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Video Relay Service Interpreting: Interpreters' Authority, Agency, and Autonomy in the Process of Ethical Decision Making

Kathleen C. Holcombe
Western Oregon University

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**Video Relay Service Interpreting: Interpreters' Authority, Agency, and Autonomy
in the Process of Ethical Decision Making**

By

Kathleen C. Holcombe

A thesis submitted to

Western Oregon University

In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of:

Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies

September 2014

EVALUATION PAGE

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Have examined the enclosed thesis entitled:

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Through Structured Reflective Practice**

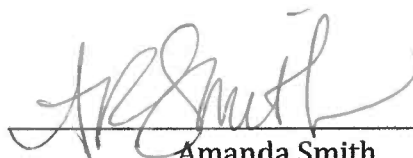
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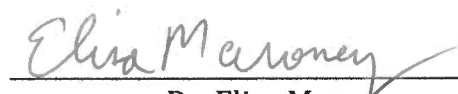
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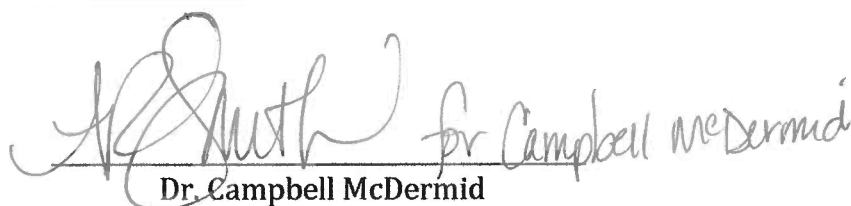
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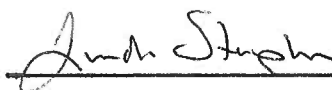
Committee member:


Dr. Elisa Maroney
Program Coordinator, Special Education

Committee member:


Dr. Campbell McDermid

Director of Graduate Programs:


Linda Stephens

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ABSTRACT

Video Relay Service Interpreting: Interpreters' Authority, Agency, and Autonomy in the Process of Ethical Decision Making

By

**Kathleen C. Holcombe
Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies
Western Oregon University
June 3, 2014**

The accumulated literature on signed language interpreting implies that despite the emerging conceptualization of signed language interpreting as a practice profession applying teleological ethics, interpreters struggle to abandon the perception of strict role constructs governed by deontological ethical decision making. The goal of this study is to gain insight into the ethical decision making process amongst a sample of video relay interpreters using the reflective practice of supervision applying demand control schema. The findings suggest the existence of both teleological and deontological ethical decision making approaches for the practice of interpreting in the video relay setting. The findings also demonstrated participants' lack of agency that impacted the prominent gap between a practice professionalism perspective and technical skill orientation among VRS interpreters. The participants' application of teleological ethics suggests an awareness of various controls to achieve effective outcomes and develop strategies to improve practice. The participants' lack of agency suggests serious deleterious implications for callers and interpreters. An argument is made for interpreters to become functional leaders in

acknowledging the apparent relationship between stress, conditions of VRS employment, and effective service as a beneficial means of guiding improved practice.

INTRODUCTION

The topic of this research is the gap between the emerging conceptualization of the field of signed language interpreting as a practice profession applying teleological ethics (outcome-focused) and interpreters' struggle to abandon the perception of strict role constructs governed by deontological ethical decision making (rule-based) within the Video Relay Service (VRS) setting. Following the narrative description of the research is background information regarding interpreting, ASL/English interpreting, and the establishment of VRS.

The narrative of this research can be summarized in the colloquialism “name it, claim it, aim it:”

- naming or identifying the issue of the profession's emergence—or lack of a fully recognized, uniformly held concept of practice professionalism and the interrelationship to ethical decision making;
- claiming or contending the existence of research-based evidence of the manifestation of problems directly related to the gap between the teleological approach to ethical decision making and the continued practice of deontology in VRS interpreting;
- aiming or examining case studies of VRS interpreters' ethical framework in the decision making process, evidence of the gap between outcome-focused and rule-focused approaches, identification of any areas of concern, and ascertaining what, if any, impact reflective practice has on the interpreters' practice.

Naming

The emerging characterization of signed language interpreting as a practice-profession rather than a technical-profession encompasses both the technical aspects of the work (bilingualism and cultural knowledge) and the additional skills related to contextual elements of an interpreting assignment including complex social assessments and quality of the relationship between the service provider and consumers (Dean & Pollard, 2013). Practice professionalism is wed to the consideration of *outcomes* of the decision making process and the application of teleological ethics, which theorizes that moral obligation is derived from the good or desirable *consequences* of an action (Teleological Ethics, 2013). Deontological ethics emphasizes the relationship between logic and ethics: An action is considered morally good unrelated to the *product* of the action but rather because of some characteristic of the action itself. The concept of practice professionalism incorporates the responsibilities, ethical framework, and role construct of the task of interpreting. (See Table 1 based on the Demand Control Schema of Interpreting developed by Dean & Pollard 2001, 2004, 2006.)

Table 1

Practice Profession Model of Interpreting vs. Technical Professions Table

Categorization of Professions	Job Title	Responsibilities	Ethical Framework	Role
Practice Professions	Interpreting	Extend knowledge & skills within a practical environment, analyze extra- linguistic features and discourse	Teleological Evaluate the consequences of a decision against the values and the impact of social constructs and contextual elements; focus on consequences	Multi- dimensional nature of role
Technical Professions	Accountants, Engineers	Extend knowledge & skills within a practical environment	Deontological Stresses value- based rules; focuses on rules	Strict role constraints
Note: Based on the Demand Control Schema of Interpreting developed by Dean & Pollard (2001, 2004, 2006).				

The interrelationship of responsibilities, ethical framework, and role construct can be demonstrated by a representative example of a relay call. A common occurrence in VRS is interpreting calls processed through an automated system that routes callers to recordings, menus, or a person, depending on their responses.

A deontological ethical approach may be as follows:

An interpreter gives a verbatim interpretation (knowledge of translation and skill to produce it), focusing on “call ownership” (subjugating interpreter controls by prioritizing consumers controls) without regard for consequences. The value of caller autonomy is the foundation of call ownership, but it is the rule that takes precedence over any possible negative outcome (e.g., pace of recordings/interpretation renders the message incomprehensible to the Deaf or hard of hearing caller).

On the other hand, a teleological ethical approach may be as follows:

While the call may start out in the same manner, the interpreter responds to outcomes (e.g., a caller’s look of confusion) by providing options (e.g., explaining the recording is fast paced and by asking if they know which department they want). If the interpreter is not able to connect, she continues the dialogue and asks for the caller’s preference (e.g., stating that sometimes dialing “O” for operator connects to a live person or that the menu may have an option to repeat the menu sequence).

While the conceptualization is emerging that interpreting requires an appreciation for the complexities of human discourse and the use of judgment to facilitate effective communication (Angelelli, 2004; Cokely, 2000; Dean & Pollard, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2013; Dean, Pollard, & Sumar, 2010; Hetherington, 2010, 2011; Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2011; Peterson, 2011; Roy, 2000; Swabey & Mickelson, 2008; Turner, 2005; Wadensjo,

1998), there continue to be "restrictions on the interpreter's role" (Hetherington, 2011, p. 139) suggesting that interpreting is often regarded as a technical profession (Dean & Pollard, 2005). The lack of uniformity of applied teleological ethics within the VRS setting will be explored.

Claiming

A number of researchers (Alley, 2012, 2013; Brunson, 2011; Peterson, 2011; Taylor, 2005, 2009), and the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (2008) have conducted studies applying various methodologies that provide empirical evidence of the gap between the rhetoric and the *de facto* decision making of VRS interpreters. Through various lenses—interviews, task analyses, questionnaires, narrative inquiry, institutional ethnography, and focus groups—decisions inconsistent with standards of practice within the field due to VRS interpreters' lack of understanding of their function or role conflict came into focus.

