

More Than Words: How Interpreters Wrestle with Risk, Rules, and Really Hard Choices

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Abstract

The topic of courage and risk in the profession of signed language interpreting (SLI) is nuanced, with emerging research on how interpreters make ethical decisions and how this impacts the profession, consumers, and practitioners. A professional's freedom to make decisions as befits their expertise, ability to implement values into action, and normative messaging are important topics when considering a professional's ability to make ethical decisions. Literature in the field suggests that the signed language interpreting profession struggles with appropriate professional decision-making due to norms. If a practitioner is restricted in their decision-making due to norms, doing what is right even when it is difficult is a courageous act. This thesis explores how professional courage manifests in interpreter decision-making and what factors contribute to making courageous decisions versus conforming to

expected and harmful norms. Through questionnaires, I identified a group of interpreters who told courageous stories that went against norms. These interpreters defied norms by upholding their values for the good of their consumers despite risk to themselves and feelings of fear. Both practitioners and interpreter educators will benefit from a research-backed avenue of discussion on factors that influence interpreters to go against accepted norms and to behave courageously.

Keywords: Sign language interpreters, decision-making, decisional latitude, autonomy, norms, courage

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The only thing we have to fear is fear itself-nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance

-President Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933)

It's never easy, but if we turn our backs on our principles, we stop being human

-Captain Katheryn Janeway (Berman et al., 1999)

Background

“I just felt stuck.”

“What else could I do?”

“What other choice did I have?”

The above are examples of common statements interpreters have made to me while discussing a time when their work became more than to “just interpret.” The job and role of a signed language interpreter is far more than meaning transfer, putting one message from a source language into a target language. Interpreters make daily decisions about what they do, what they say, what they do not say, how best to serve their consumers, uphold professional standards, and take care of themselves in the process. The field of signed language interpreting (SLI) has come far in the last three decades, especially since the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, securing the right to qualified signed language interpreters (U.S Department of Justice, n.d.). These strides include interpreters’ increased professionalization, legislation supporting disability rights, and an increased awareness of Deaf culture and signed language. Despite formal college or university-level training for signed language interpreters, interpreters seem to struggle conceiving their role as professionals when making what they believe to be difficult decisions (Dean, 2015; Dean & Pollard, 2013; Dean, Samar, & Maffia, 2022; Guery,

2014; Hsieh, 2006; Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2009 & 2011). Why is it that some interpreters might do what is expected of them rather than what they think should be done?

Decisional latitude refers to a professional's control over their decisions as befits their expertise, the freedoms of decision-making derived from their role as perceived by society, and the profession's ethical codes and standards of practice (Dean & Pollard, 2001). The literature suggests that interpreters' decisional latitude is lower than it should be, often from societal/institutional pressures (Dean, 2015; Dean and Pollard, 2001 & 2013; Dean, Samar, & Maffia, 2022; Guery, 2014; Hsieh, 2006; Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2009 & 2011). From this information, I hypothesize that two types of interpreters emerge: those who conform to norms of low decisional latitude and those who do not. Doing what is right when it is not easy is a courageous quality, one necessary for interpreters who might otherwise defy norms that do not serve their communities and are unethical. On the opposite end, risk aversion does the opposite, counting the potential risk as higher than the benefits of ethical behavior. Courage and risk aversion are two pertinent topics that will inform how interpreters make decisions within their perception of how much freedom they have to make professional decisions (decisional latitude). How does the concept of professional courage manifest in interpreter decision-making? Using qualitative research, I attempt to address this conundrum.

Statement of Problem

Decision making is key to conduct that befits a professional in a field with the power to harm or benefit consumers. When a professional makes a decision, they weigh the problem against their personal and professional decision-making frameworks, the pros and cons, and select the best option for the clients and the practitioner. This process inherently involves courage and risk. Making an ethical decision that goes against established norms is risky and

often involves fear. This is where courage is required. Anecdotally, most interpreters try to “stay in their lane,” “just interpret,” and “stay within their role.” These figurative statements may derive from a rigid conservative interpretation of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Code of Professional Conduct (CPC) (2005) or be a residual effect of the conduit model (Jones, n.d.; Wilcox & Shaffer, 2005). What about those professionals who refuse to engage in unethical behavior due to passivity and rigid norm following? If the norm of the SLI profession is to err on the side of caution via risk-aversion, where do the risk takers come from? How are courageous interpreters created?

In my experience, the interpreters with whom I have spoken can easily remember a time when they came to a crossroads of a difficult decision. The profession of signed language interpreting (SLI) has little insight into how interpreters display professional courage. A concrete understanding of professional decision-making and resulting consequences is key to the field’s growth. Without this, practitioners are exposed to stress, and harm may come to the consumers through inadequate or unethical services. I attempt to unpack these issues through the research question: How does the concept of professional courage manifest in interpreter decision-making?

Purpose of the Study

This study is important because it can give interpreters, interpreter educators, and stakeholders a better understanding of how and why interpreters exhibit tendencies of professional courage or risk-aversion. Many interpreters often feel stuck when faced with a hard decision they know is ethical, and an easier decision that may not be ethical. This professional sheepishness can lead to abuse of the interpreter and the minority groups present. Through this study, I aim to shed light on what makes interpreters professionally courageous. The implications of the study may inform interpreters and interpreter educators on the current state of the

profession in regard to decision-making tendencies, and provide an avenue of research-backed discussion for all stakeholders about what it means to be a courageous interpreter.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Courage

Rate et al. (2007) offer a multi-dimensional view into courage. The authors investigate existing definitions, descriptions, and theories of courage in order to create an operational definition. Rate et al. (2007) conducted four studies where they researched people's perceptions of courageous individuals, ranking and sorting courageous behaviors, and evaluating other people's courage. While academic consensus as to a definition of courage is lacking, Rate et al. (2007) found that people implicitly understand courage. They found that participants were able to "articulate well-developed, implicit theories of courage" (Rate et al., 2007, p.94). The authors note that there is a long-standing debate on the role of fear in defining courage dating back to Aristotle and Plato; Aristotle believing that courage is acting appropriately in the face of fear, and Plato describing courage as having knowledge to place fear appropriately (Rate et al., 2007). Chowkase et al. (2024) weigh in on this argument, asserting that courage and fear are closely linked and that fear can diminish through a personal history of making courageous decisions. Risk often involves fear, and for the limited purposes of this research, fear can measure a participant's own confidence and assessment of risk, but not to definitely determine courage based on fear. Rate et al.'s (2007) research-backed definition of courage will serve as the theoretical framework for this research. Courage is "(a) a willful, intentional act, (b) executed after mindful deliberation, (c) involving objective substantial risk to the actor, (d) primarily motivated to bring about a noble good or worthy end, (e) despite, perhaps, the presence of the

emotion of fear” (Rate et al., 2007, p.95). I will use the operational definition of courage to analyze and discuss participants’ responses.

Demand-Control Schema: Dean and Pollard (2013)

This research study is heavily informed by the scholarship of Dean and Pollard (2001, 2011, 2013), particularly their work on ethical development and the decision-making framework Demand-Control Schema (DC-S) they developed. They discuss demands as elements in the work, and controls as a practitioner’s responses to those demands (Dean and Pollard, 2013). Controls may be categorized on a spectrum from conservative to liberal. Conservative controls refer to controls that favor inaction, and liberal controls favor action (Dean and Pollard, 2013). Dean and Pollard’s work informs the theoretical foundation by being the primary decision-making framework through which the data is viewed. In addition, the questionnaire methodology mirrors DC-S as it walks participants through demands, controls, and resulting consequences. I will discuss DC-S and its implications for this study further in the Literature Review chapter.

Strengths and Limitations

This study’s scope is to study interpreter participants’ behaviors in light of courage. The sample size for this study is small, so results are indicative and align with existing literature, but cannot be generalized. The small sample size allowed for detailed analysis and handling of the stories the participants told and to go deeper rather than broad. In addition, this study involves participant self-reports, so I am limited by what participants chose to include in their responses. However, this allows participants to reflect fully on past experiences and what they choose to include can be interesting data points.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this thesis several terms are used in specific ways to describe concepts in the interpreting field. These terms include: demands, controls, decisional latitude, autonomy, norms, courage, and risk. Many of these definitions are derived from the work of scholars in the fields of interpreting and courage, while others are commonly used definitions from Merriam-Webster. In order to ensure cohesion and clarity, their definitions are provided here.

Demand(s): “a factor that rises to a level of significance that will, or should, impact the decision-making involved in your work” (Dean & Pollard, 2013, p.4).

Controls: “resources the interpreter has at her or his disposal or a response the interpreter offers in light of assignment demands (Dean & Pollard, 2013, p.15).

Decisional Latitude: “job control, skills/resources and decision authority” as determined by “one's education and experience, the freedoms attributed to that professional role by society, and by the profession's code of ethics and standards of conduct” (Dean & Pollard, 2001, p. 6).

Autonomy: “the degree to which individuals-in this case interpreters-have genuine opportunities for informed and transparent decision-making while performing their work” (Witter-Merithew et al., 2010, p.59).

Norms: a principle of right action binding upon the members of a group and serving to guide, control, or regulate proper and acceptable behavior (Merriam-Webster, n.d. 2)

Courage: “(a) a willful, intentional act, (b) executed after mindful deliberation, (c) involving objective substantial risk to the actor, (d) primarily motivated to bring about a noble good or worthy end, (e) despite, perhaps, the presence of the emotion of fear” (Rate et al., 2007, p.95).

Risk: “to expose to hazard or danger” (Merriam-Webster, n.d., 2).

Organization

This thesis is structured in six parts. In the second chapter, I explore issues of decisional latitude, courage, and norms, as well as factors that influence ethical decision-making by practitioners and how this impacts the profession, practitioners, and consumers. In the third chapter, I lay out the two-part methodology, including a discussion of the research design, data collection, analysis, and population for this study. Fourth, I will present the findings from the data, including the three data sources: demographics, narrative responses, and thematic analysis. Fifth, after the findings, the discussion chapter provides insights and recommendations based on the findings. Sixth, the conclusion chapter encapsulates the entire project and key takeaways.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Through this thesis, I explore how the concept of professional courage manifests in interpreter decision-making. The purpose of this literature review chapter is to investigate existing research, discussions, and theory around these questions. Special attention will be paid to the topics of ethical decision making, decisional latitude, and professional courage. Through these topics, I frame this thesis research on decisional latitude and tendencies toward professional courage and risk-aversion within the ongoing discussion within the literature, and key issues are explored.

The literature analyzed in this chapter focuses on identifying factors that influence practitioner ethical decision-making and how this impacts the profession, practitioners, and consumers. This will be achieved through an evaluation of professional codes of conduct (CPCs), ethical frameworks commonly used in signed language interpreting (SLI), decisional latitude, a discussion on controls and the interpreter's role, and research on decision-making in the field. The literature presented in this chapter provides strong evidence that interpreters' perceived or actual decisional latitude is lower than befits the profession, with a marked reluctance to oppose accepted norms. This seeming risk-aversion may be overcome by practitioners enacting professional courage in the field. By studying interpreter tendencies toward courage or risk-aversion, the field may begin to address how the themes from the literature show up in our work and ways to change our tendencies in ways that better uphold best practices.

Codes of Conduct

In order to understand how interpreters make decisions, a survey of the literature reveals information about how codes of conduct often have unintended effects on practitioners. All RID-

certified, medical, legal, educational, and a good number of uncertified interpreters have the responsibility to follow codes of conduct put forth by their respective organizations or workplaces. Codes of conduct in interpreting professions nationwide (see RID CPC & National Association of Interpreters in Education (NAIE) Code of Ethics) outline ethical practices. CPCs are beneficial in providing a baseline of generally acceptable behavior and have added credence to the professionalization of the field. CPCs often reinforce strict norm-based behaviors in practitioners. CPCs have aided in the professionalization of the field, but reinforce a sense of rigidity. When used as a guide to behavioral norms instead of a baseline for generally acceptable behavior and value systems, dynamic ethical reasoning becomes limited. Due to this, CPCs cannot be utilized as a basis for ethical reasoning as they cannot anticipate all possible scenarios (Dean and Pollard, 2022; Tate & Turner, 2002). Instead, CPCs are a reflection of underlying values that a practitioner should hold and how these values translate to behaviors.

Ethical Frameworks and Values

If CPCs alone cannot offer comprehensive solutions to ethical problems for practitioners, we turn to ethical frameworks for decision-making and the value systems within. Commonly, in interpreting ethics literature, we find discussions of normative ethics. Normative ethics is concerned with whether an action should occur, and the delineations between right and wrong. Within normative ethics, two sub-categories are often discussed within the literature: deontological and teleological. Deontological ethics determine normative action via weighing options with a pre-existing rule, and acting as that rule dictates (Dean & Pollard, 2011). Teleological ethics determines normative action via weighting the potential effects of a decision based on the context, selecting the option that has the outcome that best aligns with the actor's values (Dean & Pollard, 2011). Codes of professional conduct such as the RID CPC (2005) offer

specific illustrated behaviors that uphold standards such as confidentiality, professionalism, conduct, respect, etc. When the RID CPC (2005) is interpreted literally and conservatively, practitioners may practice deontological ethics as opposed to a more holistic approach like teleology (Dean & Pollard, 2011; Jones, n.d.; Wilcox & Shaffer, 2005). Dean and Pollard (2011) critique deontological ethics in interpreting, emphasizing its rigid, rule-based nature. They advocate for teleological ethics, which prioritize outcomes, impacts, and context-based reasoning. In their (2018) work, Dean and Pollard urge signed language interpreters to emphasize values (teleological) rather than rules (deontological). While codes of conduct may be beneficial in providing basic standards, it is their underlying values that should instruct practitioners, not the standards themselves (Tate and Turner, 2002). In the RID CPC (2005), the values represented include: confidentiality, professionalism, conduct appropriate to the specific interpreting situation, respect for the consumer, respect for colleagues, ethical business practices, and engagement in professional development.

In addition to these values from the RID CPC (2005), Dean and Pollard (2018) identify core values in the interpreting profession outside of those directly included in the RID CPC (2005), like accuracy, neutrality, fidelity, respect for autonomy, noninterference, non-maleficence, beneficence, and justice. While the RID CPC (2005) may infer the values Dean and Pollard (2018) discuss, they are not explicitly mentioned in the RID CPC (2005) due to its illustrated behavior approach compared to a values-based approach. The values presented by Dean and Pollard (2018) can be drawn out of the RID CPC (2005). All RID members, by virtue of membership, commit to upholding the values and illustrated behaviors in the RID CPC (2005).

The values outlined in the RID CPC (2005) and the literature above would be meaningless if interpreters did not follow them in practice. Stewart (2023) researched how interpreters make the ethical decision to accept or deny assignments. Stewart identified seventeen perceived values that the participants identified as influencing their work. Many of these values overlapped with those identified by the RID CPC and Dean and Pollard (2018). Other values were not explicitly mentioned in the RID CPC but could be implied. These values are:

transparency, honesty, respect, do no harm, competence/work quality, responsibility, non-malevolence, confidentiality, service, deaf-centeredness, shared power, sharing resources, breaking down paternalistic barriers, extending the interpreter's privilege to the work, familiarity with interpreted content, and separating oneself from the work/the work is not about [the interpreter]. (Stewart, 2023, p. 122)

Dean and Pollard (2018) show that professionals often make decisions based on their values. Due to this, I believe that values will become important in the analysis of participants' responses for this thesis project on how they perceive their ability/freedom to make professional decisions as befits their expertise (decisional latitude).

Teleological ethics allows interpreters to act based on values/principles (Dean & Pollard, 2011, 2018, 2022). A decision-making framework derived from teleological principles is Dean and Pollard's *Demand Control Schema* (2001, 2011, 2013). Within this framework, practice professionals utilize controls (reactions/responses/actions) in response to demands (situations/challenges) that accompany the work. Dean and Pollard (2013) outline a spectrum of controls, with the two ends of the spectrum: liberal (action-oriented) and conservative (inaction-

oriented). While Dean and Pollard (2011) caution against extreme liberal controls, they describe extreme conservative controls as equally dangerous. They state that:

When the demand-control gap is severe enough, interpreters may excuse themselves from a job assignment. More frequently, though, interpreters try to get through a challenging job by just doing the best they can. Yet, this stoic decision often leads to an even more compromised work product. (Dean & Pollard, 2013, p. 61)

Dean and Pollard's work (2011 & 2013) shows how inaction, just as much as action, can cause more harm than good. When the amount or severity of demands exceeds the amount of controls available to an interpreter, one viable option (control) available to a practitioner is to excuse themselves from an assignment. Depending on the context, the interpreter may have a choice to stay in an assignment doing the best the interpreter can (relative inaction/conservative) or excuse themselves from an assignment (relative action/liberal). Interpreters seem to prefer conservative controls to liberal options (Dean & Pollard, 2013). The reasoning for this type of decision will vary, from the interpreter's analysis of their skills and ability to do a job (Stewart, 2023), or a situation arises that impedes the interpreter's ability to do their job (Dean & Pollard, 2013). While withdrawing from an assignment may not be an ideal solution, the above quotation from Dean and Pollard (2013) demonstrates that if a practitioner tries to muddle through a challenging job, just trying to do their best, it can provide an even worse outcome. These findings raise interesting questions: why is it that interpreters often choose the path of least resistance, to the detriment of themselves and the core values of the field discussed above (Dean and Pollard, 2013)? Mendoza illustrates the importance of this topic:

Because sign language interpreters are the only participants in the discourse triad that are knowledgeable about both languages and cultures (typically English/hearing culture and

ASL/Deaf culture), it is incumbent upon them to make an ethical decision that is fair for all parties.” (2010, p.1)

When the interpreter who has a great deal of power feels unable to act, taking the path of least resistance (ie, the norm), there is a potential for harm to consumers (Mason & Ren, 2012; Mendoza, 2010; Russell & Shaw, 2016). This harm is especially potent to historically and socially marginalized groups (Mason & Ren, 2012; Mendoza, 2010; Russell & Shaw, 2016). This path of harm does not uphold the values presented by the literature in this section. I believe that the tendencies towards risk-aversion and courage become important as practitioners navigate whether to stay within norms that are harmful in a given situation, or to exercise their values in ethical frameworks outside of established norms. Through this research, I will attempt to investigate the tendencies of a sample of interpreters and investigate their decision-making process to address this gap between what interpreters may wish to do (values) and what interpreters actually do.

