History and Impact of the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf from 1971-2019

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History and Impact of the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf from 1971-2019

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Abstract

The history and impact of the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf was compiled as a result of interviews with eleven members of the organization and document review. Through the development of the narrative of the organization, and phenomenological study of the personal impact on members, it has been found that the organization has been instrumental as a resource for the interpreting community in Minnesota by providing education, community, and continuing education. However, in order to stay relevant, it is recommended that the organization establish connections with various people groups and organizations, make use of technology and frequent communication, and clarify the organization's mission and purpose. Passing down the history of organizations provides institutional knowledge essential for leaders to make decisions about the future directions of organizations.

A list of frequently used acronyms throughout this project can be found in Appendix G.

Keywords: professional association, sign language interpreters, history, benefit

Chapter 1 - Introduction

In October 2017, a room full of interpreters were discussing how organizations like theirs go through normal life cycles. The Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID) is an affiliate chapter of the national organization, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), and this workshop was a part of their yearly gathering for professional development coupled with their annual business meeting with a special focus on organizational life cycles. When the workshop leader presented the pointed question, “What stage of this life cycle do you believe the MRID is in?” immediately the room’s vibe changed as members became quiet, nervous, and still.

Given that the presenter had gone into depth to describe the stages of formation, development, maturity, and decline, it can be assumed participants knew that the presenter was bound to go down that path. However, having a personal assumption in your mind is different than having it confirmed by your peers. The presenter described the stage of decline similar to how Kimberlin, Schwartz and Austin (2011) cite Stevens (2001) work by saying: “Services are no longer meeting community needs, innovative decision-making stagnates, and declining demand results in reduced revenue and operating budget shortfalls” (Kimberlin, Schwartz, & Austin, 2011, p. 8). Another definition adapted from Miller and Friesen cited in Kimberlin et al. is, “businesses stagnate and begin to fail due to external challenges and internal lack of innovation” (Kimberlin et al., 2011, p. 9).

As the group started to respond to presenter’s question, participants mentioned how the MRID faced challenges in maintaining leadership, low budget concerns, and lack of member involvement. These all pointed to the MRID being in a stage of decline which means that the organization either needed to turnaround or face folding in the near future.

This was an impacting moment for this researcher to see a room full of interpreters that have been members of this organization come to terms with the current state of organizational health. Seven years ago, in 2012, several active ad-hoc committees focused on topics such as Freelance Interpreting, Educational Interpreters, Fundraising, and Annual Publications, where members were able to bring relevant issues to their colleagues for discussion. Since then, however, member involvement within these committees declined, and no one stepped forward to lead the committees after the previous leaders resigned. Member involvement and leadership has been an ongoing issue for the organization. The organization went through three presidents in 2017 due to personal resignations, causing instability in leadership and morale.

Businesses and organizations everywhere try to evaluate their strategic position in their field in order to achieve and maintain the relevance needed to stay afloat, and the MRID is no different. As Georges Lozano (2008), the former CEO of the Appraisal Institute of Canada says, professional associations used to be dependent on loyalty: “Today, although loyalty is much valued by associations, success is measured by the relevancy, recognition, and resources associations achieve” (p. 12). Like any other professional association, the MRID cannot escape the cultural shifts and technology advances (such as generational change, Video Remote Interpreting, and social media) lately requiring the organization to adapt. The MRID needs to understand what past resources it offered that made them relevant and recognized so that members and leaders can make informed decisions to re-gain relevance in the present and future.

Minnesota interpreters can name the historical laws and regulations that have impacted our field and the populations we serve such as the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1965, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1975, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991 (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007, pp. 287-288). We know that the RID was incorporated in

1972, but the institutional knowledge of our own organization is lacking. At a board retreat in December 2018, the new board of directors for the organization struggled to name any significant points of the Minnesota organization's history beyond what they have lived through or been a part of themselves. As the organization is approaching 50 years old, the experiences and record of organizational activities must be captured soon by those that lived through the early years.

This lack of information available about the history of this organization and its impact, or information about other sign language interpreting organizations shows that there is an opportunity for research. To discover the MRID's history, this researcher used interviews with long-term members to uncover the answers to the questions: 1) How do long-term members of the MRID describe the history of the organization as well as their experiences with the organization? and 2) How do these same MRID members view the impact of the organization on the interpreting field in Minnesota?

As new leaders step into serving roles and are motivated to help turn the organization around, they have no institutional knowledge and are unaware of what made the organization relevant in the past and how to make it relevant again. The goal of this research into the history of interpreting and leadership in Minnesota was to provide a relevant record and analysis for the current leadership to use as they make important decisions for the organization's future direction. It is hoped that the current and future leadership can use this as a resource to spark members' interest in the future direction of the organization by recognizing the impact that it has made in the past. Also, Minnesota is not the only Affiliate Chapter (AC) of the RID that is facing the low member involvement, financial struggles, and unstable leadership. With the original research

done on the MRID, other chapters will be able to use this as a framework for developing their own organizational assessment or use the results from it to guide their own decisions.

This first chapter provided an introduction on the purpose and scope of this project. Chapter Two will review the literature surrounding the subjects of professional associations like the MRID, history of sign language interpreting organizations, and leadership. Chapter Three will describe the methodology used, such as individual interviews and focus groups. Chapter Four will provide the results of the data gathered. Finally, Chapter Five will be a discussion of this data in light of the literature review, recommendations for further study, and final thoughts.

As most of the organization's history is held in the memories of its members, this research endeavored to discover how long-term members of the MRID describe the history of the organization as well as their experiences with the organization and how these same MRID members view the impact of the organization on the interpreting field in Minnesota. Through interviews aimed at finding the answers to these questions, that institutional history can be captured, shared and passed down. Without a project such as this, future sign language interpreters are at risk of not knowing the value of what an organization like this has afforded the previous generations. Learning about its history can help future interpreters see what professional associations like this can offer them in the future.

This study also benefits the previous generations of sign language interpreters who have put many hours of volunteer work into such an organization. Their work was not in vain, but without sharing what they have done, the memory will be lost, and the work forgotten.

Finally, this researcher does this project for personal reasons, as she has a passion for community, leadership, and investing in the next generation. Serving in this organization or others like it, she recognizes that members trust those in leadership to make wise and informed

decisions that will impact and improve organizational operations. Through research into the history of the organization and providing it as a resource, she hopes to use this opportunity for professional development as a way to invest into the leadership and next generations of the MRID.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

"As we move forward, being mindful of the past successes and challenges faced by interpreters, interpreter organizations and interpreter educators can prevent us from stumbling over the same problems and impeding our growth and professionalism" (Ball, 2018, p. 34). Dr. Carolyn Ball's statement aligns closely with what the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID) has recognized- if the organization desires to be effective, they need to know where they came from.

In order to answer the research questions of: 1) How do long-term members of the MRID describe the history of the organization as well as their experiences with the organization? and 2) How do these same MRID members view the impact of the organization on the interpreting field in Minnesota? A bit of research must be done on what kind of organization the MRID is. This will help discover what the role of a professional association such as the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID) is in 2019, and if it is any different than the role(s) it has had in the past.

Understanding the past is essential; however, there are several challenges facing non-profit, member-based organizations like the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID). This section will outline the research on what kind of an organization the MRID is, and what their history is in light of the national organization. The review of this literature will provide context in which to study the MRID.

Professional Association

While studying an organization, it is important to classify the organization in the larger scheme of organizations and associations. Caradine-Poinsett (2016) lists several of the categories of nonprofit organizations (501(c) organizations) as classified by the IRS such as charities, scientific organizations, educational institutions, religious affiliations, credit unions, social clubs, and professional associations. To understand the MRID's position as a type of organization, professional associations and their benefits and challenges will be discussed.

Profession-definition. A profession is described apart from an occupation or field due to the specific training and knowledge required for the work; their work involves the service of people, follows a code of ethics, and work is held to standards typically set by licenses and certifications (Markova, Ford, Dickson, & Bohn, 2013; Viridine, 1979; Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004). It appears that it is also relevant to understand the age of a profession and what impact that has on the field.

Sign language interpreting has been considered a "young profession" by Ball (2018), a leading researcher into the history of the sign language interpreting field and education programs. Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2004) agree with this assessment as they describe the field's process through professionalization. According to researchers, a defining factor of a growing profession is their development of a professional association- a place for individual practitioners to gather and grow their field (Markova et al., 2013; Nesbit & Gazley, 2012). The development of a professional association appears to be a milestone in professionalization. Next, a definition of a professional association will be unpacked.

Professional association-definition. Most professional associations are non-profit organizations. Caradine-Poinsett (2016) defines a non-profit apart from a for-profit organization

by saying, “Nonprofits are organizations created to serve a purpose other than the generation of profit… [their] goals are primarily focused on helping communities and are concerned with money only to the degree necessary to keep the organization running” (p. 13). This sect of nonprofit organizations, the professional association, is sometimes also considered a “mutual benefit organization” (Caradine-Poinsett, 2016).

Markova et al. (2013) recognized the lack of research available on why professionals decide to be members of professional associations, but identify that perceived value plays a huge role. They note that “organizations must provide value in order to attract and maintain members” (Markova et al., 2013, p. 2). The reason for this is that involvement is voluntary in these associations.

Members who choose to be involved can also decide to which extent they want to be involved with the organization. It is a normal occurrence to have a wide variety of involvement within the membership of an organization. This involvement can range from simply paying yearly dues, donations of goods or finances in support of the organization, to active involvement on committees or a board of directors (Markova et al., 2013). The variance in member involvement is highly correlated to the amount of value a member sees in the organization (Caradine-Poinsett, 2016; Markova et al., 2013). In order to understand that value, next will be a discussion about the benefits and challenges of professional associations.

Professional association-benefits and challenges. Professional associations are membership driven, non-profit organizations (Bugher, 1983; Caradine-Poinsett, 2016). They are often organized to “fulfill a social purpose, usually professional development and advocacy, on behalf of the interests of a particular specialty group (e.g., nonprofit organizations, nurses, lawyers, engineers)” (Caradine-Poinsett, 2016, p. 23).

In his article “Historians in Professional Associations,” Bugher (1983) defines a professional association apart from a trade association. Trade associations have a corporate focus and are often involved with regulations, research, statistics, educational programming, and lobbying. In contrast, professional associations “must be able to motivate their members to get involved in efforts intended to improve their professional development…” because “the ultimate beneficiaries of such programs are the groups and individuals daily served by membership- whether they be patients, clients, students, or public agencies” (Bugher, 1983, pp. 78-79). The difference is that practitioners, such as sign language interpreters, make up the professional associations rather than those trained in association management. This means that there is a lack of leadership and operations training within these volunteer organizations as they seek to advance their profession by enhancing individual professional performance through education, accreditation, political involvement, or publishing works (Bugher, 1983).

***Benefits of professional associations*.** As a non-profit organization, associations such as the MRID cannot profit money in order to benefit individuals working for the organization. Any excess money made from events or fundraising must go back to providing services that benefit the membership at large, and that provision of services is often what is evaluated in order to determine effectiveness (Bugher, 1983). Bugher (1983) also states the importance of meeting member expectations in order to create value in an organization. In order to know what members expect from a professional association, membership benefits provide a nice correlation. The results of Markova et al.’s (2013) study on the motivations for members to be involved in professional association is broken down into two categories- tangible and symbolic.

*Tangible***.** Primary desired tangible benefits of the assessed associations were professional development opportunities in conferences and workshops, publications and platforms. Older

generations seemed to be more persuaded by tangible benefits than younger members (Markova et al., 2013). While professional gatherings typically offered by professional associations are a typical benefit, Arendale (2009) remarks that they are not sustainable, or rather "insufficient and ineffective" for busy professionals (p. 29). They also state benefits of an association are: a "supportive home," scholarship, recognition for accomplishments, technological access to information and research, and advocacy for the field (Arendale, et al., 2009, p. 30).

*Symbolic***.** Mission focused, professional associations are able to create a symbolic meaning for its members. This has been noted by Markova et al. (2013) as a primary member benefit and incentive. Bolman and Deal would categorize this under seeing the value of an organization under the organizational orientation they conceptualize as the Symbolic Frame. They also talk strongly about the importance stories have within organizations. They say that stories are vital for passing down traditions and encouraging persistence through hard times (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The benefit of these organizations is that they offer that networking place for these stories to be passed o.

Challenges of professional associations. As earlier stated, professional associations are membership based and driven. They depend upon volunteers to get work done and can vary depending on member involvement (Bugher, 1983). This work could include planning and hosting fundraisers or events, tracking of continuing education, mentoring, filing taxes, etc. Each organization's "work" would look different depending on the scope of their mission. Members no longer join professional associations out of loyalty like they used to (Coerver & Byers, 2011). Also, the tangible benefits members look for are now being offered by multiple for-profit organizations, such as workshops (Caradine-Poinsett, 2016; Coerver & Byers, 2011). In all, it appears that professional associations are in the midst of a crisis and turning point. Coerver and

Byers (2011) go so far as to say there is a “Race for Relevance” happening (p. 2). The primary areas for concern in organizations are attributed to members’ time available, value seen in the organization, market structure, generational differences, competition both among similar fields and at large, as well as technology (Coerver & Byers, 2011).

The benefit of mission-oriented work as stated earlier, is not without its challenges. Often, mission statements of professional associations are left vague and ambiguous leaving the true meaning up to interpretation.

Volunteering. These professional associations are often run by volunteers, and there appears to be little research on the volunteer aspect of these organizations because much of the research is focused on charities. In order to mend this gap of research, authors Nesbit and Gazley (2012) conducted a survey receiving over 26,000 responses. These responses were then categorized by demographics, volunteer patterns, and the difference between community volunteering and professional volunteering. Findings from this survey reported that volunteer levels of members in professional associations and societies vary depending on education level, free time, employment status, and motivational factors.

Nesbit and Gazley (2012) also found that self-employed individuals are more likely to volunteer in professional associations. Sign language interpreters are often self-employed which makes the point that those people, according to Nesbit and Gazley, serve more often on committees or boards, but they are also less likely to contribute to a professional publication which may have a correlation to what the professional association can offer as a member benefit.

Members now have more competition for their time and energy, and they look for return on investment and to the benefits listed above for determining if membership and volunteering are worth their time (Coerver & Byers, 2011). However, member engagement has been found to

increase as their perceived needs are fulfilled within the organization (Wang & Ki, 2018). Membership fees are often the primary revenue source for professional associations; yet, there is also less discretionary income in the larger society which forces individuals to be careful about which associations they join (Caradine-Poinsett, 2016).

