



Northeastern University

Center for Atypical Language Interpreting

Unfolding Scenario: 10 VRS Call Center Setting

Sample Interpreter Responses and Reflections

Transcript*

This is the introduction to an interpreting assignment in a VRS Call Center setting. In this scenario, a hearing interpreter has recently been hired to work as a part-time interpreter for a VRS Call Center. This work will be in addition to the freelance community interpreting work the interpreter does.

In the Call Center, the interpreter will interpret for a variety of consumers, including some with limited language skills and/or who are foreign born and not fluent in ASL. The interpreter completes two days of training and is now on her first official day of work. She meets for about an hour with the Call Center Manager to go over company policies and procedures, and then logs-in and begins processing calls. The interpreter receives a call from a 31 year old Deaf consumer whom she interpreted for at a doctor's appointment earlier in the day, before starting her VRS shift. The consumer is Deaf and has both intellectual and physical disabilities that make her signs difficult to understand. In the following video clip, you will see a Deaf consumer who has similar characteristics as the Deaf woman in this scenario. She is being interviewed by another Deaf interpreter. This will help you to visualize the type of Deaf consumer for whom the Deaf-hearing interpreting team will interpret.

CLIP OF DEAF CONSUMER

Next, are a series of decision points associated with this assignment. As with any interpreting assignment, different issues or demands arise that require the interpreter to make decisions using sound judgement and discretion associated with an ethical framework. There will be a total of five such decision points in this scenario. You will see a slide that alerts you that a decision point will follow. Watch the explanation of what happens. Then, there will be a pause for you to videotape and upload your two-minute response. There are two parts to your response—what you would do and why. When you discuss the why, include information about the ethical principle or value that guides your decision. For example, maybe your decision is guided by an ethical principle involving respect for consumers, or respect for a colleague, or

*Note: This translation was not created by the original presenter. It was created after the presentation was finalized and is intended to provide an additional way to access the information.

confidentiality, or message accuracy and accessibility, or informing the consumers when some adjustment to the communication process needs to change, or some other ethical value. Be sure to discuss what principle or value is guiding your decision.

So again, you will videotape and upload your two-minute response in ASL. Be sure to include the two parts—what you would do and why. And remember, part of the why includes information about what ethical principle or value influenced your decision. Next you will see a slide indicating the first decision point, followed by a pause. After the pause, the next decision point will be introduced. This process will be repeated for all five decision points. Let's begin.

Slide for Decision Point 1.

The Deaf woman is happy to see the interpreter and places a call to her mother. During the call, she begins to explain to her mother that the interpreter who is interpreting the call is the same interpreter who interpreted at the doctor's office that morning, and that the interpreter can explain what the doctor said. Then she tells the VRS interpreter to go ahead and explain what happened at the doctor's office to her mom. What could/should the VRS interpreter do and why?

HI Sample Response:

To respond to the first decision point, I would turn to CPC tenet #3, Respect for Consumers. Because the consumer's language and culture are different from my own, and she may feel unsure about how to answer her mother, I would offer to summarize what happened during the morning's appointment, getting permission from the consumer at each point in the story before sharing during the interpretation of the call. That way the consumer retains the power to decide what to share with her mother. I would present the summary to her and allow her to choose which details to share or not; it's possible that there would be certain points she wants to keep private, and I would respect that. It's all her information, not mine, so she should have full ownership of whether and how it is shared and empowerment to make those choices, so she remains in control of it. That also relates to CPC #1, which is about respecting consumers' confidentiality. I would also add Yosso's Capital Wealth framework, as it pertains to Linguistic Capital. Because I grew up in the Korean-American community as well as the Deaf community, I have been privy to many situations where people felt a lack of confidence around sharing information and relating to the person asking for it, particularly when there were multiple different languages at play. This scenario feels similar, so I feel like I can apply the skills I learned growing up.

HI Sample Response:

In the first situation, I would be agreeable when asked to tell the caller's mother what happened at the morning appointment. I would respond by asking the caller to confirm what I remembered, and if there were particulars that they wanted to keep private, I would omit them. The Deaf person keeps the power and control over their information.

That decision comes from my understanding of Yosso's work on Social Capital. I relate to that framework because I grew up in communities that valued networking, collectivism and resource and information sharing. These callers are mother and daughter, so it's natural information to share. I would recognize that cultural value.

Also CPC Tenet #4, Respect for Consumers, applies to both mother and daughter. Making this decision will help to establish trust and rapport between each of them and myself, and that's crucial. So particularly the Deaf person feels that the information is hers to share and she controls how and what specifically is shared. That's really important here.