Decisional Latitude

CPCs and value-based ethics systems are ways that interpreters talk about how and why they make decisions in the field (Dean & Pollard, 2018). This leads to the issue of how interpreters perceive their ability and freedom to make decisions. An interpreter may adhere to a very ethical standard, but without the freedom to make decisions to follow it, cannot enact it (Dean & Pollard, 2001; Witter-Merithew et al., 2010). Dean and Pollard (2001) note that RID guidelines and the RID CPC convey a severely restricted view of an interpreter’s agency and ability to make decisions: *decisional latitude*. When a profession or job does not have a range of freedoms from which professionals can make decisions, the profession is categorized as having a high risk of burnout and stress-related injuries/illnesses (Dean and Pollard, 2001). This may stem

from how interpreters are traditionally taught to view their decisional latitude. Dean and Pollard (2001) argue that in traditional interpreter education, practitioners are taught to suppress anything within themselves that does not directly relate to the linguistic task of translation. This lack of decisional latitude may, in turn, impact an interpreter's ability to feel the freedom to utilize liberal controls, make ethical decisions, and set appropriate boundaries (Dean & Pollard, 2001). Any decision an interpreter makes that is non-linguistic will affect the translation product, the interpreter, and the consumers just as much as linguistic decisions (Dean and Pollard, 2018). Bowen-Bailey (2014) notes that he often needs to "give interpreters permission" to exercise their own expertise when making decisions. Bowen-Bailey finds this necessary to "address the tendency to rigidly follow the Code of Ethics" (2014, p.18).

Historically, Dean and Pollard (2018) argue that SLI was considered a technical profession due to the reigning conduit model, which considered bilingual message transfer as the complete and only work of the interpreter. Continuing the discussion on interpreter education and the history of the profession, Dean and Pollard assert that perception and judgment abilities as applied to interpersonal dynamics are the most important skills in an interpreter's toolbox (Dean and Pollard, 2011 & 2018). The conduit model, a lack of action of anything other than to "just interpret," is traditionally present in SLI. Dean and Pollard (2011 & 2013) assert that a lack of action (conservative controls) may cause more harm than good. Likewise, Bowen-Bailey (2014) agrees with this assessment and emphasizes that following the conduit model and rule-based approaches (deontological) often causes harm. Stating, "conservative approaches were the norm when our profession had a more rigid understanding of the Code of Ethics" (Bowen-Bailey, 2014, p.19). Bowen-Bailey (2014) puts this overemphasis of conservative controls in the past. Based on the literature so far, it appears that the conduit model is still pervasive in

interpreters' work, even when academics of the profession might understand it to be outdated. Bowen-Bailey continues, "many [interpreters] are still working within the confines of the old paradigm of a rule-based ethics. They sense that the rigidity doesn't work, but don't have the language to express how or why" (2014, p.20). In addition, Hill (2018) found that low decisional latitude exposes interpreters to a variety of stressors, which can cause risks to psychological safety. The decisional latitude literature discussed above overlaps to present a grim view of how interpreters view their ability and responsibility to make ethical decisions due to it being outside of their perceived role to "just interpret," and how this norm affects interpreters and the people we serve.

Relational autonomy is another piece of decisional latitude. Relational autonomy refers to decisional latitude within the specific context of professional relationships (Witter-Merithew et al., 2010). When a profession has low relational autonomy (and low decisional latitude), professionals experience a lack of power and base their decisions on self-interest, with a lack of understanding of the different levels of how decisions made by them and others interact and impact the world around them (Witter-Merithew et al., 2010). On the other hand, professions with high relational autonomy (and high decisional latitude) do utilize power to make decisions that befit a professional of their expertise (Witter-Merithew et al., 2010). Professional autonomy is not absolute freedom bereft of collaboration with colleagues and participants in the interpreted interaction. Instead, it refers to making decisions that befit a professional with a certain level of expertise within professional ethical frameworks (Witter-Merithew & Nicodemus, 2012).

While much of the literature has entreated interpreters to utilize the power they have to benefit the interactions they are working within, in the signed language interpreting field, behaviors that

align with high decisional latitude are not the norm (Witter-Merithew et al., 2010). Witter-Merithew et al. describe the dilemma present in interpreters' work,

When the range of viable options diminishes due to insufficient training, lack of experience, or reduced authority over one's work as a result of system-bound barriers, the quality of decision latitude suffers. Further, if the interpreter doesn't possess a sufficient degree of personal autonomy, she will fail to act ethically in the face of professional demands that require application of HAP [high autonomy profession] behaviors.

(2010, p. 5).

Witter-Merithew and Nicodemus (2012) highlight the need to apply the concept of relational autonomy to interpreting work to better grasp the significance of interpreters' choices and to support the development of effective interactions between all participants. From this, it is clear that practicing relational autonomy can address power imbalances inherent in interpreting settings. Relational autonomy not only depends on but also enhances informed and transparent decision-making (Witter-Merithew et al., 2010; Witter-Merithew & Nicodemus, 2012).

The literature on decisional latitude agrees on a few key points. First, the interpreting profession should utilize behaviors consistent with non-restricted decisional latitude. Second, a norm within the interpreting field is to utilize low-quality/restricted decisional latitude behaviors. Third, the cause stems from many sources, including training, experience, barriers, and a lack of responsibility/authority over an interpreter's work. The issues of restricted decisional latitude have been well documented and discussed in the literature, with solutions offered. Not yet discussed in signed language interpreting literature is how individual practitioners overcome the norms perpetuated by the conduit model that restricts decisional latitude. How an interpreter perceives their role and the behaviors (controls) they employ are a key piece to the puzzle of how

some interpreters overcome these norms, and some do not. Based on the literature, my prediction is that professional courage and risk-aversion play a significant role in how decisional latitude transfers into tendencies. The internal tendencies each interpreter harbors will direct how they behave ethically and whether they will challenge harmful norms.

Controls and the Interpreter's Role

To frame this research further and promote understanding of how interpreters make ethical decisions, literature on controls and why conservative controls are more often sought out is necessary. In addition, the interpreter's role directly influences a practitioner's application of controls (Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2009 & 2011). Tate and Turner (2002) highlight how interpreters are significant in providing access and communication. Theories of how interpreters work and their roles have shifted over time. Notably, the machine (conduit) model's prescriptive norms persist in interpreter education despite the shift toward models that show the interpreter's role holistically (ie, mediator, ally, bi-bi, etc.). Due to these relatively recent shifts, researchers find that interpreters are often unequipped to discuss or make ethical decisions on par with other professions (Dean, 2015; Dean and Pollard, 2022; Dean, Samar, & Maffia, 2022; Hsieh, 2006). Dean and Pollard (2022) found that interpreters express difficulty conceptualizing liberal controls (action-oriented) as ethically responsible due to overlooking the resulting consequences. Due to normative messages that inform interpreters that their primary and only function is to engage in linguistic meaning transfer, the interpreters take no action other than to interpret (Dean and Pollard, 2022). They do not conceptualize taking non-linguistic action (defining boundaries, ethical decision-making, etc.) as ethically responsible (Dean and Pollard, 2022). If limited to solely linguistic meaning transfer, the job of an interpreter is incomplete, ignoring the essence of how meaning is constructed, we ignore the fact that "meaning is not monolithic and that all

parties to a conversation work together (participate) to generate this meaning,” making the interpreter an active participant rather than an uninvolved bystander (Angelelli, 2004, pp. 20-21). Interpreters as human beings and professionals engaged in complex interpreting processes such as facilitation, negotiation, and coordination, necessarily engage in many more actions than the work of linguistic meaning transfer (Angelelli, 2004). However, interpreters often anecdotally describe activities they do outside of linguistic factors as ‘stepping out of role.’ Lee and Llewellyn-Jones (2009 & 2011) argue that role metaphors, such as invisible or conduit, deny the inherent personhood of the interpreter and the effects they have upon the interaction. Since there is not (and there cannot be) one prescriptive solution to all interactions, depending on the situation, any number of behaviors may be in line with responsible professional decision making (Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2009 & 2011). This does not indicate that interpreters have free rein to act unethically in the name of subjectivity (Witter-Merithew et al., 2010). Codes of conduct and ethical frameworks hold the interpreter accountable for their actions. The interpreter’s integrity makes the difference between an ethically responsible and an irresponsible practitioner (Lee and Llewellyn-Jones, 2009). The authors delineate the interpreter’s primary goal as “achieving a successful interaction for all participants” (Lee and Llewellyn-Jones, 2011, p.3). From this, we see that an interpreter acting with integrity will make informed decisions based on the specificity of a given situation and their knowledge of the impacts of their decisions (teleological ethics). Lee and Llewellyn-Jones (2009 & 2011) identify three categories of interpreter behaviors that demonstrate the interpreter's role: presentation of self, interaction management, and participant alignment. Different situations require different uses of behaviors that fall into these three alignments. The behavior itself is not the key factor, but the rationale for utilization by the trained and experienced practitioner. Jones’ stance agrees, stating that “interpreters feel

constrained by their ethical codes and the myth of invisibility” (n.d., p.35). Jones (n.d.) identifies a conservative interpretation of the RID CPC as a way for interpreters to remain invisible.

Remaining invisible relates to Lee and Llewellyn-Jones’ (2009 & 2011) comments on integrity, that making an informed decision is necessary and not possible when an interpreter is bound by choice or convention to a limited decisional-latitude as enforced by the conduit model.

An example of the conduit model in action from the medical field, a parallel practice profession, comes from Cooper et al.’s (2008) study. The pharmacists who participated in Cooper et al.’s research expressed attitudes of passivity, stating that they are just “a tool of the doctor” (2008, p. 443). This finding is an example of the pervasiveness of the conduit model and how it is prevalent in practice professions like the medical field, which overlaps with signed language interpreting (SLI). Comparing the study done by Cooper et al. (2008) with Hsieh’s study (2006) gives us a view of how interpreters in the medical field understand their work and roles. In Hsieh’s (2006) study on medical interpreters, the results showed instances where interpreters acted in a way that was not neutral, acting in ways that are not in line with the conduit model. These behaviors were contrary to how society and the systems the interpreters worked in expected them to behave. Hsieh (2006) found that this non-neutrality was caused by the interpreters’ effort to rectify their role performance and others’ expectations of their role. The interpreters acted in a way that was most ethical for the situation they were in, but experienced dissonance between how they were expected to behave and how they needed to behave ethically. Cooper et al. (2008) and Hsieh (2006) demonstrate how the conduit model is pervasive in the interpreting profession and often is not the most effective interpreting model for a given situation. Out of the literature surveyed for this project, Hsieh (2006) is one of the few studies I have found that studies interpreters’ behavior and demonstrates behaviors that go against norms.

While interpreters have perhaps moved or are trying to move away from the conduit model, it is still impactful to our understanding of what it means to be and do the work of an interpreter (Wilcox & Shaffer, 2005). If this is the case, why are its impacts still so prevalent in how interpreters behave and make ethical decisions? Dean and Pollard (2018) discuss the power of role metaphors to influence behavior and thinking. Role metaphors refer to a form of description of an interpreter's role (conduit, ally, helper, etc). Role metaphors and models are useful to conceptualize the profession's role and work through description (Dean and Pollard, 2018). On the other side, normative refers to how something ought to be, concerned with what is right (Dean and Pollard, 2018). As useful as role models and metaphors may be for other purposes, they are descriptive, not normative. Therefore, they cannot be used effectively as behavioral guidance because they do not account for all the varied situations of work and life (Dean and Pollard, 2018).

Roles within practice professions may also be impacted by what practitioners perceive to be their principal duties. As referenced within Reamer (2021), the philosopher W. D. Ross' *prima facie* ethical theory states that duties/professional responsibilities have a hierarchy, and often conflict. Reamer notes that, based on this, the key to professional boundaries and responsibilities lies in reconciling the conflicting duties (2021). In this thesis, what the participants view as their *prima facie*, or principal/actual duties, will impact their ethical decision-making process. Differences within these will determine how practitioners utilize their decisional latitude and the types of controls (actions and reactions) they decide to employ.

Prima facie overlaps with another type of value reasoning documented in the interpreting literature. Dean and Pollard discuss *principled reasoning*, defining the term as "the ability to weigh the import of conflicting ethical obligations, such as principles that compel action versus

inaction” (2022, p.55). Principled reasoning and Ross’s prima facie ethical theory together describe an important concept in professional ethics: the ability to conceptualize many responsibilities as important, decide which ones should be prioritized in a given situation, and make decisions on what behaviors should be employed to support the values/priorities selected (Dean & Pollard, 2022; Reamer, 2021).

Coming once again to the conduit model, the literature shows how interpreters cannot function within it, as doing so would deny their unavoidable influence upon the interaction as human beings (Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2009 & 2011). Treating and teaching interpreters to be constrained to a specific role and specific parameters is a disservice to the profession, as it does not mirror real life, or allow the interpreter to fulfill a primary function of their job: to facilitate successful interactions for all participants (Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2009 & 2011). These findings reflect on the research questions of this thesis. It appears that the conduit model may be the culprit for non-courageous interpreters. Risk involves making a decision and owning that decision, opening oneself up to hazard or danger (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Courage and integrity require a sense of ownership and responsibility for professional decisions (Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2009 & 2011). As Lee and Llewellyn-Jones argue:

“Is it possible that the notion of ‘role’ is simply a construct that interpreters have hidden behind to avoid their individual responsibility for professional decisionmaking? If there are no clear rules to follow, what is there to regulate an interpreter’s behaviour? What ensures that the interpreter always acts professionally? The answer, we would suggest, is integrity” (2009, p.6).

The literature clearly shows that the conduit model relieves interpreters of their moral responsibilities to act ethically, since they are responsible only for tasks and actions that relate to

meaning transfer (Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2009 & 2011). Anything outside of that purview may, in actuality, be ethically wrong to treat with inaction, but the responsibility is off the practitioner's shoulders within the conduit model. Within the conduit model, human beings with unique personhood are reduced to machines. A machine cannot be held accountable for its actions in the same way as an experienced and trained professional. Angelelli agrees, highlighting that "invisibility [is] embraced because it implies that the interpreter has no responsibility," allowing a way for escape (2004, p.22).

The pervasiveness of limited decisional latitude via the conduit model does more than shrug off responsibility. Under the commonly implicitly assumed conduit model, interpreters are thought to, and expected to have no power and function as if they are invisible (Mason & Ren, 2012; Russell & Shaw, 2016). However, literature findings show the opposite of this expectation. Interpreters have the power to influence the power dynamics in an interaction (Mason & Ren, 2012; Russell & Shaw, 2016). The interpreter must consider their power, how they use it, and be accountable for it as they make decisions (Mason & Ren, 2012; Russell & Shaw, 2016). Russell and Shaw's (2016) study found that when interpreters demonstrate confidence, taking responsibility for their actions holistically, successful interpretation can take place. This is due to their conceptualization of interpreting holistically. When an interpreter is aware of their actions, they can then control them. Agency then equates with confidence. On the flipside, Russell and Shaw (2016) found that a lack of agency, as endorsed by the conduit model, occurred when an interpreter did not choose an action that would have been more effective. This stemmed from a lack of awareness of the different options available to the interpreter. The participants who demonstrated a lack of agency expressed a sense of helplessness (Russell and Shaw, 2016).

To summarize the literature on this topic, interpreters' decisions stem from their own sense of agency. Interpreter education may come into play here as a solution, training interpreters to recognize the power they have in their interactions and how to use it. Interpreting is more than word-for-word translation. Everything in an interaction and the dynamics between all participants (including the interpreter) come into play, influenced heavily by the interpreter's courage to make decisions they perceive as difficult or out of the norm. Through researching courage in interpreters, we as a field may begin to understand and mitigate these issues.

Decision-Making in the Field

As gatekeepers of access, interpreters influence the success of interactions they are privileged to enter (Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2009 & 2011). Research on how interpreters make decisions is increasing. The following studies presented here may assist in understanding what factors are already known about decisional latitude and how courage and risk-aversion come into play.

