As a freelance interpreter, there’s an incredible degree of autonomy because you go to an assignment and you alone are responsible for the outcome of the interpreting product.”

Layla added that autonomy means making responsible decisions and “how you present yourself when no one’s watching.”

Several participants commented on being both independent and part of a team. Lucy shared that she valued being “independent but you’re still part of the educational team, and I like that balance.” Lucy also shared that her supervisor works at a different location, “which is awesome because then I don’t have someone looking over my shoulder all day.” Cathy echoed Lucy’s sentiment, stating that she doesn’t have “anybody else just watching over me. That trust is there. And that’s kind of neat to me.” Cathy and Lucy spoke about micromanagement. Cathy noted that her boss “allows me to be independent, and I love that.” Teresa shared that even as a team member, “I’m still independent when I’m on my own.” She added a comment regarding giving and accepting feedback, “I’m responsible to them as team members, but when I stand up and when I make decisions as to whether I’m going to accept a feed or give a feed, what I need or don’t want, I’m on my own.”

Mark and Maria mentioned that they like working alone. Maria noted, “I do like to make my own choices and do what I feel is best, but I don’t necessarily need to always be independent.” Layla, however, mirrored other participants’ comments by sharing, “I think that because I can do that independently, I do feel satisfied because I know that I can sleep at the end of the day because I’ve done a good job.”



### **1.3 Creativity**

Six interpreters described creativity in creating an effective interpreting product. Mark shared that he enjoys “figuring things out on your own” and that it “makes me feel like a stronger person than yesterday.” Teresa noted, “Our job requires us to think outside the box in terms of interpretation and in terms of learning your business.”

Wanda and Lucy described the ways creativity comes into play within various interpreting settings. Wanda shared that after assessing the linguistic needs of the client in the courtroom, “You have to get pretty creative in terms of making sure the deaf person understands everything and making sure the judge understands everything.” Lucy described creativity in the school setting in having the opportunity to design “the reading program that helped a younger student I worked with break into reading.” She described recognizing the student’s “withdrawal and the looking around at all the classmates and seeing everyone reading and seeing that they weren’t being a part of that and realizing that it was beginning to have a negative impact.” Lucy also spoke to her interpreter training program, sharing “I haven’t been taught to think inside the box so I’m really able to try something new.” She added, “I like that, that we’re able to try new things, figure out visual ways of teaching and representing different concepts that we’re leaning,” and, “They don’t always work. And when things don’t work, you have to figure out other ways to do it. I like that challenge.”

For four interpreters, creativity included collaborating on an interpreting product. Lucy stated, “I like to be able to talk to people at the school and work together to solve

problems.” Wanda shared that she liked working with students and peers, noting, “I think having that opportunity to work collaboratively would also contribute to my satisfaction when I was at the university.” Cathy spoke about working with other interpreters in a religious setting noting that they enjoy “digging into the scripture together and seeing how beautiful we can make it in ASL and how we can get deaf to understand the Word better.” Maria stated that she liked working with interpreting teams to make a “collective work product.” Heather added, “Interpreting is like playing the piano. You can practice and practice but when it comes time to perform, every performance may look a little bit different.”

#### **1.4 Taking Responsibility**

Five participants shared the value of taking responsibility for the work they produce. Heather noted that interpreting requires working within the appropriate ethical and professional boundaries. Cathy shared,

Ultimately, at the end of the day, our decisions are our own, how we handle them are our own, whether positive or negative. We have to be able to say, that was the best I could do at that time.

Layla shared her belief in the responsibility to others, including clients, other interpreters, and the agency for which she works. She stated that she will often “call myself out” in terms of disclosing a complex ethical scenario to her supervisor. She disclosed, “I can’t make decision at work that may have my moral compass spinning out of control every day, so I have to take responsibility for the decisions I make and the

work that I do.” Teresa emphasized the value of knowing whether one has the qualifications for a particular job, stating “I’m on my own so I need to be a good enough, well rounded interpreter to be honest.” She gave the example of attending an assignment with social media terminology and noted, “I also have to admit when I can’t do the job.” She described important skills required such as accepting feedback and communicating clearly with teammates.

Elizabeth described the importance of balancing autonomy and accountability, noting the famous phrase, “with great power comes great responsibility.” She emphasized that interpreters have a responsibility to understand the amount of autonomy and influence they have. She added,

We can’t forget as interpreters that we are sometimes there for just a snapshot of this other person’s life, and even though we do it every day and it’s kind of our thing, we’re all the time interpreting and deaf people are all the time having interpreters, their experiences are not always positive. We can’t take shortcuts especially when it’s something that somebody else feels is very very important.

### **Summary of Theme 1: Autonomy**

Each of the participants discussed aspects of autonomy in their interpreting work and how each impacted their experiences at work. Overall, participants described the salience of autonomy, including aspects of independence, creativity, and taking responsibility, to their feeling satisfied with their workplace. Interpreters in this sample expressed the importance of being trusted and allowed to make professional decisions by

their employer and noted that this was the most important factor impacting job satisfaction.

## **Theme 2: Altruism**

This theme encompasses serving community members and fostering harmony among the deaf, hearing, and interpreting communities. Several participants discussed serving others, both deaf and hearing, and providing support for their peers. Many shared their experiences of empowering clients, allowing them to use power that is naturally their own, with both positive and negative implications. They also described empowering newer interpreters to be successful in order to elevate the field of interpreting and to provide better services for clients.

### **2.1 Fostering Harmony**

Eight participants shared ideas about fostering harmony among deaf and hearing clients. Lucy shared, “I think interpreting in general is all about fostering harmony” and working to “encourage that dialogue” between deaf and hearing clients. Mark provided an example of this dialogue in emphasizing the importance of deaf clients having access to informal communication. “That’s what we do,” Teresa shared, “This is a profession where people think that we’re taking care of others. They’re just living their lives.” She added, “You’re a service provider, and the service is, ‘Did you understand him?’ Yep. ‘Did you understand him?’ Yep. Cool.” Lucy shared, “the fact that I can provide this person with the information the way that they want it, I just feel like so satisfied in my work there, being able to provide this person with the harmony in her workplace.” Lucy

noted that often hearing teachers and students are simply unfamiliar with the process of working with an interpreter and added that it can be helpful to be “silently encouraging and asking leading questions to draw in the deaf student and the hearing student. And all of a sudden they’re having conversations on their own and all of a sudden they start waving in the hallway.” Maria shared, “I think the most satisfying thing for me has to do with working with people and contributing to an environment of equality.” She also added that she values “seeing the signing community gaining equal access to education or job potential or any of the things we get to experience.”

Cathy mentioned that it is “not always easy to keep harmony” among deaf and hearing clients and that the interpreter’s role often depends on the dynamics between the clients. She shared that her job is “making sure the doctor-patient relationship is working.” When there is cultural or linguistic conflict, interpreters need to use their professional judgement, and Wanda described the importance of mediating these conflicts appropriately. Mark noted the value of clearly explaining the role of the interpreter. He further shared, “Having the knowledge and experience to really share about the profession is really gratifying to me.” Maria added, “Just being the conduit which people can have their experiences is really rewarding.” Lucy shared similar thoughts, noting “It definitely does make your day brighter when you see that you’ve had this positive impact.” Layla stated frustrations about systemic inequalities that impact relationships between clients. “Where’s the missing link?” she asked. She expressed feeling frustration both in witnessing disempowerment and when “both clients, hearing

and deaf, try to lean on us as interpreters.” Layla shared that ultimately “I am trying to help them empower themselves.”

Another form of fostering harmony, as described by four participants, is creating empowered interactions between deaf and hearing clients and community members.

Layla described the intentional choice to empower both deaf and hearing clients “to as much of their abilities as possible.” She shared various ways in which clients can be empowered, such as providing clear and accurate information and calling out unethical behaviors of hearing professionals (e.g., doctors, attorneys and other interpreters).

Heather described the value in encouraging clients to “put in their own work” and emphasized that when she is an effective interpreter, “these people can go on with their own lives. They can do their own thing. They can live out their dreams.”

Lucy described fostering harmony and empowering deaf students by exposing them to a variety of intern interpreters, also giving opportunities for new interpreters to receive feedback from clients. Lucy shared, “They’re able to see what kind of interpreters they like, what kind of interpreters they don’t like.” She added, “And it’s only going to make them a stronger client in the end. They’ll be able to advocate for themselves, like ‘this interpreter may be good but they just don’t work for me.’” Maria shared an experience of creating awareness of deaf culture with a newspaper journalist who asked her to speak on a local theater event that was being provided in ASL. She emphasized, “I didn’t feel it was my place to give the interview.” After referring them to a local deaf community member, Maria shared, “It was really awesome to see everything

work out for that person to feel that they were heard and they had something of value to contribute.” She added that the newspaper staff’s “eyes were really opened” and, “I think all of that would have been squashed if I had done the interview myself.”

Heather shared the responses of benevolent hearing individuals to the existence and intricacies of Deaf culture. She described “old attitudes and old ideas,” like, “That’s so wonderful. That’s so cool. I always wanted to learn sign language. But there’s also this hint of, you must be such a saint because you’re doing this.” Heather expressed, “I try not to encourage that mentality because it’s limiting” and

I don’t see what I do as, like, helping those poor deaf people. I don’t—that’s not how I see what I do. I know that’s a lot of, especially hearing people who are not familiar with this deaf culture or deaf people in general and haven’t been exposed to all the really intelligent, amazing deaf people that I’ve encountered in my life.

## **2.2 Serving the Deaf Community**

Seven participants described the impact of serving the Deaf community on job satisfaction. Mark described his own sense of identity as being a relevant factor in his own experience of altruism. Mark, who identifies as a CODA (Child of Deaf Adults) and a “servant,” shared, “I feel like I was given so much as a child. It’s been a rich experience that I want to turn around and give back to the community that raised me.” Layla shared that she felt she had the “privilege” of working with Deaf clientele on a highly professional level. She described feeling proud of her ability to flexibly serve these

clients based on their linguistic needs and preferences (i.e., working with English idioms or highly specialized medical or legal terminology).

Other interpreters noted the importance of serving the community by providing equal access to a variety of deaf clients. Wanda emphasized that interpreters “empower deaf people to be able to do what we do without an interpreter” and allowing them to make an “educated choice.” Heather stated, “Me doing a good job means they get to accomplish the thing they wanted to do, so them being deaf or having a different primary language than other people is not a hindrance to getting access to those things.” Heather shared,

I’m not taking credit for their hard work at all, but I feel like whatever small part I played in providing that service to them so that they could do their thing, I feel like that is my way of contributing, by being in support of the deaf community and fostering harmony.

Lucy spoke to altruism as acts of encouraging harmony within clients’ intrapersonal lives, particularly in the lives of her young deaf clients. She shared, “I watch the students I work with have strong academic foundations so they can go out into the world and do whatever they want.

Three interpreters described providing pro-bono services as an act of service to the community. Wanda, Elizabeth, and Maria provided examples of interpreting for weddings and funerals for free as a way to give back to the community in a case where family members are unable to afford interpreting services. “We can be limited in what



we are able to do or what is appropriate to do, say pro bono work, or real advocacy,” Maria noted, adding, “I’ve found it hard to be truly of service without taking away money from a working interpreter or taking away independence from a client or their ability to advocate for themselves.”

### **2.3 Empowering Deaf Clients**

Serving the Deaf community sometimes included values beyond altruism. Empowerment was discussed by all participants as a value important in their work as interpreters, a value defined by supporting marginalized individuals in using power that is inherently their own. Elizabeth emphasized the importance of recognizing that “interpreters do have a lot of control over a lot of aspects of the interpreting.” She shared the value of using that control to empower others, stating,

I think it’s just important to realize that we do have that decision latitude and that it is important that we maintain decisions that affect us but not necessarily affect the interpreting. When it all comes down to it, it’s not our information. It’s not our words, our signs, being expressed, and it’s up to the people involved to be responsible for that communication.