I would also like to add that I often encourage the Deaf consumer to take notes about what happens during interactions I interpret. I know for many Black, Brown and Deaf people, that information can be critical, so I'm in the practice of helping them take notes to share or revisit later, on their own or with hearing family or their provider. To me, that note-taking is a legitimate cultural value, and it helps ensure that the Deaf person has everything they need and the hearing family members will too. That's also very important.

Slide for Decision Point 2.

After her daughter summarizes what transpired during the doctor's appointment the mother asks the interpreter if there are any other details the interpreter can provide to her? When the interpreter explains that you cannot, she asks to speak to the interpreter's supervisor. What could/should the interpreter do and why?

HI Sample Response:

In this second decision point, the mother of the recent caller wants to speak to my supervisor because she feels like there were gaps in the retelling of her daughter's doctor's appointment, and I have refused to personally share them. I feel like in order to answer this I have to rewind to the first decision I made. I had said I would ask the Deaf caller to tell me what she remembered and clarify whether she wanted each point shared with her mother, because, again, Tenet #1 Confidentiality is paramount. She has the right to privacy.

At the same time, I have to engage with her mother as a second consumer. In response, I would explain the interpreting process and what I had decided to do. This mother knows her daughter, I'm sure, and is familiar with her ability to express herself and that we will have had a

repeated exchange to ensure mutual understanding, so if she is getting a sense that some information was omitted, I would explain my role and the fact of that negotiation; I relayed what your daughter gave me permission to share.

Again, because the mother would naturally be very familiar with her daughter, and how she typically communicates, I would use what I learned and saw growing up: parents communicate with their children in a very specific way. They know their children's personalities and patterns, and that familial relationship is firmly in place. So I would assume that the mother has a gut feeling throughout the call if the details of the morning appointment are incomplete, and that's why she's checking in. That's a cultural value I recognize and appreciate.

Growing up in my communities, mothers were always checking in and making sure everyone and everything was okay. But the daughter caller has a reason to share or not share her information with her mother, too. So I want to honor both callers' values around how they share information with each other.

Yosso's framework also applies here, as Familial Capital.

HI Sample Response:

This is in response to the second decision point. I find it odd that she would be questioning me, and it makes me second guess my work. To be honest, my whole goal in decision point #1 was to establish rapport and trust with each of the consumers, which is a huge cultural value for Black, Brown and Asian families. I probably would have greeted the mother at the start in Spanish, the little Spanish I know, to say hello and ask how she was, so that we could start building her comfort with me that would carry through the whole call. If she were to say during the call, "I feel like something is missing," I would have turned to the daughter caller to relay that, and ask whether I as the interpreter had missed pieces she meant to be shared.

For me, I think it's important to remember that the information being shared in the call belongs to the daughter. Yosso's framework speaks to the importance of Familial Capital, and that resonates with me. Family, how members are honored and respected, how cultural traditions are passed on and information is shared are all crucial values. Of course, I understand and endorse the CPC tenets about Confidentiality and Respect for Consumers – I respect the CPC as our guiding document – and I would prioritize respecting the caller's privacy, but I want to be transparent: if the mother wants to speak to my supervisor, I'm more than happy to transfer her. I wouldn't have any anxiety or qualms about that. I want to make sure both consumers feel comfortable and that their information is safe. They deserve that, and it's their right.

Slide for Decision Point 3.

Another call the interpreter processes is from a social worker from the Department of Children and Family Services. He is calling a Deaf parent about scheduling a home visit in response to allegations that the house is filthy and the three children under the age of seven are living in squalor. This consumer is a Deaf female who is 39 years old and originally from Mexico. She has lived in America for about ten years and has acquired some ASL fluency, although some of her language features are atypical. Next, you will see a brief clip of a Deaf consumer with similar characteristics being interviewed by a Deaf interpreter. This clip will help you visualize the type of individual for whom the interpretation is provided.

CLIP OF SECOND DEAF CONSUMER

When the social worker asks the Deaf parent if the home is clean and tidy, the parent responds that it is, and is quite upset at the question. It is obvious to the interpreter from what she can see on the screen, that the opposite is true. Dirty diapers, food containers and leftover food are visible in the room. Over the shoulder of the Deaf caller, you can see the doorway to the kitchen where trash and dirty dishes are visible. After hearing the Deaf person's response, the social worker decides to wait another week or two for the home visit. The Deaf parent leaves the screen to retrieve her calendar to make the appointment for the home visit. When the interpreter explains to the social worker that the Deaf parent has left the screen, he asks, "You can see the inside of her home, right? Does it look clean to you?" What could/should the interpreter do and why?