In order to capture member engagement, Bugher (1983) suggested rewarding members occasionally with appropriate recognition (p. 79). This aligns with Nesbit and Gazley (2012) who emphasized the importance of creating an organizational culture that encourages volunteering. When describing optimal culture for fostering volunteerism, they suggest "develop[ing] the internal capacity, mission, and messages that encourage volunteer behavior and that might also serve to equalize disparities in race, gender, and career status that cause some professionals to receive more volunteer opportunities than others" (Nesbit & Gazley, 2012, p. 582). From this, it is apparent that the branding and messaging delivered to potential volunteers can make a positive or negative impact on member engagement. It also means that an organization should pay attention to developing its internal capacity to maximize a holistic welcoming message to members.

Internal capacity is another consideration for identifying volunteerism strategies, and is defined by Shumate, Cooper, Pilny, and Pena-y-lillo (2017) as "the processes, practices, and people that the organization has at its disposal that enable it to produce, perform, or deploy resources to achieve its mission" (p. 155). When an organization has the proper resources, such as volunteers or revenue, the capacity is increased, allowing the organization to produce more member benefits. Austin (2011) stated that professional associations need to shrink and grow over time based on their current capacities and resources which means that these capacities are

not one size fits all, and each organization will need to evaluate and adapt based on the current climate. This is also highly impacted by the variation in leadership in professional associations.

*Leadership***.** Coerver and Byers (2011) stated several reasons why leadership is a challenge for professional associations. Among those reasons are leadership expectations, member expectations, and organizational structures. As for leadership expectations, each leader who comes into an authority or serving position on an organization will come from a different expectation standard and point of view. Coerver and Byers (2011) identify the challenge of understanding and adapting to the unique volunteer-based structure of professional associations.

Leadership expectations that change from one year to the next create varying atmospheres and organizational cultures (Caradine-Poinsett, 2016). Coerver and Byers (2011) also state that as times change, relevancy can become unclear and practices can become outdated which will call for leaders to reevaluate the activities, operations and standard practices of the organization. That process is referred to as radical change, and could include organizational structure or governance changes, empowerment, enhancement of staff (or volunteer) skills, definition of the market of the members, re-evaluate programs and services offered, and enhance technology use (Coerver and Byers, 2011).

For member expectations, Coerver and Byers (2011) stated that there are three categories for why a person decides to volunteer to be on a board of directors in a professional association. They are altruism, self-interest, and ego (p. 31). If altruism is the highest motivator, the leadership will do well. If self-interest and ego are the primary motivators, leadership will suffer.

Finally, Caradine-Poinsett (2016) discusses the unique organizational structure that professional associations operate in. She states that the shared leadership style of professional associations appears to set them apart from their for-profit or staff-volunteer counterparts. For-

profit organizations have a pyramid-like leadership structure in which the Board of Directors hold the decision-making power above the CEO and Executive Leadership Team. Staff-volunteer leadership structures are hierarchical where the President is responsible for decision-making. Rather than the top-down hierarchical structure expected in traditional organizations, professional associations are governed more like concentric circles requiring responsibilities and leadership to be shared (see *Figure 1* adapted from Caradine-Poinsett, 2016, for visuals of these structures). Unfortunately, this shared leadership has been shown to result in friction among leaders. Due to this, researchers noted the importance of leaders possessing skills of "political astuteness and ability to integrate mission and strategy while navigating the uncertainty of resource acquisition" (Silverman & Taliento as cited in Caradine-Poinsett, 2016, p.25).

By defining what a professional association is, and considering the benefits and challenges, one can then narrow down the interest to affiliate chapters of professional associations such as the MRID.

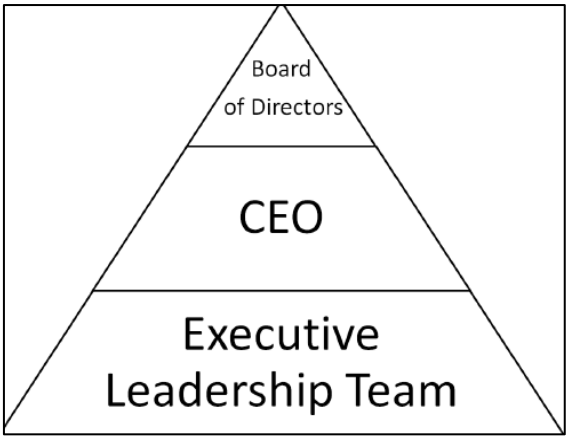

Figure 4. Leadership structure in for-profit organizations

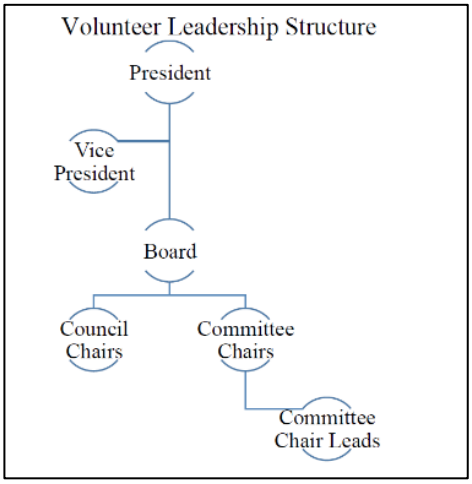

Figure 2. Staff-volunteer leadership structures

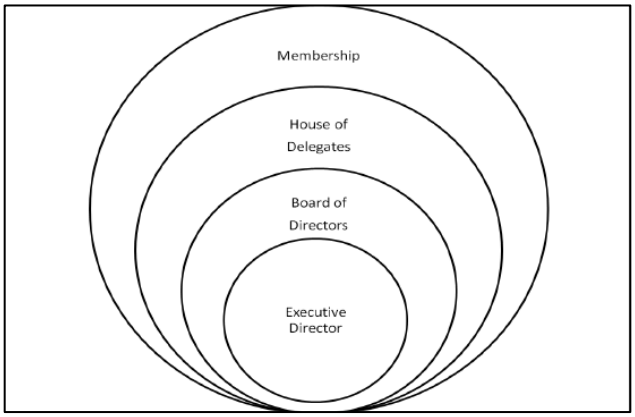

Figure 3. Leadership structure in professional associations

Figure 1- Leadership Structures in various organizations. Figure 1 is a collection of Figures 2-4 taken from Caradine-Poinsett (2016). Figure 4 shows the pyramid leadership structure in for-profit organizations, in which the Board of Directors hold the decision-making power above the CEO and Executive Leadership Team (p. 31). Figure 2 shows the organizational structure of a staff-volunteer leadership structure as hierarchical where the president is responsible for decision-making (p. 25). Figure 3 highlights the leadership structure within professional associations as concentric circles rather than a hierarchy (p. 31).

State or affiliate chapters. Many organizations have affiliate chapters within the professional association. Benefits of local membership include higher member involvement with promotion of local activities, networking opportunities, and offering mentorship programs for members (Getting the Job Done, 2005). However, little research has been found on the purpose and strength of affiliate chapters specifically. The following research will look at the sign language interpreting field in which the MRID finds itself representing.

Sign Language Interpreting and the Need for a Professional Association

Now that a profession and a professional association have been defined along with their benefits and challenges, next will be a look at how sign language interpreting came to be a field and a young profession in America. For a basic definition, Robertson (2018) stated that an interpreter is someone who

> …conveys what is said or signed in one language into another language while maintaining the original intended message. *Interpreting* allows two or more individuals who do not share a common language to engage in a communicative interaction through a person who is bilingual (p. 1).

Specifically, this research focuses on sign language interpreters in the United States who work bilingually to bridge communication between Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities using American Sign Language and those who use spoken English. Throughout this paper, the term *Deaf* is capitalized to show the cultural identity of the person rather than the medical condition of not being able to hear. Also, the term *hearing* is used by the Deaf culture in order to identify someone who can hear.

The 1960s and ‘70s was a season in America of creating laws to provide access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) individuals. Human rights acts of the 1960s led to more working

opportunities for DHH individuals and more recognition for the need of interpreters, yet there was a shortage of interpreters to fill these jobs (Viridine, 1979). The same shortage of interpreters was not limited to the United States; Canada was also going through a time of discovery and shortage of sign language interpreters (McDermid, 2008). There was a strong need for the profession to be validated (Fant, 1990; McDermid, 2008; Viridine, 1979).

Roy, Brunson, and Stone (2018) described why sign language interpreting was slow to be formally recognized as a field. One of the defining factors of a profession, as stated earlier, is that they involve humanitarian work in some way-contributing to the betterment of society. Those working with the Deaf as welfare workers (teachers, religious teachers, counselors, etc.) often had Deaf parents (Fant, 1990). As early as 1818, there were organizations established in the United Kingdom that had the name "Mission for the Deaf," and in 1929 these Missions developed a training in welfare work with Deaf individuals (Roy et al, 2018). However, the "welfare-work" nature that society perceived sign language interpreting to be was a hindrance to the professionalization of interpreting as well as the lack of recognition of ASL as an official language (Napier, as cited in Roy et al., 2018).

People who worked with the Deaf as interpreters were seen as "adhoc helpers" rather than professionals (Roy et al., 2018), and "being paid for interpreting was unheard of" (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007, p. 262). However civil rights laws passed in the 1960s slowly helped interpreters be recognized as "professional language-communication specialists" (Roy et al., 2018, p. 38). As previously stated, Ball (2018) classified sign language interpreting as a "young profession" (p. 34). One of the main reasons for this is the establishment of the neo-professional organization- the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) (Viridine, 1979).

As a whole, the RID and its 57 affiliate chapters throughout the country are the only nationwide professional associations for sign language interpreters. Histories of the national organization, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), align by giving credit of the organization's founding to a workshop at Ball State Teacher's College in Muncie, IN on June 16, 1964. Being the first of its kind, this workshop uncovered the need for a registry of interpreters to be created - an interpreter organization (Fant, 1990; Myers, 2013; Roy et al., 2018; Viridine, 1979). Although this was not on their original agenda, they held an additional meeting for participants to gather, led by Dr. Lowell (the man credited with the idea). That day, the group voted to establish the National Registry of Professional Interpreters and Translators for the Deaf and elected all executive members. The name was shortened to the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf just five months later (Fant, 1990; Myers, 2013).

The incorporation date of Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) is contested; the RID website states that it was incorporated in 1972 (About RID, n.d.); however, Viridine (1979) states that it was incorporated in 1973 and received 501(c)(3) status in 1974. The primary goals in creating this organization were to enhance communication, promote the field, recruit more interpreters, and maintain a list of active qualified interpreters (Myers, 2013; Viridine, 1979).

It is important to note the RID was not established alone. They had the support of the Vocational Rehabilitative Administration (VRA), the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) and the National Association of the Deaf (NAD). In fact, according to Myers (2013) the "Workshop to Activate Interpreting Services for the Deaf" following the 1966 NAD Convention was the "start of a working relationship between RID and NAD" (Myers, 2013, p. 32). Operations of the RID would not have been possible without grants provided by the VRA or the collaboration from the NAD.

Since then, the organization has grown to include many affiliate chapters broken down into five regions. References to state and affiliate chapters of professional associations were made previously in this chapter, and now the focus of this literature review will shift towards the specific affiliate chapter, The Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID).

Who is the MRID?

The Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf was established in 1971 as an affiliate chapter of the national organization (Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf), and as the website states, the MRID "is a non-profit organization of professional interpreters, consumers, and interested persons. The MRID was established and incorporated in 1971 with the support and encouragement of the Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens (MADC)" (About MRID, 2019). The affiliate chapter finds itself in Region III of the RID along with Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin (Affiliate Chapter Map, n.d.).

As an organization, the MRID is made up of individual practitioners, which according to Bugher (1983) is another identifying factor of a professional association. These practitioners have a specific body of knowledge and skills that would qualify them to be categorized as a professional association.

It is estimated that within the state of Minnesota, there are roughly 800 interpreters for the Deaf, and according to the RID website, in 2019 there were 547 RID Certified interpreters, 68 Associate members, and 29 Student members in the state (Membership Overview, n.d.). These interpreters range from recent graduates to those with 40+ years of interpreting experience and are widely spread throughout the state. The Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID) is a 501(c)(3) volunteer-based non-profit organization serving both interpreters who can hear, as well as Deaf interpreters. Their 2011 Policy and Procedure Manual states: "It is the goal

of the MRID to promote the profession of interpretation and transliteration of American Sign Language and English" (Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2011).

In 2018 it had roughly 450 members (Thornberg, 2018) and has an annual budget of approximately $20,000-$30,000 per year (Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, n.d.). Funds are acquired from membership dues, fundraising events, and surplus income after conferences. They host events for interpreters such as Camp ASL, Spring Conference, Fall Conference, have committees that process continuing education units (CEUs), provide spaces for specialized interpreters to gather, and produce a bi-monthly newsletter.

State chapters within the RID originally held purpose for local gatherings and networking as well as the responsibility for being involved in the evaluation and certification process (Viridine, 1979). There is little else noted in the research about the contributions of affiliate chapters and their impact on the field. Documenting the history of these organizations appears to be a key gap in the research. The next section will discuss what documenting the history of organizations looks like and best practices.

Histories in Sign Language Interpreting Fields

Bugher (1983) alluded to historians having a prominent role in helping a professional association maintain work that is within their scope. Often associations will be alerted of problems that are within their communities, yet outside of their mission. People who understand the history of the organization and their mission help to pull back efforts and ensure that the precious volunteer time is not misused. They can also help keep organizations within their scope of work (Bugher, 1983; Kimberlin et al., 2011).

Viridine (1979) documented the first fourteen years of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, and she found the benefit in documenting the history to be "probe and categorize existing

work, to generate new conceptual frames, and to point out research gaps and promising opportunities" (p. 5). Also, Kimberlin et al. (2011) noted the importance of history in shaping organizational culture and how it is essential when discussing organizational change.

While gathering and assessing the history of organizations has been found to be essential, it has also been proven to be difficult in American Deaf-related communities. In relation to the focus on an American society, Austin (2011) stated,

> Given the 'ahistorical' predisposition of the American society (i.e. more interest in the present and future than in the past) and the preoccupation of most nonprofits with service delivery demands and urgent issues of the day it is not surprising to find many nonprofits with limited (or poorly documented) written histories of their organizations" (p. 1).

It appears that American culture impacts the frequency of historical documentation in that there is little spare time to document history while focusing primarily on organizations' present and future development.

