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DEAF PROFESSIONALS IN EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES: HOW THE USE OF
TECHNOLOGIES HAS AFFECTED THEIR CAREER MOBILITY EXPERIENCES - AN ANECDOTAL
STUDY

PRESENTER: DENISE KAVIN and KIM BROUN KURZ, PhD
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>> Denise Kavlin: Would you mind if we wait one minute or two minutes? I
know, people are having lunch now. They may be taking their sweet time to
get here.

>> Yes, maybe wait for just a moment.

>> The captioning is being done remotely. We don't have anybody in the
room who is doing the captioning. So we're letting the captionist know what
is going on in the room. Our presenters is looking around a bit puzzled as
to where the captioner is.

>> Denise Kavin: Welcome, everyone. This is a presentation about the experience of deaf professionals in educational and social services professions. We're going to be showing you the results of our research project. This research was held by Kim Broun Kurz and myself, Denise Kavin. I just want to let you know because of time, we're going to be doing an abbreviated version of our much larger study we will have the full version on the web. We're just going to be touching on the basics and providing you with an overview. We'd like you to hold your questions and comments until the end but basically we only have 30 minutes to present. So I think we're going to go ahead and start if that's all right with everyone. Okay. Our interest in this topic started at a conference three years ago in Florida. There was a panel done by deaf professionals talking about their work experiences and the response from the audience was tremendous. It really stuck in my mind that there isn't really information out there about the career and promotion experiences of deaf professionals in educational and social services settings. There was some available research on deaf professionals but it tended to be focused on the alumni of NTID or focused on business professionals or people in technical careers. So as a group of people who is more interested in education and social services, oops, married me. We need to pause for a translation. Would you like me to go back a little bit to recapture anything? We said basically that there's information available already about the career mobility experiences about deaf professionals. But it tends to focus on the business and technical professions. So we decided to do a study on professionals working in the education and social services fields. From this research, four main themes kept coming up again and again. Career choices, mobility, networking and technology. The basic research question that we used or what is the experience of deaf professionals? We really focused on supervisors in the education and social services fields again.

>> Kim Broun Kurz: Hi, everyone, good afternoon. I'm Dr. Kim Broun Kurz. Sorry, I will not be able to stand up for the entire presentation. I'm feeling under the weather and have the flu but I'm here with you this afternoon. So I will be sitting down periodically throughout the presentation. I do have important information to share with you. I'd like to discuss our methodology. We had 16 open ended questions that we asked all of the participants. Let me back up. We did a one-hour videotape. Are you familiar with videophones? We had video TVs so we put a cassette tape in the TV, we did the interview via videophone. After the hour we were able to remove the videotape cassette, have it translated, transcribed into a transcript and then given to both Denise and myself and then we did a member check to make sure there were no deviations from what the actual interview contained. After we checked it we sent it to each of the respondents so they could clarify any of the information we had translated. Once the transcripts were approved, then we used these transcripts as a source of our data. Am I going too fast for you? I'd like to talk about the subjects of our study. There were 11 people in total. Three were male, eight were female. Four of the subjects -- now remember there were 11 and all of these 11 had administrative level positions. Four had doctorate degrees and advanced degree. Six had a masters degree. One person held a bachelor's degree. And you can see the other data, the demographic data regarding the age and the communication mode. This is just background information and demographic information we wanted to collect on our subjects. As part of the interview, we asked the subjects how many people they supervised and they supervised between one to 25 personnel. We also asked them where they worked, four worked in social service settings, three worked in the field of higher education, colleges and universities, two worked for the Federal Government, the administrative level again, one person works for vocational

rehabilitation, and one person works in a medical setting meaning hospital administration. And their administrating programs for the deaf. Denise is going to take over.