Mendoza's (2010) research on the differences between novice and expert signed language interpreters' ethical decision-making found fundamental differences. First, novices tended to make decisions based on personal factors like how the decision would affect them. Second, novices viewed their decisions narrowly, without appropriate context. This contrasts with the expert group, with the novices displaying tendencies to follow the rules rigidly rather than doing what may be most appropriate for a given situation. On the other hand, experts engaged in objective and context-situated decision-making, considering the impacts of their choices. Experts were also able to relate their decisions in more detail compared to the novice group (Mendoza, 2010). It is reasonable to assume that the research participants of this thesis may experience similar differences and reasoning based on their level of interpreting experience.

However, while Mendoza (2010) sheds light on interpreters' abilities to discuss decision-making and underlying themes and factors in how they are discussed, the research does not show whether the practitioners studied are ethical in practice.

In another research study on ethical decision making, Dean's (2015) dissertation found that while signed language interpreters often make claims related to allyship and justice, her research showed a deficit of reflective justice reasoning abilities. In addition, Dean (2015) found that interpreters demonstrate lower-than-expected ethical reasoning skills, favoring rule-based approaches (deontological/normative) and utilizing self-interest as a basis for ethical decisions. This finding does overlap with Mendoza's (2010) findings, but whereas Mendoza found that novices displayed these tendencies, Dean found that working practitioners did as well. Even still, as a field that is so entrenched in the lives of others with serious consequences, it is concerning that Dean's (2015) findings align with Mendoza's (2010) interpreter novice findings of self-interest being a large factor in ethical decision-making.

Why might Dean's (2015) and Mendoza's (2010) findings be the case? In Meadows' (2013) research on new interpreters' readiness to enter the field, she found that the demands of the job that were not directly involved in meaning transfer created problems for new practitioners. She found that before entering the field, recent graduates were not prepared/had different expectations of their job responsibilities/role than what they found out in the field. Meadow's thesis has interesting implications for interpreter education. The finding that interpreters experience stress and 'shock' when encountering real-world situations for which they are not prepared (which includes ethics) appears to show that interpreters are ill-trained and unprepared to deal with situations present in the field (Meadows, 2013). Perhaps a stronger foundation in moral reasoning, role space, and DC-S is what is lacking (Dean and Pollard, 2013;

Lee and Llewellyn-Jones, 2011). Connecting to Dean's (2015) finding about interpreters having a lower-than-average ability to engage in moral reasoning, Meadows (2013) provides a possible answer.

In a follow-up study to Dean (2015), Dean, Samar, and Maffia (2022) found that a group of interpreting students they studied for three years had significantly higher moral reasoning scores than working interpreters. In addition, students were able to boost their scores by working as a collective, but working interpreters were not. This was due to implementing relevant approaches to interpreter education like DC-S supervision and scenario-based approaches with the students. This contrasts to what the working group of interpreters might have experienced in more traditional interpreter education which would include a didactic approach. While not all students will have higher moral reasoning skills than all working interpreters, the differences in approaches and in the evolution of interpreter education sheds light on the evolution of moral reasoning in the interpreting field. Dean, Samar, and Maffia's (2022) findings reinforce Dean's (2015) conclusion that the interpreting profession has a prevalent, rigid norm-reinforcing approach to decision-making and support the validity of Dean's (2015) conclusion that interpreters have low moral reasoning skills. Dean, Samar, and Maffia (2022) note that Mendoza (2010) found that expert interpreters were better able to discuss their ethical decision-making than novice interpreters. Dean, Samar, and Maffia (2022), with Dean (2015), seem to be at odds with Mendoza (2010), noting that the verbal capability of an individual to describe their ethical reasoning does not necessarily equate to moral capability. Dean, Samar, and Maffia (2022) show that the history of interpreter education has been on the conservative side, reinforcing the conduit model.

In another study on ethical reasoning in the interpreting field, Guery's (2014) work on interpreters in England overlaps with the literature discussed so far, especially with Dean's (2015) and Dean et al.'s (2022) findings. Guery (2014) found that practitioners lacked confidence and did not behave consistently when dealing with ethical dilemmas. Guery's participants reported that their ethical education did not prepare them to encounter a world that is not always straightforward. In addition, they struggled to maintain consistency, and their personal and professional ethics often clashed. Making ethical decisions that prioritized self-interest, such as saving face, was common (Guery, 2014). Understanding the literature and prior work on factors influencing interpreters' ethical decision-making is key to understanding interpreters' tendencies of courage and risk-aversion as seen within a perceived limited decisional latitude. The literature in this section points to a deficit of ethical/moral reasoning abilities within SLI. How the conduit model has been internalized and decisional latitude is perceived comes through in the behavior of practitioners. We can study this behavior through a lens not yet discussed within the literature by analyzing patterns of behavior. Through this, we may make discoveries about interpreter tendencies. As informed by the literature reviewed, I expect to find that interpreters who demonstrate professional courage have a clear understanding of their role as interpreters in line with the literature above, dynamic reasoning, and decisional latitude. On the other hand, I expect to find more interpreters with risk-averse tendencies, who do not meet the criteria of being professionally courageous.

Conclusion

The literature review illuminates several key issues facing interpreters today. Due to the history of the field, the conduit model is still pervasive in interpreter education and interpreter practices. The conduit model denies interpreters of their personhood and of ethical responsibility

outside of linguistic transfer. Interpreting involves much more than the complex processes of linguistic transfer, and the conduit model diminishes practitioners' perceptions of their decisional latitude. Whether through society's expectations or learned behavior through norm-upholding messaging, interpreters display limited decisional latitude for a variety of reasons, with many factors involved. Since the norm facing interpreters appears to be limited decisional latitude, what would it take for interpreters to step out against accepted norms? The literature on how interpreters' decision-making in the field measures their ability to verbalize and conceptualize ethical/moral reasoning, but not always how interpreters in practice combat the normative messages of the conduit model. Taking action against norms of behavior requires a sense of responsibility for behavior and doing what is right, a value system to select the ethical behavior, and the courage to put that behavior into action. The literature on these topics has led to the question I seek to address: How does professional courage manifest in interpreter decision-making? The literature is clear that something is lacking in how interpreters conceptualize and enact ethical decisions. Through the investigation of interpreter tendencies, interpreters may be able to fill this gap and identify ways to employ professional courage in the workplace for the benefit of those they serve.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In light of the information on decision-making, norms, and courage I highlighted in the literature review, a study on interpreter decision-making through the lens of norms and courage can serve to identify how professional courage manifests in interpreter decision-making. To study this, I designed a two-part study. The first part was conducted using an online questionnaire, and the second via online one-on-one interviews.

Population

The eligibility criteria for participants were that they were working or retired professional signed language interpreters, who are Deaf, HH, or hearing, both RID certified and uncertified, living in the U.S.A, and at least 18 years of age. I utilized convenience sampling, asking for volunteers from an accessible population. Invitations to participate were disseminated by professional interpreter groups, Interpreter Education Programs (IEPs), and other personal networks. The number of interviewees was three.

Part One: Questionnaire

Design

I selected a questionnaire as part one of this study due to its ability to gather information about interpreters' experiences from many participants. Using Google Forms, I distributed the questionnaire by email through listservs and newsletters from various willing organizations, such as the Registry for Interpreters for the Deaf's Membership eNews (2025, September 30). In addition, this project was highlighted on the *Parking Lot Debrief* podcast, calling for participants (Rehkopf, 2025).

Participants were encouraged to forward the questionnaire link to colleagues who met the population requirements. The questionnaire consists of five sections. In the first section,

participants read about the study and provided their consent to participate. In the second section, participants answered four multiple-choice demographic questions. In the third, participants discussed their experiences making difficult decisions at work through five open-ended questions. In the fourth section, participants were presented with a series of ten action statements. Participants rated their agreement with the statement presented and their feelings about it on a sliding scale. Finally, in the fifth section, participants could choose to opt in to be contacted with information about participating in an interview. Besides providing an email address to be contacted for an interview, there was no personally identifiable information collected, and this contact information was kept confidential and separated from the participants' survey responses. See the appendices for the full questionnaire, interview questions, and other supporting documents.

Data Collection and Analysis

Questionnaire responses were transferred from Google Forms to an Excel spreadsheet. I analyzed the participants' demographics information from Excel to search for patterns and to create visual representations of the data. Participants' demographics were used to determine if there are any underlying similarities or differences in which demographic information is a factor in participant responses.

Additionally, I analyzed the open-ended questions by thematic inductive analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis approach that is beneficial due to its flexibility, theoretical freedom, and ability to provide a detailed analysis of the data as a whole, reporting on themes and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, thematic analysis is a methodology that “reports experiences, meanings, and the reality of participants,” and how those experiences “are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.81).

According to qualitative researchers Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme is defined as representing something within the data that relates to the research question, identifying a pattern within the data sets. Inductive thematic analysis refers to coding and searching for patterns and themes without attempting to search for themes that align with pre-existing frames or preconceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The six phases of thematic analysis as identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) are: 1) becoming familiar with the data, 2) creating codes so that interesting features may be systemically collected, 3) categorizing the codes into possible theme groupings, 4) reviewing the themes to ensure accuracy and to gain a holistic view, 5) creating definitions and names for the themes, and 6) reporting on the analysis findings. This approach allowed exploration into a range of themes as well as provided a more complete understanding of the topic by exposing different dimensions. Following these phases, themes from the data sets were identified and coded using the qualitative data analysis software Taguette (Rampin et al., 2021). Comparing participant responses with the themes shows key similarities and differences among the data. During the course of data analysis, the scope of this project was narrowed to include the demographic and narrative data solely. The sliding scale data may be presented in a later publication.

The theoretical framework for this project was instrumental in the data analysis for the stories the participants told in the narrative data. I used Rate et al.'s (2007) definition of courage to identify and categorize participants' responses as courageous, non-courageous, or undetermined. Rate et al.'s research-based criteria for courage are "(a) a willful, intentional act, (b) executed after mindful deliberation, (c) involving objective substantial risk to the actor, (d) primarily motivated to bring about a noble good or worthy end, (e) despite, perhaps, the presence of the emotion of fear" (2007, p.95). Additionally, the literature on SLI norms of low autonomy,

low decisional latitude, and conservative controls informed the analysis of these categories (Bowen-Bailey 2014; Dean and Pollard 2011, 2013; Witter-Merithew et al., 2010).

Part Two: Interview

Design

The second part of this research design utilized interviews. Interviews were utilized for two purposes. First, to gather more detailed data and ask meaningful follow-up questions. This will allow participants to share their stories to the fullest. Second, interviews served as a function of member-checking. After the questionnaire data collection period had closed, three participants who elected to be contacted with information about interviews were randomly selected. These three participants received an email with the interview information sheet and consent form. After consenting to an interview, it was scheduled and hosted on Google Meet. During the interviews, participants had the option to revisit the difficult scenario they previously described in the questionnaire or to present a new scenario. Following a semi-structured format, participants discussed times when they made difficult decisions at work as well as provided their thoughts and opinions on other issues in the field. This format allowed for flexibility in discussion and the participants' responses. Please refer to the appendices for a list of the guiding interview questions and other supporting documents.

Interview Data Collection and Analysis

I recorded and transcribed the interviews. Participant names were kept confidential, removed from the data set, and coded. I analyzed the interview data using key themes and words present in the questionnaire data, with the possibility of new themes emerging. In addition, I applied thematic and inductive analysis, the same treatment of the questionnaire data being applied to the interview data regarding the theoretical framework criteria and themes.

Chapter 4: Findings

In that moment, I felt like all of the focus was narrowed into this one moment of, What do I do?

-Interviewee 2

This chapter presents the results of the survey, including demographics and qualitative narrative data, using the theoretical framework from Rate et al.'s (2007) definition of courage and thematic analysis. All of the data from this study is based on participant self-reports. I intend to use this data to answer the question: How does the concept of professional courage manifest in interpreter decision-making?

Demographic Results

Sixteen respondents participated in the survey. From that sixteen, nine of the survey participants provided contact information, thereby identifying themselves as willing to be contacted with information for an interview. From these nine, three were randomly selected to do an interview. Due to a separation of identifying data, the interview participants' responses were not tied to their survey responses. Because of this, the interviewee's demographic data is not specifically determined. The demographic data from the survey covered four sections: national RID certification, years of experience as a signed language interpreter, age range, and types of work.

National RID Certification

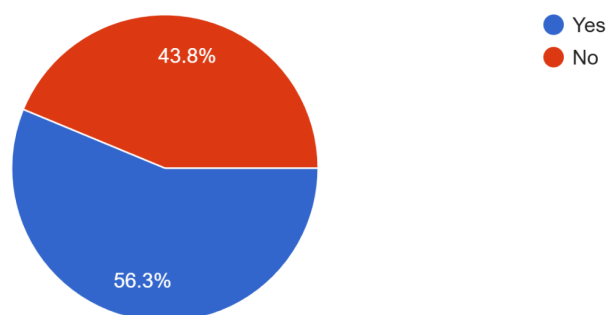
Out of the total sixteen participants, nine (56.3%) self-identified as RID-certified interpreters; the other seven (43.8%) are not (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1

Percentage of Participants who are RID Certified

Are you an RID certified interpreter?

16 responses



Note. Figure 1 shows the percentage of participants who are nationally certified by RID and those who are not. Nine (56.3%) are RID certified, and eight (43.8%) are not. The interpreters who are not RID certified may hold other certifications or qualifications.

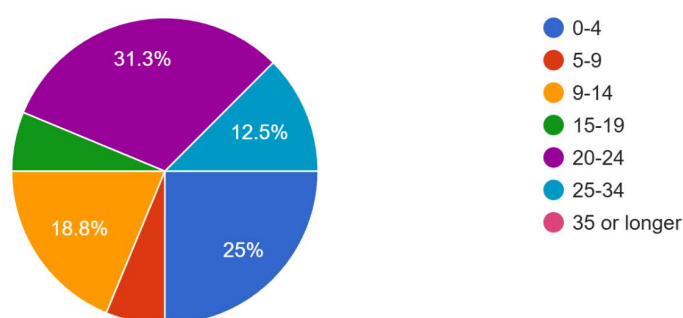
Years of Experience

When asked about their years of experience working as a signed language interpreter, five participants have been in the field between 20 and 24 years (31.3%). The range of experience is broad, with some participants having 0-4 up to 34 years of experience (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2*Participants' Years of Experience*

How many years have you worked as an interpreter?

16 responses



Note. Figure 2 displays the participants' years of experience as interpreters broken into percentages. Five (31.3%) have worked 20-24 years, four (25%) 0-4 years, 3 (18.8%) 9-14 years, two (12.5%) 25-34 years, one (6.3%) 5-9 years, and one (6.3%) 15-19 years. Zero (0%) have worked 35+ years.

Age Range

Most participants were split between the 25-34 (25%, n=4) and 45-54 (25%, n=4) age ranges, with the second majority split between 35-44 (18.8%, n=3) and 55-64 (18.8%, n=3) (See Tab. 1).

Table 1*Participants' Age Range*

Age Range	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Number of Participants	1	4	3	4	3	1

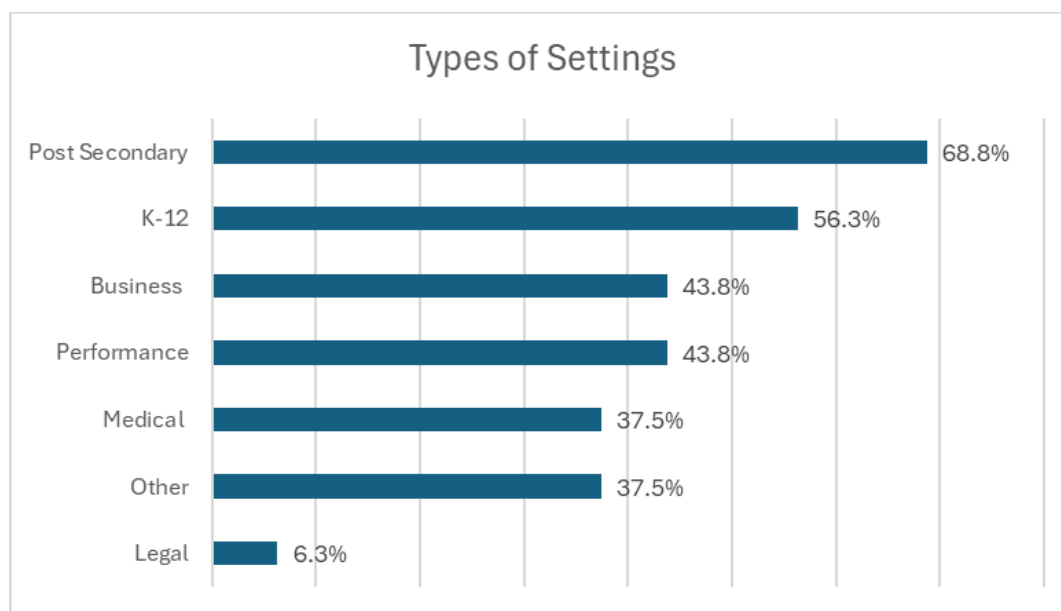
Note. Table 1 presents the age range for the study participants. Four (25%) are aged 25-34, four (25%) are 45-54, three (18.8%) are 35-44, three (18.8%) are 55-64, one (6.3%) is 18-24, and one (6.3%) is 65 or older.