Histories in the sign language interpreting field have their challenges as well. Atherton, Russell, and Turner (2001) mentioned the challenges such as most of the history has been written by people who can hear. Interpreters serve a community whose primary language is visual-gestural and has no written form. Individuals that are Deaf, DeafBlind, or Hard of Hearing are often more comfortable in their first language, American Sign Language, than they are in their second language, English. This then impacts their desire to have their thoughts, views, and experiences documented on paper (Atherton, Russell, & Turner, 2001).

Though not always documented on paper, the Deaf Community values oral histories, or those passed manually down from generation to generation (Atherton et al., 2001), and perhaps a different method for documentation is necessary. These authors go so far as to state that "in

video-taping the interviews, the potential worth of using oral history methodology for deaf history research… has been tested in a practical setting, and has been shown to be both valid and appropriate" (Atherton et al., p. 40). Limitations of this kind of research (personal interviews) are that they are vulnerable to human error and memory.

Through Dr. Ball's research, she has noticed that "History is powerless unless we capture it" (Ball, 2014). She argued for the documentation of history through personal interviews due to the nature of the sign language interpreting field's history being in the minds and memories of those who lived through it. For example, in honor of Idaho Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (IRID), Jo Ann Dobecki Shopbell described the impact that their professional association has made in her life. She found her place in sign language interpreting due to the community and professional development opportunities that the organization provided. To her, IRID means "Pride, passion, professionalism, and [her] interpreting home" (Dobecki Shopbell, 2013). Ball (2014) argued that type of history needs to be captured and shared so the field can apply what has been learned in order to evaluate the current trends in the field in order to make necessary adjustments to better the field's future.

Kimberlin et al. (2011) also talked about the importance of collecting and documenting histories of organizations but would add to this a word of caution. Rather than studying one or two cases and events within an organization, they defended the importance of a holistic approach to get a full picture of an organization. They said the collection of history to that extent can be difficult to obtain due to the nature of the history being stored in the memories of employees or volunteers, policies and procedures that dictate or define organizational behavior, and patterns of ongoing operations (Kimberlin et al., p. 4). Authors align in their concerns for accurate history,

due to the nature of memories being based on opinion and how they are susceptible to perception and human error (Kimberlin et al., 2011; Viridine, 1979).

This section of research showed that histories are necessary to document, and certain considerations need to be made when working with a visual-gestural language such as American Sign Language. These considerations are the accuracy of recalled accounts from memory, the documentation approach such as video recordings, and finally the necessity for histories to be documented holistically.

Summary

History proves to be a challenge for affiliate chapters of professional associations. In light of this, more research needs to be done on how members perceive the actions and benefits of their organization over time. This research would also provide a framework for leadership to use in its pursuits of change or even "radical change," as suggested by Coerver and Byers (2011).

In reference to organizations that gather professionals together, Robert Lauritzen (1997) used the following three questions to evaluate effectiveness: "What have I seen? What have I learned? [and] What difference does it make?" (Lauritzen, 1997). These three questions will be essential moving into the methodology and further chapters of this project.

Taking the strategies and research found from the literature review in Chapter Two, Chapter Three will describe the methodology used, such as individual interviews and focus groups. Chapter Four will provide the results of the data gathered. Chapter Five will be a discussion of this data in light of the literature review, recommendations for further study, and final thoughts.

Chapter 3 - Methods

As demonstrated in the review of literature, documentation and analysis of history is significant in an organization's ability to see how it has benefited stakeholders over time. This researcher decided to explore the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID), a local professional association for sign language interpreters in Minnesota, in order to discover their impact on the field of interpreting around the state and the personal impact the organization has had on individual members since its establishment in 1971. This section will describe the methodology used to answer the research questions: 1) How do long-term members of the MRID describe the history of the organization as well as their experiences with the organization? and 2) How do these same MRID members view the impact of the organization on the interpreting field in Minnesota? The following sections will outline the research methods and paradigm used as well as the data collection methods, setting, participants, tools, and data analysis.

Research Method/Paradigm

The open-ended and personal nature of this research topic lends itself well to a qualitative research design. Creswell (2009) said that multiple forms of data are used in qualitative research such as interviews, observations, and documents. He goes on to say, "Then the researchers review the data, make sense of it, and organize it into categories or themes that cut across all of the data sources" (Creswell, 2009, p. 175). That matches the goal of this project in studying the data in order to recognize trends identified by participants' statements.

The research paradigm chosen for this project was a combination of phenomenological and narrative. In discussing a phenomenological approach, Creswell (2009) reported that "Understanding the lived experiences marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and

prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationship of meaning" (p. 13). The phenomenon of study will be the impact of the existence of the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf over time. The goal is to collect the "lived experiences" of long-term members with the organization and to share common experiences of impact the organization has made in the eyes of its members.

In contrast, Creswell (2009) stated that narrative research is the telling of story for the creation of a chronological account. In this case, the members interviewed gave their personal stories of how the organization has impacted them and the field of interpreting throughout the last 50 years, and in doing so, they allowed the researcher to formulate a chronology of events such as that of a timeline.

Both the phenomenological and narrative approaches focus on lived experiences of those that are interviewed or observed (Creswell, 2009). Out of the observations and data gathered through interviews, the researcher identified patterns and themes that emerged in order to understand the common experiences of the participants as well as to understand the collective story of the organization experienced by participants over time (p. 13). Since the focus of this research was on the experience of the interpreting and deaf communities since the establishment of a professional association for interpreters, the MRID, this research paradigm fits well.

Data Collection Method

In order to understand what long-term members have experienced with the MRID, interviews and focus groups were used. Creswell (2004) indicated that qualitative research procedures often involve observing or asking questions of participants in an open-ended way in their natural environment to get the most thorough answers. Researchers also use multiple sources of data in order to maintain objectivity and to find patterns that emerge from the process

(Creswell, 2004, pp. 176-177). It has been stated that a common challenge for phenomenological research is to keep the researchers' biases separate from what they learn and observe through their research (Creswell, 2009; Groenewald, 2004). Although this researcher has been a participant observer with the organization for the last seven years, it is important that her personal opinions, observations, and bias stay separate from the research. In order to do that, individual interviews and interviews with focus groups were utilized, and the analysis of the data was solely focused on their contributions. The researcher was also able to access a significant collection of documents within a storage unit that the MRID owns. These documents included meeting minutes from the board of directors, committees, and other groups, as well as tax documents, newsletters, photographs, and conference planning materials. Observations and analysis of that data was also used to verify dates and events mentioned in the interviews.

According to Creswell (2009), multiple forms of data are typically gathered by qualitative researchers. In that same way, various types of data collection were used in this process including the analysis of documents and the conductions of interviews and focus groups. Individual interviews and focus groups were the primary methods of data collection.

Document review. At the time of the research, the MRID rented a storage unit in St. Paul, Minnesota, which contained previous board meeting minutes, committee meeting minutes, and artifacts throughout the years. Artifacts were found in the storage unit which support the statements and stories gathered from individual interviews and focus groups. The benefit to analyzing documents such as these, is they do not need additional transcription or translation and many are public documents that someone else has taken care to draft or compile. Creswell (2009) cautioned that these documents can have limitations such as consistency in detail and voice of

writing. His warning was realized with the documents the MRID had in their storage unit. However, the documentation available was still helpful in verifying statements in the interviews.

Individual interviews. A primary data collection method used in this research was individual semi-structured interviews. A total of four individual interviews were either video recorded in-person or recorded through a video conference platform called Zoom. Through the process of developing interview questions, Groenewald (2004) found value in asking open-ended questions involving experiences. For example, "How did you experience…" or "What value, if any, has been derived from…" (p. 47). The questions developed have followed this suggestion in that they are open ended for interviewees in order to learn from their experiences. Individual interviews, whether through face-to-face interaction or through online video conference, have benefits and challenges. Creswell (2009) stated that through interviews "Participants can provide historical information" (p. 179) which would be a great benefit to this type of research. Challenges and limitations to this approach are that the researcher's bias can be present and influence responses and that the articulation and perceptiveness of participants will vary (Creswell, 2009).

Focus group interviews. In addition to individual interviews, two focus groups were also established. One group had three participants and one group had four participants. The goal of using these focus groups was to allow members to share memories with one another in an organic way. Memories are fluid and are often triggered by someone else's statement or recollection of an event. Not only did the focus groups allow the participants to give thorough answers, they also allowed the research to stay authentic. Both personal and collective views were seen throughout these groups and ideas and memories were corrected or validated by other members who lived through it. The benefits and limitations of this type of method were the same

as individual interviews. The method of interview for the focus groups was the same as the individual interviews in that the same questions were asked (see *Appendix A* for specific questions asked). Participants either chose to be involved in a focus group interview or an individual interview, no participants were interviewed twice.

Setting

The setting of the interviews varied depending if they were in person or video conference. When using the Zoom video conferencing platform, individuals were in various locations such as in coffee shops or in their homes on personal computers. In-person interviews were held at coffee shops, bookstores, and libraries, in hopes they would be locations where individuals would feel comfortable sharing memories. Although researchers such as Krueger (2002) recommended focus groups of 5-10 participants, that would have been too large of a number for the length of time the interviews were allotted in this study. The seven people that were interested in participating in focus groups were divided in two, a group of three and a group of four. This gave more time for everyone to contribute their recollections, as well as allowed for easier scheduling.

Participants

The primary focus of this study was on long-term members of the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID). Long-term was defined by the researcher as someone who has been involved in or around the organization for longer than 10 years and ideally had served the organization in some capacity as a committee member or board member. Five groups of people were sought out as participants in this research: Deaf, Hearing, involved with the organization for 10-20 years, involved with the organization for 20-40 years, and involved with the organization since its establishment. It was a goal to have 8-10 people interviewed, and eleven

people ultimately participated in this research. Participants were given pseudonyms and are shown in *Figure 2*.

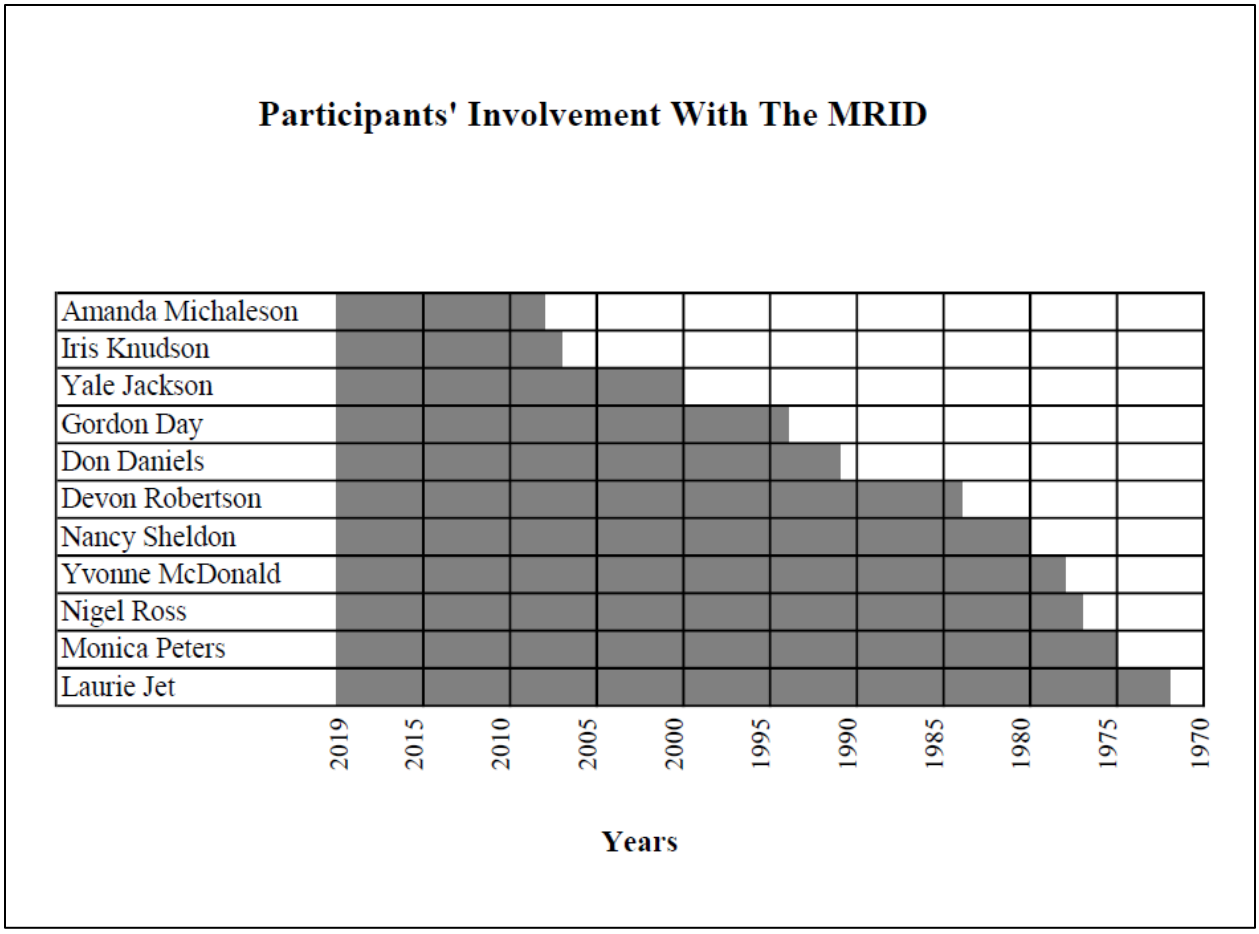

Figure 2. This shows the involvement of participatns with the MRID throughout the years. No person was interviewed who had experience from starting the organization in 1971. This chart represents when participants first became members of the organization; however, some members took breaks from being members of the organization throughout their years ranging from 1-3 years at a time.

Committee and Board of Directors Representation Among Participants			
Board Role	**Represented**	**Committee Role**	**Represented**
President	■ ■ ■ ■	Bylaws	■
Vice President / President Elect	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Conference Planning / Camp ASL	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Past President / President Ex-Officio	■ ■ ■ ■	Education	■ ■
Secretary	■	Freelance	■ ■
Treasurer	■ ■ ■	Fundraising	■ ■ ■
Member at Large / Board of Director	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Grievance	■ ■
Northern Representative	■	Evaluations	■
Southern Representative		Newsletter / Publications	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Metro Representative	■ ■	Professional Development / Continuing Education	■ ■
Central Representative		Public Policy	■ ■
Student Representative		Ad Hoc (Transition Team, Technology, Advisory, and other)	■ ■ ■ ■

Figure 3. This figure shows the collective experience and roles that the participants assumed while involved in the MRID. Some participants served in more than one role throughout their involvement with the organization such as board members, some committee members, and some were in advisory or ad hoc committee roles.

