Explores the gendered nature of the sign language interpreting profession. (Ref. SoSS-2020-016)

Supervisory team: Prof. Kate Sang & Prof. Jemina Napier

Despite the numerical domination of women in sign language interpreting (SLI), there is no extant research exploring why 80% of SLIs are women (Bontempo et al., 2014) or how this affects experiences of the profession. Sign languages are minority languages and the social construction of the SLI profession is complex due to the hearing identity of the majority of interpreters, who are then potentially perceived as ‘outsiders’ by the Deaf community (Napier, 2002a). Hearing interpreters have to enculture themselves to deaf ways of ‘being’ to effectively represent deaf signers, a complexity exacerbated by a homogenous workforce. This study will explore how SLIs navigate the gendered aspects of their profession to reveal how gender is (re)produced in sign language interpreting and hearing SLIs’ enculturation into Deaf cultures. Butler’s (2011) framework of gender performativity will inform a qualitative study drawing on a combination of linguistic ethnographic and biographical methods, including narratives and diaries; creative art workshops, photo and video elicitation tasks, as well as real-world observations and interviews.

Applicants for this project should have an academic background in Deaf Studies/sign language interpreting or the sociological study of work, with experience of qualitative research methods.

For informal enquiries, please contact Prof. Kate Sang (k.sang@hw.ac.uk)

When submitting your application for this project area, please select the option ‘Management, PhD’ from the drop-down list on the online application system.