Mark shared that empowering deaf clients includes all the little things,

All of the stuff that goes on before and after meetings, the little jokes or the little comments about the weekend before, I feel empowers them in that moment the most throughout the day. I mean, they’re really able to interact, get a sense of what’s going on around them.

Three participants spoke directly to what empowerment is not. Wanda stated, “I’m not there to quote help the deaf person.” Elizabeth gave another example, “It shouldn’t be, and it’s not the interpreter’s responsibility to make them more clear than they are.” She elaborated on this thought, “But it’s not their place for the interpreter to be making decisions for either party that perpetuates this disempowerment cycle.”

Four participants emphasized the need to consider the historical implications of working with deaf clients. Mark spoke in terms of “providing access to communication, which they haven’t had for quite a long time,” explaining that the job of the interpreter is “empowering them to have a voice, so if someone would say something that bothers them or they are offended by, they have a chance to speak up.” Wanda spoke to working with a variety of linguistic and cognitive abilities. She shared, “I empower deaf people to take control of their lives and have independence and control in terms of access to information.” Considering her role as an ally, Cathy described her internal process. She shared that she often struggles with maintaining healthy boundaries and will remind herself, “A lot of times I say to myself, empower them. Give that power to them. Let them be who they are and let them have the right to succeed and the right to fail.” Elizabeth shared considerations of the implications of hearing privilege, stating, “How I’m interpreting is reflecting on this deaf person or this hearing person, mostly with the deaf person, whether we want to or not.”

Five participants provided personal examples of empowering individuals who are deaf by being of service to them. Heather emphasized the importance of recognizing

power dynamics and giving clients “the benefit of the doubt and assume they can.” She described the process of assessing the needs and abilities of the client and providing referral information if necessary, emphasizing that interpreters should not “take away their choice.” She provided specific examples within the medical environment, noting that when medical staff default to speaking to the interpreter instead of their deaf patient, the interpreter can include these comments in the interpretation and empower the client to speak up for themselves. In the workplace, Mark emphasized that interpreters support empowerment by providing access to interpersonal interactions at work including jokes, side conversations, and social cues.

Lucy and Cathy spoke about providing empowerment as an interpreter working in the school system. Lucy gave examples of how interpreters can scaffold support in a way that is age- and developmentally-appropriate. She stated, “Usually it starts really small” and noted that this can begin with allowing elementary students to carry their own hearing aids from class to class or encouraging them to speak up when their batteries need to be replaced. She reflected that this is “something really small but helps them feel, I’m in charge of this. This is mine.” Another example Lucy provided was allowing high school students to be responsible for their own work, “even though you have an adult that follows you all day, and the adult definitely knows what homework you have.” Cathy discussed seeing the impact of empowerment in the educational system. She shared that it is difficult for students to advocate for their own needs given their status as minors in society. She stated, “It’s especially important for any child that has needs. It’s

hard to convince them that it's okay to stand up for themselves and to voice what they need." Cathy further added, "You empower them with that knowledge and then they are able to be happy and do the sorts of things that they want to do."

Elizabeth reflected on working in VRS and with phone trees in particular. She stated that it is often easiest to give the power to the interpreter to find a "live representative" in a list of options. She shared that this can be the preferred option for both the deaf client and the interpreter but cautions "if they're always counting on the interpreter to make that decision for them," the disempowerment cycle is perpetuated. Elizabeth emphasized the difficulty of making that decision in the moment, noting that it can be a decision based on convenience. Finally, Elizabeth added,

In the short term, that may put a band aid on the issue, but in the long term, it's not going to create an overall sense of empowerment among this marginalized group, and they are not going to be able to level the playing field for themselves if they are kind of being held back by interpreters who continually do things for them, even the small things.

Mark summarized the thoughts of several of his peers, sharing,

It feels like that's the whole reason I'm doing this job is to serve my community by empowering them to communicate, to have their voice, to agree, disagree, and to be able to have—to be included. So inclusion is the end game.

## 2.4 Serving Other Interpreters

Five participants spoke to the value of serving and supporting other interpreters and helping to further the profession. Wanda expressed satisfaction in terms of working as a mentor and seeing the progress and success of her interpreter mentees. She shared, “I derive a great amount of satisfaction from being able to provide that scaffolding, that structure, that positive experience for new interpreters.” Lucy expressed appreciation for her own mentoring experience, noting, “I had mentors who really made an impact on me, and I only want to do the same, help the incoming interpreters have a good leg up so that they can make an impact on our field as well.” Maria shared her experience being an instructor at the local interpreter training program and spoke to encouraging new interpreters to focus on supporting each other as well as members of the deaf community. She stated,

I really work with my students about not looking at our jobs as competition against other interpreters, but one profession that is all doing the same thing. So, the more that we support each other, the better profession we will be, and the better we will be able to serve the deaf community. So as a teacher, that’s a huge part for me.

Teresa noted the importance of passing on her knowledge to a new generation of interpreters and emphasized the importance of real-life mentorship above and beyond an interpreter training program. She stated, “The job we have is to give, and I want to retire. And if I don’t give, there’s no one else to do it later, right?” She added that interpreters

can help improve the profession by participating in research about the process of interpreting. Teresa also shared, “I really, really, really like the fact that young folks like you are doing this kind of research on the work that we do because I think the information that can come from that is absolutely amazing.” Elizabeth added that mentoring and participating on interpreting panels at training programs are other ways to provide support for the profession, noting,

So, when I have the opportunity to participate in things that help promote the field of interpreting and help guide people who might be interested in learning more about the field or just breaking into the field, I try to make time to do that.

Two participants described going beyond service to the interpreting community and providing empowerment to other interpreters. Teresa reflected on being of service to her peers and incoming interpreters, “The way we empower anybody is to give of ourselves.” She described sharing work with other interpreters, allowing interns to observe her work, providing honest and constructive feedback, and allowing new interpreters an opportunity to lead. Both Cathy and Teresa spoke to the cyclical nature of empowerment in the interpreting community. Cathy stated that when she is empowered by others, “I use that same method when I’m training or teaching.” She added, “I empower them. You know, I teach them and then I say, now you do it.” Teresa shared, “I have to give everything that I know that I’ve learned, that was passed to me by people, and as a person I owe you that. That empowers me.”

## **Summary of Theme 2: Altruism**

Each participant spoke to altruism in a variety of ways. Some described providing service to the deaf community and other interpreters, and other participants shared the meaning of fostering harmony among the hearing and deaf communities.

Elizabeth shared that altruism,

...is an inherent trait of being an interpreter. I don't know anyone who is a successful interpreter who just can't convey these characteristics because you kind of have to, as an interpreter, to be successful anyway, you have to show you care.

Empowerment was also discussed as an extension of being of service by several participants. Wanda noted, "Empowerment is really important to me and is a large part of my job satisfaction." Lucy shared her worldview related to altruism as an interpreter, stating, "You can't save the world but you can make this little square a little better, people a little more understanding that we're all people."

## **Theme 3: Relationships**

A new theme emerged from the data apart from the original six TWA work values. This theme revolves around building connections and relationships with others and includes various roles within and outside of the interpreting community with clients, peers, and general members of society. Layla shared, "I really like the social aspect that interpreting provides me," and her comment mirrored several others' remarks. Heather added, "I really enjoy meeting people and seeing all the interesting, different things they

do with their lives.” Participants described both positive and negative aspects of relationships with peers, agencies, and deaf and hearing clients and spoke to roles outside of their position as interpreters.

### **3.1 Relationships within the Interpreting Community**

Various relationships were described by all participants, including relationships with colleagues, agencies, and the interpreting community as a whole. Participants shared both positive and negative experiences of working with other interpreters. Cathy described working as a full-time interpreter in an agency environment, noting that she and her peers have developed a sense of comradery, cooperation, and support. She shared, “We look up to each other in a way because we even each other out.” Layla disclosed that she valued having respect for her colleagues, both personally and as a tenet of RID’s Code of Professional Conduct (CPC). She stated that she enjoyed being able to “make connections and friendships,” working with a team to correct interpreting mistakes, as she learned in her Interpreter Training Program (ITP). Layla shared, “I have the whole ITP attitude, you know, we learn to team together” and added that she is always asking herself, “how can I be better?” in terms of communicating with her peers and providing a better product for her clients.

Collegiality and encouraging others are values Elizabeth described as being important factors impacting her job satisfaction. She shared, “I started out interpreting where mentoring was a foreign concept” and noted that she did not have a mentor until years after she had been interpreting. Because of her experience struggling to “break into



the field,” she has a desire to build relationships with and support newer interpreters.

Mark shared that he appreciated the “sense of support” in working as a team. He noted, “We both have the same objective and we’re trying to accomplish that goal, and that is fluid communication between our deaf consumer and hearing consumer.”

Teresa spoke to her unique experience as both a consumer and a provider of interpreting services. She described identifying as a CODA and having an appreciation for the interpreters who provided services for her ill father during a stay in the hospital. Teresa disclosed, “I’m so grateful for the interpreters I will never meet, never know, never spend time with. But they take care of my family. That’s really awesome.”

Six participants shared the impact of having negative interactions with other interpreters. Lucy spoke to the struggle of working alone or with low-skilled teams, which she described as typical of interpreters within the educational system. Wanda added to the concept of collaborating with “less than qualified teams” and the impact on the profession/clients. She shared, “You’re only as good as your team, and I can’t do a good job if I don’t have a team who’s committed to doing the best they can and supporting me.” She continued, “I want a team that has a vested interest in making sure both parties communicate,” and “If they’re like, ‘whatever,’ to me, that’s not valuing the job. That’s not valuing the interaction.” Wanda expressed that having a skilled and invested teammate contributes to an effective and empowered work product. She stated, “You want somebody who cares about the deaf person, who understands deaf values and deaf culture. That’s huge to me.”

Mark expressed concerns about working with interpreters who lack self-confidence and critique themselves harshly. He also described frustrations with unethical teammates who discuss client issues after an assignment has ended. Layla disclosed experiencing age discrimination from other interpreters. She described working with interpreters who have intentionally discredited her and ignored her feedback due to her young age, even with the same amount of experience and qualifications. Layla shared personal frustrations and the negative implications on the client, sharing that discrimination, especially when it compromises the interpreting product, “takes away from the goal of what we do.” Elizabeth shared the impact of working within a negative work environment,

I very nearly decided this wasn't the job for me. It was too negative, too back-biting and competitive and not fun, and luckily ended up doing something a little different for a while and coming back to it and had a much better experience.

Four participants spoke about receiving support from and building relationships with interpreting agencies. Layla shared, “I feel cheesy when I say these things but I really like my agency, so it's easier to work for people or to work for a company that you respect.” Cathy emphasized that being a staff interpreter at an agency is “what defines me. That's where my roots are.”

Wanda noted the importance of being trusted by her agency and emphasized, “I would say that was probably one of the jobs that I really felt a sense of safety and security in knowing I had a boss that had my back.” Elizabeth added to this, sharing an

experience with new management “instituting a lot of policy changes,” particularly tightening up rules which allowed for less room for professional judgment. She shared, “it started becoming pretty pervasive” and added, “It was only when there was a change in leadership that I recognized the difference autonomy made to me.”

