

If someone asked, "Who are you?" How would you respond?

For American Sign Language-English interpreters, this is a complicated question.

As a part of the practice of interpreting, we have been taught to hide our identities.

Instead, I suggest that we embrace them.

I explored how professional identity forms and changes over time.

My study profiled the lived experience of interpreters by utilizing a hermeneutical phenomenological approach.

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Seven interpreters took their time to share their stories with me about how they first learned American Sign Language through formal education experiences as second language learners and how new identities formed as a result.

Entering a new culture and a new world allowed for the discovery, formation, and evolution of an interpreter self developing over time throughout their careers.

The work of interpreting and the analysis of their true work led these women to see that interpreting became an extension of their selves as they negotiated their way through the private worlds of others.

This led to having time to analyze their own self in the process.

They found that not only do they work as interpreters, but they involve their sense of self as well.

Through the process of being and becoming, a cycle of analysis and reanalysis, these interpreters develop, evaluate, and reevaluate their place in Deaf communities, the hearing world, and the interpreting field, while creating a professional identity that they portray daily.

Current research in interpreting studies focuses on the process of interpreting, the products of interpretation and the role of the interpreter in interpreted interaction.

However, this research does not address the interpreter as a person, with all of the complexities that make up an individual.

The work cannot be separated from the interpreter.

This research process has shown me that as an interpreter myself, the work is me.

Now that we've had the opportunity to discuss identity, I want you to take a second and think about how you identify yourself.