Recruiting Process and Data Collection Tools

After approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), initial contact was made with participants via e-mail (shown in *Appendix A*). The goal was to select at least two individuals who have been involved with the organization since its establishment in 1971, three individuals who have been involved with the organization for 20-40 years, and three individuals who have been involved for 10-20 years. Initial contacts were individuals the researcher knew personally due to her involvement in the organization and the field, or individuals referred to the researcher by trusted colleagues.

When an individual agreed to participate, they were presented with an Informed Consent form and a Focus Group Waiver form (if applicable). Both forms can be seen in *Appendix B* and *Appendix C* respectively. Both forms were either collected electronically ahead of time or signed upon arrival of an in-person interview.

This project was bi-lingual in the sense that both English and American Sign Language (ASL) were used throughout the research process. English was used for documentation analysis, emails, some interviews, and all transcripts. ASL was used for some interviews and consent forms were also translated by the researcher for access. Sign Languages are unwritten languages (Crasborn, 2015) which make research documentation particularly difficult in academic settings that focus on written evidence. As a result of this, researchers suggested video recording as the most conducive method for documenting sign language utterances (Crasborn, 2015; Hill, 2015; Perniss, 2015). Furthermore, following the recommendations of Perniss (2015), high-quality video and specific angles were considered to capture both participants and the interviewer during interviews. This allowed all people signing to capture the dialogue. Consideration was also given

to ensure that the camera was unobtrusive to the participants helping them to be their true selves while answering questions (Hill, 2015, p. 199).

Due to the visual nature of ASL, it would have been difficult for the researcher to take notes while observing simultaneously. Instead, video capture was used so discussions could flow freely, and the researcher was then able to analyze the data at a later time.

In order to collect the desired data, questions were developed and sent with the initial email to participants, seen in *Appendix A*. These questions were then used with the interviewees and focus group members. Follow up questions were also utilized on occasion in order to clarify information. Due to the narrative nature of this research, it was important for the participants to guide the sharing of information and open-ended questions were used to help facilitate participants' sharing.

When interviews were completed (see *Appendix D* for dates and times of interviews), they were then transcribed into English for analysis.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data followed a general process. The first step in the data analysis process was the collection of the raw data from documents found in the storage unit and interviews. Second, the data was organized and prepared for analysis. This included translation or transcription of interviews, renaming files as necessary to prepare for analysis and easy retrieval later, and backing up the data on a cloud service.

Next was the process of reviewing the data. During the transcription of the data, the researcher was able to get a general sense for what the history and impact of the organization was for these members. Upon completion of the transcriptions, the researcher created a spreadsheet to help categorize the information. The coding developed out of general notes from

the interviews and the content discussed, following the traditional approach of coding described by Creswell (2009) where the researcher "allow[ed] the codes to emerge during the data analysis" (p. 187). A timeline of significant events was also created from the statements of the participants, including events within the organization and external events which impacted the organization.

A narrative approach was then used to describe these themes and events for the discussion section of the final paper. Lastly, during the analysis the data was interpreted for meaning, unanswered questions raised by the data were documented, and "qualitative generalization" was used (Creswell, 2009) to generalize findings for other professional associations for interpreters.

In the write up of this data, the researcher showed multiple perspectives on events and impacts that emerged through the research. A narrative of the history of the organization as well as the phenomenology of the impact of the profession on both the interpreting field in Minnesota as well as long-term members of the organization was also uncovered and described.

Summary

Undocumented history is at risk of being lost. That is why this researcher used interviews and focus groups in order to preserve the history of the professional association, the MRID. She also analyzed the data in order to discover the answers to the research questions: 1) How do long-term members of the MRID describe the history of the organization as well as their experiences with the organization? and 2) How do these same MRID members view the impact of the organization on the interpreting field in Minnesota? Next, Chapter Four will provide the results of the data gathered. Finally, Chapter Five will be a discussion of this data in light of the literature review, recommendations for further study, and final thoughts.

Chapter 4 - Results

For this project, 11 participants supplied 350 years' worth of combined personal experiences as members of the MRID in various roles such as members, committee members, and members of the board of directors (see *Figure 3* for a list of all roles represented). Interviewees recalled the history of the organization and their experiences through answering the questions:

- What is your favorite memory of the organization?
- How would you describe the history of the MRID? Think about-
    - What are some of the milestones of the MRID since incorporation in 1971?
    - What are some of the struggles that MRID has faced over the years?
    - What trends have you noticed about the organization overtime?
    - MRID's history with the MADC (Minnesota Association for Deaf Citizens).
- Can you tell me about some positive and negative examples of the MRID's impact on the field of interpreting in Minnesota? Think about-
    - What kind of resources, if any, has the MRID supported the community with?
    - What are the primary benefits of being a member of the MRID?
    - Did the MRID ever overstep or cause harm?
    - How has MRID benefited you along your journey as an interpreter?

The answers to these questions provided the historical information for the narrative which was supplemented and verified by documents, such as newsletters, in the storage unit. It also provided information about overall trends that the participants have seen throughout the years. This information was compiled in the *Reported Trends, Struggles, Benefits, and Harm* section.

Finally, participants were asked the question "Where do you see MRID going from here?" Answers to this question were compiled in the section *Reported Next Steps for the MRID.*

Narrative

In the collection of the data through personal interviews and data collection, a historical narrative of the organization was collected. The narrative is broken down into decades beginning with 1970.

1970-1979. Around 1970, a group of individuals from the Minnesota Association for Deaf Citizens (MADC) had the idea to create an organization for sign language interpreters in Minnesota and wrote the founding documents of a new organization called the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID). On April 24, 1971, the first "Organizational Meeting" of the organization was called to order at Thompson Hall in St. Paul where the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws were adopted. Mel Carter was Chairman of the meeting and was thanked for his work as chairman in the "planning and organizing of MRID."

The first Board of Directors of the organization were also elected that day as follows: President - Rev. Lawrence Bunde; Vice President - Mrs. Carol Schweiger; Secretary - Miss Sue Dement; Treasurer - Mr. Gordon Allen; and the Directors -Mr. Mel Carter, Mr. John Bachman, and Mr. Francis Crowe. (See History- 1970s, n.d., for a list of the board of directors over time.) Several Deaf individuals were mentioned during interviews who contributed to the early years of the organization, including Mel Carter, Gordon Allen, Jim Jones, Leo Latz, and Doug Bahl.

The organization had 25 regular members and nine associate members that first year, which grew to 60 regular and 30 associate members by 1973. By 1976 there were a total of 194 members of the organization. Those early years were a time of growth and support from the Deaf community. Interpreters operated out of a social services model rather than a modern business

model and reciprocity was prevalent as interpreting services were exchanged for in-kind services or mentoring. Since there were few seasoned or experienced interpreters in the field who were qualified to teach interpreters, often Deaf people assumed the teaching positions instead. Deaf people took new interpreters under their wings and showed them what it meant to be a part of the Deaf community. They brought them to the Deaf club.

The interpreting field was just coming into the professional light in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the establishment of the national organization, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), and with the first of the interpreting preparation programs such as the one at the Technical Vocational Institute (TVI) in St. Paul (now called Saint Paul College). Many Deaf persons were supportive of interpreters becoming "professionals," because that was a new concept at the time. A paradigm shift was happening as ethics were developed for interpreters and education was provided for them about what an interpreter does and about how to work with an interpreter – and this knowledge became widespread. Certification for interpreters was also coming onto the scene, and as an affiliate chapter of the RID, the MRID was responsible for evaluating and certifying local interpreters.

TVI was the one of the first five interpreter education sites in the country and is credited as an instrumental part of the organization's beginnings. Early interpreters in Minnesota graduating from the six-week interpreting preparation program were often already professionals with college degrees in another field. They had the knowledge and skill needed to operate an organization such as the MRID, and they were also frequently serving on committees for the RID.

TVI was one of the only places with many interpreters working together. Several of the staff working at the college also volunteered as committee or board members with the MRID.

Having board and committee members in such staff positions was a resource to the organization because the staff could use the downtime on their paid positions to do the work for the organization. They also had access to office supplies such as e-mail and copy machines they could use for organizational purposes. Another benefit of the strong relationship between MRID and the college is that TVI staff interpreters were able to interact with the Deaf students. This was helpful to the organization as they tried to create community between Deaf and interpreters during events.

Around 1977, a group of members decided to start an organizational bi-monthly newsletter called the “MRID Update.” This was a strong resource to the membership over the years and operated out of TVI early on. Members used to gather on campus for “folding parties” to prepare the newest edition of the Update and mail it out to members. This was a time for new members to get involved with the organization and a time of socialization. This was also the first time that the organization needed to consider committee budgets for covering the mailing and copying expenses of this new resource.

At this point in the organization’s growth, members had difficulty describing the function of MRID and the activity was done by the organization or by individual members. They said “MRID was us” in the sense that MRID’s members represented the organization, and the organization represented the members. Actions by either individual members or the organization were synonymously considered “MRID” activity.

The late 1970s was a changing time for the organization. The MADC was a strong contributor to the creation of the MRID, yet their relationship to the MRID declined relatively soon after. Both organizations were going through a time of turnover and shift in priority. The MADC started to prioritize the creation of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division

(DHHSD). At the same time in California, there was a new philosophy that the interpreters should not go to the Deaf Club unless they were invited, which also led to a divide in the Deaf and interpreting communities. At California State University Northridge (CSUN), Deaf students and interpreters even sat on opposite sides of the room. CSUN's philosophy spread -- where Deaf people and interpreters should have less interpersonal relations – and MRID and MADC each began to show the same trend.

This was a significant period for the MRID as it separated from its roots (in MADC) and had time to become independent. Some members described the MADC as losing faith in the increasingly independent MRID, causing there to be more distance between the two organizations. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the organizations had little interaction, and the bylaws originally created for the MRID by the MADC needed to be updated as the times had changed. Adding to the uncertainty the field of interpreting was also struggling to define itself – were interpreters, professionals or paraprofessionals?

St. Paul Technical Vocational Institute (TVI) which had begun to practice like a referral agency handed over the work to the new private non-profit organization, the Interpreter Referral Service, established by the Minnesota Foundation for Better Hearing and Speech (MFBHS). In 1978, the MFBHS asked the MRID to establish guidelines for hiring interpreters that the new referral service could use. MRID was a large contributor to this change advocating for the needs of interpreters. It was also noted that this new model for interpreter referral changed the atmosphere of the field as it moved from a social service field to a more business-like model. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Regional Service Centers were also coming on the scene in Greater Minnesota to handle interpreter referral and services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals.

This exploration of independence continued as the MRID got their first PO Box (4414, St. Paul, Minnesota 55104) in 1979. Obtaining a unique mailing address was a milestone for the organization while it was gaining independence from TVI. Other interpreting programs were soon to be established, and the MRID needed to be a place that was unbiased toward any institutions. The PO Box gave them a sense of objectivity and also helped serve as an important step toward establishing the organization's own identity.

1980-1989. In 1980, the MRID established a grievance committee to handle violations of the RID's Code of Ethics, and an Educational Interpreter's Committee was in the process of getting off the ground. The Fee Schedule that had been worked since 1978 was completed and updated in 1980. This outlined a recommended pay for interpreting services and was followed by interpreter referral centers as well as individual freelance interpreters. The Fee Schedule was met with both appreciation and apprehension and was clarified over the next few months with the MADC and other organizations as to its "recommended" rather than "required" nature and why interpreters would be paid a relatively high rate per hour (See *Appendix E* for the fee schedule in 1980).

Rekindling of the relations between MADC and MRID happened as the organization recognized how important it was to honor the work that MADC and other Deaf individuals did for the organization. The Outstanding Member of the Year award, now called the Member of the Year Award (MOTY), was created in 1982 and a Deaf woman from Duluth, Kathy Moe, was the first recipient. Rand Rom, a Deaf individual and friend of a friend of the organization, created a new logo for the organization in 1983, still used in 2019 (see the logo in *Appendix F*). Individuals who joined the organization around this time recalled several positive memories

about working with the MADC and building relationships with their board. It is said that the new energy lasted around 10 years.

During these years, the MRID was considered in a positive light as a “legend” in reference to the organization’s extensive activity and contributions to the interpreting field. They were involved with legislation, activism, education, and law. Around 1981, a roster of MRID members was also being compiled so that members could contact each other easier.

In 1981, members of the organization who worked in the court system as interpreters were concerned about communication and privacy rights of Deaf individuals during legal proceedings. They got in touch with a lawyer from Legal Aid in Minneapolis, and through their partnership they were able to change Minnesota statutes Criminal 611.30 - 611.34 and Civil 546.42 - 546.44 so that interpreters were to be provided when defendants were “handicapped in communication” now called “disabled in communication” so they could understand the legal proceedings. They were also able to address what was considered “privileged communication” under Witnesses 595.02 (h), which clarified that an interpreter being present did not break the rule of privileged communication.

Through the newly established Grievance Committee, the organization was also establishing mediation processes for conflict resolution. The mediation process, continued education tracking, and standard practices which MRID established all ended up being adopted in some fashion by the RID. Members also contributed to interpreter education resources such as writing chapters for books or articles for the Journal of Interpretation provided by the RID.

MRID was also at the table when a state licensure was brought to the legislature. At the time, there was no standard for interpreters in education settings and parents of Deaf students were dissatisfied with the education their children were receiving. Licensure was brought

forward as a solution to “raise expectations, performance of interpreters, and success of Deaf students.” Though no state licensure was developed at the time, MRID was involved with those public policy discussions.

Members recounted that the MRID historically has been largely focused in the Twin Cities and struggled to represent and involve the greater regions of the state. In the early 1980s, other regional groups were emerging. The Northern Lakes Interpreters started meeting in November of 1980. The Southern Minnesota Interpreter’s Group (SMIG), later called the South West Interpreter’s Coalition (SWIC), also started in the early 1980s. Both groups actively created community in the northern and southern regions of Minnesota. These groups were separate from the MRID but submitted articles to the organization’s newsletter. It is unclear when these groups dissolved, but records of them go into the mid 1990’s. Sometime between 1988 and 1990, the organizational structure of the MRID Board of Directors changed eliminating the three general board positions and replacing them with Northern Representative, Southern Representative, Metro Representative, and Member-at-Large positions.