>> Denise Kavin: Now, this is really the heart of our research. We asked our subjects if they felt that their deafness helped or hindered their work experience. And two said they felt it was very positive and really helped. And the rest of them -- the rest of the other ten said that they didn't feel that it really helped. One said they didn't really think about it all that much. I want to make sure that our translators are up to date. Okay. We asked if they felt they were limited by their deafness in their job. Eight said yes. Three said no that they didn't feel but one said, well, it just happens. You know, I just kind of go about my business on a daily basis and don't think about it much. But, this is a little ironic and a bit of a conflict in some of the results we found. Every one of the 11 people said that if they were not deaf that they would not be where they are now. They would have chosen a different profession. And I really emphasize that these were adults, all of them were professionals. All of them have very high level degree of satisfaction in their work. They weren't angry. They weren't unhappy, they love what they do but they still felt if they were a hearing individual they would have chosen a different field. Now we asked them what they thought we would be doing. One of them said firefighter. One of them said FBI agent. Another one said CEO of a company somewhere, government diplomat. So there were a lot of different responses to that question of what would you be doing if you weren't deaf. Now this is a quote from one person and we have quotes that we're throwing in from our interviews on a periodic basis here during the presentation. I will allow you to read this for yourself. It's interesting because of the time limitation I need to say the -- one of the counselors commented sometimes they are jealous of the hearing individuals because they can do therapy for whoever they want. The deaf counselor felt they were really related to -- that they could only work with deaf people. All of the issues they dealt with were related to deafness and sort of deafness all the time and that they sometimes wish they could try and use different kinds of therapeutic approaches with different kinds of consumers. They said if I was working in a hearing profession maybe I wouldn't be able to contribute as much. They felt good about where they are at the time. Now, one or two people did say that they had the opportunity for promotion but they turned it down because they were enjoying so much what they were currently doing. For example one individual was working in vocational rehabilitation services with deaf/blind individuals. They felt they wouldn't have the same level of satisfaction if they were promoted so they turned down the opportunity for promotion based on how much they were enjoying their current position. At the same time they still felt limited so we saw again and again this paradox, this conflict between what they felt and what they were doing and what they thought they could do. They felt that by society, by the work environment, that they were perhaps looked upon as people who could only work with the deaf or with other deaf people. But at the same time they limited themselves, as well. It wasn't just an external limitation. Again, by that same token they really did enjoy what they did. They enjoyed being in a work environment where communication was fully accessible. Where they were able to contribute and where they could be comfortable in what they do. They seem to accept the tradeoffs. Some did feel that there were limited opportunities for skill development, however. And some people felt that there was -- they were very interested but they didn't feel like there wasn't a big enough market for what they really wanted to do. There wasn't enough work for the passion they would really like to pursue. There was one deaf person who wanted to be a lobbyist but felt that there was not a sufficient market, this person really wanted to be -- another

individual wanted to be in private practice law. Did he not feel that there was enough work perhaps for him to keep up with that. There was another individual who wanted to be in holistic medicine but again felt limited by perhaps the opportunities available.

>> Kim Broun Kurz: As Denise just mentioned she was talking about career choices and career mobility. People moving up in their chosen career. The feeling is twice as good to be at the top, to be at the top of the game. They have to be twice as good to be at the top. The quote on this next slide is from a vocational rehabilitation administrator and I will let you read it. During our research we looked for common trends and we looked -- we found that supervisors echoed this quote that many people didn't feel force but they felt that they wanted to stay in the field of deafness. They didn't want to look to careers that were not related to deafness because they like the career that they have chosen. This is another quote from a deaf services coordinator and I'll let you read that, as well. Some people did expression frustration, as well, because they did feel a little stuck. That they did want to be a little more mobile and wished this could have been a little more mobile but they weren't able to. Other people didn't feel stuck. That they liked what they were doing and they wanted to continue what they were doing. Many of our deaf respondents said that their job is more like a comfort zone. Very comfortable. Almost too comfortable and easy for them to stay in their job and if they were to venture into a higher level job it would be scary for them. And so we maybe need to talk about encouraging deaf administrators to go out of their comfort zone. There's nothing wrong with being in your comfort zone but this is just a pattern that we noticed.

>> One of the people we interviewed shared a story with us. They said he used interpreters in the work environment. That his supervisor -- as his supervisor he felt he was very successful but there was a colleague who was hard-of-hearing and she had a very different approach. She decided just to pay attention -- she decided not to pay attention to her hearing loss. She didn't use interpreters, she didn't use VP, TTYs or any of the things and a lot of people looked at her and said why can't you be more like her. She doesn't depend on interpreters. Why aren't you like this other woman? So that's -- that's an experience that one of our subjects had.

>> I'll let you read this slide. It talks about communication access. This quote is indicative of a common frustration that deaf administrators can't just act on the spur of the moment. They can't just at any time decide they want to participate in a workshop or an outside event. They have to do prior planning and requesting of services. Some people did feel that they were showing potential and they were working to their full potential but it took time. This next quote is from an outreach project administrator. The quote convey as sentiment that we're more than our ears and you really need to be qualified and need to show that you're qualified for people to look beyond your hearing loss.