Three participants described dissatisfaction with their relationships with certain professional organizations. Both Teresa and Maria spoke to recent changes in RID’s certification system. Teresa shared that while she recognizes a need for valid and reliable testing measurements, “It’s just a damn test.” Maria added, “I don’t know that certification means the same,” when speaking of recent changes in the certification system. She stated, “As a whole, certification isn’t viewed the same as it was ten years ago.” Mark noted a lack of support and resources from his state chapter of RID. Teresa shared that she sometimes disagreed with RID in terms of their requirements, particularly the way their practices differ from spoken language interpreting. When addressing RID’s ownership of her certification (based on dues and CEU requirements), Teresa noted, “That’s not fair. That’s not right. I earned it. I did the work. You don’t own my work.” Teresa provided a unique perspective:

I hate referral agencies. I hate them. I like working for me. Um, and—the business has changed a whole lot since we’ve had corporations come into it. And quite frankly, I have to feed my kids. However, comma, but—it doesn’t necessarily mean I like your business practices. So, if I’m hired by you and I

disagree with you, I can't disagree with you because I have to pay my bills. So, it kind of takes the human side out of it, which is what we do.

Teresa and Cathy discussed the positive impact of interpreter training programs. Teresa expressed support for recent positive changes in the field, including the continual professionalization of interpreting. She shared, "it's not just a job" anymore and emphasized that newer interpreters are better able to have a long-term career track. Cathy expressed high regard for her interpreter training program, stating "I wouldn't take anything for the program I went through" and emphasized the importance of continuing to help others become successful professionals.

### **3.2 Being Empowered by Peers and Supervisors**

Three participants spoke of feeling personally empowered by their interpreting peers and supervisors. Heather discussed the positive impact of working with other interpreters, particularly seasoned peers and CODAs. She shared feeling empowered by others' self-confidence, allowing her to be a stronger interpreter herself. Cathy expressed feeling empowered by her supervisors and experienced interpreters. She described being "given the opportunity to just go out there and try, you know, often making mistakes." Cathy added that being empowered allowed her to feel confident in her growth. She shared, "I owe a lot of thanks to a lot of people but it's from a lot of hard work within." Teresa also spoke to making mistakes, noting that mentors empowered her by giving her honest feedback. Teresa shared that empowerment is often a cycle, stating that being

empowered by others “gave me an opportunity to learn and they taught me that I’m going to teach someone else.”

### **3.3 Relationships with Clients**

Mark, Teresa, and Elizabeth shared a sense of belonging and safety within the Deaf community. Mark expressed, “Being part of a unique community was comforting to me.” Teresa shared her journey in connecting with various members of the community as a newer interpreter, stating, “I’m very, very fortunate. I went to an ITP in the community where I was raised so I could come out and make a living.” Elizabeth noted, “Because I’ve been interpreting for a really long time and because I’ve been in this area where I live for a really long time, I’ve been able to establish connections with a lot of community members.”

Four participants spoke about being supported by individual members of the deaf community. Layla shared, “I am honored that so many clients trust me. I feel honored that so many people want to work with me.” Teresa shared the impact of building positive relationships with clients by stating, “I get to come back again. You’re inviting me back into your lives.” Having deaf friends was described as an important factor in work satisfaction by Cathy and Wanda. Wanda expressed, “Something that really does contribute to [satisfaction] is the fact that I became an interpreter because my deaf friends saw potential in me.” Wanda noted the personal significance of having support from Deaf community members in becoming a professional interpreter. Cathy shared that it

was important for her to be both an interpreter and friend to her clients. “I don’t want to be a robot,” she added.

Four participants described frustrations that arose due to relationships with deaf clients. Lucy described having conflicting values between herself and a deaf client. She stated that her overarching goal of being an educational interpreter is to promote learning and shared, “I think it’s easier when you have the same type of values as the student. If the student doesn’t care, it feels like, ‘why am I coming and working all day?’”

Wanda and Elizabeth expressed frustrations with some deaf clients’ generalized mistrust of interpreters. Wanda shared struggling with “deaf people who are used to, unfortunately, getting substandard interpreting services and assume I cannot understand their signing and voice for them adequately.” Elizabeth gave an example of a client who signed slowly so he could monitor the interpreter’s word choices, creating a “halting interpretation.” Teresa shared that sometimes interpreters must juggle the interpersonal issues of other people. She suggested that sometimes, “You have to take your own self, instead of the signs, and deal with their frustrations.”

Elizabeth and Layla described misperceptions of the general hearing population. Elizabeth shared feeling dissatisfied when others perceive the work of an interpreter as “easy.” She gave an example of asking a presenter for an outline of an upcoming speech in order to prepare for any new names or concepts that might be included. The presenter “brushed it off” and proceeded to read a Dr. Seuss poem during his presentation.

Elizabeth shared her reaction, “It’s their information, and to treat their own information as blasé, it kind of astounds me.”

Layla described feeling frustrated with hearing clients who are unfamiliar with the process of working with an interpreter. She shared,

In a lot of these environments, an interpreter is not novel, whether it be a sign language interpreter or a spoken language interpreter, and it shouldn’t be something that throws your world off, but for a lot of people, it really does. So, that frustrates me.

Four participants described tensions between the deaf and interpreting communities. In terms of the impact of deaf empowerment on interpreter job satisfaction, Teresa was able to sum up the feelings of several others by stating, “We haven’t even figured all this out. We’re going through such tremendous amount of change.” Maria added a reminder, “Any time there’s change, it is uncomfortable. And even though we see it, it’s not necessarily directed at us.”

Elizabeth and Mark provided examples of unique experiences of interpreters when it comes to living between the deaf and hearing worlds. Elizabeth shared an awkward situation in which she was blamed by a deaf student, through her own voice, for their homework not being done. Mark shared a similar experience in which he was blamed for a poor yearly review of a client, noting that interpreting can be a “thankless job.” Maria spoke to some of her own struggles, sharing, “They’re upset because we didn’t advocate. They’re upset because we did advocate.” She added,

I think one of the primary frustrations is watching the result of the deaf community becoming an independent community, which is great to see but it's frustrating as an interpreter because as the only group who hears them, we are the ones often lashed out at when things don't go well.

### **3.4 Other Roles and Relationships**

Three interpreters discussed roles they performed outside of interpreting that had an impact on their job satisfaction. Mark described feeling supported by his peers when he was recommended for a manager position and then a position as a regional director. Cathy shared feeling satisfied in her role as an interpreter coordinator at her local interpreting agency. She noted that she enjoys advocating for clients and working with them to understand their language and interpreting preferences. Adding to her work as an interpreter, as a coordinator, Cathy stated that as a coordinator, "I'll fight for them to have an interpreter in a heartbeat."

Cathy and Maria noted the importance of their roles as interpreter training instructors. Cathy shared her use of creativity in this role in terms of utilizing webcast technology to teach workshops on synonyms, idioms, and other topics. Maria spoke to her role as a full-time ITP faculty member. She shared, "The fact that I'm both a teacher and an interpreter makes that time as an interpreter immensely satisfying." In fact, her dissatisfaction with the quality of interpreting services available shapes her instruction style. Maria noted that she engages her students in service learning projects in which they can both gain experience and give back to the community. She expressed,



They're having authentic experiences which I think boosts their skill level and gives them the type of perspective that we want them to have about working with the deaf community, not that we're some magic language facilitator. We all work together.

Maria described enjoying the same variety as a freelance interpreter and shared that she sometimes worries about losing her interpreting skills, "The fact that I'm a devoted faculty member makes me feel less confident as an interpreter."

Cathy shared having a unique perspective of identifying as a community and ministry interpreter and as a minister. She stated, "I am very interested in their well-being. I am very active in making sure that they're taken care of" and noted, "I struggle with making sure that I don't cross boundaries, not becoming the minister instead of the professional interpreter." Cathy shared that having dual roles within the community can be confusing for both herself and her consumers and emphasized the importance of disclosing her roles and boundaries to all parties.

Teresa and Mark provided insight into the impact of their roles as CODAs on their interpreting work. Teresa spoke to the value of separating her personal and work lives, sharing, "I firmly believe that it can't become your entire life. And I learned that the hard way." She added, "You have to learn to separate your life from your job. Um, and you have to know what the difference is." Mark spoke to balancing personal and family life as a CODA. Mark noted, "When I was freelancing, I loved that balance,

having my family life while earning a good living, um, and at the same time contributing to a community.”

### **Summary of Theme 3: Relationships**

The theme of relationships emerged as a concept separate from the initial six work values proposed by the TWA. This theme included various aspects of receiving social support and emotional connection from peers and members of the interpreting community, including being empowered by peers and supervisors. Participants in this sample also described the impact of disconnection on the interpreting community, deaf community, and within the life of the individual interpreter. They also shared the importance of maintaining positive relationships outside of their role as an interpreter to allow them to sustain a healthy work-life balance.

### **Theme 4: Achievement**

This theme describes achievement as experienced by each participant. Participants emphasized the importance of personal growth through using their abilities and developing over time. While recognition and reputation were not salient factors related to job satisfaction, each participant discussed the importance of upholding his or her reputation among the interpreting and Deaf communities.

#### **4.1 Using One’s Abilities**

Six participants expressed the importance of utilizing their skills to provide successful interpreting. Heather described her experience with achievement as using her abilities on a “micro” level and shared, “I experience achievement interaction by

interaction.” She added that this could mean a client sending a compliment about her work to the agency or requesting her services again or receiving “a genuine thank you at the end of the interaction.” Six other interpreters spoke about achievement in terms of successful communication, when a client understands the message being interpreted. Teresa voiced, “I feel achievement when people walk away and they’re understood.” Cathy, Heather, Maria, and Wanda noted that achievement was when the interpretation was successful and when communication wasn’t the barrier. Lucy shared, “I’ve seen them feel it’s impossible to do and then all of a sudden they start rocking it and then their eyes light up and—ah! Yeah, that’s why I’m an interpreter.” Three interpreters talked about frustrations related to achievement. Teresa expressed frustration when “communication didn’t happen,” and Cathy mirrored these sentiments. Lucy expressed that it was harder to have a sense of achievement from her freelance work because “you don’t have as much of that sense of, I’ve really made a difference.”

#### **4.2 Development Over Time**

All participants expressed personal and professional development as a contributing factor to job satisfaction. Three participants mentioned testing for and earning higher or specialty certifications as a source of achievement. Heather described certification as a baseline goal and remembered reading the Newly Certified section of the RID Views and “just focus on that as my goal, to see my name printed there.” She also described her experience working within the school system as lacking rewards or incentives for obtaining higher certification, sharing that “the only reward came from

myself, came from my own sense of feeling accomplished.” Layla also described the pride she felt when overcoming the challenge of certification testing, stating, “I have failed more performance tests than I have passed, so you really have to keep going. But to me, that’s just one more thing to achieve, one more thing to do.” She further expressed:

My attitude towards testing in general, whether it be an interpreting test or a college exam or a written test or whatever, I love testing. That makes me a weird person. I know that’s very odd. If I go in and fail a test of any sort, a performance test, or a final exam or any type of exam, I take my weaknesses, I look at them. I build on them and make it better. And because of that attitude, that personality trait that I do have, I just test. I test up. I’ve gotten higher certifications.

Teresa strongly expressed that “certification is for other people,” sharing “they want to know I have my letters.” She further explained that her main source of achievement comes from “doing a good job every day and doing what you’re supposed to do.” Wanda affirmed this sentiment, stating “objectively having the alphabet soup gives me status but it’s not something that I need or I seek in order to feel good about myself or satisfied with my job.”

Heather spoke to the challenge of growing as an interpreter by likening it to playing Sudoku, mastering the easy levels before moving on to more difficult challenges. Mark shared a sense of satisfaction in seeing himself grow professionally and described

his experience as a new interpreter, “even though I was a CODA, I still had a lot to learn.” Maria expressed that as she grew she discovered she was “better able to articulate what jobs I’m qualified for and in turn, I’m qualified for more because of my experience.” Maria spoke to the opportunities within the field of interpreting and her choice to specialize in deaf-blind and theater interpreting. Layla, who chose to specialize in medical and legal interpreting, noted that at first, “My stress level was very high,” even in a “safe” environment which was appropriate for her developmental level of experience.