Aiming

The research described here was conducted to review VRS interpreters' decision making process to determine whether or not they could adopt practices that suggest teleological reasoning. Case studies consisted of supervision—a form of structured case conferencing that has been developed, researched, and practiced within the field of signed language interpreting—applying demand control schema (DC-S). The framework of demand control schema “provides interpreters a way to critically analyze and reflect upon the demands of their role and the implications of their actions and decisions” (Swabey & Mickelson, 2008, p. 66). Rather than the conventional vernacular of being monitored or managed, supervision is the term used for a form of case conferencing designed to assure

quality service or superior vision (Dean & Pollard, 2013). Demand control schema examines the nature of the interactive dynamic between challenges (demands) of interpreting and the interpreters' resources (controls) available to respond to the job demands (Dean & Pollard, 2013). DC-S and its application in the reflective practice of supervision are more fully examined in the literature review.

While there are various elements within the system of signed language interpreters in the U.S., it is the scope of this research to focus on the participative characteristic, or interpreters' ability to possess the authority to make decisions necessary to improve their work (Swabey & Mickelson, 2008). Five supervision sessions were documented in this research: VRS interpreters individually presented authentic interpreted VRS call scenarios. The interpreters were guided through reflective practice to identify the following: the constellation of demands, the controls they employed, the main demand, the spectrum of possible alternative control options, and possible resulting demands. In addition to prior VRS experience, research participants were required to have experience with the particular structured reflective practice of supervision applying DC-S. In reviewing the data a trend emerged. The interpreters did not employ a singular ethical framework. The interpreters employed both deontological and teleological ethical frameworks.

Background

The profession of interpreting has only been recognized in the last century although interpreting has been in existence much longer. A broad scope of ongoing developments of the different kinds of interpreting, including booth, conference, community, simultaneous, and consecutive, has been researched (Pöchhacker, 2004).

Much of this research concentrated on spoken language interpreting that consists of meaning transfer between two languages that share the same modality.

ASL/English interpreting constitutes the transfer of meaning between two languages using different modalities—from a visual language to a spoken language. The profession of signed language interpreting in the U.S. has celebrated a 50-year anniversary of the formalization of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). The RID is a national organization representing members' interests in "advancing the profession, a certification system that brings standards to the field, and current research to their doorsteps..." (Russell, 2014, p. 26). Prior to technological advances in video telecommunications, ASL/English interpreting within the U.S. was practiced in person for events in legal, educational, conference, religious, theatrical, medical, and mental health settings. Various employment scenarios of signed language interpreters have included freelance interpreters who acquire assignments through referral agencies or private contracts (commonly referred to as "community interpreters"), community interpreters with staff positions at a referral agency, and interpreters with staff positions in K-12 and post-secondary educational settings as well as medical and mental healthcare facilities.

In addition to the aforementioned established settings that provide signed language interpreting, more recently video remote interpreting (VRI) is a service being offered through some agencies and facilities. While VRS is a form of remote interpreting, as regulated by the FCC, Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS) funds are allotted *only* for telecommunication access and prohibits billing for calls if the hearing and deaf callers are in a shared location. Therefore the term "video remote interpreting" (VRI) has come

to mean the service of interpreting provided *to* parties in a *shared* location (e.g., a health care provider and patient in an examination room) *by* an interpreter in a *remote* location (e.g., the office of an interpreting agency in another city) and is not under the auspices of the FCC (Alley, 2012) and therefore not the focus of this study.

Video Relay Service

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 required access to telecommunications services (TRS) via teletypewriters (TTYs). The legislative action was implemented in 1993. With the TTY system, a relay operator read what the TTY user typed to a voice telephone user and typed responses back to the TTY user.

In 2000, an order from the FCC expanded the allowance of TRS funds from TTY relay service to the advanced technology of VRS. The amended service provides interpreters relaying conversations between users of American Sign Language and hearing callers using spoken English or Spanish. VRS is free for end users, and any custom equipment or software used to access VRS also is generally provided at no cost to users, except for the cost of the required internet connection. As a result, people who use sign language can realize practical access to telephone services via video relay service utilizing skilled interpreters. See Figure 1 Call Flow Chart (n.d.) Sorenson Press Materials. Corporate service providers with contractual agreements with the FCC employ VRS interpreters. The corporations are compensated for the service through the TRS Fund that is supported via contributions collected from the carriers providing interstate telecommunication services (Federal Communications Commission, 2011).



Photo used courtesy Sorenson Communications

Figure 1: Call Flow Chart. Reprinted illustration of video relay service from Sorenson Communications, n.d. Retrieved May 15, 2013, from http://www.sorenson.com/press_materials.) Reprinted with permission.

While technological advances applied in telecommunications have favorably impacted the lives of both hearing and deaf people, the developments are not without their critics (Alley, 2013). Although interpreters and consumers have been involved in legislative developments, irregularities within the profession persist that “hinder efforts in achieving congruous role clarification” (Swabey & Mickelson, 2008, p. 57), along with serious issues of occupational stress (Dean, et al., 2010). A considerable measure of research addressing the profession's developments related to understanding the role and function of interpreting has been conducted (Angelelli, 2004; Llewellyn & Lee, 2009, 2011, 2014; Roy, 2000; Swabey & Mickelson, 2008; Turner, 2005; Wadensjö, 1998), and more recently research specifically focused on VRS has started to accumulate. As already discussed the development of role construct is interrelated to ethical constructs. Despite the significant body of research advancing the conceptualization of role in the field of signed language interpreting, regression is apparently occurring within the government-

regulated corporate environment of VRS interpreting. A convergence between the two areas of study—role and VRS setting—is more thoroughly explored in the literature review.

In the intervening period of time between the establishment of VRS and the accumulation of research, the demand for VRS services has continued to increase. Peterson (2011) compares the development of VRS to the model of educational interpreting in which the quality of interpreting service suffered under governmental authority and industry control. The profession's *cart before the horse* foray into educational interpreting (Peterson & Monikowski, 2010) was established without exploring the efficacy of practice or "objective input from interpreters" (Peterson, 2011, p. 209).

The implication is that the profession of signed language interpreting was in a reactive stance to the establishment of VRS. A task analysis was published in 2005 (Taylor, 2005), and the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf 's (RID's) standard practice paper for VRS (a guide to best practices) was published seven years after VRS call centers had opened (RID, 2007). While VRS is a bell that cannot be un-rung, it is imperative that research explore interpreters' understanding of professional responsibility in the VRS setting to better understand effective practice (Dean et al., 2010; Hollrah, Laurion, Johnson, & Lightfoot, 2008).

This study examines the interrelationship between the endeavor to adopt the conceptualization of practice professionalism that incorporates role clarification and the manifestation of problems in VRS interpreting presented in the current literature (Alley, 2013; Brunson, 2011; Dean et al., 2010; National Consortium of Interpreter Education

Centers, 2008; Peterson, 2011). The goal of this research is to see whether ethical reflection through application of a decision-making model “...places the field’s values and stated behavioral requirements squarely in front of the interpreter” (Stauffer and Hebert, 2008, p. 252).

Statement of the Problem

Evidence from the literature suggests that some researchers and research participants have not adopted the emerging conceptualization of interpreting as a practice profession within the nascent and vastly disparate VRS setting. This is understandable due to the “gaps and inconsistencies” within the complex social system of professional interpreting that has impacted the conceptualization of “best practices related to role” (Swabey & Mickelson, 2008, p. 69). Research participants were operating under federal regulations and corporate management-made decisions inconsistent with standards of practice. Within the VRS setting, interpreters’ lack of understanding of their function, or role conflict, came into focus.

The research described here was conducted to review a sample of VRS interpreters’ decision-making process to see whether or not they could adopt practices that suggest teleological reasoning.