>> When we did a literature review as we're preparing for write our article, again and again we saw the importance of networking. This came up again and again as an issue. And this ties in with communication in the work environment. Even if a deaf employee had an interpreter, if they felt like they had access, they still felt like they were missing out on a lot of the networking opportunities and they felt that it hurt them in their careers. And we found exactly the same thing here, as well. Many deaf individuals feel they miss out on the conversations that go on at the coffee machine, at the water cooler, in the bathroom and in the hallways. I thought, well, can't have an interpreter with me all the time so they felt limited. And deaf people often felt like even if they did have an interpreter with them, it wouldn't, it still wouldn't be a benefit. Interpreters can't be there with you 24/7. So a lot of the things that happen prior to a meeting or

after the meeting were not captured by the deaf people. These incidental incidents were lost to them. We have another quote that we will allow you to read. Many of the people that we interviewed were very creative and they came up with a lot of different ways to network with their colleagues. One person talked about happy hour every Friday afternoon. Co-workers would all get together and go to happy hour. Out to a bar for drinks and this person had never been invited. So finally one afternoon he made a coupon and he said that this is good for me to buy you all one round of drinks. And the deaf -- the hearing people said we thought we would invite you but we thought you would need an interpreter with you so we felt awkward inviting you. From that point on the hearing people always included him and this person said, if it's a small group, he would join in. If it's a larger group then it's more difficult. He was included in the happy hour Friday group from then on. Some people schedule dinner meetings or lunch meetings with colleagues on a regular basis. So that they can be filled in on what is happening. One said he had a co-worker who loved to talk. So sometimes he would go over to her office and just say, hey, what's up? The woman would fill him in on all the details, what was going on in the office environment. All that incidental information that he had been missing. Some people had different feelings about the role of staff interpreters. Some felt that the staff interpreters had access to information first and therefore the interpreter had more power, perhaps, and that was very awkward, they felt the staff interpreters had more information. That they heard everything and didn't always fill in them in on what was going on. Once or twice we said there were sensitive meetings with supervisors and other employees and they didn't want to have an interpreter, so they would go home and use the videophone to call their supervisor so they wouldn't have to involve an interpreter on site. They wanted to have more of the direct person-to-person contact via the technology. Interesting comment, we thought. Now, the use of technology we've got a lot of pretty new technology that deaf people are able to utilize. A lot of people reported that they really love e-mail, videophone, instant messaging, and they loved having the access that this technology provided. Now, other people said they didn't feel that they saw much difference yet but the majority felt that the technologies available were very beneficial. Again, we've got another quote. Really, Kim and I felt a lot more research is necessary to research the impact a videophone has had on a deaf person's mobility within an organization. Videophones only been readily available in the past three years so it's ripe for study. We would like to ask professionals has it helped you with your mobility? Have you felt more connected?

>> One of the largest complaint the deaf professional has were that the community interpreters with the skills are now being lost and stolen in effect by our VRS service providers. That's video relay service providers, that's something that professionals have noticed. Now, there's something else called VRI, video remote interpreting. We have that right now. We have a captionist in another room, a remote location captioning for us. Here's a quote from another respondent. So the deaf supervisor shared this quote with us. Now because it's harder to actually contract with interpreters, sometimes it's easier for the colleague to go into an adjacent office and call the supervisor via a video relay service and then have a conversation that way because they found that is more effective and efficient than writing back and forth via paper and pen. Here's another quote --

One of the supervisor requires all of his staff to keep an AIM window, instant messaging window, on their computer open. This provide as fast and effective way for him to communicate with everyone on his staff. Also as you can see in the quote he requires pagers. So it's an online method of communication which supports communication between the supervisor and his employees at the workplace.

>> We found a few general conclusions. There is still a glass ceiling even though we've got the Americans with Disabilities Act. Even though there are better technologies people felt they were often stuck in their careers. We don't know if it's society or if the deaf people are putting themselves in that situation. Networking issues, gathering of that incidental information, they felt it was really critical and key to their networking and therefore the mobility within the workplace or, you know, it's important, who do you know and who do you want to know? Those kinds of issues are important for deaf people. We felt the impact of technology. Having access to communication. And being able to contribute were very powerful motivators for people. Very important in the work environment. Deaf people often felt that the ability to communicate was more important than their ability to maybe move up in the organization. Now, there were some limitations with our study, as well. We only interviewed 11 people. Only focused on service fields. Only interviewed the subjects themselves. We didn't interview their co-workers or others around them. So I think our time is about good. We have three minutes left. Do you have any questions or comments you would like to make?