HI Sample Response:

For the third decision point, my gut reaction is to refuse to answer, and protect the Deaf consumer's privacy. Adhere to Tenet #1. Yes, I can see inside her home, but I would demur...and frankly lie. I would tell the hearing caller that the privacy screen was up and I couldn't see anything. I would do that because CPS workers work in the system, in the government, and that system is often unfriendly to the Deaf community, and the BIPOC community, and retains all the power. If CPS takes this woman's children, I know it will be an uphill battle to get them back. Many, many Deaf people struggle with navigating the system. So I would know that inherently, and instinctively to protect her at this moment.

As an interpreter, with everything I've seen, and as someone who grew up in the community, I have seen countless examples of why it's so crucial to be able to navigate the system. And if that Deaf caller has left the privacy screen down and her home is visible during the call, I would know without a shadow of a doubt that protecting her was the priority.

HI Sample Response:

In answer to the third decision point, I would say my immediate gut reaction is to protect the Deaf consumer. Having grown up in the community with Deaf parents, that would be my first

instinct. But recognizing that, now I'm wondering why that's my first reaction. I think it's because I've had to navigate many things, including the system, and I know that the system oppresses Black, Brown and other marginalized communities by design. I would view the CPS caller as part of the system, and because of that I would resist answering them. That instinct to resist is another part of Yosso's framework: Resistance Capital. That's a cultural value. Protect, and resist the system.

The CPC speaks to Respect for Consumers in Tenet 4.0. At the same time, I feel like "respect" isn't enough. The underlying goal of the CPC as a guiding document is Do No Harm. That relates directly to resistance, and navigating that.

So for me, the choice would be to decline to answer the question. "It's not my position to say." "I can't give you that information." That's the choice I would make, for the sake of the Deaf consumer. To protect her, and resist him. Respect the Deaf consumer's privacy and rights.

Slide for Decision Point 4.

During a break the interpreter goes to the breakroom and strikes up a conversation with another interpreter. The interpreter is acquainted with the other interpreter, but has never worked with her before. After a little small talk she begins to complain about her most recent caller. She begins saying things like, "He is impossible to understand", "I can't believe he uses VRS when he cannot make himself understood" and "Can you believe we are expected to make calls for Deaf individuals who have multiple disabilities and are impossible to understand?" What could/should the interpreter do and why?

HI Sample Response:

For the fourth decision point, in response to what that other interpreter is saying about VRS callers, I would stop her in her tracks. "Hey! Respect for Consumers is not negotiable!" That's Tenet #4. I would share details with her about my upbringing and language background and remind her that Deaf people come from all walks of life, all different countries, with a vast range of experiences learning language and *the entirety of that journey is not a reflection on them*; it's a reflection on the system. So it's offensive for her to place the blame on them, and it absolutely does not Respect our Consumers or understand the system under which we all live.

So I would reprimand her for it and let her know it isn't acceptable. I also would notice that she seems frustrated and doesn't know how to work with the calls she's getting, and suggest that the next time it happens she call a team. I would let her know about training resources. I would offer to let her observe me on a similar call, to see the way I negotiate language and information with a similar consumer, which I can do because of my own linguistic experience growing up. I have the ability to codeswitch and adjust to any client's way of communicating,

and the patience and willingness to do so. So she could look to me as a model of how to do that.

HI Sample Response:

The fourth decision point: interesting. I would probably need to take a deep breath or two before responding to my colleague. Actually, calling her my colleague makes me think of Tenet 5.0: Respect for Colleagues, which goes both ways. That makes this one a little bit tough. Why? She's sitting across from me ranting, placing blame, and I would be thinking about my family. Maybe I would be thinking about my community, my upbringing.

The first thing I would say is, "Wow, I'm sorry to see you struggling so much. I can see you're having a hard time. Can you tell me a little more?" I would try to draw more details out from her. "So you're saying you feel like Deaf people with additional disabilities shouldn't use VRS. Where would you recommend they go instead?" "What services should they use?" "Do you mean to say that everyone doesn't deserve equal access?" Because if we exclude a population from these services, they're likely to have vastly more barriers and frustrations. I'd say, "I'm happy to talk with you about this, and to team with you the next time you get a call like that." "Let's go to a workshop together."

I know that kind of situation can feel like an ambush and wouldn't be easy. For me, those ambushes happen every day, and every time I go to work. I do genuinely feel for my colleague that she's so frustrated, and I can see that that frustration may be a result of limited information and resources. She deserves to have that information, too. In terms of applying Yosso, I think of Linguistic Capital. She may not have the same access to language that I do. I carry everything I saw and experienced growing up with me. I have access to all of that, and she probably doesn't. Colleagues should all have the opportunity to learn and improve themselves, and consumers deserve to be respected too. So I would try to have that conversation with her: what that looks like, so maybe we can reframe.

Slide for Decision Point 5.

After break, the interpreter logs back in and continues processing calls. On her way out of the building from her shift, the manager who worked with her at the beginning of her shift asks her how the shift went. The interpreter thinks about the earlier call and the request to speak to a supervisor and wonders if she should provide a brief explanation in case there is any aftermath. What could/should the VRS interpreter do and why?