While the two developments—the practice profession paradigm and the advent and expansion of VRS settings— have occurred almost concurrently, the latter has raised concerns about the complexity, challenges, and constraints imposed on interpreters (Brunson, 2011; Peterson, 2011). My hypothesis is that authentic case studies can bring scrupulous attention to interpreting in VRS and provide defining evidence of applied teleological-based ethical reasoning to decision making, inform the collaborative

dialogue between academia and industry, and contribute to programs' development of research-based curriculum. A task analysis of VRS interpreting recommended that interpreting programs educate students regarding VRS interpreting "at the level of career possibilities, technical requirements and foundational skills, knowledge and personal attributes necessary for future employment" (Taylor, 2005, p. 24). However, some students indicated that rather than being prepared for employment in their interpreter education programs, they were being directed to disregard any consideration of practicing in the setting of VRS (A. Kelly, personal communication, July 21, 2014).

Identifying current effective practice has been acknowledged as a critical component in developing resources to prepare interpreters for the assumed challenges of VRS (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2008). While exploring effective practice in VRS setting has been recommended (Hollrah, Laurion, Johnson, & Lightfoot, 2008), most research does not address the issue of any particular pedagogy related to participants' ethical approach and, in fact, provides examples of applied deontological ethics, a technical professional paradigm, rigid role construct, and the absence of reflective practice (Taylor, 2005; Peterson, 2011; Brunson, 2011). A number of documented models and approaches to ethical decision making existed in the field of signed language interpreting prior to full development of D-CS, including "...Humphrey-Alcorn Decision Making Model, the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct's reasonable interpreter standard, and other approaches such as: What would my mentor say? What does my prior experience tell me? Is my decision publicly defensible?" (Stauffer & Hebert, 2008, p. 251).

Yet many VRS research participants make little or no reference to any decision-making model, perhaps due in part to their uncertainty regarding the origins of rules and guidelines that govern VRS interpreters' work (Alley, 2013). Swabey and Mickelson (2008) reviewed a history of concern within the profession of signed language interpreting regarding the lack of agreed-upon best practices related to role definition. Before the establishment of VRS, Sanderson and McIntire expressed a concern for the lack of consistency in the way interpreters "perceive and enact their role" (as cited in Swabey & Mickelson, 2008, p. 54). Ten years later the concern extended to practitioners and consumers at risk due to the absence of best practices regarding interpreters' complex role (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2005).

Existing research outcomes reflect VRS interpreters' current practice though the researchers do not explicitly identify participants' adoption of a particular ethical framework. (Brunson, 2011; Peterson, 2011; Taylor, 2005, 2009; National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers, 2008). The literature review specifically discussed whether the researchers and/or participants were aware of and/or adopted the developing conceptualization of interpreting as a practice profession as reflected by RID's change from a Code of Ethics to a Code of Professional Conduct in 2005. The absence of an established, agreed-upon conceptualization of interpreting may be attributed to the lack of a solid foundation of role definition, the constant and rapid changes in the field, and the burgeoning demand for interpreters (Swabey & Mickelson, 2008).

According to Dean and Pollard (2001), the RID's Code of Ethics, interpreter education programs, and members of the field in general dissuaded practitioners from exercising a high degree of decision latitude beyond the technical realm of linguistic

demands. Dean and Pollard define *decision latitude* as synonymous with the term *control*, and it incorporates two components of job control: skills/resources and the degree of authority and freedom to exercise decisions to employ skills and how to do so. An extended explanation of the foundation and theoretical background of DC-S is included in the literature review. Some current VRS research either does not address the issue of interpreters' decision latitude or reflect interpreters' lack of it. Interpreters' lack of controls to respond to the demands in the VRS setting may be due to their apparent lack of understanding of the delineation of authority between the FCC regulations and corporate practices (Alley, 2013).

Perhaps due to the aforementioned impediments to the developing conceptualization of interpreting as a practice profession, researchers and research participants made reference to facets of interpreting through a *technical* professional lens. Hetherington's (2011) research in the North West of England examined the occupational stress experienced by research participants whose own accounts of the complexity of their role were in contrast with expectations. The issue of occupational stress and resulting injury was recently addressed in a survey conducted by the Video Interpreter Member Section (VIMS) of the RID (Kroeger, J., 2014).

It is possible that the perpetuation of interpreting as a technical profession, in which the technical aspects of the work (linguistic ability, in the case of interpreters) are considered adequate, is both insufficient for effective work practices and harmful to interpreters (Dean & Pollard, 2005).

The Research Questions Addressed

The purpose of this study is to determine to what extent VRS interpreters adopted a practice professional approach to ethical decision making. Through the reflective practice of supervision applying DC-S, the efficacy and implication of ethical approaches are explored.

1. Which ethical framework (deontological, teleological, combined approach, or other) do interpreters follow?
2. What evidence of a gap between the interpreters' emerging concept of ethics, role, and decision making (rhetoric) and actual practice of ethical application (*de facto*) is apparent in supervision sessions applying demand control schema?
3. How did the application of the DC-S framework in reflective practice affect VRS interpreters' decision-making process?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review includes a salient overview of the profession of interpreting in North America and the history of challenges, risks of occupational stress, the development of DC-S and supervision, and a summary of the historical approach to role definition or “philosophies” (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007) of signed language interpreting. The literature review explores the interrelationship between ethical frameworks (deontological vs. teleological), professional paradigms (technical vs. practice), and role constructs (rigid vs. multidimensional). References to the existing body of VRS research related to the gap between practice profession paradigm and interpreters’ understanding of role definition within the VRS industry are discussed.

Profession of Signed Language Interpreting

The first ASL-English interpreters in the United States were clergy, educators of the deaf, and people personally associated with a person who was deaf. This was also the starting point for the trajectory of interpreting practice in Norway (Erlenkamp, Amundsen, Berge, Grande, Mjoen, & Raanes, 2011). Erlenkamp, et al. (2011) asserts that interpreting services landed in the charitable domain, and interpreters functioned to help an individual deaf person or the Deaf community. Early in the development of the profession the field’s only national organization, now known as the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, was established in 1964 in Muncie, Indiana. Within eight years the organization had an established board, published the guidebook *Interpreting for Deaf People*, developed a code of ethics, and discussed issues related to skills and quality of interpreting (RID, 2006, p. 2). There are other components within the complex system of interpreting service (e.g., legislative, regulatory, educational), and other organizations

(e.g., National Association of the Deaf [NAD], Conference of Interpreter Trainers, and America Sign Language Teachers Association) that influence the profession. The RID and NAD have revised the field's professional ethics (Swabey and Mickelson, 2008). As RID's own handbook (2006) notes, there was an ongoing concern for quality assurance that resulted in the establishment of a National Evaluation System commonly referred to as certification.

The RID handbook (2006) also notes a number of accomplishments by 2003:

- the establishment of the certification maintenance program (CMP) and the ethical practices system (EPS);
- the formation of a joint task force to address issues of common interest with the NAD that expanded to include the American Sign Language Teachers Association (ASLTA) and the Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT);
- Oral Transliteration Certificate and Certified Deaf Interpreter tests were completed, and the Special Certificate: Legal was revised; and
- membership increased to over 10,000.

In the last decade RID added a VRS Standard Practice Paper as a guide to best practices (RID, 2007) that states: "RID's membership makes up the largest pool of interpreters working in the industry..." (p. 3).

Concurrent to the establishment and ongoing developments of the RID, interpreter training programs evolved. In the U.S., there are a number of interpreter education programs offering associate, bachelor, and master degrees in signed language interpreting. Since 2007 the Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education (CCIE) has accredited ten bachelor degree programs and four associate degree programs (CCIE,

2014). The CCIE's revised Accreditation Standards were completed in 2014 and reflect requisite skills *beyond* bilingualism and cultural knowledge (e.g., discourse analysis, critical thinking, and ethical decision making).