From 1982-1985, the organization pursued and obtained 501(c)(3) status. As a former 501(c)(4) the organization was exempt from federal taxes but as a social welfare status, they were not exempt from state tax and the contributions to the organization were not tax deductible. This new status opened financial opportunities for the organization by categorizing it as a “charitable organization” allowing any donations to be tax deductible.

As the MFBHS Interpreter Referral Service saw an increase in demand for interpreting services in the late 1980s, one agency was not enough to contain the work. Several interpreters wanted to explore working independently of the organization in a way they called “Freelance Interpreting.” Yet, this was met with resistance by some because meant that there would be no

central control of interpreters. Those who wanted to freelance had to fight against no-compete clauses to work independently. The MRID was a support to those interpreters wanting to freelance, and it was around that same time that the Freelance Interpreters Committee was established within the MRID.

Around 1984, the legislature created a Charitable Gambling Board which centralized the control of charitable gambling to the state level (Williams, 2005). The MRID got in touch with a local BINGO hall, “Little Canada Bingo Hall,” and went into a legal contract with them to start benefitting from this charitable gambling. Some members thought this was inappropriate of the MRID since the MRID was a professional organization, not a charitable one -- and they left the organization because of it. However, the primary motivation for the organization’s partnership with the BINGO hall was “easy money.” The organization frequently struggled financially, and as a 501(c)(3), they met the qualifications to establish such a charitable gambling relationship. The organization’s run at gambling lasted around seven months and $250,000 were earned. However only $33,000 were actually left to the organization after five lawsuits were filed, including sexual harassment, embezzlement, and others. Many other non-profits who rushed into charitable gaming had similar experiences as the MRID’s involving inappropriate action. Once the lawsuits were settled the remaining $33,000 was used as seed money for conferences and workshops for the organization.

A big year for the organization was 1987. The MRID created a “Golden 100 Membership” which allowed members to pay a sum of money to be members for the next 100 years (those individuals would have to start paying dues again in 2087). This was also the year that the MRID hosted the RID’s national bi-annual conference. As a result of the conference, the term S*t. Paul Standard* came about. This was in reference to the successful conference as well as

how “because the St. Paul conference set the standard for what interpreters were measured against.” Members were proud of how Minnesota (and the MRID) helped set standards that were used nationwide as RID adopted them or used them as examples such as the Grievance Policy, and Continued Education Tracking.

As if hosting the national conference was not enough of a milestone, this conference was also the inspiration for starting BLeGIT*, a member section of the national organization for individuals identifying as bisexual, lesbian, gay, intersex, and trans* (BLeGIT* Member Sectionq, n.d.). A group of conference goers spontaneously invited the community to Rumour’s, a gay bar and club in St. Paul, as an after-conference activity. The flyer posted on the bulletin board advertising this activity was taken down twice and the third time someone stood watch to make sure it stayed posted. That evening over 200 of the approximately 450 conference goers went to Rumuor’s to show their support for LGBT members. Because of what happened in 1987, the member section BLeGIT* was established at RID’s national conference in El-Paso two years later.

The RID’s national tests for interpreter certifications were in flux in the late 1980s, and as changes were implemented, the Evaluations Committee was replaced with a RID Testing committee by 1990. The late 1980s ended with the Board of Directors of the MRID traveling to various parts of the state for meetings and graduation pizza parties were hosted for new graduates from the interpreting training programs.

1990-1999. As the organization entered the 1990s, printing and mailing the MRID Update Newsletter was still an important member resource. It was a primary way that members received information about the interpreting field. Such information was valuable such as the new

requirement in 1990 that a person must be dual members of both RID and their local affiliate chapter to vote at business meetings for either organization.

Camp ASL started around 1990 and celebrated its fourth anniversary in 1994. This was considered a great resource for newer interpreters to have a silent and emersion weekend in ASL. The Camp was normally hosted in northern or central Minnesota. It was in the early 1990s as well when the MRID started awarding their first scholarship, the Myrtle Allen Scholarship. Scholarships were mentioned by members as a resource that the organization provides. This first scholarship provided financial support to a student pursuing education for becoming an interpreter inspired by Myrtle Allen.

Region III conference was held in Minnesota in 1994, and theatrical interpreters from the Deaf Education and Advocacy Foundation (D.E.A.F. was created by the MADC in 1980) and the Northern Sign Theater partnered to create the TIP, Theatrical Interpreting Project, that brought theater into the spotlight in Minnesota. Other committees of the time were Bylaws, Camp ASL, Annual Conference, Fundraising, Historian, Membership, MnEdIToR (Education), Nominations, Professional Development, Publications, Scholarship, Student MRID, Website, and an Ad Hoc QA Legislative Committee.

The Freelance Committee was still alive and active in the early 1990s but was sunsetted by the board in late 1996 due to inactivity. Members noted how there was a significant impact to the organization's relationship with its members any time the Freelance Committee ended (both here and later in 2015). Members felt disconnected from the organization and felt they had no voice as new fee-for-service sign language referral agencies started to emerge. This was noted as a time where business practices were changing and there was a great need for the Freelance Committee to hold the referral agencies accountable. It was also the time that there was

significant involvement from the MRID (in 1994) to help pass the Quality Assurance Law setting standards for interpreters in K-12 education settings.

As technology started to develop in the 1990s, the MRID got on board with email and a website. The first website set up around summer 1996 was http://www.serve.com/MRID with an email address of MRID@mail.serve.com. The organization held office space at Normandale College from 1994-1995, and Century College from 1997-1999. While at Century College in 1997, the organization purchased its first computer, a 1995 Toshiba 486 laptop with 20MB RAM, and hired a temporary part-time (4-hours per week) person to do MRID work.

In 1997, the Myrtle Allen Scholarship became the Pioneer Scholarship, keeping the same mission to contribute to the education of future interpreters. The MRID also added a new scholarship that year for educational interpreters pursuing RID certification. This was because changes to the Quality Assurance law (QA Law), beginning in the year 2000, would require K-12 interpreters to be certified with the RID Certificate of Interpreting and Certificate of Transliteration (CI/CT) or be certified by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) Level III. The MRID was heavily involved with the happenings surrounding the QA Law and these proposed changes throughout the mid-late 1990s including a study of the educational interpreters in Minnesota. Through this study, the MRID discovering how few educational interpreters were certified while working with Deaf children. This was noted as a time where the MRID followed the MADC's lead and their combined communities came together in support of higher standards for the education of Deaf children.

A new Mentorship Scholarship category was added at the 1998 Annual Business Meeting providing $100 to up to five interpreters seeking mentoring services. The organization did this because they "felt so strongly about supporting the efforts of mentoring to further our

profession." The organization was now up to three different types of scholarships serving as a resource to the community. However, it is noted that Deaf individuals find it hard to access these scholarships because of the narrow focus.

In the late 1990s the organization began hosting "Chalk Talks." These were free educational opportunities for members. Satellite locations throughout the state made these opportunities available to individuals outside of the Twin Cities, even having some in Wisconsin. As the MRID had always struggled to be a *state-wide* organization, this was an important resource developed which made people in greater Minnesota feel connected.

News from National RID came out in 1993 that a motion to approve a Certification Maintenance Program passed (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 1994). Effective July 1994, the 90 contact education hours or 9.0 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) would be required every three years to maintain certification (with a first cycle extension to December 31, 1999). The amount of CEUs needing to be collected was amended and became 8.0 units, or 80 hours of tracked continuing education, every 4 years in 1999. According to members, the MRID had always been a "go-to" organization for providing a plethora of continuing education opportunities for members, and this change at the national level became the beginning of a trend away from "continuing education" where individuals yearned to learn. Priorities started to focus on how many units have been tracked rather than what they learned in that educational interaction.

2000-2009. In 2001, the Freelance Committee started up again with new energy in response to an unfortunate occurrence where DOORWAYS (a referral agency) could not pay interpreters for the work they did. Fall of 2002, Minnesota Department of Human Services Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division (DHHSD) announced that they intended to stop funding

the interpreter referral system in Minnesota. Since the early 1980s, DHHSD funded referral services through a central center and other regional centers because there was no previous structure for providing interpreter referrals in the state. Private fee-for-service referral agencies emerged around 1995 and by around 1999 metro private referral agencies received no state subsidy for day-today operations. Some private agencies in central Minnesota were still receiving funding, however. The goal at the time was to re-evaluate where the best return on investment would be for the community by reallocating the dollars previously spent on interpreting referral using a Request for Proposal (RFP) system.

Video Relay Service (VRS) companies were starting to draw in interpreters in the early 2000s. These centers provided interpreting services for phone calls and offered consistent hours for interpreters as well as community and later became a primary source of CEUs. The advent of the VRS again started to change the atmosphere of the interpreting field and the MRID did not have much involvement with this.

In 2004, Leo Latz passed away and in honor of his contribution to the organization, the "Lion Roars Humanitarian Award" was created and first awarded to Bonham Cross at the 2005 Fall Conference. Other significant memories of the 2000s were the conferences and entertainment. These sparked both positive memories of the community coming together to enjoy a time of release, as well as a time of contention when the activities were "hearing" focused and un-inclusive to the Deaf.

It was noted that around 2006-2007 many people left the organization for a time because of some inappropriate comments made. These comments were derogatory or oppressive in nature and caused harm to the community. It was also around 2009 where a Deaf individual joined the Board of Directors; however, due to language access of an organization accustomed to speaking

English, that board member soon after resigned from their position. Deaf board members later joined again in 2015.

Just as the Chalk Talks ended around 2007-2008, MERGE (Making Everyone Really Good at Everything) started in 2006. MERGE was also mentioned as a resource created by MRID members to welcome new interpreters into the field by providing networking and professional development opportunities. Members described this group as a way to "help graduates figure out how to move forward or progress in the field" and "it was a way of trying to foster the next generation of interpreters. That's something MRID talks about a lot and isn't always good at doing." This was noted as a positive milestone for the organization.

The organization continued to try and stay current with technology in the mid-late 2000s as they utilized egroups (email list-servs) for various special interest group such as MRID Announcements, MRID Talks (Education and Freelance), MRID Freelance Committee, and MRID MERGE. These were a new avenue for the organization to provide a place for members to see announcements and receive specialized information about topics of interest.

Camp ASL also continued through the 2000's and was noted as a substantial contribution to the community as well as a money maker for the organization. Finally, in 2009, the Mid-year meetings to an Annual Spring Event as a result of the 2008 bylaws change to help MRID members have a platform to discuss motions and changes at the national level.

2010-2019. In 2010, a state-wide survey went out to the membership with a high response rate about the interpreting community and what the MRID could do to meet the needs. It was cited as a milestone because it was the first time the organization had done a survey of that type. This survey helped the board at the time decide which direction to take next. MRID also hosted the 2010 Region III Conference and was co-chaired by a Deaf and hearing team. This was

a positive memory recalled by members as a time where the organization had Deaf and hearing balance in leadership of a significant event.

The Update Newsletter from its start around 1977 had always printed and mailed out the newsletter to members, or non-members could subscribe for a small fee. However, in 2010, June-July 2010 issue of the Update, the Publications Committee announced that it would start the process of being offered online with colored pictures, live hyperlinks, and a faster delivery time to recipients. People used to wait at their mailboxes for the Update to arrive and would call the Update Editor if it was late by a couple of days. This move online disappointed those who held such ties to the paper newsletter, because while this was a cost saving and environmentally friendly decision by the committee, members again felt disconnected.

The Yahoo! Groups were slowly replaced with a Google platform from 2010-2011, and the listserv MRID-NEWS@googlegroups.com became the primary outlet for job announcements, education opportunities, and community happenings that many members began to depend on for information. MERGE, who got its start in the MRID, has since separated into its own organization around Fall 2012. In 2019 still provided a valuable resource to the interpreting community.

A memorable situation happened at the 2014 MRID Fall Conference in Rochester, MN. Members recall that the Deaf participants were not able to see the interpreters for a presentation due to the interpreters' decision to stay in a previously established position. Immediately following the presentation, the interpreters approached the Deaf participants and discussed the situation. This became significant because it was widely seen as a misstep on the interpreters' part not to move to a visually accessible location for the Deaf audience members. However, the interpreters involved decided to create a transparent case study out of the situation and share it

with the membership. This was received positively and interpreters coming into the field were able to benefit from the open process. Members noted being thankful for the transparency of the conflict resolution process and how it eased tension.

Two thousand fifteen was a pivotal year as the organization addressed a common struggle for Deaf people to feel welcome at MRID conferences or meetings- English. A different Deaf individual joined the board and ASL was used at all meetings. Later, another milestone for the organization happened that year- ASL became the official language of the organization:

> MOTION 15:10:05: Be it moved that the official language of Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf be American Sign Language (ASL), and be it further moved that ASL be the language of all MRID business and board meetings, MRID Conferences and events beginning after the completion of the 2015 MRID Fall Conference (MRID Update, 2015, p. 11).

Members recounted this as a time where they felt the organization took a step in the right direction for its relationship with the Deaf community. At that same business meeting two more Deaf individuals joined the board. While recalling this, a member said “the milestone here was Nic Zapko who came in first and tried to break through. When that didn’t work, three more came together and made the breakthrough. It’s not necessarily a bad, or a good thing, but it just shows that we are changing and going down the right path.” Another member said when the organization uses ASL as a primary language, it sets an example for individuals interacting with and around the Deaf Community. Seeing that the organization for interpreters uses ASL encourages new interpreters to view it as the “norm,” and it serves as a reminder to those that may have gotten into the field before it became the norm that they should sign.

Another important motion at the 2015 Annual Business Meeting was 15:10:07, the establishment of the "Transition Team." The purpose of this ad hoc committee was to "study the association structure and purpose, solicit input from members and make recommendations to the membership" (MRID Update, 2015, p. 11). The Transition Team collected data and presented their findings at the 2017 Business Meeting.

Sometime between going "online" in 2010 and 2014, the MRID Update ceased production. With a new energy in 2015, the MRID Update made a comeback and restarted production of the bi-monthly newsletter for members. In 2018 and 2019, the Update began to experiment with an ASL video version of the MRID Update alternating with the "traditional" newsletter format.

Alive and active in the early 2010s, the Freelance Committee ran into hard times as language use became an issue – to sign, to voice, to interpret, to not? That coupled with Video Relay Service companies providing interpreters a place for continuing education and community, the Freelance Committee saw low attendance numbers and became vacant in 2015. This was seen as an impact on the interpreting field because the Freelance Committee would have been a "very natural way for Deaf interpreters to come into the field." Members also noted that social justice was a key issue and continued to be so in 2019.