HI Sample Response:

For the last decision point, I would let my supervisor know that I'm concerned, in accordance with CPC Tenet #4: Respect for Consumers. I never want to see interpreters oppress our

consumers by neglecting their culture or language. As an organization and a field, we need to address this persistent issue, so I would be honest with my supervisor. I am aware that the decisions I make are based on my lived experience and different Capitals I know I've developed over time. But many other interpreters don't see, or don't know, or maybe don't care about, the same things I do. I would say that the company should develop training on this matter, to ensure that our Deaf consumers don't experience this type of oppression again.

That's an artifact of Yosso's Aspirational Capital, and the desire to elevate and improve the lives of our community and ourselves.

HI Sample Response:

When my supervisor asks about my day, I would be honest with them about what happened that morning. I would be open with them, because I believe in the value of transparency. That's another cultural value I was raised with. It's very important to me because, again, I'm navigating the system with the Capitals Yosso described. I want to ensure that I can provide my supervisor with the full picture of what I know and understand about what happened. I have nothing to hide; I believe in that. I believe in the value of the Deaf community, period.

The CPC describes Respect for Consumers, and that means I know I need to be upfront about what happened. For me, that's totally fine, even if I made a mistake or if I didn't make the best decision; I'm open to correction and feedback.

Also, I sort of don't think that will happen. I think if I was actually in the call with the mother and daughter, I would have done everything possible to avoid what happened in the scenario. But if it did happen, I would be fully available to have an honest conversation about it with my supervisor. That's for the best anyway, because that's what I believe in. Openness and transparency. That's important to me, as an interpreter and as a person. That's my personal and professional value.

Reflections on Sample Responses:

HI 1: So. How was that for you?

HI 2: Interesting. Really interesting. I think one thing that's fascinating is that there were some "pre-set" decisions. For example, the mother saying she felt like she wasn't getting all of the information and wanted to speak to my supervisor; that one really struck me. How did you feel about that one?

HI 1: Honestly, my first reaction was, "That would never happen!!" Right? Because I would work so hard in the first place to make sure both mother and daughter were getting everything they needed throughout the call. I would ask the daughter really explicitly what she wanted to share with her mother, and I would *spend time* negotiating that, and that and only that would be

what I gave to the mother. And if the daughter decided not to share something, that's her right! So if the mother says, "I feel like something's missing"..."maybe it is, but I can't tell you!"

But I understand why the question is there, and where it comes from. The mother may have had bumpy experiences with other interpreters in the past, or maybe the turn-taking is taking too long because of the time I'm spending to be clear; she may start to wonder what's going on in the silences. So there's a need to be open and transparent when we describe the process, and why I chose that answer. What do you think?

HI 2: I'm on the same page. I really do believe that building trust is like currency. It's a cultural transaction. Trust is the first thing I automatically want to set up, especially with Brown or Black families. The moment that the daughter comes on the screen and recognizes me, that's a sweet and touching thing for me. The same with the mother. So for me, my culture and upbringing tells me, "this is family sharing time now." So I had the same reaction you did – "wait, the mother doesn't trust me?" But okay, that's a valid feeling, but I wonder if – unfortunately – it might just be both the mother and daughter's experience from before this call, before me. We don't know. But I often feel that when I come into a situation, both parties are coming in with past trauma from what interpreters did before.

That's another reason why it's important for me to establish trust. And you're right, if the daughter wants to hold back some information, that is 100% her right, but I probably wouldn't voice or frame it that way to the mother. I wouldn't indicate there was information being withheld; I would just tell the story as a whole and end with, "and that's what happened." So that if the daughter didn't want to share everything, I would be totally comfortable with that, because that's a cultural thing for her personally: how can I own my own information? My culture, my language, how I express myself, how I *protect* myself, for *her*. That's my perception of what's going on, as we sit across from each other, and I get that, absolutely. Because of my family and my community; I get that on a whole other level.

HI 1: I was thinking about the answer you gave when you talked about notes. I love that, because you're right: how many times am I interpreting and worrying whether the Deaf consumer will remember the information? "I don't know, so I better just write it down and give it to them." So, if I wasn't clear, they'll have another opportunity to get clarification from someone else, using those notes. That lets me relax. It's another tool we can use.

HI 2: Notes were a big part of my life growing up. I don't know about you. For me, even if I was passing information back and forth between my parents and whomever else, it was critical for me to make sure I got it all right. So that my parents were safe. So that my parents, family and friends were safe. I think it's telling how often we both mentioned the system in our answers. The system isn't really designed for Deaf people – especially Deaf immigrants. Deaf people who

may have LDS, language deprivation. My parents didn't have access to that education, or language; they were both late to that kind of capital. Plus they moved to America when they were young. So for me, I've seen it; notes act as an anchor, a fixed piece of information. Like you said, it's okay if I'm wrong, because the information is there, permanent, on the page, where anything missing can be filled in by someone else. It's written down.