Education has been one component of the professionalization of signed language interpreting. Countries considered leaders in the field of signed language interpreting are so recognized because they have established university-level training programs, a system of interpreter education program accreditation, educational interpreting guidelines, and license “maintenance” systems (Napier, 2004). The RID's focus on quality, ethics, and a system of skill evaluation has continued as is evidenced in the revision to the code of ethics and the educational requirement of an undergraduate degree before testing for any RID performance-based exam changes, which was enacted in 2012. There have been considerable gains in the professions' short history, and the field has struggled to deal with the constant and rapid changes (Swabey and Mickelson, 2008).

History of Challenges

Decades ago the development of community interpreting presented a series of challenges for signed language interpreters in the U.S. The interplay between various considerations—legal requirements, service delivery, training within academia, and training outside of public systems of higher education—became organized before practitioners structured their orientation (Pöchhacker, 1999). A similar set of circumstances occurred in the setting of K-12 interpreting. The passage of legislation that resulted in an increased demand for signed language interpreters in the K-12 setting posed considerable challenges (Swabey & Mickelson, 2008), and the field finds itself in a constant reactive stance. Persistent communication barriers in interpreted education have

been attributed to the ambiguous role of interpreters in the educational setting (Marschark, Sapere, & Convertino, 2005).

The development of VRS in telecommunication access services also was brought about by legislative action. Researchers of VRS have referred to educational interpreting as a bellwether for the rampant problems of ineffective service deliveries that plague VRS—increase in demand for interpreting services, and regulation of practice without sufficient and timely benefit of the field’s expertise (Brunson, 2011; Peterson, 2011). The fact that the profession has faced challenges in the past in no way diminishes those we face in the present, and VRS poses considerable challenges (Taylor, 2005).

As professionals in the field of signed language interpreting continue to consider the practice of VRS interpreting, professionals can rest assured that various constraints in the past were met with a diversity of approaches: The K-12 educational setting has developed a performance assessment test, guidelines for professional conduct, and pre-hire screening (Schick, n.d.). While there is some awareness of the profession’s history, further exploration of current research-based ethical concepts may serve as a guide to learn from the past.

Risks of occupational stress

Dean and Pollard’s (2001) initial research explored the relationship between interpreting and occupational stress and adapted the concepts of demand-control theory from research conducted by Karasek and Theorell (as cited in Dean & Pollard, 2001). Karasek and Theorell identified the impact on workers from the interactive dynamic between the challenges (demands) present in a work environment and the resources (controls) workers had available (as cited in Dean & Pollard, 2001). The interrelationship

between demands and controls directly affected workers' experience along a continuum from degrees of job satisfaction to levels of occupational stress. Prior to Karasek and Theorell's research, other authors used a static view of occupational stress and assigned rates of stress to particular job categories independent of workers' resources (as cited in Dean & Pollard, 2001). In Karasek's documentation of workers in various job categories, such as firefighters, he found that when adequately equipped with resources, these professions did not experience symptoms of occupational stress (as cited in Dean & Pollard, 2001). Karasek and Theorell found that when the controls available could not satisfy the demands of work, regardless of the job category, workers experienced stress-related illness and injury (as cited in Dean & Pollard, 2001). Conversely, when workers were excessively prepared with controls to respond to a job with few or inconsequential demands, they also were at risk for occupational stress. According to Dean and Pollard (2007), Karasek and Theorell's (1990) research illustrated that the *imbalance* between demands and controls had an impact on occupational stress, job satisfaction, employee retention, and work effectiveness.

Of four distinct occupational settings (VRS, K-12 education, community-freelance, or "staff" positions), VRS interpreting was associated with the highest risk levels (Dean, et al., 2010). Dean, et al. (2010) replicated the earlier smaller-scale study they conducted at an RID conference in 2005 with a high degree of consistency for all eight variables between the two data sets. Via an online survey for the 2009 project, they increased the number of participants from 144 interpreters to 497. With striking similarity, both the 2005 and 2009 studies reported significantly greater degrees of role constraint than participants from the other three interpreting settings. Dean, Pollard, and

Sumar's (2010) findings concluded that this indicated no difference when controlled for interpreters' years of VRS experience. According to Kroeger (2014) injuries are "largely happening to experienced, certified interpreters." A report conducted by the Video Interpreter Member Section's Council of the RID found that 30.7% of the 342 survey respondents had been physically injured at work (Kroeger, 2014).

Hetherington (2011) used interpretive phenomenological analysis to study occupational stress in the signed language interpreting profession. The six participants' accounts identified occupational stress as a significant factor within the field of signed language interpreting (Hetherington, 2011). Analysis of the research identified three themes related to significant causes of interpreter's stress—real and/or perceived constraints on their role by other professionals, their own understanding of the responsibilities coupled with complexities of the role, and the feeling of powerlessness when the goal to ensure effective communication is hindered by the constraints (Hetherington, 2011).

Demand Control Schema and Supervision

Influenced by Karasek's demand-control theory, Dean and Pollard's (2001) research focused initially on the concern of occupational risk for signed language interpreters. Elaborating on Karasek and Theorell's theory, Dean and Pollard (2001) expand on the term *controls* to refer to the range of positive, professionally appropriate characteristics and actions the interpreter possesses or can access in a given work assignment. Decisions and actions that are ethical and effective can be viewed along a spectrum from liberal (more active, aggressive) to conservative (more passive, reserved),

and logically there are decisions and actions that can fall outside the range of ethical and effective practice (Dean & Pollard, 2004, 2005, 2013) (see Figure 2).

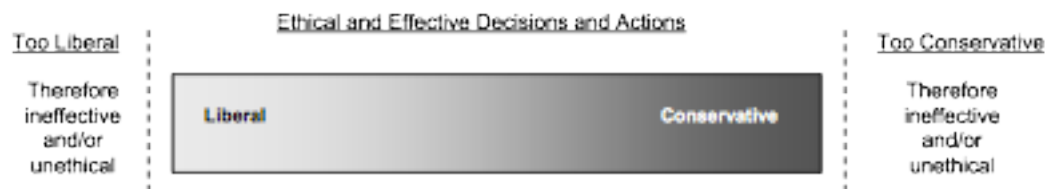


Figure 2: Practice-profession model of decision making reprinted with permission from Oxford University Press (Dean & Pollard, 2005, p. 270).

The spectrum can be illustrated in medical practice; a physician may favor an approach (liberal or conservative) to evaluate a potential course of treatment as it applies in a particular case and determine the path to attain the most favorable outcome. Within the skilled professions of medical practice, there is general acceptance of patients seeking a second opinion for major non-emergency procedures. The practice of attaining a second opinion is due to the fact that medical professionals may have a variety of sensibilities to assess the nuances of medical practice; therefore, more than one “right answer” exists that can be classified in terms of the position on a scale of ethical choices between liberal and conservative. Doctors’ ethical decision-making process is similar to interpreters. The spectrum accounts for the difference of opinions practitioners ascribe to in their practice with no one answer being more correct.

The development of DC-S is best understood as a paradigm or framework for the practice of interpreting. DC-S is not a cognitive process model but rather an ethical decision making process model. Theorists have developed models of interpreting to

acquire knowledge of the interpreting process and understand how to manage it (Lee, 2005). DC-S is compatible with established interpreting approaches with the understanding that contextual significance and the socio-cultural dynamics of interpreting practice are acknowledged therein (Dean & Pollard, 2013). DC-S does not supplant models of interpreting theorists, such as Gish's approach (1987) or Cokely's sociolinguistic model of the interpreting process (1992), which outline stages of the interpreting process for the purpose of discussion and control (Lee, 2005).