In those years, MRID was also a place where members could come together and discuss important topics. The community rallied when RID put their certification test, the National Interpreter Certification (NIC), on Moratorium in 2015. Again, the community came together when RID appointed a hearing CEO of the organization in 2018. In a way to ally with the Deaf community, the MRID discussed what it would mean to disengage from the RID. While the

MRID stayed an affiliate chapter, that was a time where external influences inspired action and discussion among members.

Though discussions in the community were had over listserv platforms, committee involvement was low and board members often took committee responsibilities such as planning conferences. At the 2017 Business Meeting, the Transition Team recommended a review of the structure of the organization to make the "organization relevant, responsive, and sustainable through changes in leadership" (Transition Team, 2018). This inspired a new ad-hoc group consisting of some of the Transition Team members and some new board members of 2018. This "Change Team" as it was called, recommended a new board structure at the 2018 Annual Business Meeting. After some revision, the motion was passed. Changes to the board structure took the eleven board positions down to seven: MRID Director, Operations Director, Finance Director, Communications Director, Programs Director, Community Relations Director, and Membership Director. This change in structure was noted by members as a milestone for the organization, though it was also mentioned that the change felt more like the MRID was shifting operations to a business model rather than a non-profit professional association.

After taking a break from 2015-2017, Camp ASL gained new energy in 2018 and 2019. Deaf mentors became a part of the weekend and more partnerships with MADC were being formed. Camp ASL 2018 was a joint effort of the MADC and MRID and Fall Conference 2019 was also a joint effort.

At Camp ASL 2019, conflict happened surrounding issues of race, privilege, and white fragility, during one of the workshops. That situation left campers with an uncomfortable feeling similar to the occurrence at the 2014 Fall Conference. One member recalling the situation said:

> to see… all come together and have a discussion about the experience, that was a positive example for me showing that when something comes up, we can work through it together and find out how to move forward. For me, that felt like a good model of how to resolve conflict, because conflict will happen. If we ignore it and play "Minnesota Nice" by sweeping it under the rug, we don't heal. That was a great example of learning as an organization about how to handle and resolve conflict in a positive way.

Conflict was also mentioned in a more general sense when disagreement over motions at a business meeting were discussed. Business meetings may have heated conversation over an issue, but it also gave members an opportunity to see new perspectives. The ability to stay respectful to colleagues while discussing this conflict and exploring different perspectives "helps us improve, learn, and grow" said one member.

As these interviews were conducted in 2019, members mentioned a current hope for the organization in a strong Board of Directors, involvement with the Deaf Community, and collaboration with the MADC. The next section will outline common trends of the organization over time mentioned by participants, and following will show how members responded when asked, "Where do you see the MRID going from here?".

Reported Trends, Struggles, Harm, and Benefits

As they answered the interview questions, participants reported their perceptions of the trends, struggles, harm and benefits of the MRID in the past. These are broken up *into Reported Struggles and Trends* and *Reported Harm and Benefits*

Reported struggles and trends. Participants were directly asked about the struggles and trends of the organization throughout its history. The most commonly reported struggles were with leadership and identity. The most common trend was stated as an ASL sign rather than an

English word which was translated by one person as “inconsistent.” An important linguistic note about this word is that individuals most often signed the ASL word that looks like a wave, or an unsmooth path, or the motion of going up- and down-hill repeatedly throughout time. While answering the questions, participants often flowed freely when discussing trends and struggles of the organization, making it difficult to state directly what they said were struggles apart from trends. In lieu of that, this section will focus on their mentioned trend of inconsistency as a result of leadership, identity, and communication.

Communication. Many participants mentioned how both priorities given to communication with members and the skill of making that communication effective have impacted the membership’s view of the leadership team throughout the years. Type of communication, whether verbal or signed, and frequency with which the membership received communication from committees, or the board, impressed upon the membership what kind of organization the MRID was and from that, members made decisions about whether to be involved or not. This applied to both the mode of communication used at conferences, meetings, and events as well as the external communication from the board and committees about what was going on within and around the organization.

Members noted how the organization largely operated in American Sign Language (ASL) in the beginning years, later drifting to using primarily spoken English, and most recently establishing ASL as the official language in 2015. There were times throughout the MRID’s history where participants noted that Deaf people wanted to be involved but did not feel welcome due to language barriers. When priority was given to English there was less involvement from the Deaf community and in turn, when priority was given to ASL, the organization saw more involvement from the Deaf community. This involvement, they noted,

included volunteering with the organization, partnerships with the Minnesota Association for Deaf Citizens (MADC), and general support of organizational initiatives and activities. Throughout the years, higher sense of community was felt when the involvement between the MRID and the Deaf community increased.

The frequency of external communication was also a large part of how members perceived the organization throughout the years and was commonly referred to as “inconsistent.” The MRID Update newsletter has served as a primary vehicle for communication over the years, and participants discussed it as a great resource impacting the interpreting field in Minnesota. It provided information about continuing education, laws and policies impacting the Deaf community and work as an interpreter, and it was also a primary avenue for the board and committees to share activity with the membership. A few members noted that when the Update went to an online format, or when there was a pause in production, it directly impacted how connected they felt to the organization. Other references to frequency included wishing that there was more communication on a regular basis from the organization and how when transparency through communication was offered to the membership, trust increased.

Leadership and managerial skill. Participants noted how it is common for volunteer non-profits to lack business skills in leadership positions, and how the MRID is no exception. One participant noted how there is much pressure for volunteers to do the work required by the MRID. Several members mentioned how while some people become leaders to exude power and authority, the vast majority of people who have volunteered for the organization are well-intentioned but lack the know-how to be effective.

In terms of managerial skill, participants noted how personality traits and training were important for success, as well as the ability to take action when current practices are not working.

One participant spoke about this in terms of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator test results. She said that students used to be required to take this personality test while in their interpreting training program at St. Paul Technical Vocational Institute (TVI). At the time, she said that a high percent of student interpreters had the Myers Briggs type INFP (Introverted, Intuitive, Feeling, and Perceiving type; For more information about this personality type, see INFP Mediator Strengths and Weaknesses, n.d.). While these are common types to work with people, she said, they are not the type to be bookkeepers or succession planners; and are at times unmotivated to go against the status quo to change policies and procedures. Another member discussed personality in terms of general managerial skill as a lack of training. They said that people in the field of interpreting are trained to be interpreters, but not trained to be managers. They require different skills and so when people join the board or committees, they largely feel incompetent. That same participant also discussed the liability while volunteering for an organization and that is not commonly discussed during onboarding. In fact, the trend of succession was brought up frequently.

Due to the above-mentioned personalities and training, the MRID has not had great success passing down institutional knowledge. Participants mentioned cases of conference planning manuals being continuously re-created rather than passed down, board and committee members not understanding their roles and responsibilities, and loose end projects that are difficult to pick up without knowledge of what and how anything previously had been done. Also, as a common interpreting field issue, ideas become cyclical because people that used to have the reigns on a project or do not pass them down to the next generation and then that new generation comes up with the idea assuming it had not been done before. Also, a participant mentioned how the MRID has not had a good understanding of the law and what it can or cannot

do as a 501(c)(3) which impacts the activity that the leaders decide to be involved with such as fundraising ventures and lobbying.

Commitment of leaders has also had an impact on succession planning and consistency of activity. Participants noted how the responsibilities expected of volunteers have been unclear and that becomes a barrier for members to want to step up. How much time expected of those volunteers per week, month, or year has also been a factor. Finally, in terms of succession, leadership is comprised of and dependent upon volunteers who all have personal lives and competing priorities. The time leaders have to offer the organization varies year to year causing activity and perceived organizational health to also ebb and flow.

Identity. Another commonly noted struggle for the organization has been that of the organization's identity and who the organization serves. Participants noted how external factors impact this such as the change at the national level of RID, technology, and political culture. A few participants noted how when the RID struggles to clarify their identity and purpose, it is reflected on the local level. Also, actions from the national level such as change of grievance process handled at the local level being taken to the national level, as well as the requirement of continuing education units (CEUs) drastically impacted the primary offerings of the Affiliate Chapters.

The change in mandating CEUs led to many other companies and organizations providing CEUs where the market became saturated. Many of these opportunities are also free which means that the CEU opportunities that the MRID provides for fee less attractive. Also, participants mentioned with technology came the advent of the Video Relay Service company which is now a common place where interpreters work together and feel a sense of community. According to participants, the MRID also used to be at the table for legislative policy change

such as the QA law, Hearing Impaired Services Act (HISA), Rule 8 of the court, and interpreting licensure. One participant said, “All the things that [the MRID] was, it is no longer.” Other participants correlated what the organization offers to members, i.e. benefits of membership, with the identity crisis of the MRID.

Reported benefits and harm. Participants were asked directly about the benefits and harm of the organization to document what the organization has offered to members in the past, and how actions of the organization have been perceived. This section reports on participants’ perceptions of actions that caused harm and their perception of the benefits of having the MRID as an organization. Finally, this section also reports the answers participants gave about personal benefit from being involved with the MRID.

To give an opportunity to discuss the potential harm that the organization has caused, participants were asked, “Did the MRID ever overstep or cause harm?”. Several members could not think of times where the organization caused harm, whereas others mentioned harm caused by language access or leadership decisions such as, engaging in gambling or disbanding committees. They also mentioned how individual actions of members or those in leadership can be associated to the whole organization. For a list of participants recollections of times where the organization overstepped or caused harm, see *Figure 4*.

Benefits of MRID		
Resources Over the Years		**Personal Benefits**
Continuing Education	**Other**	- Voice on issues impacting the field
- Chalk Talks	- Fee schedule	- Recognizing local talent in interpreting specialties
- Conferences	- Grievance procedure	- Entry point into the field
- Workshops	- Education tracking	- Provides credibility as a member of a professional association
- MRID Update	- Gathering place / socialization	- Networking and developing friendships
- Camp ASL	- Freelance committee	- Participation in workshops
Community Education	- Standard practice papers	- Platform to try presenting workshops
- Fundraising events	- Platform for teaching	- Developing leadership skills while serving
- MRID Update	- Voice into issues the community is facing	- Confidence in personal skills and intuition
- PR Kit	- Community Support in Policy through lobbying	- Interaction with role models in the community
- How to work with an interpreter	- Member directory	- Sense of community
- Public Broadcast	- Financial sponsorship of other organizations	- Staying abreast of community events

MRID Overstepped or Caused Harm	
- Disbanding Freelance Committee	- Misinterpreting Bylaws
- Non-profit gambling	- Inappropriate comments and involvement with personal matters by leadership
- Inaccessibility at conferences and meetings	- Inaction where action from the board or committee was desired by the community
- “hearing focused” activities (singing entertainment at conferences)	- Individual action (or inaction) seen as a reflection of the entire organization

Figure 4. Summary of comments from participants about the benefits from and of the MRID as well as harm that the MRID has caused.

Participants were also asked three questions to understand what the MRID has offered the community in terms of benefits: “What kind of resources, if any, has the MRID supported the community with?”; “What are the primary benefits of being a member of the MRID?”; and “How has MRID benefited you along your journey as an interpreter?” A list of answers for these questions can be found in *Figure 4*. Specific quotes from members about how the MRID benefited them on their personal journey are:

- “I’m just really glad it was there when I started. It was a really, really wonderful organization and group of people and community.”
- “I think it’s a very important organization.”
- “It was a place to learn, a place to help set policies, a place to interact with Deaf people, to get feedback. You know, it raised me up.”
- “MRID was so very important in providing support… and community and we were searching together and trying to figure things out and you know, trying to find our way in this new field that was just really developing.”
- “For me, what I would do for MRID, I would look to them for education, I would look to them to keep me apprised of anything legal or policy that I should weigh in on. Minnesota is very progressive, very active in like the medical the question of medical certification and all the work that St. Kate’s does. So, I see that as all a part of comes through MRID too. I think they play quite an important role in those ways for me.”
- “I’ve learned so much. I’ve met some amazing people. I’ve had great opportunities to grow as a person, as a professional, and as a leader.”
- “They have allowed me to network and meet interpreters from across the state.”

- “I think just being friends with people and making connections with people I work with.”
- “Some of the people that I’ve met I’m still friends with after all this time.”
- “And a way that connects with the Deaf Community. There were things that were set up that provided opportunities to meet with the Deaf people. And doing the functions, I can think of so many like Thompson Hall, that just provided us with the community and an opportunity to meet Deaf people.”
- During break-out sessions at MRID conferences where interpreters could learn from the leaders in Minnesota one participant recalled: “…but you’d see who’s giving the workshop. Who is the person who knows, and who are the people all in the front row chiming in who know? So, as an interpreter and I got a job like that then I’d know who to call before I go to that job.”
- “From my perspective going to conferences has been great because of the networking opportunity. Being able to meet and get to know people that I didn’t know were interpreters has been a great opportunity for me to consider who I team with at a later time. I then will have names to go with faces or names that I can refer others to for a team. I can recognize them because of Fall and Spring Conferences. MRID brings me the ability to network with others so that I can know my teams better when we work together in the future. On my journey, that’s been nice.”
- “For me, a benefit has been similar to what others have shared, networking, plus meeting people that I look up to or admire their style of leadership, interpreting, personality etc. I can then take and apply it to my own work and life. I think that’s been important.”

- “I've gotten to participate in workshops that if MRID weren't here, I wouldn't have gotten to participate in.”
- “I think what MRID afforded me personally was a platform to try out teaching and to try out giving workshops… it’s a really great place to let local interpreters try out if they want to take their interpreting work to the presentation level.”
- “I forget who said it, maybe Amanda, that MRID developed leadership skills, and that’s true for me. I was a very young person when I joined the board and looking back, I recall all of the wonderful people that I was able to learn from which helped me on my journey as an interpreter.”
- “I still go to conferences and like to sit with newer interpreters to give back some (I hope) support as they’re entering the field. I’ve gotten that benefit, but I also have the opportunity to give back which is a benefit for me.”
- “MRID has given me a chance. Similar to like I said, the first time I was on the board I wasn’t sure what to do, I didn’t feel qualified to do all that was asked, but I was given the chance and as I went along, and I fell in love with it really.”
- “Confidence in myself… It’s also helped me to develop my own intuition of who to trust and not trust, what’s BS.”