Types of Interpreting Work

All of the participants were engaged in more than one type of interpreting work, with the highest number of participants being engaged in postsecondary education work (68.8%, $n=11$), then K-12 (56.3%, $n=9$), business and performance tied at 43.8%, $n=7$, medical and other tied at 37.5%, $n=6$, and then legal at 6.3%, $n=1$ (see Fig. 3).

Figure 3

Participants' Work Settings



Note. This figure represents the types of work performed by the participants. Each participant could select multiple work settings. Eleven participants work in postsecondary settings, nine in K-12, seven in business, seven in performance, six in medical, six in other, and one in legal.

Qualitative Narrative Data

The data sets for this study deal with participants' descriptions of when they made a difficult decision at work and the factors that surrounded their decision(s). Based on the theoretical framework for this study which is Rate et al.'s (2007) definition of courage, I checked the responses by the following criteria to determine if the story depicts professional courage by the following criteria: intentional, with mindful deliberation, involving risk to self, motivated by good or noble ends, and perhaps despite fear (Rate et al., 2007). Due to the risk inherent in courage, it must be defined in order to properly analyze the data. Translation researcher Pym (2015) identifies risk in translation as three types: credibility risk, uncertainty risk, and communicative risk. Credibility risk involves interpersonal relationships, uncertainty risk, which relates to the cognitive processes of the practitioner handling the source, and communicative risk, where the success of the interaction and communication/good of all parties, is at risk (Pym, 2015). Naturally, there may be more than these specific categories that are determined by interpreters in the field and this study, but these are factors that often are at risk when interpreters make decisions related directly to the interpreting process. In addition, in a broader sense, risk means "to expose to hazard or danger" (Merriam-Webster, n.d., 2). I used these understandings and definitions of risk and courage to analyze the stories told by the participants. From the analysis, three groups were categorized: stories that show professional courage, stories that do not show courage, and stories that are undetermined due to insufficient information.

As evidenced by the literature, norms in the signed language interpreting field involve low autonomy, low decisional latitude, and risk-aversion. In addition, interpreters show a marked reluctance to oppose these accepted norms, taking the path of least resistance (Dean & Pollard, 2001; Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2009; Witter-Merithew et al., 2010). Since the literature reports

these problems, how are courageous interpreters created? How do interpreters go against the norm? Taking action against norms of behavior requires a sense of responsibility for behavior and doing what is right (role) (Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2009 & 2011), a value system/framework to select the ethical behavior, and the courage to put that behavior into action.

In this research, participants discussed a time when they made a difficult decision at work and the factors that went into their decision. Applying Rate et al.'s (2007) framework, the stories are categorized. It is important to note that this study cannot judge the ethical value of the stories due to the limited scope of this study, as well as due to the fact that decision-making is dynamic. In addition, it is outside the scope of this study to judge if the participants themselves are courageous or not, only determining if a behavior/decision was courageous. As Rate et al. (2007) note, labeling a characteristic of a person from an isolated action cannot be an accurate determination. In addition, behaving courageously once in one situation does not mean courageous action can be predicted to occur again, or in a different situation.

Stories of Courage

This section includes eight out of sixteen participants, who, by the definition of courage from Rate et al. (2007) demonstrated courageous behavior. This section will relate a summary of each of their stories, describe how their decisions were courageous, and how their actions did or did not align with norms in the interpreting field. The participants in this category displayed acute awareness of the possible risk and negative repercussions their actions could cause upon themselves and others, displaying courageous behavior, doing something worth doing despite the risk in alignment with their values. Figure 5 shows the groupings of participants as courageous, non-courageous, and undetermined.

Figure 4*Participant Categorization Pictograph*

Note. Out of sixteen participants, eight (in blue) are categorized as courageous, two (orange) as non-courageous, and six (gray) as undetermined.

On the topic of courage generally, a few participants had comments on their personal and the field's application of courage. According to one participant, upholding values requires courage, saying that when seeing something wrong, they refuse to stay silent, "no, I'm going to speak up...yes, that definitely does take courage" (Interviewee 2). Interviewee 2 also notes that ethical issues are not black or white, but that courage is at the core of an interpreter's work. On the other side, Interviewee 1 disagreed with the notion of courage as important in their work, noting that they do not think courage is a factor in their work, because they do not feel fear, therefore they do not experience courage. While fear may be an intrinsic factor of courage for many people, the absence of fear does not invalidate an action from being courageous. As Chowaske (2024) notes, through repetition and experience, fear may dwindle, and actions may still be courageous even if there is no fear experienced by the actor. This is an important feature as to how the stories participants told were analyzed, because while fear may be common in

courageous stories, the presence or lack of fear is not a determinant of courageous action. The next sections summarize the salient aspects of the seven courageous stories, how they meet the definition of courage, and how they go against established norms.

Courageous Story 1: Participant 4

Participant 4 is not an RID-certified interpreter, has 0-4 years of experience, is between the ages of 25-34, and works primarily in K-12 and performance settings. Participant 4 discusses the topics of dynamic reasoning, how K-12 boundaries and professionalism look different than other types of work, and how school systems often challenge interpreter ethics. They explained how they have had to advocate for themselves and watch their back within the school system. They felt stressed and like they should be doing more to support their struggling Deaf student, but also felt limited due to other staff not understanding the interpreter's role or doing their own jobs well.

The interpreter felt alone. They valued protecting themselves and promoting student interests. This participant expressed fear that others would have negative perceptions of interpreters, but also a strong desire for other professionals to understand their role. They risked loss of reputation, inappropriate blame, their job, and negative perceptions of interpreters generally. Their solution was to double down and do what they knew they could do to make others understand their role and to support student success. They describe their role as part of a team accomplishing education and furthering student goals. This participant made intentional decisions after mindful deliberation to do this, risking blame and negative perceptions, motivated by valuing student success (and self-preservation), despite fear of being misunderstood and criticized. This participant did not follow established norms because they exercised decisional latitude and autonomy to do something about their situation and uphold their values. At the same

time, their decisional latitude was limited in their school setting, due to the wider educational team attempting to limit their autonomy.

Courageous Story 2: Participant 5

Participant 5 is an RID-certified interpreter with 20-24 years of experience, aged 65+, and primarily works in K-12, postsecondary, and business settings. In the story they told, Participant 5 experienced extreme conflict, shock, and stress. They were ordered by a Deaf consumer (DC) to stop interpreting out of concern for the interpreter, but the interpreter judged that they were fine and did not compromise their position on needing to provide access to other DC in the room. Even when the situation escalated, the interpreter did not back down from their position and what they knew was right. They describe their intentional deliberation process as running through a mental list of controls, trying to find the best option so everyone can win, while under pressure.

In addition, they describe the core of the RID CPC as ‘do no harm.’ The chief value that they prioritized in this situation was access. They experienced great risk to blatantly tell a confident and powerful DC no, risking the quality of their good relationship and their standing as an interpreter. Within their difficult situation, they prioritized access over “the peace,” along with the tenets of the CPC. Decisional latitude and autonomy were employed in this situation because the interpreter did not simply accept what they were being told to do, but instead made a decision with deliberation and intentionality to continue to provide access despite being ordered not to, including risk to the actor, motivated by the good of another (access for all DCs), and despite the experience of fear. Through this courageous action, norms were not followed because they exercised greater than normative autonomy and decisional latitude.

Courageous Story 3: Participant 7

Participant 7 is an RID-certified interpreter, has 20-24 years of experience, is aged 35-44, and primarily works in postsecondary, medical, business, performance, and other settings.

Participant 7 felt terrible and guilty over upholding access standards that temporarily left a Deaf consumer without access due to refusing to enter an uncondusive interpreting situation. Even after the situation was resolved, the interpreter never felt good about it. Participant 7 breaks the situation down and discusses how if they went into the situation that was uncondusive to interpreting, they would have been stuck, unable to provide quality services that would impede access in the long run. Participant 7 discusses their lack of fear and hesitation to confront all stakeholders about interpreters' ability to do their job successfully, comfortably, and appropriately. However, they note that it is often uncomfortable when, due to the system not providing these conditions, a Deaf person does not have access.

Participant 7 values quality services, access, and the ability to do the job of interpreting appropriately. They risked blame, negative reactions, and negative perceptions. These actions fit the definition of courage through behavior that was a purposeful and deliberated decision, despite risks, and motivated by good cause (values of access, best standards, etc.). Feelings of fear are not noted by this participant. They went against norms of low autonomy and decisional latitude, instead exercising autonomy and decisional latitude in a courageous way.

Courageous Story 4: Participant 8

Participant 8 is not RID certified, has 9-14 years of experience, is in the 35-44 age range, and works in medical, business, and other settings. In the scenario they described, they experienced verbal abuse from a DC while on the job. The interpreter valued access above their feelings and psychological safety. They framed their choice as either denying access totally or keeping themselves safe. This story is complex because it meets the definition of courage: the

choice was intentional, involved deliberation, made at risk to self, upheld their value of access, and in the face of fear, but there are features of this story that made it difficult to categorize, as will be discussed in the Discussions chapter.

This case is interesting due to the participant dually explaining what they did do and what they would have done in a perfect world. The interpreter explained what they would have done if there was another option to uphold their prima facie value of access-like video remote interpreting (VRI), a solution which would have involved removing themselves from the situation. In this perfect world scenario, which they did not do, the solution they described would exercise liberal controls, autonomy, and decisional latitude, protecting themselves as well as upholding the CPC in the process. However, because access would have been deprioritized by not staying in the situation, they did not utilize that option. It is unclear if these actions represent norms of favoring conservative controls, low decisional latitude, and low autonomy. In this situation, the interpreter utilized conservative controls, but it cannot be determined if doing so followed a norm, because conservative controls were those that best upheld the prima facie. There is not enough data to determine if norms of low autonomy and decisional latitude were followed or not. However, it is interesting to note that in their perfect world scenario, these norms are decidedly not followed, and the interpreter would be free to make different choices.

Courageous Story 5: Participant 10

Participant 10 is an RID-certified interpreter with 5-9 years of experience, aged 25-34, and primarily works in K-12, postsecondary, and medical settings. They experienced concern for their consumers and disgust when asked to do a job they were not qualified for in exchange for higher pay. They decided not to comply with poor access standards, understanding that it would cause more harm than good in the long run if they accepted. The interpreter describes their

experience as upholding the standards of access. The feelings of fear they experienced were based on retaliation for themselves, but also for the DC. They made an intentional decision after deliberation, risked retaliation, and upheld their value of appropriate access for a noble end in the face of fear. Participant 10 did not follow the norms of low decisional latitude and autonomy. Instead, they made recommendations for best practices to stakeholders and fought back against inequitable solutions.

Courageous Story 6: Participant 11

Participant 11 is not RID certified, with 9-14 years of experience, aged 35-44, and works in K-12, postsecondary, and performance settings. They worked with a minor who had a serious medical emergency and a mandated reporting situation that the minor kept secret until they confided in Participant 11. The interpreter felt overwhelmed, unprepared, and sensed that what they understood to be professional boundaries might be crossed. “My chest instantly tightened up, and I felt like nothing could have prepared me for that. I could hear years of ITP training on boundaries screaming in my ears” (Participant 11). The interpreter did their legal duty of mandated reporting, comforted the minor, and ensured that the minor received essential services. The interpreter qualifies their decision as necessary despite describing it as outside of the role of strictly linguistic interpreting. They say that they realize there are code of ethics tenets against what they did, but despite this, they believe that what they did was right. The interpreter experienced serious consequences from other interpreters who defamed the interpreter’s ethics for being open to any kind of personal conversation and for comforting the minor. Despite these undesirable consequences, Participant 11 stands by their actions. Their decision was intentional, involved deliberation, was motivated by the safety and good of the minor as well as their value of humanity, at great risk to themselves, and they felt fear. Participant 11 did not follow norms,

but committed to action they believed was right, exercising autonomy and decisional latitude courageously.

Courageous Story 7: Participant 12

Participant 12 is not RID certified, with 0-4 years of experience, aged 25-34, and works in K-12, postsecondary, and other settings. The decision they made came down to, as they described it, being “a human before an interpreter” (Participant 12). They felt conflicted between upholding professional boundaries and providing support to a student who clearly needed it. Their decision was affirmed by the consumers and other staff members. Their decision was intentional and involved deliberation, upholding their value of humanity. They risked being viewed as unethical or unprofessional. Through this action of putting aside norms of professional boundaries, norms of rigidity in role, and low autonomy are not followed.

Courageous Story 8: Participant 14

Participant 14 is RID certified, with 25-34 years of experience, aged 55-64, working in K-12 and business settings. They describe a situation where they weighed policy vs what would be more right holistically for a given situation/consumer. They describe that they would not be enacting the value of beneficence holistically if they strictly followed protocol every time. In addition, they cite respect for the consumer/autonomy as a key value, risking backlash for going against norms and policy. Their decision involved intentionality, deliberation, and upholding values of beneficence, respect, and autonomy, despite risks. Participant 14 does not follow deontological norms, instead exercising autonomy and decisional latitude.

Courage Summation

Table 2*Courage Demographics*

Participant	RID Certified?	Years of Experience	Age Range	Work Settings
Participant 4	Not RID certified	0-4	25-34	K-12 and performance
Participant 5	RID certified	20-24	65+	K-12, postsecondary, and business
Participant 7	RID certified	20-24	35-44	Postsecondary, medical, business, performance, and other settings
Participant 8	Not RID certified	9-14	35-44	Medical, business, and other settings
Participant 10	RID certified	5-9	25-34	K-12, medical, and postsecondary
Participant 11	Not RID certified	9-14	35-44	K-12, postsecondary, and performance
Participant 12	Not RID certified	0-4	25-34	K-12, postsecondary, and other
Participant 14	RID certified	25-34	55-64	K-12 and business

These participants demonstrated high autonomy behavior, exercising their decisional latitude in line with their values. In the face of a demand, the interpreters in this group made intentional choices after deliberation to implement their values through an action (control),

weighing the risks, and for many, in the face of fear. It is outside the scope of this research to judge whether these decisions were ethical or not, but rather if they uphold the criteria for courage. Incidentally, the courageous actions align with behaviors that are outside of norms of low autonomy and decisional latitude. It is interesting to note that half of the participants in this category are not RID certified (4/8). Experience levels range, with two participants having 0-4 years of experience, one with 5-9 years, one with 9-14 years, two with 20-24 years, and two with 25-34 years. Almost all (7/8) of these participants list K-12 settings in common. K-12 settings have greater needs for flexibility and autonomy compared to community settings, but also typically have low self-efficacy, which would not seem to imply an ability to be courageous (Fitzmaurice, 2017; O'Bleness, 2019). From these demographic patterns, it appears that RID certification and more years of experience are helpful, perhaps, but not necessarily a definite determiner, factor, or predictor if an interpreter will make courageous decisions. However, while not a definite determiner, it is indicative that most participants in this category had over 20 years of experience and are RID certified, but it is outside the scope of this study to make any determinations based on this data.

Non-Courageous Stories

On the other side of the courageous stories are two participants whose stories are non-courageous. The characteristics and situations related in these stories are greatly varied. The commonality to these two stories is that they align with norms of low autonomy and low decisional latitude. The first non-courageous story in this section describes a courageous act, but is in this category due to what the participant had to say about their actions since that experience.

Non-Courageous Story 1: Participant 3

Participant 3 is RID certified, has 20-24 years of experience, is in the 55-64 age range, and works in K-12 and postsecondary settings. Participant 3 expresses great fear and worry about losing their job due to their personal identity. The interpreter expresses the clash between their personal and professional lives and values. Participant 3 describes making an intentional choice after deliberation to uphold their values of authenticity and human rights despite some risks. In this situation, they did not accurately predict the response of the people involved and experienced unwanted consequences.

After this experience, Participant 3 stated that they learned from the situation and have decided not to take the same course of action again. Going forward, Participant 3 has chosen to dramatically separate their personal and professional lives for self-protection. They experience many negative feelings and dissonance over this decision.

It is not the scope nor place of this research to condemn or justify this decision, but rather to analyze it from a courage and norms lens. The action that Participant 3 has disavowed matches the criteria for courage. The decision not to repeat similar actions does not align with courage. This story could be categorized as courageous based on the criteria, however, I decided to put it in the non-courageous category due to the participant's additional stories and firm disavowal of repeating actions similar to this in the future due to risk. Indeed, most of Participant 3's questionnaire responses were focused on explaining how they do not engage in courageous action on this particular issue due to the risk.

From a norms perspective, their initial decision was contrary to norms of inaction and low autonomy/decisional latitude. After experiencing unwanted consequences, they have decided definitely to now follow the norm in this regard, although they note experiencing undesirable emotions and dissonance over this decision. In the moment of making a courageous decision, the

actual risk was higher than the risk assessment. After experiencing unwanted consequences, the risk then outweighed upholding their values, resulting in the decision not to take similar action again.

Non-Courageous Story 2: Participant 16

Participant 16 is not RID certified, has 0-4 years of experience, is in the 18-24 age range, and works in postsecondary and performance settings. They expressed many feelings of being stuck between what they knew was right and wanted to do, and a hearing consumer's request/demand to teach ASL vocabulary. The interpreter recounts how they tried to value Deaf authority over ASL and Deaf culture, but ended up compromising, having negative emotions afterwards. Participant 16 discusses the friction between what they wanted to do that would uphold their values, and pressure to do what was expected out of fear. They felt confused, unsure what to think, taken aback, and speechless. Participant 16 discusses friction between what they wanted to do that was right and being pressured to do what was expected/felt obligated out of fear, "I didn't want to stir the pot." Participant 16 expressed a desire not to be rude or to reflect poorly on interpreters or the Deaf community by their refusal. Ultimately, this story is in the non-courageous category because actions were taken that capitulated to the risk and fear rather than upholding values. Through this, this story shows norms of low autonomy and decisional latitude.