I've seen so many instances of Deaf people not remembering details or being unsure of what was said, and it just kills me. It can genuinely be a matter of life or death. So the notes matter; I think some people might think it's no big deal, or the other way, that it's the interpreter doing too much, "that's not our job," and they're right, it's not outlined as part of our responsibility under the CPC, but for me Respect for Consumers is *holistic*. That means making sure I don't – that no harm is caused. That's really important for me.

I find it interesting, speaking of harm, what you said earlier about CPS. When the CPS caller asked what the Deaf mom's home looked like inside, and you just casually shrugged and said, "Oh, the privacy screen is up." "I would lie." I thought that was super interesting. I'm not gonna lie, I support that decision. But I think some other interpreters might think, "but why?" Lie is a strong word. Can you speak some more to that?

HI 1: I thought the same thing, when I watched myself sign it. "Lie". "Ooh, that is a strong word." But my intention was to be deliberately vague, to protect the Deaf caller. Yes. So maybe not "lie," per se, but "bend the truth"? Is that what we would say?

HI 2: "Make the choice to..."

HI 1: Right. So again, it's back to Respect the person's right to privacy. And confidential communication. I mean, if it were a regular voice-only phone call, there would be no access to seeing the person's house. So because you, CPS, have a position of authority, and you're trying to take advantage of that position – not on my watch. I'm a little bit offended, actually, that they would try to take advantage of the nature of the technology allowing them to have this call. Like, "are you serious right now?" So yeah, and again, that's my gut reaction, immediate instinct, to protect the Deaf caller. Because we know – if the children were taken, is the judge going to easily give them back? Probably not! Those systems are simply not designed for Deaf people. And navigating those systems includes challenges, and costs money, and you might have to hire a lawyer – I know growing up my family couldn't have afforded to hire a lawyer. And they didn't have enough English skill to navigate the system on their own. If CPS had taken us, as kids, we probably never would have been given back. Because how can you fight against a system you don't understand? Especially as immigrants, in the American judicial system. So that was killer for me. That CPS worker, that system, already has so much power, and the Deaf person has so much less power. The fact that CPS even wants to go in and nose around their

home – if the Deaf person says no, what happens? Do they have the right to say no? So I feel like, okay, you have the right to see their house, but do it legally. Follow the protocols, and do it by the book. Don't ask me to skirt the process. And that process is in place to protect the people anyway! Don't try to skip steps just because you think you can. No.

HI 2: That's really it. I couldn't agree more. Yes.

HI 1: OK. What about your answer about the supervisor? You said you would have shared the details of what happened anyway, and I was really intrigued by that. Growing up as a Korean-American, I don't feel like I was perceived in the same way Black and Brown people are. So I don't think I have the same instinct to justify or protect, because I just had a different experience. The way I travel through the world is different. So I'm fascinated by that answer. Can you say more about it?

HI 2: Sure. For me, complete transparency is the only way I can feel like I'm in complete control of my information. How I can feel like my family is in control of their information. Don't misunderstand: my parents definitely value their privacy. Privacy is very important in Filipino culture; it's very much a cultural value. But at the same time, if we're talking about privacy in the context of families, yes, but in the context of the wider system, with your boss, at your job, at a doctor's office or what have you, anything outside the family, I feel like transparency is a protective measure for us to make sure we're doing everything right. Because we're so often perceived by the system as doing it wrong. I remember my father being reprimanded for filling out some paperwork wrong, and he was ashamed and flustered trying to get everything in the right order, and I got busy helping him, and then they said it was the wrong date, so "oh, the date's wrong? Yes, of course, we'll fix it right now", and on and on. There's this panic, being yelled at and asked why it wasn't right in the first place. And that happened so many times, and I witnessed the effect it had on him so many times, and not just for my parents but for other Deaf people I knew in the community I grew up in. That if something was missing you would be accused of all sorts of things, and I think about why that happened. What if we were able to beat that accusatory moment of "you're missing x, y, z." What happens if the response was ready and clear and valid? Prepared in advance with how to counter that. If the boss was caught up short because he'd been prepared to yell at us, but we had everything we needed, so he had nowhere to go with that aggression. Just, "...oh." To show up at that desk and say confidently, "Here are the forms you requested. I've already made copies and we also have back up copies." Then the moment would be diffused or avoided and the process could continue. So it wouldn't be just, "we did this right," but "we did this the way you expected us to." "We can do it the way you expect us to. We are capable." Because so often it feels like we are perceived as being incapable. I am, we are, a target, because of those assumptions.