Several participants spoke to being challenged. Elizabeth noted, “I know from experience mostly where I will feel successful and where I won’t feel successful. She also shared, “A lot of that is because I feel comfortable knowing the things I’m really good at and the things I might need to pay attention to and work on.” Maria shared, “It’s a delicate balance between feeling comfort and feeling challenged.” Heather also expressed that while comfort is nice, “I feel like comfort is good to a certain level, but then you get too comfortable and that kind of can lead to boredom.” She shared, “For me, feeling bored made me feel really dissatisfied.” Layla emphasized the importance of not being stagnant, sharing pride in her ability to overcome challenges:

I think this goes for any person in any job in any position you have, if you work hard at staying relevant in your field, you’re just going to do a better job and that, in turn, is going to make you happier and want to do more of it because you are working so hard at it.

Heather shared her experience of transitioning out of the ISD and into community work. She voiced, “I felt like I had grown my wings and was ready to fly and leave home.” She further expressed this concept when sharing:

When something that used to be hard for me becomes easier or I didn’t have to think so hard about something or I’m familiar with a certain subject matter, so I’m familiar with something and it comes to me without having to work so hard for it, that feels like achievement for me.

#### **4.3 Recognition and Reputation**

Each one of the participants spoke to the importance of having a good reputation. Six spoke to gaining recognition from other interpreters, whether for their particular skills or in their role as a mentor. Heather shared that reputation serves as a “macro” level of achievement for her, particularly in “getting acknowledgement from other interpreters I look up to or who I respect.” Cathy expressed having a positive reputation as an interpreter coordinator and as a staff interpreter. Wanda spoke to the recognition that comes from having legal certification. “That’s hard to do,” she shared. Elizabeth affirmed that being certified to interpret in the courts “kind of lifted the status of how people viewed me.” She also discussed how others perceived her as a “strong voicer, ASL to English interpreter,” particularly in the VRS environment, further sharing, “so I kind of become the default lead interpreter on assignments.” Maria noted that with advancement in the field she has become an interpreter training instructor and mentor. Heather expressed feeling appreciated when having “new interpreters come and say, hey

I heard you're a really good mentor. I'd like to work with you." Mark reflected on the impact of doing a good job in the community, sharing that other interpreters "get wind of those things and start to see you differently, more as a mentor than a new interpreter."

Three participants discussed the value in receiving recognition from their employers or employment agencies. Cathy expressed the importance of feeling appreciated and respected by her boss. Mark shared an experience of being encouraged from within the company to be a leader, to become a manager and a regional director for a video relay company. With a school district as Lucy's employer, Lucy pointed to her reputation as being impacted by how well she works with her clients. "When they see my student is making leaps and bounds, then it reflects well on me."

Finally, three participants expressed value in having a positive reputation among the deaf community and with clients. Mark expressed, "at the end of the day, I'm satisfied with how I'm perceived in the interpreting and deaf community." He further shared, "I've gone through my years of gaining experience. I've achieved a reputation in my community, which in return has served me because with plenty of requests comes plenty of work." Cathy shared having a positive reputation for building relationships within the community, for being available, and for showing a "willingness to help." Heather affirmed the value of making an impact and shared that when she has run into clients long after an assignment, "they look at whatever small minute role I had in their lives with a positive spin." She voiced, "that makes me feel like I'm doing something right."

#### **4.4 Interpreting as a Calling**

All nine participants in this study described their work with a sense of achieving a purpose and having passion for their vocation. These interpreters shared their love for their work in terms of achieving a sense of purpose by giving back to something beyond themselves and fulfilling a need. Lucy said that she has enjoyed having a positive impact on others, and Wanda stated, “I think one of the biggest things is knowing I get to make a difference for people. That to me is very satisfying. And it fills a need.” Maria stated, “This would be the only thing that I would want to do,” and added “I think I would still do it on the side, whether it was financially advantageous or not.” Layla agreed, “If I won the lottery and never had to work again and I never needed anything, that I would still be an interpreter.” Layla added, “I just love what I do,” and, “It’s part of what I need, and it’s part of what I can give the world.” Heather also stated, “I love what I do. I love my job.” Elizabeth shared, “I would never be happy in a traditional nine-to-five office kind of job.” Wanda noted, “It’s something I’ve always enjoyed,” adding, “It’s fun and they pay me to do it.”

Mark and Wanda spoke to their work as part of a spiritual calling. Mark shared, “I’m very happy. I couldn’t imagine being in another career.” He emphasized, “I always call it a God-given career, and this is what I feel like a higher power out there has chosen me to do. The fact that I can go out and do the job well but at the same time show respect and really care about these members of the Deaf community is self-gratifying.”



Cathy shared, “It’s a lot more than just satisfaction. It’s who I am.” She added, “To me, satisfaction is when I get up and go do what I love.” Cathy stated, “[I] feel a fulfillment that’s somewhat like that’s where He wants me to be.”

#### **Summary of Theme 4: Achievement**

All participants expressed experiences related to the work values of achievement in terms of using their abilities, developing over time, upholding a professional reputation among the communities in which they work, and achieving a sense of purpose. Many individuals described this calling in terms of fulfilling a need and using their skills for good beyond their own needs, while two participants spoke to their vocation in theistic terms, indicating the value of their work as part of their spiritual paths. Interpreters in this sample also emphasized the importance of hard work in feeling satisfied with their career overall. Elizabeth spoke directly to the impact of achievement on job satisfaction:

All those things contribute to job satisfaction because the more you’re seen as a competent practitioner and the more you’re recognized as a professional versus a friend or family member, and the more people request you for jobs and want to work with you as a team, the better you feel about your work.

#### **Theme 5: Comfort-Safety**

The work values of comfort and safety were combined in this theme due to overlapping ideas such as stability, predictability, and variety. The TWA defined both safety and comfort in terms of the impact and degree of stress present in the workplace. Therefore, the initial interview questions may have encouraged participants to describe

similar elements of safety and comfort related to their experiences of work satisfaction. This theme also reflects participants' experiences with stress, including coping techniques to help manage tension at work.

### **5.1 Variety**

All participants noted that they enjoyed the variety inherent in the job of an interpreter. Teresa, Elizabeth, Cathy, and Mark discussed the difference between freelance interpreters and other professionals that work "nine-to-five" and go to the same location every day. Layla shared that interpreters experience "a little bit of everything" and "I love that I'm going somewhere different every day and that I have a new challenge." Mark echoed having a "sense of excitement to start the day." Maria noted, "Every day is different. Every environment is different." Elizabeth added, "For me it's a way to stay interested." Layla noted that working with different languages is another aspect of variety inherent in the job, sharing that she liked the challenge of accommodating individual client's language preferences.

Elizabeth discussed the various levels of variety within each environment (i.e., freelance, VRS, and educational interpreting), giving an example of working in a call center she shared, "Just because I did this three hours yesterday and I'm doing it three hours today doesn't mean that it's going to be anything like it was yesterday." Heather stated that even within the consistency of working in a school district, she is able to "mix it up" with different classes, working on different campuses, and working with deaf

students and staff. Lucy added, “Even if I’m with the same student at the same school, you move up a grade, you’re interpreting new classes, new content.”

Cathy emphasized the value of variety in her work, stating “I think one of the biggest sources of satisfaction is that I get to do something different every day,” and added, “I never get in that funk where you’re going to the same job doing the same thing over and over again.” She shared that interpreting gives her a “sense of contentment which doesn’t come easy for me.” Maria stated,

Knowing that I’m doing what I want to do and I can do different types of work and be paid a reasonable salary for doing it makes it a great job. Very satisfying to do what you love and be paid for it.

## **5.2 Stability and Predictability**

Seven participants described perceptions of stability and predictability. In terms of long-term job stability, Lucy expressed, “I like knowing that I have a job tomorrow and, you know, I like having my schedule all worked out. So, that’s definitely a comfort for me.” While Lucy works in the K-12 educational setting, Elizabeth and Cathy spoke to working as an interpreter in the community. Elizabeth shared, “There’s plenty of work for skilled interpreters in my area.” Lucy noted that working at a well-known agency who is “kind of *the* agency” is a “very safe feeling.” On the other hand, Heather shares the stress of working in the post-secondary setting and described the feeling of “just kind of hanging on, hoping your student doesn’t drop a class.” Wanda, however, described

working at a university as a staff interpreter. She stated, “It was a job that I enjoyed very much because of the safety and security I felt there. I was good at it. I enjoyed it.”

Elizabeth spoke to the nature of freelance jobs in terms of having varying levels of “both stability and predictability and instability and unpredictability.” Wanda, who works full time at an agency, shared that her work is consistent in terms of receiving a predictable income yet the day-to-day topics encountered are very unpredictable, possibly interpreting for a court case in the morning and a yoga class in the afternoon. Layla shared this sentiment and noted, “My work is very, very stable but it is not predictable at all.” Wanda disclosed, “I actually enjoy the unpredictability of it.” Lucy shared an opposite experience working in the K-12 setting. She expressed that she liked having a consistent schedule and liked working with the same clients each day.

Mark stated that it can be helpful to the work of interpreting when there is a sense of familiarity with the client or the topic being interpreted. He expressed, “when you go in cold turkey with a new client, that stability and predictability is definitely lacking because you do not have that rapport.” He continued:

Once you’ve been around somebody and worked with somebody for so long, you start to get a real good feel for what they’re going to say next or how they’re actually going to phrase something, it really does improve your situation.

Wanda shared a similar experience, stating, “There’s a familiarity. There’s a, ‘You’ve got this. We know this is going to go well.’” Layla expressed, “I’m somewhere different every single day, doing something different every single day, so there’s no

predictability at all, but I like it. I'm okay with it. I love it. Yeah, I'm very satisfied with that." Layla and Heather described a gradual increase in comfort with increased experience. Heather commented, "At first, obviously, it wasn't comfortable because there was all these really new situations I was walking into, stuff I had read about in my textbooks and kind of overheard in conversations with other interpreters at workshops and stuff." She added, "So at first there was kind of a learning curve where I was being put in all of these uncomfortable situations." She described that over time it became easier knowing "how I would react in those situations."

## **5.2 Stress and Coping**

Eight participants described emotional stress involved with being an interpreter as well as some strategies helpful in coping with those stressors. Elizabeth described the inherent stress of interpreting, including being in unpredictable situations and using other people's words. She shared, "There's a lot of stressful things that happen during interpreting that, if you're not careful, as an interpreter, can become your own stress." Teresa noted, "Some situations are more stressful than others." Layla emphasized the stress that comes with legal interpreting, "It's just the stakes are so much higher," and continued, "It's so much to carry." Teresa described personal factors that come into play in terms of stress, "If I'm working with someone losing their children, that's a big deal to me personally." She shared, "We're people so it kind of depends on what we're taking into that situation."

Maria and Wanda shared struggling with changes in the profession. Maria spoke to the changing dynamics of the profession, noting that, in the past, new interpreters were vetted by members of the Deaf community. She shared, “I really dislike the fact that the deaf consumers have been taken out of the approval process.” Wanda described frustrations with how assignments can sometimes be disseminated without care for client needs or interpreter’s skill level. Heather noted the “really stressful dynamic” of competing with other interpreters for work. She shared, “it’s like everybody’s just trying to hustle for those two-hour-minimum jobs, trying to scrape together a living.” Heather emphasized that she often hopes to answer “the email blast so quickly that you get the job instead of someone else.”