Non-Courageous Summary

Table 3

Non-Courageous Demographics

Participant	RID Certified?	Years of Experience	Age Range	Work Settings
Participant 3	RID certified	20-24	55-64	K-12 and post-secondary

Participant 16	Not RID certified	0-4	18-24	Postsecondary and performance
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This group is small, and due to this, definite themes are difficult to prescribe. Half (1/2) of the individuals whose stories are in this category are not RID certified. The experience ranges from the 0-4 category through the 20-24. In addition, the ages range. There are no indicators that the setting of work has an impact on categorization. In addition, each of these stories varies greatly in situation and character. What qualifies them to be in this category is holding a value and making a decision based on risk factors rather than upholding the value. This topic is complicated, and it is not within the scope or the place of this research to judge between right and wrong. These two stories conform to norms, giving in to what was expected, despite feelings that they should be able to do the contrary, but being unable or unwilling to do so.

Undetermined Stories

There are six stories told by interpreters who did not necessarily go for or against the norms in the field discussed above or the definition of courage (Rate et al., 2007). These six stories could not be categorized because there was not enough information to determine whether these stories show courageous behavior or not.

Thematic Analysis

Across all participants, I identified several pertinent themes that relate to factors of courage and decision-making. They are: CPC/policies, certainty/confidence, support, horizontal violence, feelings, human above interpreter, role description, and values. These themes have interesting implications for the topics of decision-making, decisional latitude, courage, and the state of the profession because they reveal patterns of behavior and thinking among the research participants.

CPC/Policies

The first theme that came through as influencing interpreters' decision-making was the RID CPC. Here are the tenets/principles discussed by participants:

- Access (CPC 2.0, 4.0, and 4.4)
- Render the message faithfully (2.3)
- Accuracy (2.3)
- Interpreter's "rights:" the ability to do the job comfortably, successfully, and appropriately (2.2 & 2.4, 3.1 & 6.3, 6.5)
- Impartiality (not technically in CPC)
- Ethical conduct (5.3)
- Confidentiality (1.0)
- Providing advice (2.5)
- Neutrality (not technically in CPC)

Participants had a variety of comments about the RID CPC and how it influenced their decisions. Overwhelmingly, over half of the interpreters (9/16) cited the CPC as reasoning for why they made their decisions. From these nine, five cited exact tenets. Other participants cited things like impartiality (2/16) and neutrality (1/16). Impartiality and neutrality are not cited within the CPC explicitly, but there are tenets that can be interpreted to imply impartiality and neutrality (2.5, 3.0 guiding principle, 3.3, 3.5, and 4.4). However, the fact remains that it is still not in the CPC.

Participant 10 pronounced that they made their decision by adhering to and promoting "what we all believe" to be the best standard practice for disability accommodations, not providing less than adequate accommodations. This is in line with RID CPC (2.2, 2.4, 6.3, 6.5),

but the “what we all believe” (Participant 10) statement is interesting since there anecdotally appear to be so many disagreements as to what best practices are in the field. In addition, boundaries that align with the CPC are consistently cited, in particular when upholding impartiality, neutrality, and the ambiguously cited topic of professional boundaries (4/16). Boundaries are not a core behavior in the CPC, but rather a way we set personal and professional limits on our behavior so that we protect ourselves and our consumers.

Two participants’ comments about the RID CPC struck me as interesting. First, Participant 11, in dealing with a serious mandated reporter situation, stated that they knew the CPC has tenets against providing advice (true, CPC 2.5) and getting personally involved (not necessarily, but may be implied). They believed that from this, the CPC instructed them not to have personal conversations with a client. They believe that their doing so went against the CPC in order to uphold their ethical and professional obligations as a mandated reporter. CPC tenet 1.0 on confidentiality provides an exception for mandated reporters, but this was not the area of the CPC that Participant 11 conceived that they were in conflict with. The second participant who responded in this vein was being abused by a client while on the job (Participant 8). The participant acknowledged that the situation presented a situation where they were in conflict with the CPC (does not elaborate), however, they valued access higher than compliance with the CPC.

RID CPC as a Guide

One interpreter noted that RID CPC is not the law, but rather should be used as a guiding principle. Several interpreters (6/16) note that ethics and policies must be dynamic, varying based on the setting and needs of the people involved. Interviewee 2 noted that it takes courage to follow the scope of the CPC, to look at the tenets, and understand that it is a guide to do what is generally ethical. While not about the CPC, Participant 14 went against policy/protocol

because it was not in line with their best practice/beneficence values, citing a holistic and dynamic approach as necessary.

Overall, this shows that interpreters have the RID CPC very much in their consciousness, and it is a significant factor in decision-making. However, it is interesting to note that a good number of interpreters (6/16) conceptualize the CPC as a guide, and even place other values like access and humanity above the CPC.

Certainty/Confidence

Half of the participants (8/16) recount questioning their decision in the moment or even months later, wrestling with it. From this half of the study participants, most (6/8) are not RID certified. In addition, all of the study participants who had 0-4 years of experience are part of those who questioned their decision and/or wrestled with it. The rest of the 8/16 in this category had 9+ years of experience with varied ages and types of work.

Still on the subject of certainty and confidence, 11/16 interpreters describe feeling intense feelings of conflict internally in the moment as they weighed the options before them, feelings of unease, and unsure how to respond to the demand that demanded a decision from them. These interpreters had overlap with the last group of 8/16, but three more interpreters identified these feelings of in-the-moment conflict. The three who felt conflicted only in the moment are all RID certified with at least 5-9+ years of experience. From this group, all 0-4 participants are included, most are not RID certified (6/11), and ages and experience levels vary.

Struggle

Participants used words like battle, struggle, conflicted, obsessed, worried, and many more words that convey struggle (see Feelings and Fear sections below). In addition, many

participants expressed struggles with the profession and with other interpreters by way of horizontal violence or just a plain lack of support (see Horizontal Violence section).

Confidence and Surety

There are a few interpreters (6/16) who stand out in their surety and confidence that they made the right decision. Two interpreters who questioned their decision in the moment as well as wrestled with it afterwards also overlapped into this category, with being sure they made the right decision (demographics are not a factor for this overlap). Out of the six interpreters who had surety and confidence, 5/6 were RID certified, all with 15+ years of experience and 45+ years old. The interpreters in this group could still struggle, as evidenced by the two participants who overlapped between groups, but they were also able to come to a decisive decision and stand by it.

Several participants (5/16) cite the results of their decision as a reason for their confidence that they made the right decision. Two of the five wrestled with their decisions afterwards, but were validated by the results of them. In addition, three of the five felt conflicted about their decision at the moment, but cite teleological ethics as validating the decision. From those who demonstrate a teleological framework, 3/5 were RID certified, and ages and years of experience ranged.

Dynamic Reasoning

Many participants (6/16) describe how their reasoning is dynamic, where they consider the context and specificity of their participants and particular situation when making decisions. These participants considered what was best for their consumers overall rather than blindly or rigidly following policy or the CPC. These interpreters describe their thought process as it aligns with teleological ethics, describing the outcome as determining if their decision was right, noting

that well-intentioned actions do not equate to right, and that the CPC is a guide not to be followed rigidly.

Summary

Most (6/8) of the participants who wrestled with their decisions in the moment and long after were not RID certified. All of the participants (4) who had the least experience (0-4 years) were in that category. 11/16 had feelings of conflict about their decision in the moment. Of those 11, most (6/11) are not RID certified. It is interesting to note that all of the participants with the least experience were in the two categories of uncertainty, and that the wrestling/conflicted group is predominantly not RID certified.

Out of the 6/16 interpreters who had surety and confidence that they made the right decision, most (5/6) are RID certified, with 15+ years of experience, and 45+ years old. This is in contrast to the previous group of conflicted and wrestling participants. Most (3/5) who cite teleological ethics were RID certified, with ages and years of experience ranging. From this, it appears that the less experienced and those without RID certification are more likely to struggle with a lack of confidence/wrestle with their decisions, as well as are less likely to cite reasoning in line with teleological ethics.

Support

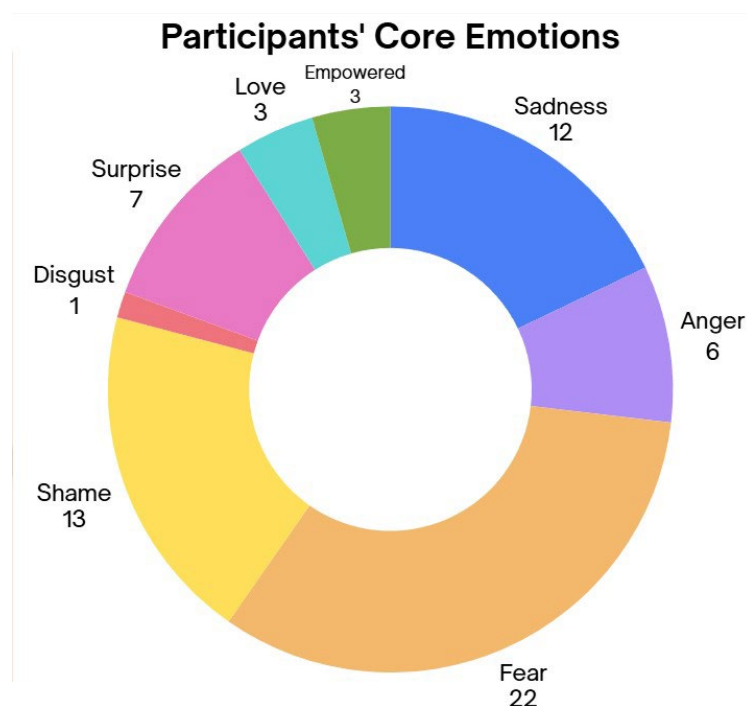
In addition to teleological ethics, several participants (6/16) denote that discussions with teams and mentors are helpful and validating in their decision-making process. This type of colleague and mentor support was helpful to participants both in the moment and afterwards; commiserating over how difficult the situation was and discussing the decision. Most of the participants who referenced feeling supported by various practices were RID certified (4/6), with experience and ages ranging. Two interpreters made comments about their development and how

their background and training have enabled them to make decisions. Workshops, trial and error, and IEPs are discussed. One participant describes their IEP and instructors as having ingrained certain principles and values like confidentiality into them, perhaps too much, where they experienced paralysis by analysis early in their career and as a student. They describe their early experiences as being by the book, perhaps too much so after a decade of reflection (Interviewee 3).

The interpreters in this study cite feeling supported by: agencies understanding their position and not faulting them, working together to remedy the issue, mentors to discuss and counsel, teams validating and working through issues together, consulting with trusted colleagues, workshops, and case conferencing. The participants indicated that discussions and collaboration with teams can cut down on vicarious trauma, and experienced feelings of relief rooted in camaraderie.

Feelings

The feelings the participants recounted when they made their difficult decisions have weight on the subject of courage, as fear often, for many people, plays a large role in the risk-benefit analysis (Rate et al., 2007). Feelings are defined as “an emotional state or reaction” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). I analyzed participants’ responses to identify words used to describe emotional states or reactions. In addition, the Emotions Wheel by the Center for Psychotherapy of Santa Barbara (n.d.) was utilized to further confirm the selected words as feelings and to categorize them into core emotions. The word count for feelings was 67 across all participant responses. Using the feelings wheel and context of the responses, the feelings words that the participants explicitly said were categorized.

Figure 5*Participants' Core Emotions Wheel*

Note. Figure 5 shows the 67 feeling words broken down into their corresponding core emotion categories: Fear (32.8%, n=22), Shame (19.4%, n=13), Sadness (17.9%, n=12), Surprise (10.4%, n=7), Anger (9%), Love (4.5%, n=3), Empowered (4.5%, n=3), and Disgust (1.5%, n=1).

The feelings that the research participants had are vast and varied, there are currents of commonalities between the responses. The most common words related to sadness were: sad, torn, and disappointed. The most common words related to anger were: anger and frustration. Shame is related to feelings of guilt, being blamed, and being misunderstood. Disgust had one word associated with it: disgust. The surprise category related to: confused, shocked, conflicted, and speechless. Empowered feelings were related to feeling good and a lack of fear.

Fear

The most cited emotion was fear (32.8%). The words associated with fear were: fear (3), unsafe (2), stress (2), afraid, worried (2), stuck (2), overwhelmed (2), unnerved, panicked, nervous, unease, scared, anxiety, intimidated, and obligated.

Table 4

Participants' Feelings of Fear

Participant	Fear Words	Total Number of Fear Words-22
Participant 3	fear/unsafe (2)	3
Participant 4	stressful/afraid/worried	3
Participant 5	stress	1
Participant 7	stuck	1
Participant 9	overwhelmed/unnerved	2
Participant 10	fear	1
Participant 11	overwhelmed/fear	2
Participant 12	worried/panicked	2
Participant 15	unease/nervous/scared	3
Participant 16	anxiety/intimidated/stuck/obligated	4

Most interpreters (10/16) mention feelings of fear in the stories they told. The fear ranges in type from not feeling safe to be their personal identities at work, watching their back to avoid getting backstabbed by colleagues, fear that other people would have negative perceptions of interpreters and the Deaf community, fear of lack of success for the consumers, lack of access, strained relationships, and upsetting the peace. In addition, two interpreters discuss horizontal violence as causing fear of judgment and mistrust. I will discuss this topic further in the Horizontal Violence section. The interpreters who struggled with uncertainty and confidence in

the Certainty/Confidence section describe their thought processes during and after a decision-making process as fearful, obsessing over various options, and reviewing the moment in their minds repeatedly.

One participant wished they, “...could fall through the floor right now and somebody else take this one on” (Interviewee 2). These feelings of fear, shame, and sadness are undoubtedly undesirable for occupational health, but probably common in practice professions, especially in ones as embroiled in human lives as interpreters are. Far from feelingless robots, interpreters are human, and while many of them describe making ethical decisions in line with the RID CPC, they still had feelings of dissonance between what was asked of them/the problem and what they knew they should do. These feelings relate to the inner landscape of an interpreter striving for the best option that is a win-win for all stakeholders, an incredible burden to bear for a lone practitioner dealing with power dynamics, cultural barriers, professional and ethical standards, personal needs, and doing the work of interpreting in all of its complexities at the same time. Through reading the participants’ responses, one thing in particular struck me. While there was an element of self in all of the responses, these undesirable feelings that participants felt had much to do with striving for the benefit of the communities the interpreters serve. In addition to this striving that led to undesirable feelings, there were other feelings present that are desirable, like those in the Love and Empowered categories. Over and over again, interpreters displayed concern for the welfare of their clients above all else, seeking not only not to cause harm (non-maleficence), but also to actively promote good (beneficence), doing what is right by the people they serve in conditions that required courageous behavior.

Horizontal Violence

Three participants had choice words about the current state of the field, citing horizontal violence as a reason why professional courage and integrity are lacking. One participant noted that they have the most fear of interpreter reactions compared to anything else, because they have been burned and have mistrust towards most interpreters. They cite problems in the field like gossip, toxicity, superiority, and a caste system (Participant 11). Another participant noted that there is a group, albeit a small group, of interpreters who seem to be “out to get others.” They are hypercritical, egotistical, eat the young, and are unsupportive (Interviewee 3). Another participant had an insightful comment on this issue, saying, “If we’re hurtful and harmful to each other, there's no way that we can develop courage within our profession. All that's happening right now is that we are influencing community people who are fearful, right, and don't take risks” (Interviewee 2).

Human above Interpreter

When describing the reasons behind making the decisions that they made, many participants described issues of being human, humanity, or being a human first. Within this, there is a duality between the participant responses. First, one participant believes that they must be human before an interpreter, using their humanity to answer a need. Another participant described a situation where they intervened in a situation, and as they described it, they were a human outside of the RID CPC. However, they still support their decision to interfere as ethical because they describe the need to be a human first. Second, there are those who believe (3 participants) that human reactions and feelings should be secondary factors in decision-making, but begrudge that this often is not possible. Notably, Participant 8 endured strenuous abuse from a consumer in the name of access, putting their humanness aside, grinning and bearing it because if the interpreter put a stop to it, there would not be any more access. One participant expressed

both these points of view, describing in their story the human and interpreter sides of the argument, these two views wrestling over the decision.