Management of the interpreting process is directly related to the challenges impacting the work environment. DC-S examines the nature of the interactive dynamic between challenges (demands) of interpreting and the interpreters' resources (controls) available to respond to the job demands (Dean & Pollard, 2013). DC-S as construed by Dean and Pollard (2013) identified four demand categories, "EIPi" (environmental, interpersonal, paralinguistic, and intrapersonal), to apply specifically to the profession of interpreting. To achieve effective communication while interpreting between two interlocutors, one Deaf and one hearing, is complex. The decisions interpreters make are improved in consideration of speakers' thought worlds (Namy, 1978). Thought worlds of each speaker include their respective roles, influences of their environments (shared or varied, e.g., culture, workplace), and systems (educational, legal, medical) in which they are engaged (Dean & Pollard, 2013). The viewpoint of interpreting work as more dynamic than a purely technical endeavor also is incorporated in the schema regarding opportunities to employ controls before, during, or after an assignment (Dean & Pollard, 2013).

Dean, Pollard, and Samar (2010) conducted two studies of occupational health risk using the Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ); both studies indicated that interpreters face greater occupational health risks than most other occupations in the JCQ normative database. The studies comprehensively measured eight variables of occupational stress: psychological demands (distress), depression, physical exertion, job dissatisfaction, and decision latitude (controls), which is comprised of skill discretion, decision authority, and role constraint. The decision latitude scale as espoused by the DC-S is interdependent on the resources available and an interpreter's ability to use those resources (Dean, et al., 2010). Dean, et al. (2010) evaluate the relationship between skill discretion and decision authority to determine the degree of role constraint an interpreter experiences. Role constraint is calculated by dividing the value on the scale of discretion by the value on the scale of authority: values greater than one suggest that a worker is unable to utilize their skills and resources (Dean, et al., 2010).

Dean and Pollard's (2013) construct of supervision applying DC-S replicated reflective practices employed in many healthcare professions (Driscoll, 2007). Professional practice is a process of problem solving; reflective practice is a process of reviewing the decision-making process for the purpose of improvement (Schön, 1983). The capacity for reflection can be used to cope with competing images of professional role and value conflict (Schön, 1983). A variety of practice professions including healthcare and psychotherapy have acknowledged the beneficial process of reflective practice as a component of professional development (Ferraro, 2000; Hetherington, 2012).

Supervision is a form of reflective practice applying DC-S to improve work effectiveness. Facilitators lead participants through a structured review of their work through identifying the demands, controls, consequences, and resulting demands, and discussing alternative controls options (pre-, during, and post-assignment). Supervision sessions are held in-person or on-line with interpreters who work in a variety of settings and students of interpreter education programs. In addition to actual case presentations, *thematic* supervision explores a challenging aspect of interpreting work (i.e., an ongoing assignment with a substitute teacher/staff person). Dean and Pollard (2005) have recommended continued research to evaluate the utility of DC-S. Typically, supervision refers to the collaborative contribution of a group of colleagues engaged in the professional development of supervision. One-on-one supervision also has been provided in various scenarios including between mentors and mentees.

Current research provides evidence of problems attributable to decision-making approaches that are out of sync with the emerging conceptualization of ethical practice. Taylor's (2005) task analysis examined the skills, knowledge, and personal attributes required for VRS interpreting. Four years later, Taylor's (2009) VRS industry research included a review of metacognitive skills. Some participants lacked reflection and analytical abilities that resulted in *continued* ineffective practices (Taylor, 2009).

Brunson's (2011) research participants had various approaches based on *when* they were trained: None of the participants mentioned DC-S or supervision. Deservedness was one serious issue Brunson's (2011) research exposed. Some interpreters implemented punitive practice to deal with callers they deemed inhospitable. Brunson (2011) concluded that it is incumbent on VRS providers to embrace Dean and Pollard's work.

The NCIEC practitioner survey asked VRS interpreters how they could improve VRS interpreting service. The results elicited unspecific reference to making ethical decisions, having or finding a mentor, and networking with colleagues (NCIEC, 2008). Peterson (2011) regularly compromised his principles in response to the demands of VRS interpreting. Peterson notes Dean, Pollard, and Sumar's contribution to research, yet his narrative inquiry makes no mention of the application of DC-S or practice of supervision.

Ethical Framework (Deontological vs. Teleological)

The ethical framework of interpreting has transformed along with the professionalization of interpreting practice. Over a decade ago Cokely (2000) advocated for the reorientation of the RID's Code of Ethics from its rigid prescription of practice to a rights-based approach. Subsequently, in 2005 the RID devised the current Code of Professional Conduct (CPC), which includes seven tenets (RID, 2005). The guiding principles of the tenets are to uphold high standards of professional conduct and to do no harm. The CPC is not a set of rules but rather emphasizes interpreters' obligations to exercise judgment, employ critical thinking, and apply the benefits of practical experience. The CPC specifically includes the practice of reflection on past actions as an obligation of professionalism. "The benefits of past experience" and "practice of reflection of past actions" (RID, 2005, p.1) both convey an outcomes-based (teleological) ethical approach.

Dean and Pollard (2013) address the issue concisely:

...we assert that ethical dilemmas typically arise in situations where the practitioner has not been thinking in a teleological manner to begin with, that is, many ethical dilemmas can be avoided by following a consequences-based

decision-making process throughout the course of one's work (p. 86).

VRS research provides numerous examples of ethical dilemmas, some of which can be ascribed to interpreters' rule-based decision-making approach. Although there is evidence of a deontological approach, interpreters are often unsure whether mandates originated with the FCC, individual VRS companies, or the RID (Alley, 2013). Peterson (2011) reflected that uncertainty: "I am constrained by my lack of knowledge and understanding of company policies where I work and in the industry in general" (p. 200). He also noted "we have enabled the VRS industry to fossilize the accommodations we made into regulations..." (Peterson, 2011, p. 204). In interviews and observations with VRS interpreters, Brunson (2011) documented interpreters' decision making based on what "the FCC required" (p. 100), what "seems to be frowned upon" (p. 61), or by "adhering to the policies" (p. 96). Brunson (2011) noted his own decision to breach protocol and that he and colleagues achieve functional equivalency by "breaking the rules" (p. 60). One of his research participants responded to a strong intrapersonal demand expressed as "I about died" and characterized an apparent sense of role constraint: "They are trying to reduce us to robots" (Brunson, 2011, p. 97). While Brunson noted that the reflective practice of supervision applying DC-S could be used to improve VRS work, his research participants made no mention of any form of reflective practice. One VRS interpreter stated, "There are things that I would probably benefit from discussions with other interpreters on so that I can figure out how to handle these issues" (Brunson, 2011, p. 91).

Taylor's (2005) task analysis concluded that the more options interpreters have to set their work schedules and breaks, the more likely they will have sufficient reserves for

making good decisions and the greater likelihood of positive outcomes. This is rather thin evidence of any standard application of teleological ethics. The discussion of ethics in Taylor's (2009) subsequent research of VRS is scant, although ethical and professional decision making was ranked third most important out of a list of thirteen effective practices. This was the result of a research questionnaire given to VRS interpreters and managers. The over 100-page document included two sentences addressing ethical decision making (e.g., arriving on time, calling in sick, and being part of a team). Discussion of the competencies required read, "Interpreters should know and follow the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct. Interpreters should practice ethical behaviors while relaying calls, and while in VRS centers (maintain confidentiality in and outside of the call center)" (Taylor, 2009, p. 55).

Among three issues consistently referenced in the VRS Summit and VRS research conducted by the NCIEC (2008), research participants mention strong ethical decision-making skills. Though there is no inquiry regarding any specific ethical framework of VRS interpreters and no documentation of any mentioned in interpreters' comments, a deontological approach seems evident. When identifying differences between VRS and other interpreting settings, many comments focused on the corporate climate and the need to work within the regulations of the FCC (NCIEC, 2008).

Professional Paradigm (Technical vs. Practice)

Through Dean and Pollard's initial research, an occupational health survey applying the Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ) with interpreters, they identified two normative groups in the JCQ database: practice professions and technical professions. (Dean, Pollard, & Samar, 2010). Practice professionals work in human services where

careful situational consideration and judgment are central to working effectively.