Teresa and Mark shared several pieces of advice for how to cope with stress as an interpreter. Teresa shared that interpreters need to know how to manage their own feelings. She described personal factors that impacted her ability to work an assignment, “I could sign the hell out of this, but I should not be here because I’m uncomfortable with this because, like you said, I’m uncomfortable and I’m going to influence your discussion.” She also suggested that interpreters separate their personal and professional lives:

You’ll decrease your stress level when you get to that point when you realize that your interpreting is a job. How you feel about it is something entirely different. You have to have your own personal network of support and your own life.

Mark shared, “I think safety is having a support system, having a few confidantes that are interpreters and being able to go out and vent, and also receive constructive feedback because you have to have a safe place to go.” He also spoke to emotion regulation on a personal level:

It’s just conquering the different emotions, too, and coming back home going, ‘hey you know, you didn’t do too well today but there’s always tomorrow.’ And I come back the next day and I have a great day and just reflect.

Participants in this study also described physical safety in four settings: mental health, schools, courts, and medical environments. Five participants described their experiences with safety in the mental health environment. Mark, Layla, Heather, and Elizabeth shared feeling unsafe in a locked-down mental health facility. Heather gave an example of a time she did not feel safe in a drug rehabilitation clinic, particularly because “I didn’t have access to the whole story before I walked in.” She noted, “I didn’t feel safe and that completely interfered with the ability to do my best work.” These participants also shared their use of coping skills to deal with these unsafe environments. Mark shared that he stays aware of his surroundings and chooses assignments with discretion. Layla stated, “If I don’t feel safe on a job, I leave.” Layla described her ability to protect herself and noted, “I put my safety above all else. I do not sit with the clients in the room alone, period.” Heather suggested that knowing her own boundaries helped her feel less concern for her personal safety. Elizabeth shared that the ability to choose her assignments helped her feel safer, “If I’m not comfortable interpreting for a

person that is unpredictable and unstable with their anger management, then I don't have to work with that person if I don't want to, or I can work with that person when it's in a controlled environment." Teresa spoke to coping with struggles in a mental health environment when dealing with the interpreting itself. She stated, "When you're working with a psychiatric person, you make sure that when they say *me*, you say *me* but point to *them* so they will punch the right person."

Three interpreters described settings other than mental health facilities. Lucy shared her experiences with safety within the school system, "As far as physical safety, schools are pretty safe. Obviously now it's a little more tenuous than before, but I like that schools have a sense of security." She spoke to the safeguards in place such as locked doors and police officers patrolling the hallways. Teresa also noted the importance of having police for protection when working in the courts, "Because I do my job, I know that those folks will do their job and I'm good." Teresa also described safety within the medical environment, speaking directly to the risk of airborne viruses. She stated, "I have to watch out for me, but I'm also there to make sure that this doctor can make sure they can take care of them. She shared that one of the best ways to cope with this risk is to have health insurance, "It's just common sense."

Extreme challenges were described by four participants. Heather shared that as a new interpreter, she had the difficult task of revealing a cancer diagnosis to a client. Teresa noted that it is a "huge responsibility" to provide services in a crisis. She shared, "I have to understand that when I come to the hospital because you've been raped, it's



not about me.” Layla disclosed that she held a client’s hand as she passed away, sharing that it “emotionally rocked my world.” Mark also shared that five of his clients died within a span of three months. He expressed that he “bottled it up for a while” and,

I carried that home with me and it was really hard to process and not feel like it was not my fault, which medically, you know, it was not my fault. It was going to happen regardless of who the interpreter was. But it was still hard not to think, maybe I can’t do this medical thing, or maybe I’m the grim reaper of interpreters.

In terms of coping, Mark discussed being open with his spouse about the impact his work was having on him as well as reaching out to close interpreter friends. He shared, “That really helped me through that period of my interpreting career.” Layla stated, “I’ve seen things that have impacted me emotionally and got me really down because of what I’ve seen at work, but I wouldn’t say those experiences made me like interpreting any less.” Her methods of coping included taking time off work and processing her own emotional reactions.

### **Summary of Theme 5: Comfort-Safety**

Participants in this study discussed work values of comfort and safety in terms of variety, predictability and stability, and stress and coping techniques. Most participants agreed that these values did not contribute greatly to job satisfaction as a certain amount of stress was viewed as inherent in the work of an interpreter. Lucy was the only participant who shared that safety was an important factor in continuing to work for the school district. She shared, “All of that is super important to me, and that’s part of the

reason why it's worth it for as low pay as it is, why I keep going back.” Five other participants specifically stated that feeling comfortable does not in itself contribute to job satisfaction, including Mark, Maria, Teresa, and Elizabeth. Elizabeth noted the importance of balancing comfort with feeling challenged in job satisfaction, and Layla shared, “It’s because I advocate for myself [before and on the job] that I feel comfortable.”

### **Theme 6: Status**

This theme includes participants’ discussions of the impact of compensation, demographics, social status, and personality factors on their feelings of job satisfaction. Demographic and social factors included age, gender, language, and educational factors.

#### **6.1 Compensation**

Eight participants spoke about compensation, both positively and negatively. Maria, Heather, and Lucy discussed low compensation for educational interpreters. Heather voiced, “The pay was kind of insulting.” She noted that even with her training and educational background, “when you add up my salary at the end of the year, I make less than a first-year teacher, so that was kind of discouraging.” Lucy, who currently works full-time at a school district, shared, “I definitely have to take on side jobs and sometimes second jobs to make sure I can afford everything.” Maria shared that her “staff position wasn’t enough to pay my bills for the kind of lifestyle I already had as an adult.” She noted that it was also difficult to transition into community work in terms of knowing how to budget for a more unstable environment financially.

Mark and Heather noted that community interpreters are paid well if they put in the work. Layla shared, “It is a blessing to be busy in this field.” Cathy spoke to the financial insecurity that comes with freelance work, concluding, “It can be feast or famine.” Layla described advancement in the field in terms of pay rates. She shared that as a newer interpreter, she worked nights and weekends and took emergency assignments as needed. She expressed that, at first, “I really had the feeling of like, wow, that’s it? After all the work, this is what I get financially?” and described feeling disappointed in the entry-level wages she was making. She described her current wage as more comparable to her skillset. “I’m to a point now where my comfort level with my compensation versus my educational background, my certifications, I am satisfied and very comfortable with what I’m earning now.” She added, “I feel like I’m making a fair wage.” Elizabeth pointed to the difference in pay rates among agencies in the area, noting that there can be a 13 dollar per hour difference between employers. Teresa shared experiencing a pay cut in moving geographic locations, stating, “I didn’t always get paid what I’m worth.” She continued, noting that at the end of the day, “it didn’t impact how I feel when I leave the job.” Elizabeth commented, “The compensation is nice, but it’s not really a determining factor on my jobs or how I would answer this question” about job satisfaction.

## 6.2 Demographic Factors and Social Status

Six participants mentioned personal demographic factors and social status markers, including education and professional status, status as a person who knows more than one language, and age and gender factors.

Heather explained interpreting as a process of working through a “status transaction” between individuals, often other professionals. She expressed having a certain status as a “free agent” or an independent business owner and discussed expectations of being treated like a professional, stating, “I’m used to being on par with the teacher or the professor or the nurse or the doctor and not as the employee or the patient or the customer.” Elizabeth expressed appreciation for the increased recognition by society at large of the complexities of the work of an interpreter and respect for their role as a working professional. Layla affirmed the importance of the recognition of interpreters as autonomous professionals. Cathy expressed that she has gained respect as a professional with her length of service as a status marker. Lucy shared, “having an education in general is very—it’s a status marker.” She noted that earning a master’s degree from Gallaudet University is “huge in the field” and “definitely gives me some credibility.” Heather disclosed being treated differently within the school system among other levels of professionals. She shared, “Everyone is very grateful of, like, what you do is important. It takes all of us to make it work. But those status hierarchies are reinforced by how much people get paid.” One participant described the reactions she receives from being a bilingual individual. Elizabeth shared, “Most hearing people in

America only speak one language so to have people go, ‘wow that’s really cool that you know two languages’ or that you and your husband communicated across the room. That was really cool.”

Two participants expressed concerns about age and gender demographic factors. Layla mentioned experiencing ageism as a negative social status marker. She expressed receiving inappropriate negative comments from other interpreters about her inability to interpret simply because of her age. Heather disclosed her status as a married woman, sharing the impact this has on her professional life. She shared, “I have the freedom to freelance, but I only have that because I happen to be married and I happen to have access to health care.” She further explored the impact of working in a female-dominated field by expressing,

The majority of interpreters are women and, you know, I play into it, too because when women are married, their income is not considered the primary source of, um, you know, it’s not the main thing, so they’re willing to accept these terms of employment that maybe, if this field was dominated by men that they probably would not accept these working conditions.

### **6.3 Personality Factors**

Six interpreters shared aspects of their identity and personality related to their interpreting work. Cathy and Elizabeth disclosed that they identified as independent women. Elizabeth shared, “I’ve always been a really independent person. It’s not like I don’t want to follow rules or I have a problem with authority or anything like that. I just

want to know why.” Cathy also shared, “I’m an overachiever” and noted that she had often struggled with feeling content in her previous work before becoming an interpreter. She shared that she identified strongly with being a full-time agency interpreter and stated, “that’s what defines me. That’s where my roots are.” Elizabeth shared that being an interpreter fits with having a “curious” personality because as an interpreter, she is exposed to a variety of things. Layla shared that she had a “black-and-white” personality which wasn’t a good fit for certain aspects of interpreting like mental health settings. However, she described one part of her personality that served her well, “I really like the social aspect that interpreting provides me since I am such a social person.”

### **Summary of Theme 6: Status**

Some participants expressed experiences related to the work value of status in terms of compensation, demographic and social factors, and aspects of personality. While compensation reflected a type of status marker, most participants described that they would most likely continue interpreting whether or not they were paid for their work. Others described the struggle to maintain a level of financial comfort as an interpreter, particularly when working as a freelance professional. Demographic and social factors were discussed and appeared to impact interactions and the perspective of the interpreting field as being a female-dominated profession. Some participants expressed that interpreting was a way to participate in a work environment that aligned with their particular personality styles.

### **Source Triangulation Results**

The current study utilized triangulation to enhance the trustworthiness of the data analysis in order to remain open to different aspects of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Multiple sources were used, including source triangulation, member checks, analyst triangulation, and heuristic triangulation. Source triangulation was utilized by interviewing multiple participants, in which common and unique experiences were captured. These experiences included shared positive and negative perceptions of certain environments or relationships. Participants commented on their varied levels of experience, their employment status, and their training experiences. In order to validate the credibility of the analysis, participants were provided an opportunity to provide feedback on the themes. The researcher provided via email a list of themes and subthemes along with descriptions of each and asked participants for their responses (Appendix G). Five participants responded with reports that they agreed with the themes developed by the researcher. One participant commented on her support for the theme of empowerment being included with altruism. No new data were presented or incorporated.

Analyst triangulation was utilized to determine whether there was agreement among the emergence of themes and subthemes found in the transcripts. The cross-coder was provided with a brief description of the study, and during the initial stage of data analysis read and coded five of the transcripts. In particular, she utilized affect themes to discover the relevance of Safety in terms of belonging and security, confidence in the

work product related to Achievement, and the value of being empowered and empowering others reflected in the new theme of Relationships.

Heuristic triangulation was used by having the researcher seek disconfirming evidence of her own biases throughout the research. The researcher's personal experience as a CODA and an interpreter provided an invaluable framework from which to understand participant experiences. However, there were times when information provided by participants conflicted with the researcher's personal beliefs about work values. For example, the researcher noted that she enjoyed the variety and unpredictability of her work. This view was confirmed by some participants but contrasted others' experiences. Some participants described having a preference for a stable and predictable environment. Another example emerged when analyzing the theme of empowerment. The researcher's beliefs contrasted one participant's comment regarding being an advocate for clients. The researcher believes that it is not always an option to be an ally if the client does not choose to view the interpreter in this way. In these situations, the interpreter is a tool rather than an ally or an advocate. These reflections were processed through researcher memos and discussions with her thesis advisor.