Plus, I believe in transparency anyway. What's wrong with saying, "I made a mistake"? If I did, own it. It doesn't have to mean you do penance, "mea culpa, mea culpa." Even if it was serious, you can say, "OK, wow, I really messed up." And that's how we grow, as a person, as a professional and as a field. The whole thing. In general. To not take ownership and instead to insist on zero accountability or responsibility for it, with an eye toward self-preservation... really? I think there is a giant, overlooked value of just saying, "Hey, you know what? I'm not sure how that went. Can I share what happened with you?" And, I'm okay if I made a mistake; that's why I'm bringing this to you, so I can get feedback and guidance for how I can handle it the next time.

It's about being human. I think so many interpreters are so caught up in trying to do everything right, all the time, being perpetually perfect, and it's completely impossible. My goal is always to protect, and do no harm, so I think it's about striking a balance between cultural values and the CPC, and it can be a nice balance. I do think that the CPC has gaps, so there are times when it doesn't align with my cultural values. Because of that, I'm more deliberate about how to achieve that balance and bring both into my work in a way that is holistic. It can be a hard thing to do.

HI 1: Speaking of that, how we can balance our cultural values with the mandates of the CPC, how we can hold both of those things, what do you say to people who chide you for being led by cultural values, who say, "That's not appropriate here. We need to be professional." "Personal values need to be kept out of it." How do we engage with that kind of thinking?

I think it's clear that we both believe that cultural values are an integral part of our decision making process, and for good reason...would you mind speaking to that?

HI 2: I've always struggled with that tenet, where it talks about Professionalism. I mean, define that for me. The definition you just cited – no personal cultural values – is very narrow, and represents a specific community. Possibly the community that was involved in establishing that expectation, who codified that law or rule or process.

I don't know. For me, I feel like professionalism, definitely or, boundaries, definitely. But I think there's a way to still build trust and have transparency, be accountable, and I would say all of that working in concert *is* professionalism. The cultural part is the human part. I think that part is what's missing from that definition of Professionalism.

And, I would defend my choices over the course of the last 14 years of work, because this framing has sustained me. Balancing the cultural aspect, habits and traditions within Brown, Black and Asian communities, which is core part of who I am and have always been. What do you think?

HI 1: We've referenced Yosso's Cultural Capital Wealth Model a lot. That frame is really ideal to help us understand the decisions we're making intuitively and where they come from. The root of those decisions. And they're often based on cultural values and upbringing. What feels right or wrong, how to make people comfortable, connecting with people, how to understand another person's values, whether my values are the same...so you're right: it's the human part. It also allows us to understand our clients better. Instead of the alternative, which is, "I don't understand what it's like to navigate the system in your shoes." That makes it easy to ignore or discount something the client says, because, "I don't understand it." That's not it at all! The information they're conveying has value and integrity in its own right; they said what they said for a reason. It comes from the lifetime of experience that happened before they were sitting in front of you. Frustration, navigating the system, barriers. And, as interpreters, we also try to navigate the system, having grown up and witnessed what we have, and we've learned lessons from that, so we can guide these clients through.

It's so interesting because we're both CODAs with Deaf parents, so our cultural and community values are very much centered on that passing of information between people, sharing information, and that's important too. If I know how to get through a system, I'm culturally expected to share that. Not to keep it to myself. Even during interpreting. Yes. That's it.

HI 2: I really appreciated what you said to the break room interpreter. What was your immediate reaction to that situation?

HI 1: Well, my first thought was, "how rude!" "Do you know who you're talking about?" Or, "do you know who you're talking to?" I mean, I've seen that my entire life.

HI 2: Your entire life. Right.

HI 1: And you just insulted my community.

HI 2: Uh-huh. Yep.

HI 2: Exactly. How rude. *And*, "I see your frustration." As a fellow interpreter, I can agree, it's not easy. I get that. And, I'm not saying that I can work well with all Deaf clients; I'm definitely not saying that. I have absolutely had my share of people I could not connect with. Frustrations. "Not successful moments." But that comes from an iterative, evolving understanding of their background and their journey, and a *deep* respect for that. I mean...yeah.

I would just offer options to that person. Like you said - you said it very nicely - ways to elevate her practice. I would be supportive. Because it's clear she doesn't have the right tools to work with that Deaf person. And, we also know from having grown up with immigrant families, that there's a lot of us out there.

HI 2: It's tough. I think that's tough. I think that's another navigation piece that we are pretty good at. That skill, to be able to take a blow like that, to be faced with something that heartbreaking. I mean, I could have – and maybe in my younger years I would have – just let it be, and shrugged and kept my feelings to myself. Because that sort of comment does trigger an emotional reaction in me. Because I know CODA interpreters, especially multicultural CODAs, interpreters who are CODAs of Color, absorb a lot of that sort of talk. "You're too loose with your boundaries; you connect too much with the consumers; you're too close to them." Maybe yes, maybe no, but at the same time, what's wrong with that?