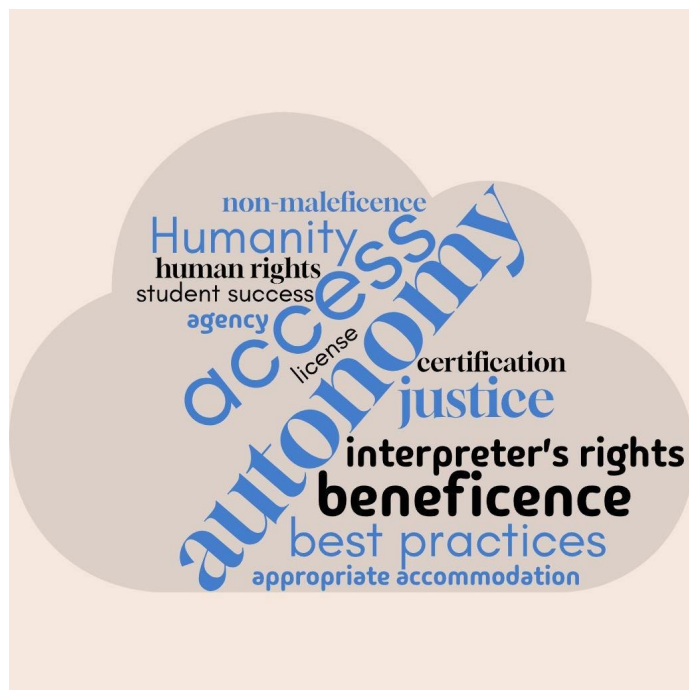
Role Description

How interpreters conceive of their role may have an influence on the human vs interpreter debate. Participants cite their role as: to provide access, follow CPC, meaning transfer, render the message faithfully, to be ethical, practice confidentiality, to fight for right accommodations and best practices, practice non-interference/neutrality, facilitate communication, to be professionals, and to be human.

The study participants' descriptions of their role as a signed language interpreter, on the whole, is nebulous and often vague. Two participants describe rebellion against the conduit/robot model, but still three others operate within it, citing their humanity and interpreter selves as distinct and different. Participant 16 even describes feeling stuck in their role as an interpreter, unsure of what to do, being pulled by their rigid understanding of what it meant to be an interpreter, what was being asked of them, and having to parse out a middle ground answer.

Values

Values are a large part of courage, as the definition of courage is “primarily motivated to bring about a noble good or worthy end” (Rate et al., 2007, p. 95). What the good or worthy end is differs from participant to participant. The highest cited values were autonomy and access. The next highest cited were beneficence, best practices, humanity, interpreters' rights, and justice. This word cloud shows the frequency of value words explicitly mentioned by participants. Each value count represents the value being mentioned by each participant once.

Figure 6*Values Word Cloud*

Note. Word cloud showing frequency of values mentioned by participants in order of highest mentioned: autonomy (n=4), access (n=4), beneficence (n=2), best practices (n=2), humanity (n=2), interpreters' rights (n=2), justice (n=2), agency (n=1), appropriate accommodation (n=1), certification (n=1), human rights (n=1), license (n=1), non-maleficence (n=1), and student success (n=1).

State of the Profession

Interpreters had comments about the state of the profession, from the horizontal violence comments, but expanding on how interpreters' lack self-awareness, and inability to regulate decisional latitude in a way that empowers the DC and serves hearing consumers (HCs) too. A comment that stuck out to me was a question one participant posed to themselves, "Are we ready for courage? Does our profession want it? I don't know, I don't think so" (Interviewee 2).

Findings Summation

Courageous Stories

I categorized the sixteen participants' responses based on the criteria of Rate et al.'s (2007) definition of courage. Based on this, I analyzed the stories participants told about a time they made a difficult decision and split the participant stories into three categories: courageous, not courageous/risk-averse, and undetermined. The stories in the courageous category made purposeful and deliberate choices, implementing their values through action, weighing the risks, and despite (for many) fear. It is interesting to note that most of the participants whose stories demonstrated courage had 20+ years of experience and had RID certification, which appeared to be a factor. These courageous stories tended not to follow norms of inaction, low autonomy, and low decisional latitude.

On the other hand, the stories that followed the norms present in the interpreting profession and demonstrated non-courageous behavior did not have striking commonalities with the demographics of the participants. While the stories told in this category vary greatly in situation as well as the decision made and the factors, the similarity is that these stories show evidence of holding a value but making a decision based on risk factors rather than upholding the value. It is outside the scope of this study to determine more deeply why this was the case for each participant, but rather to report on the characteristics of stories that are courageous or not.

Themes Summation

The themes present across all participants' responses illustrated interesting factors that influenced their decision-making process and outlook on interpreting work. First, the CPC is very prevalent in how interpreters describe their decision process, the consciousness of the CPC

as a guide rather than a rigid set of rules appears to be emerging in the profession, yet not fully embraced by some.

All of the participants experienced struggles, many with issues with uncertainty and confidence, several recounting struggling even some time after the decision. Perhaps this is due to the development of interpreters, whereas one participant described, IEPs often engrain “by the book” behavior in their students, and paralysis by analysis (mentioned by Interviewee 2 as well as anecdotally common). In addition, Interviewee 2 recounts struggles in their work and after the fact. Due to the pervasiveness of struggles and undesirable emotions faced by the participants, this makes the stories that demonstrate confidence more interesting, as they came at a cost and were not easy. By way of support, the interpreters cited colleagues, mentors, and teleological ethics as key factors in their confidence that they made the right decision. The principles of teleological ethics and dynamic reasoning come across in several participants' responses, recognizing that reasoning must account for the contextual factors and specificity of a given scenario; prescriptive one-size-fits-all solutions rarely work.

In addition to the themes discussed above, I explored the feelings interpreters had about their work and the decisions they made, as it is relevant to courage, since feelings play a role in risk aversion and courage. Organized into core emotions, fear is the largest category, followed by shame and sadness. The interpreters in this study experienced feelings of dissonance and stress as they searched for the best option that could be a win-win for all participants in the interpreted interaction. Horizontal violence was discussed by interpreters, and was a cause of fear, fearing the condemnation and judgment of their colleagues for stepping out of norms and doing what they believed to be ethical. Most of these undesirable feelings had to do with the interpreters' internal experience, but in relation to how the people and consumers they worked with would be

affected by the demands present. The interpreters in this study expressed hearts in line with the people they serve, seeking client welfare above all else, and doing what is right.

A main theme present across most responses was the idea of humanity/humanness being the justification and reasoning for decisions. Being a 'human first' is used to describe understandings of role and values. This finding aligns with Dean and Pollard's (2022) findings relating to figurative language. On a similar note, the descriptions provided of the interpreter's role were nebulous and often vague. They struggled with rebellion to the conduit model, and the expectations of others to behave a certain way, feeling stuck within rigidity, having to navigate conflicting messages and values to find a successful and ethical solution. The values discussed by the participants included autonomy and access as the top values championed by participants.

Chapter 5: Discussion

I conducted this research to examine how the concept of professional courage manifests in interpreter decision-making. The findings highlight several pertinent factors that may influence an interpreter's decision to act courageously. In addition, the findings showcase stories from the research participants, highlighting examples of courageous behavior and non-courageous behavior as it relates to interpreter decision making. This thesis has evolved over the course of the research. Initially, the research questions were more focused on decisional-latitude perceptions than they were on professional courage. However, through the review of the literature, it became apparent that the interpreting research to date is clear on what harmful norms in the field are, yet interpreters still often struggle with them. From this, the topic of courage became apparent as my discussions with interpreters (and the literature) pointed to stories of overcoming norms and what it took for them to make the decisions that they made.

As informed by the literature review, my prediction was that courageous stories would be in the minority, finding non-courageous stories as the majority. My findings show the opposite, with half of the stories (8/16) demonstrating courageous behavior, and only two showing non-courageous behavior. Again, this does not indicate whether or not the decisions made were ethical, but rather if they fit the criteria for Rate et al.'s (2007) definition of courage, "(a) a willful, intentional act, (b) executed after mindful deliberation, (c) involving objective substantial risk to the actor, (d) primarily motivated to bring about a noble good or worthy end, (e) despite, perhaps, the presence of the emotion of fear" (Rate et al., 2007, p.95). In addition, all but one of the eight courageous stories demonstrated behaviors against harmful norms found in the literature. This can indicate that courage is related to overcoming norms.

Self-Efficacy

There are several pieces of literature that align with the findings of this thesis. First, Wong (2023) features courage in her auto-ethnographic research of a novice interpreter. Similar to this project, one of Wong's aims was to investigate in practical terms, "What does it look like to be a courageous interpreter?" (2023, p.8). Wong (2023) summarizes issues of self-efficacy from researchers Bandura (1977 & 1986) and Margolis and McCabe (2006), that self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to successfully utilize a behavior in order to generate a desired result. In addition, O'Bleness (2019) states that "self-efficacy demonstration and belief may reveal itself as the ability to enact professional agency in the interpreter role defined by environmental expectations, understanding and application of interpreter role" (p.11). So then, agency/autonomy and decisional latitude come together to determine self-efficacy (O'Bleness, 2019). If one has the belief that they can do a certain thing, then that belief is revealed through autonomy and decisional latitude. As O'Bleness (2019) notes, since self-efficacy is enacted through decisional latitude, professional courage can manifest in decision-making if self-efficacy is sufficiently high enough for an interpreter to act courageously. It could be inferred then, that the interpreters who demonstrated courageous behavior had high enough self-efficacy to implement courageous action.

Out of the 6/16 interpreters who had surety and confidence that they made the right decision, most (5/6) are RID certified, with 15+ years of experience, and 45+ years old. This is in contrast to the previous group of conflicted and wrestling participants. Most (3/5) who cite teleological ethics were RID certified, with ages and years of experience ranging. From this, it appears that the less experienced and those without RID certification are more likely to struggle

with a lack of confidence/wrestle with their decisions, as well as are less likely to cite reasoning in line with teleological ethics.

Findings on Courageous Stories

The eight participants who are in the category of courageous stories met the criteria for courage “(a) a willful, intentional act, (b) executed after mindful deliberation, (c) involving objective substantial risk to the actor, (d) primarily motivated to bring about a noble good or worthy end, (e) despite, perhaps, the presence of the emotion of fear” (Rate et al., 2007, p.95). In the face of a demand, the interpreters in this group made intentional choices after deliberation to implement their values through an action (control), weighing the risks, and for many, in the face of fear. Seven out of the eight in this category also demonstrated behavior that was against norms. In addition, eight participants demonstrated courage regardless of RID certification and years of experience. However, RID certification and greater years of experience may be a factor in who made courageous decisions, with most (5/8) having 9+ years of experience and half (4/8) being RID certified. The interpreters who are RID certified had 5-35 years of experience, and those who were not RID Certified had 0-4 or 9-14. Those who are RID certified had more experience compared to those who were not. From these demographics, it appears that RID certification is less of a factor in courageous decision-making compared to years of experience.

Years of experience is connected to higher self-efficacy according to Bouffard-Bouchard (1990), who found that higher self-efficacy scores were among those who had greater knowledge and experience. However, Hoza (2016) notes that experience alone is insufficient. Hoza cites “successful and verifiable experience” (p. 90) as key to developing “the expert intuition that they do have and to not assume expertise that they do not actually have” (2016, p. 90). The findings of this study seem to align with this literature (Bouffard-Bouchard, 1990; Hoza, 2016). In

addition, courage often functions as an invitation to others to emulate behavior that has integrity and is vulnerable, creating habits for practitioners (Bower, 2021; Worline, 2010). Along with this, Moore (2020) found that higher confidence equated with better interpreter performance. While better performance might not be tied directly to courageous behavior, Bouffard-Bouchard (1990), Bower (2021), Hoza (2016), Moore (2020), and Worline (2010) support the findings of this thesis, that greater experience, expertise, and repeated patterns of behavior is related to confidence, self-efficacy, and performance.

An interesting finding is that seven of the eight participants in the courageous category listed K-12 interpreting as a setting they primarily worked in. The findings on K-12 interpreters as being overwhelmingly present in the courageous stories group is interesting due to the literature (Fitzmaurice, 2017; Hoza, 2016; O’Bleness, 2019) on the topic of K-12 interpreter self-efficacy. Studying K-12 interpreters’ self-efficacy, O’Bleness (2019) found that self-efficacy was adversely affected by factors outside of interpreter control and lack of clarity on role, responsibilities, and other topics. O’Bleness (2019) reports mixed perceptions of self-efficacy from K-12 interpreters depending on various factors such as environment. From O’Bleness’ findings, K-12 interpreters self-efficacy results are erratic and greatly varied, but generally there are “feelings of discomfort in student outcome and influence” (2019, p.99). In addition, Fitzmaurice (2017) found that uncredentialed interpreters in K-12 rural settings operated with unregulated autonomy in ways that are viewed as harmful due to lack of expertise, role confusion, and broader educational team issues. O’Bleness (2019) found that K-12 interpreter’s self-efficacy results to be erratic and varied, and Fitzmaurice (2017) asserts that certain K-12 interpreters have too much autonomy. This can connect with Hoza’s (2016) argument about expertise, learning to trust what a practitioner knows, and moving out of the unconscious

incompetence stage. It is outside of the scope of this thesis research to investigate K-12 interpreters' self-efficacy and courage as relates specifically to the K-12 setting. Since self-efficacy is necessary for courage (O'Brien, 2019) and K-12 interpreters typically have issues with self-efficacy (Fitzmaurice, 2017; O'Brien, 2019), it is surprising that K-12 interpreters would be overwhelmingly present in the group who told courageous stories. Further research on this topic would be necessary to pinpoint why this is the case as it is outside of the scope of this study.

Finally, it is shown in the courageous stories told by the participants that they did not uphold norms because their *prima facie* value was prioritized above risks and what norms might require of them. In light of this, does upholding norms ever require courage? While the harms of low-autonomy and low-decisional latitude behaviors are well documented by the literature (Dean & Pollard, 2021; Hill, 2018; Witter-Merithew et al., 2010; Witter-Merithew & Nicodemus, 2012), the fact that there is a norm for interpreters to favor conservative controls (Dean & Pollard, 2013) does not equate to the violation of this norm to always be courageous or ethical. Wong (2023) notices a lack of evidence in her auto-ethnography of inaction coded as courageous. Indeed, the participants who are categorized as telling courageous stories tended to favor liberal controls compared to conservative (inaction). Wong (2023) questions if inaction can be courageous, which ties in with the question posed here: can norm following be courageous? This may be an avenue for future research, or can simply be answered with the beloved refrain: it depends.

Findings on Non-Courageous Stories

There were two interpreters whose stories demonstrated non-courageous behavior. The stories vary greatly in situation and type, but are similar in the interpreter holding a value and

making a decision based on risk factors rather than upholding the value. In addition, these two stories conform to norms; the practitioners expressed that they want to take action and uphold their values but feel that they are unable to do so. It is outside the scope of this project to analyze these stories in a normative context, determining between right and wrong, but rather to analyze what factors may be present. Due to the small size of this group, patterns cannot be accurately determined. Out of the two individuals in this category, one is RID certified and the other is not. One person has 0-4 years of experience and the other has 20-24. In addition, one practitioner is between 18-24 years old and the other is between 55-64 years old.

Non-Courageous Story 2 told by Participant 16 is the most cut and dry from the non-courageous stories presented. While in the non-courageous category, Participant 16 demonstrates knowledge of their internal processes at the time of telling their story, what they wanted to do, what they felt they had to do, their feelings, and their conceptualization of the consequences of their action. The other story in the non-courageous category had more nuance compared to Participant 16's story. This could be due to the story-teller's prerogative in how they dissected and presented their experiences.

In addition to the stories identified in this research as non-courageous, Wong (2023) describes a non-courageous story from her auto-ethnographic research, when as an intern interpreter, she intended to switch with her team interpreter but instead fear caused a freeze response. According to Rate et al. (2007), courage necessitates having a worthy goal/value/end and acting to uphold it despite risk and fear. In this story, despite having a worthy goal, a freeze response caused by fear meant that unhelpful norms were upheld (Wong, 2023, p.43). Wong's (2023) story of experiencing how risk and fear caused inaction overlaps with the stories told by the participants of this research. These stories paint a picture of novice interpreters as particularly

vulnerable to giving into risk and fear, deprioritizing their *prima facie* values and taking steps to mitigate perceived risks instead. This finding aligns with literature on the subject: more experience equates to more confidence and courage (Bouffard-Bouchard, 1990; Bower, 2021; Hoza, 2016; Moore, 2020; Worline, 2010). Tying the topics of self-efficacy, experience, and expertise to the topic of courage through this research can provide interpreter educators and other stakeholders with a research-backed avenue of discussion on this topic for the intrapersonal and external pressures facing novice interpreters, so that they may learn how to be courageous when necessary.

Difficulties in Categorization

When conducting the data analysis via Rate et al.'s (2007) framework of courage, two stories were particularly difficult to categorize. First is Courageous Story 4: Participant 8. This story is complex because if the story is analyzed strictly from only what Participant 8 relayed, they believed about the story then it would be categorized as courageous. However, the story has features that could land it in the non-courageous category as well. According to Participant 8's description of what occurred, they describe their thought process as making an intentional decision with deliberation. Next, the risk that Participant 8 identified explicitly was their own psychological safety and wellbeing. This risk contrasted with their *prima facie*: access. Given this information, this meets the definition of courage. With this interpretation of the data, it would appear that in this instance, inaction was courageous, answering in part the question Wong (2023) put forth.

However, when viewed through another lens, there is a different interpretation of the data. First, the inaction of the interpreter and the intentionality and mindful deliberation of the decision may be in question due to considering the great amount of stress and fear experienced

by Participant 8. This may be an example of a freeze response that was later rationalized. In addition, while not cited as the main risk, angering the DC by temporarily refusing access would have further compounded the DC's problems and made them angrier. This risk is an undercurrent of the situation, infusing the situation with risk to the participant to make the DC more abusive or the situation worse. From this view, this story may be categorized as non-courageous. The decision to categorize it as courageous came from the need to more fully rely on what the participant explicitly identified as values and risks.