Technical professions are dissimilar in that knowledge and skills pertaining to technical aspects predominately suffice in satisfying requirements of the work (Dean & Pollard, 2005). Several authors have argued for a practice profession model in which contextual factors are critical to making informed decisions in the field of signed language interpreting (Cokely, 1992; Gish, 1987; Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007; Metzger & Bahan, 2001; Namy, 1978; Pöchhacker, 2004; Roy, 2000; Turner, 2005; Wadensjö, 1998; Winston, 1989).

The technical aspects of interpreting—bilingualism and cultural knowledge—do not include all the relevant contextual elements of interpreting (Dean & Pollard, 2013). The issues of complex social assessments, judgments, and decision-making skills are crucial to effective practice. To discuss the quality of interpreting, it is necessary to consider both interpreter product and performance, including “textuality, source-target correspondence, communicative effect, and role performance” (Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 153).

Brunson’s research addresses a number of interpreters’ apparent failures to adopt a practice profession approach within the VRS setting. Rather than seek relevant contextual elements, one research participant attributed “her struggle to provide an accurate interpretation” to policies that precluded her from gathering the context (Brunson, 2011, p. 96). Another research participant ascribes the directive “that the context is not important” to VRS providers’ training of “newbies” (Brunson, 2011, p. 98). The acceptance by interpreters of what they perceive to be rule-based directives, albeit while lacking specificity of origin (Alley, 2013), suggests the adoption of a technical

professional paradigm in the VRS setting. Peterson (2011) discusses a rule (the prohibition to refuse a call) and reason (to avoid preferential treatment) behind one FCC mandate. Despite acknowledging the spirit of the regulation and a concurrent demand to exercise discretion in accepting an assignment with regard to “skill, communication mode, setting, and consumer needs” (p. 205), Peterson (2011) suggests interpreters’ values as being rendered irrelevant. Peterson’s (2011) characterization that social norms (greetings and eye contact) within the VRS setting are rendered unnecessary may be further evidence of a technical professional perspective of VRS interpreting.

Role Construct (Rigid vs. Multidimensional)

To better understand the current philosophical approach and struggle to abandon the perception of a strict role construct governed by deontological ethical decision making (rule-based) within VRS, it is essential to review the evidence of the *current* application of older philosophies and the various metaphors and models that have been observed or prescribed in the past.

Brunson (2011) stated that participants in his study of VRS, like most interpreters, favor one philosophy. He acknowledged that the choice of philosophy depends on when and where an interpreter was trained, as well as whether they have stayed current with the literature in the field. Each of the philosophies (helper, conduit, bi-lingual/bi-cultural, and ally) that Brunson (2011) outlined lends themselves to prescriptive application. Peterson (2011) succinctly addressed the issue of interpreters’ role in the evolution of customs and conventions (teaming, breaks, and discussion with interlocutors regarding accessibility to communication) within community interpreting in contrast to the VRS setting. He acknowledged that, specifically within the post-secondary educational setting, the

“blending of venue and convention” (Peterson, 2011, p. 210) took years to develop. A more rigid role construct was described in the VRS setting where “we see interpreting less as a social event and more as a mechanical function/commercial transaction” (Peterson, 2011, p. 210) lacking evidence of custom or convention. In worst case scenarios interpreters acting as a machine, conduit, or a telephone wire could fail to provide cultural mediation or contextual adjustment. They are, according to Brunson (2011) forced into this model as “Rather than allowing interpreters to employ the philosophy they deem appropriate, video relay service mandates impose a conduit philosophy” (Brunson, p. 15) and presumably in some situations VRS interpreters “pretend to be invisible” (Brunson, 2011, p. 13).

The development of the invisibility myth is related to the concept of performing the task of interpreting in the least obtrusive way possible (Mason, 2014) in service to the value of impartiality. But an interpreter has an inherent impact on communication through the involvement in cultural modifications of source language, response to direct address, and negation of socio-textual elements (Mason, 2014). It is detrimental to effective interpreted communication for the interpreter to disengage from responsibility for the management of the flow of communication and development of rapport. The misconception of role continues despite the issue of ineffectiveness of the conceptualization of *invisible* interpreter. Dean and Pollard (2013) clarified the source of the profession’s ethical frame in a discussion of the underlying value that professional interpreters embrace: respect for Deaf people’s autonomy, agency, and self-determinacy.

In the VRS setting, a concept associated with the ideal of self-determinacy is incorporated in the policy of “call ownership” (Peterson, 2011, p. 218). Collaboration

with VRS interpreters is not necessary for successful communication per the policy and at times has deleterious results (Peterson, 2011). One example of the concept of “call ownership” that can be particularly ineffective is when callers request the interpreter to refrain from identifying that the call is through the relay service and interpreted by a third party (Peterson, 2011). Although such constraints on interpreters can be associated with the conduit model, the occurrence is not limited to the VRS setting. In their review of various models of interpreting, Wilcox and Shaffer (2005) stated that the interpreters continue to adopt a conduit model approach to interpreted communication. In the course of developments, the conduit model replaced what was described as the first model in evolution of signed language interpreting— *helper*.

During the commencement of the profession of interpreting, the helper model was predominant but was summarily dismissed with the establishment of the RID (Dean & Pollard, 2005). The helper role came under scrutiny due to the fact that it perpetuated the impression that Deaf people were not capable of acting independently—or did not have the freedom to do so. Emerging philosophies of interpreting were recognized to assist practitioners in understanding the complexities of what interpreters were doing or should do. It is worth noting that not all of the models were prescriptive; preceding research on signed language interpreting or the formalization of the profession, a number of models were identified to describe the role of interpreters through observation (Brunson, 2011).

Humphrey and Alcorn (2007) included three philosophical frames in addition to the helper (the conduit, communication facilitator, and bilingual/bicultural expert). Brunson’s (2011) explanation of the additional three main philosophies that emerged varied somewhat from that of Humphrey and Alcorn (2007) (conduit or machine,

bilingual/bicultural, and ally). In addition to the helper model, Swabey and Mickelson (2008) included conduit, communication facilitator, bilingual/bicultural, and a reference to Roy's proposal that role definition is best described "from the theoretical frameworks of discourse analysis and social interaction" (p. 54). Before continuing a review of the various metaphors, it is notable that the variation in the recording of the field's own role definitions underscores Swabey and Mickelson's (2008) point that there has been inconsistencies in the way interpreters perceive and enact their own role. Witter-Merithew and Stewart (2003) assert that "the absence of well informed and agreed upon best practices regarding the complex and evolving role of interpreters places both the consumers and practitioners at risk" (p. 1).

Interpreters employing the helper model often had a close relationship with the Deaf community providing an "insider's perspective of the language and culture" (Swabey and Mickelson, 2008, p. 53). The reactive philosophical shift that occurred with the goal of guiding interpreters to extricate them from the helper role led to the conduit model (Brunson, 2011; Swabey & Mickelson, 2008). As the pendulum swung, the role of signed language interpreters came to be viewed as a technical aid "concerned with confidentiality, neutrality, accuracy, and faithfulness to the message" (Roy, 2000, p. 101). While the shift was intended to empower deaf clients and encouraged them to assume responsibility, the implementation of the model had negative consequences. While autonomy and self-determinacy were highly regarded values put in place to support the conduit model (Roy, 2000), in practice it was rigid to the point of machine-like message transference.

The communication facilitator as described by Humphrey and Alcorn (2007) appeared to be a course correction away from the conduit model but in half measures. It allowed the interpreter to retake responsibility for the physical environment (such as placement within proximity of the speakers, responsibility for attending to visual access of deaf clients, awareness of issues relating to lighting and background). A shift to the bilingual/bicultural model was marked by continued attention to physical surroundings, respect for deaf identity and ASL, and the interpreters' responsibility for cultural mediation.

Despite the continued progression of role definition, in the early iteration of the FCC order mandating the funding of VRS service, a more technical perspective of the interpreting task was evident. This would appear to be an example of what Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2004) described as the incompatibility between standards set by the profession of and those set by the marketplace. The FCC's initial perception of communication assistants (CA's)—the term for interpreters—as conduits once again challenged the role definition of signed language interpreters (Peterson, 2011). Interpreters' perception of limited decision latitude within VRS is evident in some of the current research (Bronson, 2011; NCIEC, 2008; Peterson, 2011; Taylor, 2009).