If I'm still maintaining my boundaries and professionalism, still considering myself a professional interpreter...I think back to you mentioning balance. For me, I would look at that colleague and think, "OK. How do we move forward together?" How do we move that line? Because I feel like we're on perpetually opposing sides. I'm concerned for what will happen if one day you interpret for my family. I'm concerned if one day you interpret for my community. The people who lifted me up, who raised me.

I can only protect the Deaf community for so long. I can only do it on my own for so long before I need to be able to rely on my colleagues. So, "OK, you're frustrated. I can see that. How can we support each other?"

HI 1: That *really* triggered me. Because that's why I do this. Because I look at my mother. She has limited education, acquired language later in life. A lot of CDIs can't work with my mother, and hearing interpreters definitely can't. And I worry that one day she'll be in the hospital and there won't be an interpreter who can understand her. That scares me, honestly. It scares me a lot. And our field does not address that. We're not trained for that. That's another huge reason why I'm sitting here with you.

HI 2: I think that's a natural, completely valid fear for us. For our communities to have. The communities of CODAs of Color, multicultural CODAs. We're in this field for a reason, and it's because we didn't see ourselves in it growing up. Did you? I didn't see myself. That's not to say, "I didn't see myself represented, therefore I need to come and save everyone." No. But I didn't see interpreters who were invested at the same level, to the same degree about the same things: the cultural part. The navigating-the-system part. The resistance part. I think that's why the Yosso model resonates so much with me. It's so valuable, because it offers support to fill in those gaps in the CPC.

What you just said is so beautiful, important and powerful. "We're not really taught that, we're not trained for that." We had the school of life. That's how we learned to do it. So I agree, I think this conversation is really important. Thank you for sharing that.

HI 1: I'm glad you're here.

HI 2: I'm glad *you're* here.

So, we've talked a lot about our cultural experiences and upbringing. What would you say or think for interpreters in general, what would be some best practices, to find not just that balance between culture and the CPC, but the healthy distinction between them? How would you say or define what some ideas could be for standard or good practices, or pieces to keep in mind, for our colleagues, when I enter this doctor's appointment or this mental health situation? What would you say?

HI 1: As interpreters, we work from our center. Our frame, and our cultural experience. Community experience, upbringing, education, all of that. That makes up our center. If the person across from you looks like you, born and raised in America, attended public school, went to college like you, you can assume your centers probably align. They're probably similar.

However, if the person across from you doesn't look like you, and doesn't have the same experiences you did, you should be aware of your center. You should investigate what that center is. American culture's biggest value, far and away, is individualism and independence. You can do it, you have the right, speak up! Often our consumers don't feel the power or agency to do that, and were raised in a culture that doesn't allow for challenging or going against the system, because there are severe consequences if you do. Some countries will genuinely kill you. It's not an option. So how can we balance that? That's really the big question.

Number one is, we have to know more about the client before we walk into an interpreting situation. We have to. Schedulers and people responsible for booking interpreters need to have vastly more information about the Deaf person and the situation, so that I can know if my frame is in another universe and doesn't apply. So I can learn what the consumer's frame is. Did you just escape your country to come to the US, and now you don't know what to do or where to go and you're looking for services? What does that look like, and more importantly, what does that *feel* like? We're assuming someone's education level, their level of access to language, but how do they see the world *right now*? Can we try to see the world from their eyes? Try to understand that.

I get it, we have to be professional, and I'm not saying that being professional precludes us from that perspective-taking – that's not what that means. Professional means do your job right, which means *linguistic and cultural* mediation. Too often I think we're preoccupied with conveying the hearing person's information to the Deaf person, because we want to give them *everything*, but we forget about the person on the receiving end of that deluge. My cultural center is usually aligned with the hearing consumer, and we both feel comfortable here, but

yours is different, so we're over here and you're over there. As interpreters, we don't know how to handle that distance and bridge that gap.

You have to step way, way out of your comfort zone. It's non-negotiable. Because sometimes it's a matter of life and death. So stop. Take a step back. *Think*. And be open, to engaging with the consumer, to working together with them. There's no time line, no artificial time limit, assignment end time or minimum billable hours – that's not the interpreter's problem. That's the system's problem, and they can deal with it. If someone from within the system tries to hurry you along, you can say, "Well, your system doesn't understand that this person needs more time." And advocate for that. Don't let the system pressure you and then merely pass that pressure on to the Deaf person. Don't do that. That makes you part of the system.

As a professional, I have to understand both: the consumer's frame and the system's frame.