Second, Non-Courageous Story 1 told by Participant 3 was difficult to categorize. As discussed in the findings, Participant 3 met the criteria for courage, but upon experiencing undesirable and negative consequences they determined that the risk was too great to make a similar decision again. After this moment, Participant 3 has decided to behave non-courageously in this one aspect, and they describe experiencing dissonance due to deprioritizing their *prima facie* in the face of risks. It is neither the place nor scope of this project to determine whether this decision was right or wrong. The dynamic and contextual nature of decision-making makes this impossible. The goal of this research is to evaluate the story told through the lens of a research backed definition of courage (Rate et al., 2007). This story was difficult to categorize due to the double nature and role of risk evaluation and re-evaluation. I had to decide how to categorize this story as courageous, non-courageous, or both. This story could solidly be in both categories, but was put in the non-courageous category due to the participant's additional stories and firm disavowal of repeating actions similar to this in the future due to risk.

Themes Findings

The themes present in the participants' responses lead to interesting trends and implications. First, the values identified by the participants' were: autonomy, access,

beneficence, best practices, humanity, interpreter's rights, justice, agency, appropriate accommodations, certification, human rights, professional licenses, non-maleficence, and student success. On a larger scale, Ramirez-Loudenback (2015) conducted a study on the values of signed language interpreters. She found that interpreters expressed these value categories in order from greatest to least: self-direction, benevolence, universalism, security, conformity, hedonism, stimulation, achievement, tradition, and power (Ramirez-Loudenback, 2015). Given the same definition of categories used in Ramirez-Loudenback's (2015) research, the participants' values in this thesis can be aligned with the categories Ramirez-Loudenback used. When applied, the findings of this study, while on a much smaller scale, align with Ramirez-Loudenback's study (2015). Mirroring Ramirez-Loudenback's (2015) study, self-direction, benevolence, and universalism are also the highest prioritized by the participants in this study.

In addition to values, how interpreters perceived themselves and their humanity as separate from their interpreter selves is interesting. Several interpreters discussed the notion of needing to behave contrary to their human nature, while others described acting out of humanness to the detriment of their conception of their 'interpreter' self, and still others wrestled with their interpreter and human selves. This finding raises interesting implications. Are we really one or the other? Do we have to be either an interpreter or a human? Why the need for distinction? What about the word 'interpreter' denotes inhumanness? What about the word 'human' negates interpreter? In addition, as Dean and Pollard (2022) note, using "being human" as justification or reasoning for a decision, is an example of figurative language that is unhelpful at describing normative ethical decisions. This finding ties into Dean and Pollard's (2022) research on lack of ethical vocabulary to appropriately express decision-making in the field without using figurative language.

Uncertainty, confidence, and struggle played a large role in the stories the interpreters told. Half (8/16) of the participants questioned their decision in the moment and for some time afterwards. All of the participants who had 0-4 years of experience were among these interpreters, and 6 out of the 8 are not RID certified. In addition, another group identified were those who described conflict and other undesirable emotions when weighing options, a group comprising 11/16 participants. The interpreters in this study indicated that they struggled with decisions as well as with wider external factors like other interpreters, the state of the profession, or lack of support. On the other hand, 6/16 were confident afterwards they made the right decision. Most (5/6) of the interpreters in the confident group were RID certified, all with 15+ years of experience and 45+ years old. The interpreters in this category might still have experienced struggle, but were able to come to a decisive decision and demonstrated confidence in their reasoning. This aligns with the literature that greater experience equates with greater confidence and self-efficacy (Bouffard-Bouchard, 1990; Bower, 2021; Hoza, 2016; Moore, 2020; Worline, 2010).

The perception of ethical frameworks and policies like RID CPC is also insightful into the decision-making processes of interpreters. Over half (9/16) cited the CPC as reasoning for their decisions. In addition, several interpreters (6/16) conceptualize the CPC as a guide, noting that ethics and policies must be dynamic and take context into account. These six interpreters demonstrate dynamic reasoning; holistic decision making, understanding that well-intentioned behavior does not equate to right. One less than this group, (5/16) five interpreters also demonstrate teleological thinking, with ranging demographics, but with the majority being RID certified. These findings on confidence, certainty, and types of frameworks for thinking about decisions indicate that those without RID certification are more likely to struggle with lack of

confidence and wrestle with their decisions. In addition, they are less likely to express utilization of teleological ethics.

Dealing with conflicts internal and external with decision-making is far from easy. Several interpreters (6/16) describe methods of support and validation to their decision making process including primarily discussions with colleagues and mentors and working through issues in collaboration. From Wong's (2023) research, the factors that hindered vulnerability and courage were anxiety, shame, perfectionism, level of confidence, and trust. On the other side, factors that influenced courage and self-efficacy in a positive way were personality and psychological empowerment (Wong, 2023). This relates to Bontempo & Napier (2011) and Hill (2018). Wong (2023) found that vulnerability is crucial to work as interpreters. Vulnerability allowed her to ask for support, recognize areas for growth, and to keep trying repeatedly even when lacking confidence or in the face of risk (Wong, 2023). According to Wong, "courage is vulnerability" (2023, p.49). In a similar study, Williams (2020) says, "The results of this study suggest that while differences in experience and a lack of familiarity may be factors in the levels of confidence for new interpreters, the clearest connections to interpreter confidence are rooted in our interpersonal relationships and approaches to each other" (p.36). In addition to the literature, the findings of this study are yet more evidence of how crucial interpersonal peer and mentor support is for interpreters in general, but especially for new interpreters. If there is no safety to develop self-efficacy, courageous interpreters' growth will be stunted, and instead will be taught to default to risk through fear responses. Safety in interpersonal relationships between interpreters has become a topic of note in recent years. Ott (2012) defines horizontal violence as "persistent behaviors such as gossip, diminishing comments, rudeness, devaluing others' professional worth, and criticism, perpetrated by members of a group toward one another,

whether consistently or inconsistently, that cause harm, anxiety, and stress in the receiver” (p.15). Since Ott’s (2012) novel research, horizontal violence has been a subject of research and discussion in the interpreting field (Hewlett, 2013; Hill, 2018). Combating and reducing horizontal violence involves vulnerability, reflective practices, and framing ethical dilemmas under value frameworks (Ott, 2012; Ramirez-Loudenback, 2015; Wong, 2023). These practices support understanding, and value prioritization assessment would increase thereby encouraging greater self-efficacy as well as courageous interpreters.

Finally, the feelings interpreters experienced sheds light on the internal processes of practitioners who are wrestling with risk, rules, and really hard choices. Ten out of sixteen interpreters experienced fear when making decisions at work. Chronic or widespread fear, shame, and sadness are undesirable for occupationally healthy fields. Interpreters are not robots, we have feelings, we are human. Interpreters have big burdens to bear: power dynamics, barriers, standards, personal needs, interpreting work in all its complexities, values, ethical frameworks, and consumer needs. Yet despite all this, the interpreters in this study did their job. The undesirable feelings felt by the participants stemmed from both internal and external sources, but overwhelmingly were a result of the interpreter striving for the welfare of the communities they serve. Emotions run high in the interpreting profession and lack of healthy coping mechanisms can cause burnout (Schwenke, 2015). On the flipside, researchers cite emotional intelligence and stability as a predictor of self-efficacy and coping skills (Bontempo & Napier, 2011; Karimi et al., 2013).

I echo Hill’s (2018) sentiments from my own experience doing this research and seeing these emotions and struggles, “...working as an interpreter can be an incredibly negative experience” (Hill, 2018, p. 57). But,

By being open with one another, showing one another grace, interpreters can create a space for vulnerability that will allow growth to happen. If each interpreter were to engage in self-study related to dealing with own shame and vulnerability, interpreters across the profession would increase resiliency toward the negative aspects of working environments” (Hill, 2018 p.67)

Discussions Conclusion

Through this research I examined how courage manifests in interpreter decision-making. Since the need for courage has been demonstrated and factors presented, how do we grow courage? The answer is through vulnerability and interpersonal support, which are crucial for growth (Hill, 2018; Wong, 2023). Renowned vulnerability and shame researcher Brown (2015) defines vulnerability as “uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure” (p. 34). On the flipside, shame is the killer of vulnerability (Brown, 2015, 2017, 2019, & 2019; Wong, 2023). Wong (2023) summarizes Brown’s (2015, 2017, 2019, & 2019) work on shame and vulnerability, “Shame stems from the fear of disconnection. Vulnerability is the true measure of courage. Shame resilience is rising strong” (p. 12). In addition, Wong (2023) identifies overlap between what Lee and Lllewynn-Jones (2009 & 2011) discuss on interpreter role and integrity with Brown’s (2015, 2017, 2019, 2019) work. Neutrality and silence come “at a very high individual and collective cost. Individually, we pay with our integrity. Collectively, we pay with divisiveness, and even worse, we bypass effective problem-solving” (Brown, 2019, p. 94 as cited in Wong, 2023, p.16). This neutrality and silence can be seen in the residue of the conduit model: low autonomy and low decisional latitude. It is easy to sacrifice our integrity and shrug off responsibility for our actions. This in turn results in not upholding the values of the profession: beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and agency (Beauchamp & Childress, 2007; Dean &

Pollard, 2022). This research has highlighted how to improve interpreter self-efficacy, decisional latitude, autonomy, value framework utilization, and courage through interpersonal support and personal and collective growth in vulnerability. Passivity is not defaulting on action, but an action in of itself. If we function within fear, we make the decision to enforce and enact negative norms. However, through vulnerability, interpreters can develop courage, breaking out of complacent complicity to the benefit of those we serve.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

I am not driven by fear...fear is not an option. Fear is something I conquer

-Participant 2

I stand by my actions

-Participant 11

That's when I knew I'd made the right decision

-Participant 12

I was thinking about all these stakeholders before I even thought of me

-Interviewee 3

The purpose of this research study is to investigate how professional courage manifests in interpreter decision-making. Through the results of this study, the profession and all stakeholders can gain clearer understandings on the factors that influence interpreters' courage. This will allow us to combat harmful interpreter norms of behavior and protect against the abuse of practitioners and the Deaf community. The first step is to determine what courageous behavior is and what that looks like for interpreters. Rate et al. (2007) defines courage as “(a) a willful, intentional act, (b) executed after mindful deliberation, (c) involving objective substantial risk to the actor, (d) primarily motivated to bring about a noble good or worthy end, (e) despite, perhaps, the presence of the emotion of fear” (p.95). In conjunction with Role Space (Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2009 & 2011), DC-S (Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2011, 2013), and values in the field (Dean & Pollard, 2018; Ramirez-Loudenback, 2015), these concepts joined together demonstrates a picture of courageous interpreter behavior for the first time.

To achieve these ends, I designed a qualitative study, asking interpreters to describe their decision-making process when they made a difficult decision at work. Participants were walked

through questions that mirrored the DC-S (Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2011, 2013) process.

Decisional latitude, autonomy, and values were key investigations of the questionnaire. Using convenience sampling, 16 signed language interpreters in the U.S. participated in an online questionnaire. In addition, three willing questionnaire participants were randomly selected for more in depth, member checking interviews. The themes were analyzed with thematic analysis with an inductive approach, and the categorization of the stories and the types of behavior as courageous or non-courageous as guided by Rate et al. 's (2007) definition of courage utilized deductive reasoning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Rate et al.'s definition of courage was applied to the qualitative data to determine if the actions taken by participants met the criteria for courage (2007).

Eight out of the sixteen participants told stories that are courageous. From these eight, seven had behavior that went against norms. That courageous action would go against norms is not surprising. As Lee and Llewellyn-Jones (2009 & 2011) demonstrate, the conduit model denies the personhood and inherent responsibility of an interpreter in an interaction. Acting in line with personal and professional values requires integrity, so engaging in behavior that takes accountability for decision-making intentionally, after deliberation, for good ends decidedly does not align with the messaging of the conduit model that compels interpreters to take no action other than to engage in linguistic transfer (Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2009 & 2011; Rate et al., 2007)

Five out of the eight interpreters who told courageous stories had 9+ years of experience and half (4/8) were RID certified. Two stories were categorized as non-courageous. These two stories were told by two different profiles. One is RID certified with 20-24 years of experience, and 55-64 years old. The other is not RID certified, 0-4 years of experience, and 18-24 years old.

Six stories had relevance with themes, but there was not enough information to determine if they were courageous or non-courageous. While the stories participants told were categorized based on showing courage, all participants of this research are to be commended for their courage in telling their stories. Telling their stories required intentionality, mindful deliberation, risk to self of being judged, for a good/noble end of research that might provide benefits for the profession, and perhaps in the face of fear.

I found that professional courage is demonstrated by interpreters, and those interpreters who have more years of experience and those with RID certification were more likely to tell courageous stories. My prediction that the number of courageous interpreter stories would be a small minority section of the data was wrong. Courage manifested through interpreters who, as following Rate et al.'s (2007) definition, demonstrated behaviors intentionally, after mindful deliberation, despite risk to the interpreter, motivated by values of the profession/good/prima facies, and despite (for most) fear. Research on interpreter ethical decision-making and norms has entreated interpreters to utilize their power and to resist norms, but still norms of low autonomy and decisional latitude are prevalent (Witter-Merithew et al. 2010). While not indicative to include sweeping statements on the state of the whole profession, this study presents evidence of interpreters being courageous and defying norms. The interpreters in this study were courageous in their actions when they upheld their values, fighting for the best outcomes for all stakeholders in line with their and the profession's values, in the face of risk and fear. The findings of this research shows that courage is possible in signed language interpreting, and in most cases, courageous behavior also serves to defy norms of low decisional latitude, low autonomy, and the unduly favoring of conservative controls (Bowen-Bailey, 2014; Dean and Pollard, 2011 & 2013; Witter-Merithew et al., 2010). In addition, those who displayed courage

typically had more years of experience and had greater professional accreditations than those who did not (RID certification).

Thematic findings show key factors and influences on decision-making. The findings on interpreter's values aligns with previous research (Dean and Pollard 2018; Ramirez-Loudenback, 2015; Stewart, 2023), namely autonomy, access, and beneficence as the highest cited. Another interesting theme was that of interpreters' conceptions of their humanity and interpreter selves as distinct and often at odds. From this finding, we must ask the question, are we as a profession getting any closer to stronger ethics vocabulary and decision making in the field? Without the language to support or conceptualize it, decision-making may be reduced to acting on compulsion or a gut feeling, without understanding how or why we make decisions or able to defend or reason for ourselves if faced with risk, uncertainty, and norms.

More thematic findings showed that half of the participants struggled with their decision, and that those with less experience tended to struggle more. Those with more experience had greater confidence. I found that the RID CPC is influential in decision making and several interpreters (6/16) view it in light of holistic and teleological practices. This view aligns with literature on the topic (Dean & Pollard, 2022; Tate & Turner, 2002), the underlying values within the RID CPC instructed practitioners, not the prescribed behaviors themselves (Tate and Turner 2002). While there may be a tendency to rigidly follow the RID CPC for a variety of reasons, a conservative interpretation of the RID CPC and policies in general are a way for interpreters to shirk responsibility and remain invisible (Bowen-Bailey 2014; Jones, n.d.; Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2009 & 2011). While not generalizable to all interpreters, some interpreters, especially those who had RID certification and greater years of experience did not rigidly follow the RID CPC. This aligns with Mendoza's (2010) finding that experts demonstrated higher dynamic

reasoning, teleological, and reasoning skills than novices. In addition, those without RID certification were more likely to struggle with lack of confidence and less likely to express teleological frameworks in their reasoning. Teleological ethics is an important ethical framework in signed language interpreting (Dean and Pollard, 2018). Finally, I found that feelings of fear, shame, and sadness were pervasive.

These findings highlight a few key points. First, each of the courageous stories and the themes discussed show that courage involves doing what is hard, involves struggle, and often includes negative experiences in the face of adversity. The themes and patterns investigated indicate that interpreters are still struggling to reconcile the work they do and the kind of choices they make with the conduit model and norms that are still pervasive in the profession (Dean and Pollard, 2001; Wilcox and Shaffer, 2005). The key word here being struggling, denoting ongoing action. The conduit model certainly is not reigning fully supreme, because these interpreters show evidence of working in ways to overcome harmful norms in courageous ways. They do this through championing their *prima facie* values in the face of risk, implementing teleological frameworks and dynamic reasoning, wrestling with their humanity, and seeking out support and ways to support others in this hard work we often-to use figurative language-call, just interpreting.

This research is a novel way of viewing interpreter decision-making. Drawing on the work of others, the theme of courage as being necessary to combat norms was identified. I have combined the concepts of the conduit model, decisional latitude, autonomy, norms, and other factors in a new way to investigate what it means to be an ethical interpreter in the face of adversity. Hsieh's (2006) study shows interpreters in the medical field taking action that was out of line with the conduit model, and experiencing dissonance between how others expected them

to behave and what the interpreters themselves knew was right via their expertise. Other than the research presented and discussed here, Hsieh (2006) is the only other study that records behaviors against the norm. Norms have been documented and discussed, but little research has been done to investigate how interpreters might overcome these norms. The conclusion of this project is that this is done through professional courage.