>> I would like to add one clarifying point. Even though technology did aid communication in the workplace and they felt that communication was more accessible, at the same time technology does not replace and resolve the problems that we confront today with career mobility. So we need to do more studies in this area to find out really how technology specifically is impacting career mobility. Again, it's not a replacement resolution for -- it resolves some of the issues but not all of the issues.

>> The technology can never replace that human component.

>> Absolutely. I'm curious before we go, I want to ask the audience a question. How many of you work in educational or social service settings? By a show of hands. Okay. How many of you your work is related in technology somehow? Technological field? Okay. Great. How many of you are from other countries, not the United States.

>> You are, that's fantastic, non-U.S., from other countries? We would be interested to hear your questions, comments and thoughts about our research study, as well. So we're open to that, as well. Yes?

>> I have a question. I'm curious, let me stand up. If your research, and your data collection, did you find a relationship between about -- between the people who chose their communication mode and their comfort level and career mobility?

>> I'll go ahead and answer that. All of the subjects that we interviewed were deaf and they were manual communicators, they signed. And the person who was more oral said that she was very tired of struggling and she said she was losing her patience. I thought that was very interesting. But most of them -- most of the group were signers.

>> There were some issues, though, as well related with if they were hard-of-hearing or not. That was a good question. The person from the audience is asking I'm wondering if a person who tended to use their voice more or read lips more tended to be -- have an easier time with their career mobility?

>> Well, as Kim is answering, the societal view of if a person can speak, if they are deaf, maybe they are smarter and maybe they would have more opportunities to be promoted. Our study didn't focus on that but that would be a good question, as well.

>> How many people have cochlear implants?

>> I don't believe anyone is using cochlear implants. The question from the audience was how many people -- how many individuals used cochlear implants and none of the people in our study had cochlear implants.

>> Can everyone see me? I'm sorry. Let me go up front. Sorry about that. I want to make sure everyone can view my comment. I'm more concerned, you know, for example, I'm in the field. I've been working in this field for 20 years and I love it. But I don't know if I want to stay here another 20 years. So I'm trying to decide now which field I would go into. This is causing me to do a lot of introspection. I know that I have a colleague who used to be my student is very frustrated and he feels that his skills are great and that he could be promoted but you know he sent out resume, he has gone to interviews and he hasn't been hired. So he's feeling very frustrated and he's wondering about maybe changing his career goals. So and I would like to stop that. I mean I want to be supportive. I know this student personally and he's brilliant, a genius in the area of computers, you know, but I can't discourage him from going into technology. I mean he is deaf. He does not use his voice. And you know how do we resolve these issues? Not only in education but how do we resolve these issues for people while they are going through school? How can we help them to address the issues before they graduate? With the technological field you would think it would be easier.

>> The technology and computer fields can be very competitive. And I know that there's always companies looking for more. A lot of companies really prefer to have hearing individuals working at their help lines and their customer service lines. So I think that a lot of companies really expect people who are very skilled, have experience in the field, they want to look at a resume and see what their education is, where they went, and I know that a lot of companies when they look at somebody who is deaf or hard-of-hearing they really prefer to see the hard-of-hearing label.

>> That would be an interesting study. Maybe you could take upon that study yourself.

>> I was a little bit discouraged because when Kim and I were doing the lit review we saw a lot on people with disabilities in the workplace and but there wasn't a lot about their promotion experience. There was a lot about how to hire people with disabilities, how to accommodate them, so it was from the perspective of the caretaker but there was only one article on the mobility of deaf people in the workplace, and individuals experienced with qualified workers and their ability to be promoted even though they had disabilities. So I think that that's a bit discouraging and there needs to be a new focus.

>> [inaudible comment]

>> They were faculty members, administrators, program coordinators, counselors, as well, and different staff individuals, all areas.

>> We would like to thank you for your time. If you have more questions Denise and I will be around and we have our contact information also on the hand-out. So please feel free to contact us and thank you for coming.

>> Thank you, Kim and Denise for a wonderful presentation. If you didn't get a hand-out, please go for the website. Their full presentation will be available there. Thank you very much. Thank you to our interpreters, as well, and to the tech people and captionist, as well. Thank you all.