The NCIEC (2008) identified understanding personal and professional boundaries and roles and knowing how to maintain them as a knowledge set in the VRS setting. Taylor (2009) noted the additional role of customer service representative. Other researchers were more critical of the FCC mandated role. Peterson (2011) characterized the two available role choices of VRS interpreters as conduit, “what a dial tone would do,” and customer service agent. Perhaps the gap between practice profession paradigm

and interpreters' understanding of role definition is further evidenced in Peterson's (2011) suggestion that VRS work be distinguished from interpreting and that the term CA (communication assistant) is fitting. Peterson asserted that there is evidence that VRS work is chiefly a mechanical function based on interpreters' conduct and FCC expectations.

As a conclusion for the literature review, VRS has impacted the emerging conceptualization of interpreting as a practice profession and irrevocably changed the way interpreters work. This new and fast-growing interpreter service provision has raised new questions about role, including that of operator, particularly since the FCC regulates this service. While the development of established best practices may take time, as they have in other settings, moving backward—to a machine model—would not appear to support advancements in the field.

A practice professional conceptualization of VRS interpreting applying teleological ethics might possibly be modeled by the theory of functional leadership. In her influential textbook on ethics and decision making, according to Swabey and Mickelson (2008), Gish discussed the merits of applying the theory of functional leadership to the profession of signed language interpreting. Gish's view of leadership incorporates interpreters' involvement in the interactions and maintenance of relationships within the interactions, although not in the content or topics discussed (Swabey & Mickelson, 2008). Her perspective of interpreters as functional leaders includes helping the group accomplish a goal while remaining faithful to the interpreters' role. Applying functional leadership well constitutes professionally-based guidance in regard to the interpreting process without taking power or leadership away from the

consumers involved. This is a teleological ethical course that may respond to the belief that VRS interpreting inherently drags the profession “backward twenty years,” as one interpreter stated (NCIEC, 2008).

This qualitative research explores the hypothesis of the existence of a gap between the possible (practice profession) and the perceived (technical profession) paradigms. Next the explanation of the methodology describes the path of the research to test the hypothesis and document the consequences of VRS interpreters’ decision-making approaches.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to determine what approach to decision making the sample of interpreters demonstrate and whether there is evidence of a gap between the rhetoric of interpreting as a practice profession (applying teleological ethics) and an assumed approach (applying deontological ethics) in the VRS setting. A qualitative research inquiry was conducted by means of case studies to review the reflective decision-making process of signed language interpreters while applying the framework of DC-S and to address the research questions.

1. Which ethical framework (deontological, teleological, combined approach, or other) do interpreters follow?
2. What evidence of a gap between the interpreters' emerging concept of ethics, role, and decision making (rhetoric) and actual practice of ethical application (*de facto*) is apparent in supervision sessions applying DC-S?
3. How did the application of the DC-S framework in reflective practice affect VRS interpreters' decision-making process?

The qualitative research approach suited the purpose of the study, which was to investigate if VRS interpreters who experienced supervision—the guided reflective practice applying demand control schema—would adopt teleological reasoning for ethical and professional decision making.

As Denscombe (2010) suggested, this approach involves theorizing at a high level of abstraction and then subsequently doing empirical research by collecting data in the field to see if the theory actually works. While the initial area of interest of this research was identifying unique controls applied to VRS interpreting, the concepts and theories

developed were the product of analyzing the data. As Denscombe (2010) characterized grounded theory, the researcher engaged in a persistent process of comparing and contrasting codes as they emerge and improving the emerging concepts and theories by checking them against the data and the literature review findings.

The grounded theory approach has its roots in pragmatism. The hypothesis that reflective practice applying DC-S can inform interpreters' decision making has practical applications. Assessing the challenge and consequences of a gap between a teleological ethical approach and the perception of strict role constructs governed by deontological ethics is informative. The data collected along with the literature review findings satisfies the premise that the value of grounded theory is gauged by how well it addresses real practical needs (Denscombe, 2010).

Case Studies

Empirical inquiry to investigate the contemporary phenomenon of the gap between practice and technical professional approach to VRS interpreting was employed by conducting a multiple case study. Multiple case study methodology was employed with a sample of five VRS interpreters and the principal researcher, who conducted each study in the form of guided reflective practice. The conceptualization of interpreting work was investigated through the paradigm of DC-S, which provides constructs that require reflective practitioners to consider the contextualized factors underlying the complex nature of the work (Dean & Pollard, 2009).

It is relevant to note that cases were supervised individually and not in a group setting. The data was coming from one participant at a time and not influenced by the dialogic nature of multi-participant conversation about interpreting practice. This also

allowed the researcher to more clearly summarize what occurred. Dean and Pollard (2013) noted, “All techniques and practices of supervision, whether individual or group, are designed to assure quality of service” (p. 138).

Supervision is the shared examination of ethical decision making in actual work experiences and the review of interpreters’ application of adopted ethical standards within the field (Dean & Pollard, 2009). A trained facilitator guides the reflective practice of supervision *after* an interpreter presents a case. Facilitators do not purport to have the answers but rather engage in discussion of cases as colleagues and provide expertise only in the area of the *process* of applying DC-S to the reflective practice *as needed*. In fact, the selection and presentation of the case is at the discretion of the presenting interpreter. The expectation is that the case presentation is not unduly shaped but presented in a raw state, and this helps in positioning the facilitator and participants on equal footing. Data collection in the raw state also aligns with Denscombe’s (2010) preferable method of data collection for grounded theory research.

No confidential caller information (e.g., phone numbers, names, or callers images) was sought or recorded in the case studies. Cases were altered to delete any distinguishing details thus making it impossible to identify the source of the call content. The information is disguised for the benefit of all people involved (callers as well as research participants). Pseudonyms (“Colleen,” “Emily,” “Julie,” “Laurie,” and “Sarah”) were assigned to each research participant. All case studies, while altered and disguised, accurately represented the spirit of the salient points of discussion related to effective practice of interpreting as they occurred, allowing the presenting interpreter the potential to improve their interpreting practice.

While it was critical to the research to explore authentic VRS interpreting cases, the mandates of the FCC, policies of the industry, and RID's Code of Professional Conduct were solemn considerations. It was of great import to consider any reasonable expectation of negative outcomes to callers or interpreters. While the cases were discussed between individual participants and the researcher and between the researcher and thesis advisor, all distinguishing information of call content has been deleted to maintain the confidentiality of callers.

Design

A request to participate was circulated via the closed Facebook group, RID Video Interpreter Member Section (see Appendix A for the request to participate notice). A request to participate was emailed to three trained DC-S facilitators residing in three different states asking that they share the invitation with supervision participants working in the VRS setting. Once participants had responded, they received, signed, and returned a consent form (see Appendix B for the informed consent form).

The researcher reviewed both the ground rules of supervision and summary of DC-S with each participant immediately before each case study began. A document graphically describing and depicting the four demand categories and the three opportunities to apply controls was provided for research participants (see Figure 3). The document was developed and is routinely provided by trained facilitators to assist participants in following the structure of supervision (see Appendix C for full-page image of the DC-S supervision document).

Welcome to Supervision!