My results and conclusions from this research have led to new understandings of courage in the interpreting profession and ways to foster courage. The intention of this research was to gain insight into how interpreters display professional courage. Through the inductive approach of this research, factors on how interpreters demonstrate integrity, combat norms, and come out of the conduit model are identified. In addition, deductive approaches confirmed interpreters' stories as courageous. The limitations of this study is the small sample size and the limited scope. Themes of teleological frameworks, dynamic reasoning, and values (among others), are investigated, but are not the focus of this study.

The inductive nature of the thematic analysis means that the conclusions are high in validity, but low in reliability and not generalizable (Trafford & Leshem, 2008). However, the deductive approach of utilizing Rate et al.'s (2007) definition of courage involves collecting data to test whether interpreters as show courage has high reliability and the approach can be generalized to other studies as well as provides a framework for practitioners and interpreter education to begin to understand interpreter courage (Trafford & Leshem, 2008).

This research generated copious amounts of data, including data sets that were not included in this publication like scalar action and attitudinal sections of the questionnaire. The results of that data set did not align with the scope of this study. From this, I learned about how to handle large quantities of data, determining what aligned with scope. In addition, I did not ask

participants if they were courageous or walk them through the definition of courage (Rate et al., 2007) out of a desire not to influence their stories. However, there may be value in follow-up studies that explicitly ask interpreters about the role of courage in their work and their understanding of it. In the vein of making courage explicit in future research, there may be life and professional experiences or qualifications outside of the basic demographics explored in this thesis that may produce interesting results on why some interpreters demonstrated courageous behavior. Along with this, future research on this topic may make the topic of risk explicit in future research to gather interpreter perceptions as it relates to decision-making and courage. This may be done in a similar methodology to this study; interviews can be utilized on a larger scale. The questionnaire and interview data were not linked to preserve anonymity. This limited my ability to follow-up on the topic of courage and risk as I did not have access to the interviewee's questionnaire responses outside of what they themselves chose to disclose. A future study may include interviews that discuss courage and risk with participants, using confidentiality rather than anonymity. In addition, I did not investigate which framework practitioners used (deontological or teleological) but noted it as a theme among responses. An interesting follow-up to this research would be to make more explicit connections between ethical frameworks, value systems, and courage, especially considering Dean's (2015) findings on signed language interpreters' deficit in ethical decision-making skills.

From this research, the recommendations of other researchers are supported as well as connected to the topic of courage (Ott, 2012; Ramirez-Loudenback, 2015; Williams, 2020; Wong, 2023). First, I found that participants who expressed dynamic/teleological reasoning were more likely to come to a decisive decision with confidence. I found that supportive and collaborative discussions with colleagues and mentors aided in interpreter decision-making. This

aligns with William's (2020) findings and recommendations. Practices of vulnerability, reflective practice, framing ethical dilemmas under value frameworks reduces horizontal violence (Ott, 2012; Ramirez-Loudenback, 2015; Wong, 2023). In addition, interpersonal relationships are key to influencing self-efficacy and courageous interpreters; we need healthy coping mechanisms to deal effectively with stress to increase resiliency (Bontempo and Napier, 2011; Hill, 2018; Karimi et al., 2013). Confidence and holistic responsibility for decision-making combats norms (Russell & Shaw, 2016).

Due to a lack of appropriate vocabulary on ethics, many interpreters may know that a rigid interpretation of the RID CPC is not working, but struggle to express and act upon that knowledge (Bowen-Bailey, 2014; Dean and Pollard, 2022; Hsieh 2006). Figurative language might be an attempt to convey a normative message, but it ultimately fails (Dean and Pollard, 2022). When utilized, the ideas of making decisions based on arbitrary principles like humanity or the heart can cause harm because they are not inherently linked to a value framework (Dean & Pollard, 2022). Improving ethical reasoning skills and vocabulary is a key step to ensuring that practitioners are able to fully conceptualize and articulate their reasoning, banishing needless subjectivity and ensuring firm, rigorous decision-making (Dean and Pollard, 2022). All professions must deal with conflicting ethical duties, and conduct risk-benefit analysis, seeking out the best solution for all participants (Dean and Pollard, 2022; Rate et al., 2007; Reamer, 2021). Learning how to enact this complicated process and how to support that reasoning is paramount.

Rather than norms of interpreting that render interpreters invisible with no power, interpreters as wielders of power in interpreted interactions must make equitable decisions (Mason & Ren, 2012; Mendoza, 2010; Russell & Shaw, 2016). Interpreter education has a role

to play in all of these issues by training interpreters to wield the power they have in interactions ethically and courageously when need be. Autonomy means operating within the expertise you have within an ethical framework (Witter-Merithew & Nicodemus, 2012). Without sufficient expertise or ethical framework experience or education, interpreters are not set up to be courageous, indeed they cannot be without a value system or expertise to enact decisions. Interpreter education has a gap, not preparing students for real world situations and historically reinforcing the conduit model (Dean and Pollard, 2001; Dean, Samar, and Maffia, 2022; Meadows, 2013). Preparing interpreting students for these real-world situations becomes essential through strong foundations in moral reasoning, Role Space (Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2009 & 2011), and DC-S (Dean and Pollard, 2001, 2011, 2013; Guery, 2014). Engraining the practices of collaboration, value frameworks, dynamic reasoning, vocabulary are ways to combat these issues (Ott, 2012; Ramirez-Loudenback, 2015; Wong, 2023). Now, this research can be added to the repertoire, showing by practical example and analysis what it means to be a courageous interpreter within the real-world grit of decision-making. By understanding courage, interpreters may begin to implement it into their practice intentionally, making use of their value frameworks and risk-benefit analysis skills, or seeking to acquire/bolster these skills.

Interviewee 2 asked, “Are we ready for courage? Does our profession want it? I don’t know, I don’t think so.” The readiness of the profession as a whole cannot be determined by this research. The results of this study show contradicting understandings of role, humanity, risk-benefit analysis, and approaches to the work. This thesis revolves around human beings’ decisions to do what is hard and right, especially when it may come at a price. The factors, tendencies, and themes that go into courageous decision-making researched and discussed here has the purpose of affecting change. Through research such as this project, avenues are opened to

discuss the work of signed language interpreters in ways that inform and empower interpreters to talk about courage, risk, rules, and really hard choices. It is my hope that these stories serve to remind us that no matter the risk or the fear, the hard work we do every day is worth it. Through vulnerability, collaboration, and support we can, and we must continue to make the hard choices despite the risk, endeavoring to do what is right, even more so when we fail in this pursuit.

Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, 'I will try again tomorrow'

-Radmacher, 2007

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Appendix A: Questionnaire Recruitment Email

Hello Colleagues and Friends,

My name is Shayla Richardson. I am a student at Western Oregon University, pursuing a Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies, and am an interpreter in Oregon. I am conducting research for a Master's thesis under the supervision of Dr. Elisa Maroney.

I am researching interpreters' perceived or actual professional freedom to make decisions (decisional latitude). I plan to do this by examining how interpreters make decisions at work and their feelings surrounding them. I hope to learn what factors ("demands") into interpreters' decisions, what decisions ("controls") they employed in a situation they experienced, and what the results were ("resulting consequences").

For this study, I am inviting signed language interpreters to answer questions about their experiences making professional decisions through an online questionnaire. I am seeking participants who are hearing, Deaf, or hard of hearing, working or retired signed language interpreters, of any certification status, and at least 18 years of age. The questionnaire should take around 20 minutes to complete.

More information on this thesis project is available in the attached consent form. The consent form can also be found on the first page (section) of the Google Forms questionnaire.

If you are interested in participating in the questionnaire, please visit the link here:

<https://forms.gle/ThRXNL3dThFF6eGV7>.

Please consider sharing this invitation to participate with colleagues who might be interested.

Thank you!

Shayla Richardson

Appendix B: Interview Recruitment Email

More Than Words: How Interpreters Wrestle with Risk, Rules, and Really Hard Choices

Hello!

Thank you for completing the questionnaire for my thesis: “More Than Words: How Interpreters Wrestle with Risk, Rules, and Really Hard Choices.” In addition, thank you for being willing to be contacted about participating in the second part of this research project: interviews.

Participation in interviews will give you a chance to share your story(ies) more fully and allow the researcher (me) to ask follow-up questions. This will provide more detailed information to support the data from the questionnaires.

I have attached the research project information sheet and interview consent form to this email.

Please reply to let me know if you are interested. I have listed tentative dates and times for interviews. Interviews will take around an hour to complete. Let me know if you have any questions.

Interview Dates:

-
-
-

If none of these work, please let me know your availability, and we will find a time that works.

Thank you again for your support in furthering the research available on this topic!

Kind Regards,

Shayla Richardson

Appendix C: Questionnaire Consent Form

More Than Words: How Interpreters Wrestle with Risk, Rules, and Really Hard Choices

My name is Shayla Richardson. I am a student at Western Oregon University, pursuing a Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies. This survey is a part of research I am conducting for a Master's thesis under the supervision of Dr. Elisa Maroney.

Volunteering to Participate

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose whether you want to take part in the study or not. If you have any questions about this study and this form, please ask us. If you decide to participate in this study, you must select "Accept."

Eligibility

To be eligible to participate in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age and have worked as a signed language interpreter.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to research interpreters' perceived or actual professional freedom to make decisions (decisional latitude) in the interpreting field. I plan to do this by examining how interpreters make decisions at work and their feelings surrounding them. I hope to learn what factors ("demands") into interpreters' decisions, what decisions ("controls") they employed in a situation they experienced, and what the results were ("resulting consequences").

Participant Requirements

Should you choose to participate in this study, you will complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire has five parts:

1. Participant consent

2. Demographics
3. Five open-ended questions about when you had to make a difficult decision
4. A series of 10 statements where you will answer on a sliding scale your agreement and feelings about the statements
5. Interview participation information opt-in.

The questionnaire should take approximately twenty minutes to complete.

Confidentiality

The questionnaire does not ask for any personal identifying information during parts 1-4. During part five, participants may choose to leave an email address to be contacted with information about participating in an interview. If you choose to participate in an interview, your survey responses will be linked to your email. If you do not choose to provide an email, your survey responses will remain anonymous. Confidentiality will be maintained by separating identifying information from responses, storing the key in a separate password-protected file, and restricting access to the key file to the principal investigator. All data will be maintained on my laptop in a password-protected file.. The only person other than the principal researcher who may have access to the data is the thesis committee chair. The results of this study will be published in a thesis. Your name and any identifying information will not be included in the publication.

Risks

While efforts will be made to protect participant confidentiality (e.g., through anonymization of data and secure data storage), there is minimal risk that some identifying information could be unintentionally disclosed. However, no sensitive or identifying data will be linked to the participants in any published results. There is a low risk of emotional discomfort when recounting potentially unfavorable experiences. If you decide to participate in this study and

experience a negative event you believe is related to this study, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw, your responses will be deleted and destroyed.

Benefits

There is no monetary compensation for participating in this study, however, you may benefit from having a space to express your thoughts and feelings about past experiences. In addition, you will be helping increase research that will benefit the field you work in.

If you have any questions or concerns at any point about this study, please contact me at barness@mail.wou.edu. You may also contact my thesis advisor, Dr. Elisa Maroney, at maronee@mail.wou.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about the ethical conduct of this research, please contact the WOU IRB at 503-838-9200 or via e-mail at irb@wou.edu.

Participant Consent

I acknowledge that I have read the information above and that I agree to participate in the above-mentioned project through this questionnaire. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time. I understand that I may choose which questions to answer and can leave some blank if I choose. I also understand that all personal information will remain confidential. I was welcomed to ask any questions I wanted. I have received answers to my questions. I understand the risks and benefits of participating in this study. I agree to participate in this research study.

- Accept (by clicking to continue, I acknowledge my consent)
- Decline (to exit the survey, close the browser tab)

Appendix D: Interview Consent Form

More Than Words: How Interpreters Wrestle with Risk, Rules, and Really Hard Choices

My name is Shayla Richardson. I am a student at Western Oregon University. I'm working on a Master's degree in Interpreting Studies. This interview is part of a research project I am doing for my Master's thesis. My faculty advisor is Dr. Elisa Maroney.

Volunteering to Take Part

You are being invited to be in a research study. Taking part is your choice. You can decide if you want to be in the study or not.

If you have questions about the study or this form, please ask. If you agree to join, you will need to sign this form. You will get a copy of the signed form for your records.

Who Can Participate

To be in the interview part of this study, you must:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Have worked as a signed language interpreter
- Have already completed the questionnaire for this study

Purpose of the Study

This study looks at how interpreters make tough decisions at work. I want to learn more about how much freedom interpreters feel they have when making these choices. The study will explore what made a decision hard ("demands"), what choices were made ("controls"), and what happened afterward ("consequences").

What You'll Be Asked to Do

If you agree to join, we'll schedule a one-on-one online interview. You'll choose the date and time, and we'll send you a meeting link by email.

In the interview, you'll talk about times you had to make difficult choices at work.

- For hearing participants, the interview will be audio recorded.
- For Deaf participants using ASL, the interview will be video recorded.
- These recordings will be typed out (transcribed), and both the recordings and transcripts will be deleted within five years after the research is published.
- The interview will take about one hour.

Your Privacy

Your name and any personal information you share will be kept private. That information will be stored in a separate, secure file from the study data. Only the main researcher and the thesis advisor may see it. Your name will not appear in anything that gets published.

We will take steps to keep your identity private, but we cannot guarantee total anonymity.

Risks

You may feel some emotional discomfort when talking about hard experiences.

If at any time you want to stop, you can leave the study without any penalty. If you choose to leave, your interview and any answers you gave will be deleted and not used in the study.

Benefits

You won't get paid for being in this study. But you may find it helpful to talk about your work experiences. You will also be helping researchers learn more about interpreting, which may help others in the field.

If you have questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Shayla Richardson: barness@mail.wou.edu

Dr. Elisa Maroney (faculty advisor): **maronee@mail.wou.edu**

For questions about the ethics of this study, contact the WOU IRB at **503-838-9200** or **irb@wou.edu**

Participant Consent

I have read this form and understand what the study is about. I agree to take part in a one-on-one interview. I know that I can skip any question I don't want to answer and that I can stop the interview at any time. I understand that my personal information will be kept private.

I agree to be recorded during the interview. I understand the recordings will only be used for this study. They will be kept secure and will be deleted after the study ends. I can also ask for the recording to be deleted at any time. I understand the risks and benefits and have had my questions answered. I will receive a copy of this form after it is signed.

Participant Printed Name:

Date:

Participant Signature: _____

Primary Researcher Printed Name:

Date:

Primary Researcher Signature: _____

This study has been approved by the Western Oregon University Institutional Review Board.

Appendix E: Questionnaire Questions

Section 1-Participant Consent

See Appendix C.

Section 2-Demographics

1. Are you an RID-certified interpreter?
 - Yes
 - No
2. How many years have you been working as an interpreter?
 - 0-4
 - 5-9
 - 9-14
 - 15-19
 - 20-24
 - 25-34
 - 35 or longer
3. What is your age range?
 - 18-24
 - 25-34
 - 35-44
 - 45-54
 - 55-64
 - 65 or over
4. Please select up to three types of interpreting work you are most engaged with.

- K-12
- Postsecondary (college, university, trade school, etc.)
- Medical
- Legal
- Business
- Performance
- Other

Section 3-Difficult Decision Description

1. Look back at a situation where you had to make a difficult decision at work.

Please describe it while respecting confidentiality.

2. In this situation, what prominent feelings came up? What made the decision difficult?
3. What was your response to or what control option did you employ in the situation? What did you do or not do?
4. Explain your response. What considerations went into determining your decisions? Values, policy, etc.?
5. What happened next? What were the results of the situation and your decision?

Section 4-Action Statements Alignment and Feelings

Indicate with each statement two items: their level of agreement, ranging numbers 1-5 from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, and feelings of fear, ranging numbers 1-5 from Little Fear to Very Strong Fear.

1. I would give honest feedback to a colleague, even when it was difficult.
2. I would report unethical behavior by an interpreter to an appropriate authority.

3. I would advocate for someone who is being overlooked or mistreated.
4. I would take actions that I believe are right even when I fear possible consequences.
5. I would ask for necessary working conditions, even if it risked conflict.
6. I would choose to educate others about equity in interpreting and other topics, even if it made people uncomfortable.
7. I would express disagreement with interpreting norms I believed were outdated or biased to colleagues, organizations, or consumers.
8. I would stay in assignments I felt unprepared for or felt ethically compromised by
9. I would hesitate to take on unfamiliar tasks at work
10. I would question agency/job site/consumer expectations when they conflict with best practices.
11. Is there anything else that came to mind or that you would like to discuss before completion of the questionnaire?

Section 5-Interview Information Opt-In

5. If you consent to be contacted with information about participating in an interview, please leave your email below.

Appendix F: Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me more about your experience in the situation making this difficult decision?
2. What made the decision difficult? Competing factors?
3. What was your decision(s)?
4. What factors went into your decisions?
5. What were the results of your decisions? How do you think this impacted you/consumers/the field/etc?

Follow-up question examples:

- Can you tell me more about that?
- What do you mean by that?
- How did that impact you? Emotionally, professionally, etc.
- Is there anything you wish you'd done differently?
- I noticed ..., does that mean ...?