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### **Summary of Findings**

The aim of this study was to explore sign language interpreters' experiences of work values and job satisfaction. Rather than focusing on quantitative data, this research was focused on qualitative analysis, which illuminates the meaning of participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1997; Patton, 2015). The results of this exploration point to the importance of autonomy, altruism, and achievement in the lives of this sample of sign language interpreters. In contrast, comfort, safety, and status appeared to be less important than autonomy and altruism, except when describing stress factors that participants were unable to control. All participants described ways to navigate emotional stress utilizing coping techniques to balance demands of the job. Overall, the findings of this study explored six themes related to job satisfaction: (a) Autonomy, (b) Altruism, (c) Relationships, (d) Achievement, (e) Comfort-Safety, and (f) Status. Each of these themes will be discussed in the order of their contribution to job satisfaction.

#### **Autonomy**

This study highlighted the impact of autonomy (or lack of autonomy) on job satisfaction. Participants described various types of autonomy, including having the ability to choose what types of work to do and setting their own schedule (for freelance

interpreters). Educational interpreters described having less autonomy in their work due to systemic demands of their organization. All interpreters described the value of independence and making professional decisions daily. Even when working as part of a team, trust enhanced autonomy and feeling of independence. Participants also described factors that were less important to job satisfaction, such as creativity and taking responsibility in their work.

### **Altruism**

Altruism emerged as another important factor related to job satisfaction. Interpreting provided participants an opportunity to serve the Deaf community in a meaningful way. Empowerment was found to be encompassed under the values of altruism and relationships, as an extension of providing a service to others. Some participants described using their awareness of power, responsibility, and privilege to create empowered interactions between deaf and hearing individuals. Most of the interpreters in this sample endorsed feeling satisfied in their ability to foster harmony among others. Acts of altruism and empowerment often extended beyond working with deaf clients into the mentoring arena. Many participants shared having hope in the future of the profession and working to lift up newer interpreters to better support the larger Deaf community.

### **Relationships**

Participants reported having both positive and negative interactions with other interpreters, agencies, and professional organizations, and many expressed that these

interactions often had an effect on their satisfaction at work. Several participants spoke to the impact of being empowered and spoke to cultural tensions between the deaf and interpreting communities and expressed discomfort with changes in the profession. Maintaining healthy relationships was identified as a salient factor that helped balance work-life demands, which contributed to increased job satisfaction.

### **Achievement**

All nine participants in this study specifically expressed developing a sense of achievement from personal and professional growth and gaining new levels of abilities over time. Each interpreter also spoke to the importance of having a good professional reputation among the deaf and interpreting communities. Many participants noted, however, that this recognition did not necessarily contribute to job satisfaction as much as it increased their confidence in their own abilities and strengthened their relationships with their peers and clients. Of particular importance is that all nine participants in this study described their work in terms of achieving their purpose or calling. Some shared that they were led by God while others spoke in terms of fulfilling a need and having passion for their work.

### **Comfort, Safety, and Status**

Interpreters in this sample described various aspects of comfort, safety, and status and expressed that these values were not significant contributors to overall job satisfaction. Most participants agreed that variety, instability, and unpredictability were natural parts of the work of interpreters. When stressful situations emerged, participants

utilized a variety of coping techniques, including reaching out to their support system and learning to manage the portions of their work over which they had personal control. Several participants described aspects of social status and personality that impacted their work. Some noted that their age and gender impacted the way others perceived their status and the status of the profession. Others shared that simply being well-educated, multilingual professionals gives interpreters increased status. Some interpreters mentioned that their personality status as curious or social people was a good fit for the interpreting profession in which they are able to interact with others daily.

### **Consistency with Existing Research**

Results of the current study appear to be largely consistent with previous research on the impact of work values and job satisfaction. In particular, this study supports values found to be important to samples of United States nurses, Australian occupational therapists, and American oncology volunteers, counselors, and spoken and sign language interpreters. In terms of achievement and status, participants in the current study endorsed values regarding stimulation, growth, and achievement consistent with previous studies (Cunningham & Smalls, 2014; Fagermoen, 1997; Fitzpatrick et al., 2013; Moore et al., 2006). Status was experienced similarly by some participants in the current study as in previous studies of work values. As in Tuckett et al.'s study of Australian nurses (2009), job satisfaction for educational interpreters in the current study appeared to decrease when pay and recognition were low. The interpreters in this study, however, expressed that they were able to find other values on which to focus in order to make

meaning of their work (i.e., through altruism and achievement). The results of the current study revealed moderate agreement with Schwenke, Ashby, and Gnilka's study (2010) on sign language interpreters' experience of burnout. The current study did not directly explore burnout, but it was discovered that factors related to safety and comfort were not salient factors that impacted job satisfaction. In fact, most participants described instability and emotional stress as inherent in the work.

One unexpected finding was the sense of calling and fulfillment expressed by participants. Previous research on psychotherapists points to a calling as work that provides a sense of purpose and meaning, work that is other-oriented and contributes to the common good, and having a skill that meets a need beyond oneself (Dik & Duffy, 2009). These authors noted that the difference between a calling and a vocation is that a calling has an external motivation (ie., God or the needs of society), while a vocation includes purpose and contribution to society to the extent that it is beneficial for the self. Interpreters in this study appeared to hold values consistent with a calling, but future studies may benefit from exploring the impact of internal versus external motivation on overall job satisfaction.

These results also appear to be consistent with previous research on counselors and spoken as well as sign language interpreters in that participants value having flexibility and autonomy in their work (Hale, 2011; Katan, 2009; Reid et al., 1999; Swartz, 1999). Among counselors and interpreters, having a sense of control over the work environment appears to allow individuals to balance the responsibility of their

professional lives with their ability to make positive change (Cunningham & Smalls, 2014; Swartz, 1999). Previous research on the emphasis of altruism is supported by this research, pointing to the salience of personal fulfillment from providing a service to others (Cunningham & Smalls, 2014; Fagermoen, 1997; Fitzpatrick et al., 2013; Hale, 2011; Katan, 2009; Ravari et al., 2012; Reid et al., 1999).

Swartz (1999) noted that positive supervisory relationships do not directly impact job satisfaction for sign language interpreters, but the results of this study show that relationships are a salient factor that supports satisfaction with their work and that conflictual relationships may lead to individuals seeking other employment opportunities. Consistent with Reid et al.'s qualitative study of counselors' work satisfaction (1999), relationships with colleagues and clients were a major contributor to the reduction of stress and the increase of job satisfaction among the current sample of sign language interpreters. In other words, the current study supports the idea that positive supervisory relationships may contribute to increased tenure and overall career satisfaction.

In terms of altruism, the participants in this study expressed that the idea that being of service was central to their decisions to be an interpreters. This finding is consistent with previous research among interpreters and other helping professionals (Cunningham & Smalls, 2014; Fagermoen, 1997; Fitzpatrick et al., 2013; Moore et al., 2006; Ravari et al., 2012). Empowerment was found in this study to be a theme encompassed within the work values of Altruism and Relationships and was experienced by participants similarly to participants of previous research studies on counselors,

nurses, and oncology volunteers. Interpreters in the current study reported acts of empowerment through cultural mediation, social advocacy, and language access consistent with previous studies (Bahdir, 2010; Mason & Ren, 2012; McIntire & Samson, 1995; Moody, 2001). Participants provided descriptions consistent with previous explanations of the impact of empowerment of the Deaf community, such as experiencing backlash from the community and recognizing the historical and individual oppression perpetuated by individuals, including interpreters themselves (Harvey, 2001; Lane et al., 1996).

### **Implications for Vocational Theory**

The results of this study support the Theory of Work Adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Nauta, 2013) in that particular work values were found to be important contributors to job satisfaction. For this sample of sign language interpreters, the values discovered to be most salient were autonomy, altruism, and achievement. The match between individuals and their environment is central to the TWA model, and posits that employees remain in their careers longer when they feel their values are being met (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). Participants in this study shared experiences of leaving a particular work environment (e.g., school district, VRS) because their values no longer aligned with the workplace. While some values were combined in the results of this study (i.e., comfort and safety), all themes described by participants could be categorized by one of TWA's six work values. This research was interested in the impact of empowerment on job satisfaction, given the inherent power differential in interpreter-

client relationships. Empowerment was found to be a theme within the values of altruism and relationships, rather than appearing as a distinct value.

The Demand-Control Theory (Dean & Pollard, 2001) was also supported by the results of the current research. Participants described linguistic, environmental, and intrapersonal factors similar to those proposed by Dean and Pollard (2001), and autonomy (i.e., decision latitude) was found to be a salient value related to the amount of control interpreters had over their environment (Karasek, 1979). To further support this theory, Badhir (2010) described the stress inherent in power imbalances when working as an interpreter. Participants in this study provided examples of how they manage the stress of having power in interpreting situations and emphasized the importance of having the ability to be independent and autonomous to navigate the complex work of the interpreter.

### **Implications for Future Research**

This study highlighted the importance of a variety of work values for sign language interpreters—particularly autonomy, altruism, and achievement—and how alignment of these values with work environments improves job satisfaction (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). The current study could be further supported by quantitative studies, which would be able to capture the values of a larger sample of the interpreter population. For example, future studies may utilize the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (MIQ), based on the TWA, which highlights six work values and 21 related needs (Rounds & Jin, 2013). To expand on the TWA, future studies could include person-environment fit



factors for sign language interpreters. Interpreters often have choices about the settings in which they choose to work, and particular environments may support specific work values. Interpreters who enjoy working in the educational environment, for example, appear to value comfort and safety, and this could be explored through future studies focused on various interpreting settings and roles (e.g., educational, VRS, or community; freelance or full-time). Another possible area of future research would be to further explore how work values play out within the context of Demand-Control Theory (Dean & Pollard, 2001; Karasek, 1979). Autonomy was found to be a strong predictor of work satisfaction, and future studies might explore the extent to which autonomy allows interpreters to control their environments.

The current study focused on factors that affect job satisfaction; that is, how happy individuals were with their jobs. Participants also described dissatisfaction in a variety of areas (i.e., lack of autonomy, lack of support from peers or supervisors, extreme challenges, frustrations with agencies and organizations). Future research might focus on which work values relate most closely to job dissatisfaction and how these challenges might be managed.

### **Implications for Practice**

**Implications for interpreters.** Interpreters, trainers, and employers of interpreters may find support from this study in understanding the factors that encourage job satisfaction, particularly which values they endorse and how closely their values align to one another. When individuals are satisfied with their work, they are less likely to

change jobs or careers (Moore et al., 2006). The current study pointed to the salience of autonomy, altruism, and relationships in maintaining job satisfaction, and many participants described the importance of balancing work demands (i.e., unpredictability and instability) by focusing on aspects of their job over which they have control in order to gain a sense of autonomy. A list of recommendations for enhancing job satisfaction is provided in order to encourage interpreters to consider factors contributing to their own satisfaction with their work (Table 4). This list reflects suggestions and salient themes that emerged from the original interview guide and participants' responses. Several participants noted that they learned about themselves simply by participating in the interview process, pointing to the value of introspection in understanding one's own experience of job satisfaction.