Although members were readily able to answer how the MRID has benefitted them personally in the past, and some could readily provide examples of community benefits of having the MRID, others found it difficult to describe the current benefits of being a member. One member said

> I don’t think there’s any benefit right now to being a member of the organization, yet I still think it’s the right thing to do… What is the MRID for? Is it just that we can say we have a professional organization for sign language interpreters in Minnesota? If so, great.

Another participant said, “Professional membership in an organization is just really crucial.” Another echoes these statements by saying:

> The benefits are people getting together to do good things for the field, but that doesn’t seem to be a good enough answer. They say “I pay $35 to be a member and get back what? Can you list them? A T-Shirt, a cup, etc.” They’re looking for, it seems, something tangible. For me, it’s a struggle to explain the benefits… I intuitively know that it’s about professional involvement, which I feel is important. For me, it’s tough to say that someone is a professional interpreter without them being a part of the professional organization, it just doesn’t feel like it fits.

After being asked about the benefits and consequences of the organization over the years, members were asked about their perspectives about the future of the organization.

Participants’ Outlook for the Future of the MRID

Responses about the benefits and harm of the organization provide a picture of what the MRID has offered in the past. To capture what it could offer in the future, the question “Where do you see the MRID going from here” was asked. Responses included suggestions that the organization could implement, and possible challenges the organization will face, such as connection and inclusion, identity and purpose, and leadership and communication.

Connection and inclusion. Participants mentioned how interpersonal connections were important. One participant discussed outreach by saying “we need to go out there and recruit, dialogue, and build relationships. We can’t assume that by us being welcoming, they’ll come. It doesn’t work. We need to go out there.” Another said “We need to learn how to identify the potential skills in others and invite them in personally. Then encourage them when they don’t believe they can do it and walk with them until they’re comfortable on their own.”

Partnerships with other organizations such as the MADC, Minnesota DeafBlind Association, Minnesota Chapter of National Black Deaf Advocates, LGBTQ community, etc, could be developed, and participants also mentioned to build and maintain connections with various sub communities such as educational, freelance, video relay, video remote, medical, mental health, and legal interpreters.

Many participants mentioned the generational and cultural shifts surrounding the community. As culture and social justice focus was already mentioned as a trend, finding ways to include people of color (POC) and in the organization was important to participants. Participants mentioned that seeking involvement from POC and finding a way for the MRID to provide support and become attractive for POC interpreters would expand the interpreting field of Minnesota. Member sections were offered as a suggestion.

Other participants also mentioned that the MRID could have more space for Deaf interpreters and spoken language interpreters. One member said, “I would think that the MRID would be the one place that gets Deaf interpreters… they’re a part of us.” Another mentioned wondering why there is not more of a connection between spoken and sign language interpreters. Several members discussed how they see MRID working more with the MADC in possible revisiting of an ethical practices system or a joint representation to address expectations of interpreters and Deaf clients. One member cautioned that going “against” initiatives of the MADC would be harmful. They suggested having open discussions between the organizations about disagreements as a more supportive approach than being outright against their actions.

Participants also mentioned the importance of using technology and electronic media for creating connections with the community. Others mentioned how using that technology to

connect with regions outside of the Twin Cities would be important. They also discussed the need to create space for in-person social interaction.

Identity and purpose. Participants commonly mentioned the struggle to describe the MRID's organizational purpose and identity. Some suggested revising the mission, vision, and philosophy statements of the organization- though cautioned that this needs to be a conversation with the membership at large and not made in isolation.

Deciding who the organization serves and represents was important to participants and some also mentioned how this may be influenced by the lack of direction at the national level of the RID. One member recounted a motion made at the 2019 Annual Business Meeting of the RID about changing the definition of an interpreter and said,

> There is a lack of sophistication about what we do, and I wish that MRID could be at the forefront of this. But the MRID is us, and if we as a collective group have no clue what interpreting is, by and large neither will the organization.

Being able to describe who the MRID serves and what interpreting is, participants mentioned, will be important for clarifying the identity of the organization and what it can offer to members.

One participant mentioned that an asset to the organization is that it "has the ability to really morph into whatever is needed at that moment." As a small organization, it has been able to adapt over time to the needs of the community. Participants also mentioned how the new generations seem to have different needs than the seasoned interpreters. One participant recommended a survey to the greater community to discover what current needs there are for the professional association. Participants also mentioned how organizations around the United States have seen a decrease in volunteerism and suggested that the MRID explore the potential impacts of generational change.

VRS centers that have been around since the early 2000s have taken space in providing community and CEUs to their video interpreters and those interpreters commonly do not have much connection or need from the MRID because of it. Participants mentioned that it may not be the primary place to earn CEUs anymore and has not been as involved with policy at the legislative level for a time. Some believe it may be time to make public policy a priority again for the organization: "it feels like we should be back to the group that supported some of those laws… that was making a difference." Another member mentioned, "I think MRID has a purpose, we should be the ones advising the legislature on how we [interpreters] work." Other members mentioned how the MRID still has a purpose of education, requesting topics such as a wider variety of workshops not pertaining to interpreting, but general education. Also, they mentioned discussing or providing workshops on interpreters' strengths and weaknesses, technical skill of interpreting, and to maintain the practice of letting local interpreters have platforms for workshops.

Leadership and communication. Finally, in terms of challenges ahead, several participants mentioned the caution for the leadership. Some participants worry that MRID will be taken off its mission because of personal agendas in either leadership or outspoken members, and how there will be a need to carefully attend to priorities the organization assumes as well as the ability to manage conflict well. Succession of next leadership on the board was also a concern. Many recognized the quality of leadership in positions in 2019 and worried that the momentum will be lost if there is a change in power.

Several recommendations about communication for the organization were also mentioned. Participants mentioned the need for clear and transparent communication. One member said, "In today's current times, transparency is always best because it builds trust."

Another member said, “maintaining transparency in communication is huge.” In terms of the importance of clear communication, one member said,

> …decide who you’re serving. Be clear in the message you’re sending to the larger community so that they know they can trust you, so they know how to get involved, and so they know why to be involved. Communication is really key.

As a part of this communication, participants also mentioned the need for the leadership to consider communication of roles and responsibilities for serving. One member said that being able to clearly outline the responsibilities would help people realize how much work the positions are, and it would increase the likelihood of people with the necessary skills to run for the position rather than someone who wants the spotlight.

Also, communication was discussed in relation to operations of membership meetings, suggesting that maybe technology could be used to allow all voices throughout the state speak into issues and decisions, not just those that are privileged to go to the annual meetings; “Maybe we can use technology to ensure that all have a voice and their votes make a difference to the organization.” Participants wanted to see more communication with the membership. One participant wished there was more frequent and short communications (in ASL) about organizational activity and community put out through social media or email.

That communication of responsibilities, participants mentioned, is also important for maintaining consistency in leadership. Current leadership must train behind and keep dedication to the organization without burning out. One participant mentioned the possibility of leadership training groups such as Deaf, POC, students, etc. This would provide an opportunity for them to ask questions as they get to know the politics and customs of the organization “so they can feel

comfortable and understand what to do." Hopefully that would result in more interest, comfort, and eagerness to get involved.

Along with communication, another member discussed the importance of gratitude by saying,

> Step back and say thank you to people that are doing the work. They won't always do it perfect, but they're doing it. When they make mistakes, learn from it, but it's important to say thank you to those that have been involved.

Another mentioned the importance of a simple smile when interacting with others.

Chapter Four was a description of the data collected from interviews. It included a narrative of the history of the organization from 1970-2019, as well as a description of the trends, struggles, harm, and benefits, and ideas given by participants for the future direction of the organization. Chapter Five will be a discussion of this data in light of the literature review, recommendations for further study, and final thoughts.

Chapter 5 - Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to discover how long-term members of the MRID describe its history as well as their experiences with the organization; it was also to understand how they view the impact of the organization on the interpreting field of Minnesota. As the literature review displayed, there was not much research available on the benefits and purposes of a state chapter of a professional association for sign language interpreters. This original research is meant to add to the body of literature surrounding these topics. This final section will discuss the data in light of the literature review, describe limitations of this project and propose recommendations for further study, and conclude this paper.

Discussion

In the literature review, a quote was used from George Lozano (2008) was used: “Today, although loyalty is much valued by associations, success is measured by the relevancy, recognition, and resources associations achieve” (p. 12). The MRID’s symptoms of decline in 2017 appear to be because the organization’s members could not describe its relevance. In other words, members of the organization could only remember what they have lived through. If they recently joined the organization, they could not name its purpose and identity or what it currently or previously offered to the community. In terms of recognition, what does the community know MRID for? If asked, would they be able to name the purpose, mission, and value of the MRID or any other affiliate chapter of a national professional association, such as those of the RID? Throughout inquiring about this chapter’s experience, it seems that the purpose of the organization has changed over time, and it appears to be at the crux of another necessary change. Future endeavors of the organization could focus on defining that identity, developing and training leaders, and continuing to contribute to improving the quality of interpreting services throughout the state.

Describe relevance: Purpose and benefits. In the following section, recommendations are provided for MRID to strengthen the relevance and benefits for members. It is clear that the perceived value of the organization is influenced by the resources and benefits provided. In the past, prominent resources have made the MRID recognized such as:

- continuing education opportunities
- social engagement and networking with colleagues
- financial sponsorship by scholarships or providing for other organizations
- publications like the newsletter and standard practices
- a voice in public policy

- platforms for sharing information

However, maintaining those resources means that the organization needs to have the capacity. Shumate, Cooper, Pliny, and Pena-y-lillo (2017) define capacity of nonprofit organizations as the "processes, practices, and people that the organization has at its disposal that enable it to produce, perform, or deploy resources to achieve its mission" (Shumate et al., 2017, p. 1). For the MRID, that would include volunteers desiring to be involved and take action. If the membership of the organization wishes for the MRID to provide these resources, they also need to be involved in making them happen. Take for example the MRID Update – members got together and decided to make the newsletter on their own. This was not a decision enacted or enforced by the board. It later became a committee but started out as just a group of members wanting to do something. Members also instigated the Freelance Committee, the PR Kit, regional groups such as the Northern Lakes Interpreters, and many of the public policy action such as 1981 Minnesota statutes for communication access in legal settings or the Educational Interpreters survey which provided evidence needed to pass the QA Law to improve interpreting standards for Deaf children.

Special attention needs to be made to how to create inclusive and welcoming environments within the organization that encourage volunteering. The organization also needs to be one that is free of barriers such as communication or diversity. If they desire to be a resource, the trend toward a social justice focus needs to become integrated into the organization's activities.

Professional development opportunities were mentioned as a primary resource that the organization provided, though now that niche has been crowded by for-profit organizations offering CEUs (consistent with views of Caradine-Poinsett, 2016, and Coerver & Byers, 2011)

and a shift away from professional development and continued education into simply tracking CEUs has also taken a toll on this benefit.

Movement of credentialing, CEU tracking, and grievance or mediation to the national level have had their impact on the purpose of the MRID. Without these, the MRID has strived to maintain relevancy in the state by providing resources that they *believe* the state needs. It can, therefore, be assumed that the MRID's identity has been held so tightly to the resources such as CEU opportunities in workshops and conferences, that when others started crowding that market, the organization had nothing else to lean on, but the type of opportunities offered should be paid attention to. Perhaps following the suggestions of participants to offer a wider variety of continuing education opportunities in other disciplines, more rigorous opportunities for improving interpreting skill, and addressing interpreters' strengths and weaknesses. Another recommendation would be to promote the benefit and necessity of skill development rather than CEUs in hopes that it would appeal to the core values of interpreters.

Participants in this study recommended that the MRID could have more involvement in public policy, more variety in continuing education offerings, and more space for community interaction, but overall, if the membership is not engaged with the greater community and up to date on what the community needs, less motivation is there to act. Continuity in engagement has been difficult for the organization as well. As participants said, there are times of action and stagnation in the organization's history.

By re-examining the mission and vision of the organization, who it serves, and what the desired purpose of the organization is, clarity could be made to the current symbolic value of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2017), because it seems as though the symbolic benefit has a stronger correlation to the purpose of the organization than the resources. As mentioned before,

the board often will make decisions based on what they *believe* the community needs, surveys would help identify the true needs of the community and offer community space to discuss it as a group. As the MRID continues to explore their purpose and relevancy, transparency in those conversations is crucial. Membership has felt disconnected when the leadership makes isolated decisions, so it is important to involve the membership with these decisions through collaboration and transparency.

Develop leaders. Research shows that leadership skill is vital for the health and development of an organization (Caradine-Poinsett, 2016; Coerver & Byers, 2011). The leadership is responsible for creating culture that encourages volunteering. Often the most welcoming culture is one that is stable and has a need that we see our own ability to fill. When the organization aligns with our personal beliefs and values, we receive a symbolic benefit from engagement (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Caradine-Poinsett, 2016). However, if the leadership is unstable, the environment is unwelcoming, or decisions are made where it does not seem like the membership is welcome to participate, it will not be encouraging volunteers (Caradine-Poinsett, 2016; Coerver & Byers, 2011; Wang & Ki, 2018). Cardine-Poinsett emphasized this more by saying “volunteers desire constant approval from their peers” (p. 88).

In this researcher’s view, most harm has been done when the organization (or the leadership of the organization) became secluded from the community or became toxic in words or action. Participants frequently commented on how internal decision-making that was isolated from the membership felt disengaging. Such decisions as the original disbanding of the freelance committee, the decision to be involved with gambling, and misunderstanding the bylaws show that when the leadership starts to make isolated decisions, they lose connection and trust from the membership. It is also apparent that harm can be caused easily by the misperceptions of leaders

who do not understand the relationship between serving as an individual and yet representing a whole organization. Extra training in leadership and frequent reminders about the visibility of leaders' actions may be important to include in subsequent onboarding of new leaders.

Bugher (1983) mentioned the lack of leadership training for professional associations because practitioners make up the leadership. The MRID is consistent with this assumption as participants commented on the lack of training leaders come into the organization with, such as skills in communication, management, and succession. Participants mentioned the need for a wider variety of educational opportunities, and if the MRID were to build leadership training into their organizational structure, this could become another benefit to involvement in the organization.

If the MRID wishes to improve their organizational operations, they must pay attention to leadership training by providing avenues such as committee work or leadership-in-training groups, as mentioned during participant interviews. If the organization does not recognize the skill and potential contributions that individuals outside the organization could contribute and intentionally outreach, recruit, and train, the cycle will continue. Also, a succession plan would help to pass down that institutional knowledge which has been missing.