OK, last question. What words of advice or wisdom would you share with interpreters? What do you think?

HI 2: I have to reiterate what you said earlier. It was so powerful. I want to borrow that, to emphasize it again. Your center – everything that you bring with you. I think often – I can't tell you how much I agree with you – when interpreters – white, Black, Asian or anything else – come into a space, we don't know what we're walking into. That's one key thing you mentioned. "Tell me well before."

We don't know enough about the people we work with. That distance is too great; we're too far apart. I understand that interpreting is a profession, yes, but at the same time we're really missing the totality of who that person is. You're right; it's not just telling the Deaf person what the hearing person said and vice versa. There is so much more depth to that interaction, because the Deaf person has so much more depth, so much lived experience that brings them to that moment. I think "the whole of a person" you look at, yes, the language, the culture, yes, but it's more than just race, more than just heritage. They are more than just the sum of their parts. Really look at them.

One thing I've really appreciated in my talks with colleagues has been the idea of learning on our own who and what we don't identify in common with our consumers. You know what I mean. I'm a Filipino person, 1st generation. I don't know much about Indian culture. I don't know much about Korean culture; I know a little bit, but not much. Or Jamaican culture, or Haitian. I have to take the time to do my homework. That means I have to do more; I have to invest a little more. That means I have to learn a little bit more about the world I exist in, as well as the community I serve.

If I know I live in a city with a large Haitian population, you better believe I'm doing more homework to learn about Haitian culture, community and traditions. Food; everything that's

important to them. I will build relationships, and invest in friendships. Spend my money in local Haitian businesses. Because I think at the end of the day, we have to realize that we are investing in each other. They're investing in me; they're trusting me. I'm investing in them too. My work, my values; I really see them, when they're looking back at me. I think it's a result of my upbringing.

That's how I can grow as a professional. I can afford that; I can be more accountable to learn more about the world, even if it's not my world. Rather, it's not my center, but because I live and work in this community, maybe I should do more work at home. Work on myself. Before I even think about assignments, and what's next or happening next week. That's A.

B, I think it's important to recognize the need to be open. Open to respecting the totality of the person who is our consumer. "You're not like me? That's awesome." That's awesome. You're not the same as me? Awesome. I'm already *so humbled*. I'm already honored to be here. I'm honored to serve as your interpreter, to work with you and for you, I'm here and I'm ready. Both Deaf and hearing; I'm not dismissing the hearing consumers. Same goes: I'm here.

What you said was so beautiful: it's not about passing on the pressure to conform with the system. It's about how we interrupt that freight train and stop that cycle. How do we break it? I can contribute good works to that effort, whether that's my decisions and how my actions affect the Deaf person, or how I engage with the hearing person as we all work together in this process. I think it's important that we recognize and see the whole of the people we work with, both Deaf and hearing.

The last point I'll make is, know your why. Why are you here? Why am I here? Why is the interpreting field here? I think often we're so consumed by doing our jobs and getting on to the next thing, which is a natural byproduct of American culture – and we live here, so that's a fact of our lives – but I'm not a fan of mindlessly obeying the system. I can codeswitch and course correct, and the system can do the same, until we meet in the middle and it can be okay. At the same time, my why is what sustains me. My why is my reason for – okay, if I'm in a tense moment with a colleague, I can remember, "I'm not here for me; I'm here for *them*, for the Deaf community," and that means that if we disagree, I can be present for it, and genuinely say, "Ok, let's go. Let's talk." That's the biggest personal benefit I get. I've experienced oppression and insults and being told I'm doing it wrong, and I can take those blows and say, "OK, how can I improve then?" But understand, I can't be the only one doing the work; *you* have to do the work too. We both have to. We have to invest in each other, in order to invest in the Deaf community, because they're investing in us.

We owe Deaf people such a debt of gratitude, so my suggestion for a best practice would be humility. Humility. Be open, be transparent. And own your mistakes. Be accountable. And

support each other. Call each other in. “Hey, I noticed, I’m curious, why did you do that?” Do *this*, what we’ve been doing today! It’s so beautiful: “I’m curious about this thing you said, can you say more?” “Great, yes, here’s what I was thinking.” We both benefit from that, and we both grow. We gain insight and understanding. And once we realize the harm we’ve caused, it begins to lessen. Those things are important.

The contents of this transcript were developed under grant H160D160001 from the U.S. Department of Education (Department). The Department does not mandate or prescribe practices, models, or other activities described or discussed in this document. The contents of this transcript may contain examples of, adaptations of, and links to resources created and maintained by another public or private organization. The Department does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of this outside information. The content of this transcript does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department. This publication is not intended to represent the views or policy of or be an endorsement of any views expressed or materials provided by any Federal agency. (EDGAR 75.620)