Table 4

*Maintaining Job Satisfaction for Sign Language Interpreters*

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**Autonomy**

- Interpreters should seek to utilize their autonomy in healthy ways in order to balance the stress inherent in interpreting work.
  - Interpreters who value independence may benefit from working in a more flexible environment. For example, freelance or agency work typically offers more autonomy.
  - Interpreters whose work values more closely align with needs for safety and comfort may benefit from working in a more structured environment in terms of compensation, schedule, or consistency. For example, working in an educational setting or a VRS environment may offer more predictability in terms of scheduling and financial stability.
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### **Altruism**

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- Interpreters who value being of service to others are encouraged to take time to recognize the impact of their work. Interpreters provide communication access for a historically disempowered community of people and expand the awareness of Deaf needs and rights to the hearing community.
- Interpreters should explore the motivating factors behind becoming an interpreter and gain an understanding of their own experiences of power and oppression.
- Interpreters who value empowerment can seek to reduce power differentials wherever possible and to take accountability for their actions. One way to do this is to have a friend or colleague who acts as an accountability partner with whom you can confidentially discuss issues of privilege.

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### **Relationships**

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- Interpreters should develop and maintain healthy relationships with clients whenever possible and seek to resolve client conflicts when they arise.
- Interpreters should maintain healthy interpersonal boundaries with clients, peers, friends, and family members.
- Interpreters should maintain supportive relationships (within and outside of the interpreting profession) in order to reduce the impact of work-related stress.

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### **Achievement and Status**

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- Interpreters who value professional development and growth are encouraged to take time to recognize their career achievements (i.e., enhanced certification or education; obtaining a meaningful position, etc.).
  - Interpreters who value achievement but are struggling to obtain success are encouraged to evaluate their skill level, motivation, and their ability to articulate their professional worth and personal needs.
  - Interpreters should gain awareness of their personality styles and how they might match or conflict with interpreting in general or within certain work environments. For example, if an interpreter is a more concrete thinker and prefers stability, she/he might be more satisfied with a full-time position at an agency or school district. For individuals who have more free-spirited or outgoing personalities, a freelance position may be a better fit.
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### **Safety and Comfort**

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- Interpreters should acknowledge the continual challenges that are posed in the work of the interpreter and recognize when stress levels are being increased beyond healthy limits.
- Interpreters who are experiencing stress at work are encouraged to assess their environment for sources of strain and attempt to gain control over some aspects of their work wherever possible (i.e., change schedule, environments, etc.)
- If a working environment becomes too stressful, interpreters should utilize their personal autonomy to determine whether they would like to change positions, environments, or professions.
- Interpreters are encouraged to practice emotional awareness and stress-reduction techniques (e.g., taking time off work, processing emotional responses, having a confidante)

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*Note:* Recommendations developed based on participant responses to interview questions.

**Implications for counselors.** Vocational counselors may receive insight from the current research to utilize when working with clients who work as sign language interpreters or other helping professionals. As highlighted in the current study, these professionals are at a higher risk for burnout and must balance work demands with job elements that are within their ability to control.

A list of questions was created to utilize when exploring values with sign language interpreters (see Table 5). This tool may allow career counselors to help interpreters explore specific aspects of their work that are important to them and are within their ability to control. Counselors should encourage interpreters who struggle with job satisfaction to clarify which work values are most important to them and assess how their work environment meets those needs. By gaining a sense of autonomy, interpreters may feel more satisfied with their work.

Table 5

*Questions for Exploring Work Values with Interpreters*

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**Theme 1: Autonomy**

- In what ways are you able to make decisions at work? In what ways are you limited?
- How important is it to make your own schedule?
- Do you want to be/like being an entrepreneur? Would you prefer to work for someone else?
- How are you creative at work? How important is it that you have an opportunity to be creative?
- How important is it to take responsibility for your work? How much do your personal ethics align with your professional and ethical obligations?

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**Theme 2: Altruism**

- What drew you to this profession? (Your narrative may help you discover what values are important for you.)
- How important is it to serve others at work? Through your work?
- Does your work satisfy any aspect of your spirituality?

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**Theme 3: Relationships**

- Do you have relationships that are supportive (in and outside of work)?
- Do you have healthy and meaningful relationships with colleagues and clients?
- Are your other life roles fulfilling? How do they support your interpreting work?

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**Theme 4: Achievement**

- Do you feel you are using your abilities in a meaningful way?
- Have you developed in accordance to the goals you have set for yourself?
- Have you achieved the recognition and reputation you desired?

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**Theme 5: Safety and Comfort**

- Do you prefer to have stability and predictability at work? How much flexibility do you need?
  - How comfortable are you in new situations?
  - Are you willing to work in potentially dangerous/risky environments (i.e., medical, legal, mental health, outdoors)?
  - Are you able to articulate your needs (on and off the job)?
  - Do you have healthy stress-management skills (ability to say no, take time off work, engage in self-care and recreation, etc.)?
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### **Theme 6: Status**

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- What type of lifestyle do you want to maintain? To what degree do you need to have financial stability?
  - Are you a social person? What personality factors lend themselves to this profession?
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*Note:* Questions developed from participant responses to interview questions.

This list of questions includes aspects of altruism that encourage interpreters to explore their career narrative to determine the motivating factors for becoming an interpreter. Other questions can be used to help interpreters explore the supportive nature of their relationships within and outside of their professional lives. Therapists may also ask about specific values around achievement, such as professional development and assess whether the interpreter has sufficient opportunities to grow. Finally, while some elements of stress are out of the hands of interpreters, vocational counselors should encourage interpreters to develop health self-care and coping strategies to prevent burnout and manage job strain. The list of questions provided may be useful when working with other helping professionals to determine which values are salient in their job and the aspects of their work that are most meaningful to them.

#### **Limitations**

Some of the limitations of this study include drawbacks inherent in qualitative work. The sample size was small (n=9) and may not be generalizable to the broader population of sign language interpreters. The sample was homogenous, and while diversity factors were considered and included as much as possible, the sample was

ultimately representative of the population. Future studies may explore a wider variety of demographic variables with a larger sample.

Secondly, the initial demographic questionnaire did not ask participants about their educational background and, therefore, the study was unable to explore the impact of education on work values or job satisfaction. Individuals in this study were required to hold RID's NIC (National Interpreter Certification) which limited the participant pool. At the time of recruitment, the educational requirement to test for the NIC was a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Since recruitment, the requirement to hold RID's NIC has increased to a master's degree. Future researchers may choose to explore a wider variety of certifications and specialties (i.e., EIPA [Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment]), certifying bodies (i.e., state boards), and education levels.

Another possible limitation to the current study is volunteer bias. It is likely that individuals who volunteered to participate in research about interpreting and job satisfaction may inherently create more meaning in their work or differ in other ways than interpreters who would not choose to participate in research.

### **Strengths**

These limitations are countered by an important strength. The process of scientific research inherently lends itself to a hearing perspective, organizing information in a linear or categorical fashion to understand a phenomenon. Job satisfaction is best understood through understanding of individuals' work experiences, and qualitative inquiry lends itself to understanding these experiences (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The

researcher chose to explore interpreters' experiences through a qualitative approach, which is more consistent with the Deaf culture's love of storytelling (Lane, 1996). Future research using mixed-methods would be helpful in clarifying values and job satisfaction as they apply to a wider range of participants.

### **Conclusion**

To date, this has been the only study conducted exploring the experience of sign language interpreters and job satisfaction using qualitative analysis. The results of this study can be used to inform interpreters, their employers, vocational counselors, and interpreter instructors about how the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) may be applied to individuals working within this profession. Interpreters work in many environments (e.g., educational, medical, legal, community) and in many roles (i.e., freelance, contract, or full-time), and when they make use of their autonomy, they are able to combine elements of their work into an experience that is satisfying for them. Empowerment was initially predicted to be an emerging work value among sign language interpreters. Instead, it was found to be encompassed within the values of altruism and relationships. An intriguing discovery highlighted the importance of relationships in experiencing job satisfaction. Individuals' experiences at work are impacted by both positive and negative relationships, which points to a potential drawback of the TWA theory: valuing relationships in the workplace has not been incorporated into previous conceptualizations of job satisfaction.



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Appendix A  
Definition of Terms

## **Definition of Terms**

**Achievement** – feeling accomplished and using ones abilities (Rounds & Jin, 2013)

**Altruism** – fostering harmony and being of service to others (Rounds & Jin, 2013)

**Autonomy** – the ability to be independent and creative at work and taking responsibility for the work produced (Rounds & Jin, 2013)

**Burnout** (also called compassion fatigue) – a gradual process of emotional exhaustion that can leave an interpreter vulnerable to experiencing vicarious trauma (Harvey, 2001)

**Comfort** – experiencing minimal levels of stress at work; can include factors such as independence, variety, and compensation (Rounds & Jin, 2013)

**Empowerment** – providing support in order to allow individuals to use power that is naturally their own (Mason & Ren, 2012)

**Interpreter/Translator** – an individual who renders information from one language into another (RID, 2007); the terms interpreting (public works) and translating (literary works) are often used interchangeably within literature and among professionals (Katan, 2009) and will be considered as interchangeable concepts for the purposes of this study

**Job Satisfaction** – the degree to which an individual likes their job or work environment (Swanson & Schneider, 2013)



**Safety** – experiencing stability, order, and predictability at work (Rounds & Jin, 2013)

**Status** – achieving recognition and advancement (Rounds & Jin, 2013)

**Theory of Work Adjustment** – established by Dawis and Lofquist (1984), a theory that describes work adjustment as when an individual is both satisfied with their employment and satisfactory to their employer, creating a state of equilibrium within one's career (Swanson & Schneider, 2013)

**Work Values** – beliefs and standards in the workplace that guide individual action and thought (Swanson & Schneider, 2013)

**Video Relay Interpreting (VRS)** – a free service regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in which deaf and hard of hearing individuals can utilize video technology and a sign language interpreter to make phone calls (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2007)

**Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)** – interpreting services provided via videoconferencing technology, where the interpreter is in a separate location from the client(s) (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2010)

Appendix B  
Pre-Screening Questionnaire

### Pre-screening Questionnaire

1. Age in years: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Race/Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you have deaf parents?           yes \_\_\_\_\_   no \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you have deaf family members?   yes \_\_\_\_\_   no \_\_\_\_\_
6. Number of years you have been interpreting professionally: \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is the status of your current role as an interpreter?  
Full time \_\_\_\_\_   Freelance \_\_\_\_\_   Contract \_\_\_\_\_   Other \_\_\_\_\_
8. Have you worked in the following settings? If yes, for how long?
  - a. K-12                   yes \_\_\_\_\_   no \_\_\_\_\_   number of years \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Higher Education   yes \_\_\_\_\_   no \_\_\_\_\_   number of years \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Video Relay Service   yes \_\_\_\_\_   no \_\_\_\_\_   number of years \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Community
  - e. Government           yes \_\_\_\_\_   no \_\_\_\_\_   number of years \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. Business              yes \_\_\_\_\_   no \_\_\_\_\_   number of years \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. Legal                 yes \_\_\_\_\_   no \_\_\_\_\_   number of years \_\_\_\_\_
  - h. Other \_\_\_\_\_      yes \_\_\_\_\_   no \_\_\_\_\_   number of years \_\_\_\_\_
9. In your current role, what are the top three settings in which you work?  
1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Do you have other certifications besides the RID NIC?   yes \_\_\_\_\_   no \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, what other certification(s) do you hold? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Contact information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred method of contact: phone \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C  
Interview Guide

## Interview Guide

Thank you for your interest in my thesis research on the experience of sign language interpreters and job satisfaction. I am excited about your participation and unique contribution you can make to my study.

The research model I am using is a qualitative one through which I am seeking comprehensive depictions or descriptions of your experience. In this way I hope to illuminate or answer the research questions: First, how do sign language interpreters experience work values of (a) achievement, (b) comfort, (c) status, (d) altruism, (e) safety, (f) autonomy, and (g) empowerment? Second, how does each of these seven work values impact job satisfaction?

Through your participation, I hope to understand the essence of job satisfaction for sign language interpreters as it reveals itself in your experience. You will be asked to recall situations or events that you experienced related to job satisfaction. I am seeking descriptions of what these experiences were like for you: your thoughts, feelings, behaviors, as well as situations, events, places, and people connected with your experience.