Pass down the story. The MRID was created by Deaf individuals recognizing a need to encourage the development of interpreting as a profession. It was not for the sake of interpreters, but to raise the standards of interpretation received by Deaf persons. That story of growing the profession in order to improve the quality of what interpreters do, for the sake of the people we serve, needs to be passed down.

Bolman and Deal's (2017) description of symbolic benefits of the organization as stories inspired the researcher to ask participants "What is your favorite memory of the organization?"

During the interviews, eyes lit up as participants described favorite conferences where many people gathered and socialized, times of laughter and fun, and when the content of workshops was applicable to their work and they got hands-on practice with colleagues. Stories such as Deaf and hearing participating together in karaoke, dancing, socialization, and working together on the craft of interpreting were shared. All of these show that interpersonal connections appear to be a large symbolic benefit for the members of the organization. Creating connections through that community is important for the continued relevancy for a professional association for interpreters.

The sharing of the history is not for the purpose of maintaining what has been; in fact, if organizations are not changing, they will become irrelevant and cease to exist (Coerver & Byers, 2011). These are organizations in which people have poured their hearts and souls into hoping that it will make a difference. The history needs to be passed on to preserve the actions of the organization and show that member's involvement will not be forgotten (Ball, 2014). Also, as history is not always prioritized in American non-profits, we can easily forget where we have come from and have no direction for the future.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Study

The eleven participants in this study were able to provide the information necessary to collect a history of the organization, but because the majority of the data was based on memory recollection during interviews, specific dates of events could be approximate. This researcher used resources available to verify dates, but years and events could be recalled slightly out of order. Another limitation to this study was that it was based upon interviews with only eleven members of the organization. It does not capture every member's description and experiences, though it does provide a sample.

A further limitation or barrier to this study is that there were no interpreters of color interviewed, and few Deaf interpreters interviewed. The parameters of this research were set to inquire about long-term members (ten years or more involvement with the organization), and it was found that there are a limited number of interpreters of color and Deaf interpreters that fit the parameter in Minnesota's association. Further research is recommended into this to capture the thoughts and feelings of those interpreters to get a fuller picture of the organization within the last ten years.

Further study of other professional associations for sign language interpreters would also help verify the data of this research. Though it can be speculated, it is not proven if the same trends and struggles happen in other affiliate chapters of professional associations such as this one. With other histories to compare it to, results could be more widely generalized.

Conclusion

This was an enlightening project about the history and impact of the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID). The results of the interviews show that the purpose of the MRID has been to educate, create community, and improve standards for sign language interpreters around the state. As the MRID moves into 2020 and beyond it will be important to remember key words such as relevancy, recognition, and resources (Lozano, 2008), and the words of Dr. Carolyn Ball (2018) during her presentation at Street Leverage - "being mindful of the past successes and challenges faced by interpreters, interpreter organizations, and interpreter educators can prevent us from stumbling over the same problems and impeding our growth and professionalism." This research contributed to preserving the history of the successes and challenges of the interpreting organization, the MRID, and it is hoped that this project inspires

more interpreting organizations to look into their own histories to help them find their relevancy in the years to come.

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Appendix A

Initial Email to Participants

Hello (participant's name)! Hope this email finds you well. (ASL version here: https://youtu.be/TJ2a-y0xXyY)

My name is Sydney Groven, I am currently in the final chapter of my Master of Arts in Strategic Leadership program at North Central University. For my Capstone/ Thesis project, I am seeking to interview individuals that have been involved with the MRID throughout its history.

If you'd like to be interviewed for this project, kindly respond by Sunday, July 7, 2019. The interviews will be scheduled July 15-26, asking for about 1.5 hours of your time. I'm looking to have both individual interviews and a focus group if possible. Options for interviews could be in person or through Zoom (a video conference platform).

Ideally, the interview pool would consist of 8-10 people who have been involved with the organization long-term but not necessarily members of the organization the whole time. My goal is to discover how long-term members of the MRID describe the history of the organization as well as their experiences with the organization and how these same MRID members view the impact of the organization on the interpreting field in Minnesota.

I am looking for at least-

2 individuals who have been involved since the MRID's establishment in 1971
3 individuals who have been involved with MRID for 20-40 years
3 individuals who have been involved with MRID for 10-20 years

The questions that will be asked during the interview will be:

1. What roles have you played within the organization? (examples could be member, board member, committee member, etc)
2. What is your favorite memory of the organization?
3. How would you describe the history of the MRID? Think about-
    - What are some of the milestones of the MRID since incorporation in 1971?
    - What are some of the struggles that MRID has faced over the years?
    - What trends have you noticed about the organization overtime?
    - MRID's history with the MADC (Minnesota Association for Deaf Citizens).
4. Can you tell me about some positive and negative examples of the MRID's impact on the field of interpreting in Minnesota? Think about-
    - What kind of resources, if any, has the MRID supported the community with?
    - What are the primary benefits of being a member of the MRID?
    - Did the MRID ever overstep or cause harm?
    - How has MRID benefited you along your journey as an interpreter?
5. Where do you see MRID going from here?
6. Is there anything else about your experience with the MRID that you would like to add that we haven't gotten a chance to talk about yet?

These interviews will be recorded for documentation purposes while I draft the final product. Per the Institutional Review Board that has approved this project, the data (recordings) will be saved for three years on a personal device that will not be shared with anyone but myself.

Thank you for your time. Again, the interviews will be scheduled July 15-26. If you are able and willing, please let me know so that we can get the interviews scheduled.

Best,
Sydney Groven (Capeling)
763-355-7847 v / txt / FaceTime
sydney.capeling@mail.northcentral.edu

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

ASL version can be found here: https://youtu.be/QiRBgifX9Vc

NORTH CENTRAL

Informed Consent

Prospective Research Participant: Read this consent form carefully. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research. Thank you.

Project Title: Impact of the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf from 1971-2019
Researcher: Sydney Groven
Researcher Email: Sydney.capeling@mail.northcentral.edu
Organization: North Central University, Minneapolis

Purpose of this Research Study:

You are being asked to participate in a research study designed to document the history of the organization, the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID), and its impact on the interpreting and Deaf communities in Minnesota. The goal of this research is 1) to record the valuable experiences of MRID members throughout their involvement with the organization, 2) to detect what benefits the organization has given to the communities over the years, and 3) allow this research to be used by the current and future leadership of the organization in order to direct decisions or share with other professional associations for signed language interpreters.

My name is Sydney Groven, and I am a student researcher at North Central University in the Master of Arts in Strategic Leadership Program. This project is being conducted as part of my degree program. I graduated from North Central University in 2012 with a bachelor's degree in American Sign Language/English Interpreting, and I have primarily worked in freelance interpreting settings in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area of Minnesota. I have been an active member of both the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, and the MRID since 2012, and I obtained my National Interpreter Certification through RID in 2016. As an active member of the MRID, I recognized that there is not a good historical record of our organization or its benefit to the Minnesota interpreting and Deaf communities, and I hope that this project will help fill that gap.

Procedures:
You will be asked to…

- Participate in answering questions either in a focus group, or individual interview setting as a part of this project. These meetings and interviews will all be recorded through video capture
    - These interviews and focus groups could be done live / in person or they could be done through a video conferencing platform.
- Participation of this study could range from 45 minutes for an individual interview to up to two hours as a part of a focus group.

Possible Risks:
Although you are at minimal risk for this study, potential risks may include the recollection of hurtful memories or emotional past experiences. There is a risk that readers or watchers could misunderstand statements or have misinterpretations of comments. The collection of data will be made and stored electronically in which there is risk of cyber hacking. Finally, there is a risk that those participating in a focus group session may share what they learned with other people outside of the group.

Possible Benefits:
This project has many possible benefits not only to participants of the study, but also to the body of literature about professional associations for interpreters. Participants could enjoy looking back and recalling fond memories of the organization. They could also get in touch with those they have not seen

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in a long time during a focus group. The final product could be shared (with permission) at a later time for the organization which could create camaraderie and nostalgia among members. It could also be shared with other affiliate chapters of the national organization, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, in order to spark interest in documenting their local histories. Finally, if specific benefits of a professional association are found throughout the process, these benefits could be shared nation-wide, adding to the literature that supports the validity and benefit of professional associations for interpreters.

Financial Considerations:
You will not receive any financial compensation for your participation, nor will you incur any costs as a result of your participation in this research.

Confidentiality:
Results of this study, including all collected data, may be published in my capstone project and in possible professional presentations. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym to use for the final product for quotes and documentation to ensure your identity is protected.

If participating in a focus group, other members of that group will know your identity. However, all will be asked to respect one another's statements by not sharing the information with others.

Email and cloud services will be used in collection and storage of data. Although email and cloud services are not totally secure, my computer has security software, and no one else will have access to my computer and/or my passwords in order to access these accounts.

Termination of Study:

You are free to choose whether or not to participate in this study. You may also choose to withdraw from the study or to decline to answer any questions at any time.

If you choose to withdraw from the study, none of the data collected on, about, or by you will be used in the data analysis or writing of the findings.

After the Study is Completed:
After the study is completed, the final product will be shared with all active participants. Attempts to reach participants with an electronic copy of the research will be through email addresses provided. The recorded data will be kept for three years.

Resources:
Any questions you may have about this study will be answered by Sydney Groven at the address above.

Subject and Researcher Authorization:
I have read and understand this consent form, and I volunteer to participate in this research study. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form if requested.

Participant Information:

_____

Participant's Name (Print):

_____

Participant's Signature: Date:

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Appendix C

Focus Group Waiver Form

ASL Version can be found here: https://youtu.be/zIQdo2SKv0U

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Focus Group Waiver

Focus Group Participant,

The goal of this research is to have an accurate account of the history and impact of the organization, the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID). With that said, participants should feel free to share their thoughts with confidence that their words will not be repeated. They should also trust that their participation in this study is treated confidentially.

If you agree to this statement, please sign below.

I agree to maintain respect for my colleagues by not sharing who else participated in this focus group and what was said during the session.

Participant's Name Participant's Signature

Appendix D

Scheduled Interviews

Interviews were scheduled as follows:

1. July 15, 2019, 1:00-2:00pm, Nancy Sheldon, in person, English
2. July 18, 2019, 4:00-5:30pm, Devon Robertson, Monica Peters, and Yvonne McDonald, in person, mix of ASL and English
3. July 22, 2019, 2:30-4:00pm, Amanda Michaelson, Iris Knudson, Yale Jackson, and Gordon Day, Zoom Video Conference, ASL
4. July 23, 2019, 11:00am-12:00pm, Laurie Jet, in person, English
5. July 25, 2019, 12:00-1:00pm, Nigel Ross, in person, ASL
6. July 30, 2019, 5:00-6:30pm, Don Daniels, Zoom Video Conference, English

Appendix E

Fee Schedule 1980

GUIDELINES TO USING THE MRID FREELANCE FEE SCHEDULE

"Freelance": A job that comes up one time; no long-term contract

"Freelance Interpreter":
--Works "on call" as needed

--Does not have guaranteed work

--Must travel to many differenct work places

--Works different hours every day, including evenings and weekends

--Is available for "hire" by the hour

"Freelance" Expenses are costs included in the fees.
--Car cost (payments, repairs, insurance, gas, parking)

--Travel time (In the metropolitan area, it may require one hour to get from one job to the next job; therefore, only a few jobs can be scheduled in one day.)

--Health insurance (No group health plan for interpreters)

--Special clothes for various settings (court, workshops, banquets, etc.)

--Follow up time; send bills, figure taxes, find out about next job, preparation time.

Companies, Aencies, Businesses, Organizations should pay the recommended fees.

Deaf people are NOT expected to pay the full rate from their own pockets.
1. On the job, the company should pay.
2. For personal business, the deaf person and the interpreter should agree on a lower rate that is fair.
3. Emergency funds for interpreters may be available through the Interpreter Referral Service.

Interpreters:
--Should not ask for more than the fee schedule says.

--May choose to accept less than the fee schedule says.

--Sometimes work as "volunteers" (free). If so, that is a private, personal decision made by the interpreter.

During the 1980 MRID Convention, the members did vote to support the recommended fee schedule. The schedule will remain the same for this year.

MINNESOTA REGISTRY OF INTERPRETERS FOR THE DEAF

FEE SCHEDULE

FOR FREE LANCE INTERPRETERS

This is the suggested, revised fee schedule for certified, and provisional permit holders as proposed by the MRID-IRS Board Committee.

The IRS committee formally asks that the MRID Board review our recommendations and vote to accept, change or reject this fee schedule.

A. CSC Holder

1. The min. charge is either: $10/hr, portal to portal
OR
$12.50/hr, flat fee

2. If the meeting is cancelled with less than 24 hours notice the interpreter will be paid for a min of two hrs work.

3. There is a two hour min. charge for any job.

B. TC/IC/RSC (and any combination) Holders

1. The min. charge is either: $7.50/hr, portal to portal
OR
$10.00/hr flat fee.

2 and 3 of part A also apply to this category.

C. Court or Legal Settings

1. Legal Skills Certificate Holder
   a. Min. charge of $30.00 for the first hour; $20 for each additional hr.
   b. Waiting time is added to the fee charged.
   c. Two hour min. for every job.

2. CSC Holder
   a. Min. charge is $20 for the first hour; $15 for additional hours
   b and c are the same as above.

D. All Day Conferences, Workshops, Conventions
1. CSC holders: $100/day/interpreter with alternating interpreters plus expenses (day = 8 hrs, if day extends beyond 8 hrs., hourly rate goes into effect)

2. IC/TC/RSC Holders: $75/day/interpreter (same rules apply)

Appendix F

MRID Logo Adopted in 1983

Appendix G

Commonly Used Acronyms - Defined

ASL	American Sign Language
BLeGIT*	Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay, Intersex, and Trans* (a member section of the RID)
CEUs	Continuing Education Units measured as 1 hour = 0.1 CEU
DHHSD	Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division of the Department of Human Services in Minnesota
MADC	Minnesota Association for Deaf Citizens (an affiliate chapter of the NAD)
MERGE	Making Everyone Really Good at Everything (started out as a committee of the MRID and is now independent of the organization)
MFBHS	Minnesota Foundation for Better Hearing and Speech
MRID	Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (an affiliate chapter of the RID)
NAD	National Association of the Deaf
QA Law	Quality Assurance Law (governs requirements for interpreters to work in K-12 education settings)
Region III	The MRID is within Region III (mid-west region) of the RID along with Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin
RID	Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf
TVI	Technical Vocational Institute (now known as St. Paul College)
VRS/VRI	Video Relay Service or Video Remote Interpreting