I value your participation and thank you for the commitment of time, energy, and effort.

Note: If these questions apply differently to different settings (K-12, Community, VRS, etc., please note that in your answer)

1) What things are most satisfying to you about your work?

- 2) Describe your primary frustrations or sources of dissatisfaction.
- 3) Achievement has been defined as *feeling accomplished and using ones abilities*.
- How do you experience achievement as a sign language interpreter?
- How does achievement contribute to your job satisfaction, if at all?
- 4) Comfort has been defined as *experiencing minimal levels of stress at work*, and can include factors such as independence, variety, and compensation.
- How do you experience comfort as a sign language interpreter?
- How does comfort contribute to your job satisfaction, if at all?
- 5) Status has been defined as *achieving recognition and advancement* and often relates to perceptions of prestige and social status.
- How do you experience status as a sign language interpreter?
- How does status contribute to your job satisfaction, if at all?
- 6) Altruism has been defined as *fostering harmony and being of service to others*.
- How do you experience altruism as a sign language interpreter?
- How does altruism contribute to your job satisfaction, if at all?
- 7) Safety has been defined as *experiencing stability, order, and predictability at work* and can describe the work environment itself or the individuals with whom you work.
- How do you experience safety as a sign language interpreter?
- How does safety contribute to your job satisfaction, if at all?
- 8) Autonomy has been defined as *the ability to be independent and creative at work and taking responsibility for the work you produce*.

How do you experience autonomy as a sign language interpreter?

How does autonomy contribute to your job satisfaction, if at all?

9) Empowerment has been defined as *providing support in order to allow individuals to use power that is naturally their own.*

How do you experience empowerment as a sign language interpreter?

How does empowerment contribute to your job satisfaction, if at all?

10) Now that we have discussed (a) achievement, (b) comfort, (c) status, (d) altruism, (e) safety, and (f) autonomy, and (g) empowerment, which two or three values are most important to you?

11) While I have tried to cover all aspects of work values, you may still have experiences that come to mind related to your job satisfaction. What else, if anything, would you like to share with me about contributors to your job satisfaction?

Appendix D  
Semi-Structured Interview



## Semi-Structured Interview

\*Indicates potential follow-up by interviewer

- 1) What things are most satisfying to you about your work?
- 2) Describe your primary frustrations or sources of dissatisfaction.
- 3) Achievement has been defined as *feeling accomplished and using ones abilities*.  
How do you experience achievement as a sign language interpreter?  
How does achievement contribute to your job satisfaction, if at all?  
\*Ex: What constitutes a “good day’s work?” What have been your experiences with “just the right translation?”
- 4) Comfort has been defined as *experiencing minimal levels of stress at work*, and can include factors such as independence, variety, and compensation.  
How do you experience comfort as a sign language interpreter?  
How does comfort contribute to your job satisfaction, if at all?  
\*Ex: What is your perception of flexibility and variety with respect to your work?
- 5) Status has been defined as *achieving recognition and advancement* and often relates to perceptions of prestige and social status.  
How do you experience status as a sign language interpreter?  
How does status contribute to your job satisfaction, if at all?  
\*Ex: Some helping professionals have defined status as working in high profile settings and/or receiving a good wage. What is your experience with these examples?

6) Altruism has been defined as *fostering harmony and being of service to others*.

How do you experience altruism as a sign language interpreter?

How does altruism contribute to your job satisfaction, if at all?

\*Some examples may include working with a team, providing pro-bono services.

7) Safety has been defined as *experiencing stability, order, and predictability at work* and can describe the work environment itself or the individuals with whom you work.

How do you experience safety as a sign language interpreter?

How does safety contribute to your job satisfaction, if at all?

\*Are you able to provide an example of how safety plays out in your work?

8) Autonomy has been defined as *the ability to be independent and creative at work and taking responsibility for the work you produce*.

How do you experience autonomy as a sign language interpreter?

How does autonomy contribute to your job satisfaction, if at all?

\*One example may include having control over assignments, contracts/conditions, team environments.

9) Empowerment has been defined as *providing support in order to allow individuals to use power that is naturally their own*.

How do you experience empowerment as a sign language interpreter?

How does empowerment contribute to your job satisfaction, if at all?

\*Are you able to provide an example of how you witnessed empowerment play out?

- 10) Now that we have discussed (a) achievement, (b) comfort, (c) status, (d) altruism, (e) safety, and (f) autonomy, and (g) empowerment, which two or three values are most important to you?
- 11) While I have tried to cover all aspects of work values, you may still have experiences that come to mind related to your job satisfaction. What else, if anything, would you like to share with me about contributors to your job satisfaction?

Appendix E  
Informed Consent Form

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY  
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: A Qualitative Exploration of Work Values and Job Satisfaction Among Sign Language Interpreters

Primary Investigator:.....Monique J. Champagne, B.A. 214-991-5280  
Faculty Advisor.....Jeff Harris, Ph.D. 940-898-2313

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study, conducted by Monique J. Champagne, B.A., at Texas Woman's University. The purpose of this research is to elucidate the lived experiences of American Sign Language interpreters in order to explore and describe the way sign language interpreters experience six work values (defined by the Theory of Work Adjustment) and how these values may contribute to job satisfaction. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a sign language interpreter currently certified with your National Interpreter Certification (NIC) with the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID).

Description of Procedures

In the first stage of this study, you will be provided with a copy of this informed consent to research via a PsychData website link. Should you continue to be interested in participating, you will fill out a demographics form. On this demographics form, your email address, first name, and phone number will be requested. You may or may not be selected for participation in an interview. If you are not selected for participation in this study, you will be thanked for your time and no further involvement will be required. However, if you would like a copy of the study summary, you may request this at any time. This summary will be delivered via email upon study completion. If you are selected, you will be contacted via phone or email for an interview.

If you have been chosen for study participation, you will be asked to spend between 45 minutes to 75 minutes of your time in a recorded telephone interview with the primary investigator. The researcher will ask you questions about your experiences with work values and job satisfaction; you will have received these interview questions ahead of time. The interview will be audio recorded and then transcribed so that the researcher can be accurate when studying what you have said. In order to be a participant in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age or older and currently hold an NIC certification.

Potential Risks

One risk in this study is loss of confidentiality. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. All email correspondence with identifying information will be stored in a password-protected database that will be deleted upon the study's completion. Material related to the study, including any identifiable information (name, email, and phone contact information), will be kept separate and stored in a password-protected folder. Interview recordings will be limited to access by the principal investigator and an undergraduate research assistant. Interview transcriptions will only be read by the principal investigator, research assistant, advisor, and the individual selected to help with cross-coding the data. Once the interviews have been coded, the codebook will be password protected. All recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the transcription process, and de-identified transcripts of interviews will be shredded within five years

of the study's completion. You can choose a location of your preference; the interviewer will conduct the interview from a private and secure location.

There is a potential loss of confidentiality when information is collected over the Internet. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all emails, downloading, and Internet transactions. All emails that contain your name or contact information will be deleted upon study completion. Information from your demographics questionnaire will be kept confidential through Psychdata.com, which stores information in a secure data facility. Psychdata.com employs several procedures to preserve data security including a 128-bit Secure Socket Layer data technology that encrypts both survey questions and participants' responses. Psychdata.com servers are stored in a secure data facility and are monitored by security personnel 24 hours per day and 7 days per week; all data files are backed up by Psychdata.com daily; and Psychdata.com incorporated security measures that disallow the viewing of previous pages by individuals who use a computer after a study participant. The researcher and her advisor will be the only individuals who will have access to the data on the Psychdata.com website. The researcher will be the only individual who has access to your personal information and transcript resulting from the interview.

Another risk in this study is the possibility of psychological or emotional discomfort. The researcher will ask you questions about your experiences with work values and job satisfaction. The researcher will also ask you to offer examples of experiences you have had regarding job satisfaction. However, as noted, you will have received the interview questions ahead of time so that you can choose what you are comfortable revealing. Participation in this research is voluntary, and you may stop the interview at any time should you experience any psychological or emotional discomfort. You may choose which questions you wish to answer and decline to answer any questions that may cause you discomfort. The researcher will provide you with a referral list of agencies that may be contacted for assistance.

Another possible risk in this study is fatigue. If you become tired or upset, you may take breaks as needed. You may also stop answering questions at any time and end the interview.

There is a risk of loss of time. Participation in the study is voluntary. Interviews are expected to last between 45 and 75 minutes. You may choose to leave the study at any time for any reason.

Because study questions will center on personal experiences, and because the study will utilize member checks (in which members respond to the overall themes found), there is a risk of loss of anonymity. However, participation is voluntary and you may stop the interview at any time, skip any questions that cause you discomfort, and leave the study at any time. Data will be de-identified and stored in a password-protected file. Identifiable data (name, email, and phone contact information) will be separated and stored in its own password-protected file. As noted, the researchers will provide you with a list of resources in the event you experience any feelings of discomfort.

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

#### Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your involvement in this study may or may not be of direct benefit to you. However, your participation will help advance the research in the area of work values and job satisfaction for sign language interpreters. Another benefit to you is that at the completion of the study, a summary of the results will be emailed to you upon request.

Questions Regarding the Study

You may print out a copy of this informed consent form to keep. If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researcher; the phone number is at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at [IRB@twu.edu](mailto:IRB@twu.edu).

By clicking the "I agree" button below, you acknowledge that you have read this information and are giving your informed consent to participate in this study.

Appendix F  
Wordle Samples





Appendix G  
Member Check

Dear participant,

Thank you again for taking the time to speak with me about your experience with job satisfaction as a sign language interpreter. After diligently analyzing data from all participants, I have developed a list of themes that describe the essence of your responses regarding work values related to job satisfaction.

Please take some time to review the initial interview questions as well as the final list of themes attached. I would appreciate a brief response by Friday, January 13th. I am looking for ideas about whether you feel your responses were covered in the description of themes, if anything was missed, and/or any additional comments you would like to share.

I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Monique Champagne

## **Summary of Themes**

### **Theme 1: Achievement-Status**

This theme describes various aspects of achievement (listed below). The status aspect of this theme included factors related to demographics, social status, and personality.

#### **1.1 Using One's Abilities**

#### **1.2 Development Over Time**

#### **1.3 Recognition and Reputation**

#### **1.4 Demographic Factors and Social Status**

#### **1.5 Personality Factors**

### **Theme 2: Comfort- Safety**

This theme combines overlapping aspects of comfort and safety (listed below). Stress and coping includes descriptions of various types of stress encountered by interpreters as well as coping strategies used.

#### **2.1 Stability and Predictability**

#### **2.2 Stress and Coping**

#### **2.3 Compensation**

### **Theme 3: Autonomy-Comfort**

This theme includes comments on the presence and absence of overlapping aspects of autonomy and comfort (listed below).

#### **3.1 Decision-Making and Personal Control**

- 3.2 Independence**
- 3.3. Variety**
- 3.4 Creativity**
- 3.5 Taking Responsibility**

#### **Theme 4: Altruism-Empowerment**

This theme includes ideas about serving the deaf and interpreting communities and fostering harmony between deaf and hearing clients. Empowerment was found to be an extension of altruism, with an emphasis on awareness of power dynamics when serving others.

- 4.1 Serving the Deaf Community**
- 4.2 Fostering Harmony**
- 4.3 Serving Other Interpreters**

#### **Theme 5: Relationships**

This theme emerged as separate from the initial seven work values. This theme includes positive and negative aspects of relationships with peers, agencies, deaf and hearing clients, and other roles (i.e., ITP instructors, ministry-related work, family-life).

- 5.1 Relationships within the Interpreting Community**
- 5.2 Relationships with Clients**
- 5.3 Other Roles and Relationships**