Pre-assignment Controls	Environmental Demands	Interpersonal Demands	Assignment Controls
Controls that are employed before or in the preparation for the formal assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Physical surroundings (room temp., chemicals and odors, seating arrangements/sight lines, lighting quality, visual distractions, background noise, space – people, furniture, equipment) ➤ Goal/Purpose of setting ➤ Terminology ➤ Personnel/Cientele (Who's present?) ➤ SAFETY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Power & personal dynamics ➤ Communication style and goals ➤ Emotional tone or mood ➤ Role & cultural differences ➤ Communication flow (turn-taking, etc...) ➤ Relationship nuances (new, familiar, intimate, tension, power, etc...) ➤ "thought worlds" 	Controls that are employed during the interpreting assignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal (ITP) Informal ➤ Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work-related Personal ➤ Direct Preparation for the assignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contacts Team Interpreter Consumers Materials/Readings 	Paralinguistic Demands	Intrapersonal Demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Acknowledgments ➤ Self-talk ➤ Direct Interventions ➤ Adjusted Translations ➤ Prior Relationships ➤ Code of Ethics ➤ Role Metaphors
Post-Assignment Controls Controls that are employed after the assignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Debriefing/Venting with support system ➤ Self-Care ➤ Follow-up with people involved, with further education, with referring party ➤ Supervision: Formal with supervisor; Informal with colleagues 			

Based on the Demand-Control Schema for Interpreting developed by Robyn Dean and Robert Pollard (graphic by Lenthia Zinsky)

Figure 3: DC-S Supervision Document (Reprinted with permission R. Dean, personal communication, September 15, 2012).

In one-on-one supervision sessions, five participants presented an authentic case from their experience as VRS interpreters. Three of the supervision sessions were conducted in VRS centers' conference rooms with permission from call center managers from two different service providers. Two supervision sessions were conducted through an online web conferencing service. Two of the three participants meeting face-to-face with the principal researcher provided typed outlines of their cases. The principal researcher documented the five cases without comment or analysis to allow the interpreters to characterize their work without undue influence. The researcher used an easel pad to write notes during the three face-to-face supervision sessions, and the

researcher used a screen-share feature to type notes during the online web conference supervision sessions (see Appendix D, facsimile of supervision session notes).

After each individual case presentation was completed, the researcher reviewed the notes and asked each participant clarifying questions and then modified the notes accordingly (see Appendix E, sample of typical clarifying questions and responses during supervision sessions). At this stage of research, the researcher proceeded to facilitate a collaborative process of identifying the demands, controls, consequences, and any resulting demands with each participant. As previously presented in the literature review, demands are challenges in the work environment and controls are a range of positive, professionally appropriate characteristics and actions the interpreters can employ in a given interpreting assignment (Dean & Pollard, 2013). The demands and controls were documented by the researcher and added to the supervision session notes (see Appendix D, facsimile of supervision session notes).

After completing the discussion of demands and controls with each participant, the researcher reviewed the constellation of demands. During each individual supervision session, the researcher asked participants to identify the main demand. As discussed in the literature review, the structured reflective practice of supervision applying DC-S concludes with a focus on exploring alternative control options (see Appendix D, facsimile of supervision session notes). In keeping with the purpose of supervision (self-guided improvement through reflective practice), the researcher did not direct the participants to address a particular demand.

As data analysis commenced, the researcher's thesis advisor, who is also a trained facilitator of supervision, reviewed each case. A summary of each case was reviewed

with the respective research participants to verify the accuracy of the interpretation of the data from their case presentation and as a form of triangulation to strengthen the data collection and analysis process.

While the process of reflective practice included a thorough discussion of an interpretation assignment in a VRS setting, in addition to maintaining confidentiality and respect of callers, there was no disruption to VRS service or to the VRS interpreters' practice.

Participants

Five VRS interpreters with knowledge of DC-S and supervision participated in the study. All participants were females between the ages of 26 and 48 years. Each of the participants had achieved RID certification; one interpreter has National Interpreter Certification (NIC), one interpreter has NIC Master, two interpreters had the Certificate of Interpreting and Certificate of Transliteration (CI and CT), and the final interpreter held three certifications, the NIC, CI, and CT. The researcher had prior knowledge regarding four of the participants' participation in supervision groups, DC-S workshops, and/or training.

All participants had a range of VRS work experience between two and six years. Four of the VRS interpreters worked part-time. As a group, their weekly schedules ranged between 10-28 hours of VRS work. Three of the four part-time VRS interpreters were working in their communities in other settings. The one full-time VRS employee had administrative responsibilities. The interpreters resided in three different states and were employed by three different corporate service providers. Participants were aware that the research had Western Oregon University Institutional Review Board approval.

The lead researcher obtained informed consent forms from each participant (see Appendix B for the informed consent form).

Data Analysis

The first stage of analysis involved categorizing the raw data and identifying commonalities. The raw data was collected from the supervision session notes of each case, summaries of cases, and notes from review with the principal researcher's thesis advisor and the participants. Open-coding headings included attention given to rules and outcomes, references to role construct, complexity of the constellation of demands, and indications of occupational stress. An early concept was refuted, as the data was incomplete in supporting the concept that VRS interpreters were applying unique controls. The comparative analysis was valuable for noting commonalities in what the interpreters did and did not discuss.

As the codes took shape, relationships between codes were explored, and this shifted the analysis toward key (axial) components with some codes being identified as more crucial. Seven key components (focus on rules, focus on self, incidence of stress, DC-S generates awareness of more and varied controls, perceived lack of agency, complexity of work, and lack of collaboration with callers) emerged from the open and axial coding. The themes are examined more fully in the findings. The selective coding focused attention on the codes that had emerged as being vital to an explanation of the complex social phenomenon encountered in VRS interpreters' ethical decision-making processes. The researcher was able to verify the developing theory that eventually emerged through review of the data. The resulting theory, thoroughly grounded in the

data, encapsulates the limited success of VRS interpreters to solidify a teleological ethical approach through the guided reflective practice of supervision.

Situating the Author

As a colleague to the research participants, the researcher drew on experience of interpreting in the VRS setting since 2007. Preparation to facilitate supervision initially included attendance at a DC-S workshop, an extended training program provided as professional development through an employer, and participation in various supervision groups. Additional preparation included facilitator training, co-facilitating supervision, and enrolling in an Introduction to DC-S course at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), all with one of the authors of DC-S scholarship, Robyn Dean. Additional instruction was attained through collaboration with other facilitators in “supervision of supervision,” developing and presenting a workshop, leading supervision groups, and instructing aspiring facilitators.

Limitations of the study

While there are various limitations to the study, some restrictions were related to the researcher’s and the participants’ time constraints. While participants were enthusiastic and committed, it was difficult scheduling supervision and the analysis review. The reflective practice of supervision was scheduled for an entire hour; follow-up interviews, when conducted with four of the five research participants, were a half-hour long. Some participants reviewed the summary of the findings, expressed satisfaction with the research process and findings, and opted out of a follow-up discussion.

While the exploration of ethical practice through the lens of reflective practice of supervision with five participants was informative, due to the small sample size, it is

necessary to consider more research to explore a larger corpus of data to the point of theoretical saturation and identify any new phenomena generated by the transformation induced by technological advances and professional practice.

Due to the fact that technology will transform intercultural communication and professional practice and generate new phenomena requiring systematic study (Pöchhacker, 2004), a limitation of the study was the lack of an interdisciplinary approach.

Another limitation is the assumption that people are accurately representing themselves, which is a limit that must be accepted as unavoidable in establishing a trusting environment for supervision. It is within the scope of human nature to project oneself in a positive perspective and fail to act on proclamations of intended behavior. Participants ultimately may present themselves in a positive light regarding what they will and will not discuss and how they discuss it. The presence of the principal researcher created the observer paradox in that by being present it may have changed the participants' responses.

FINDINGS

The findings are divided into seven themes drawn from the case study. The themes emerged from the analysis of the data and reflect common threads that were apparent throughout different participants' accounts. Table 2 Themes are shown below:

Table 2

Themes

Theme	Characteristic
1 Focus on rules	Emphasis on regulations, VRS policies, and technical skill orientation
2 Focus on self	Preoccupation with face-saving, and self-interest
3 Incidence of stress	Frustration, anxiety, criticism, and constraints
4 DC-S generates awareness of and more and varied controls	Developing knowledge of teamer's abilities, schemas for calls, self-care, and pre-assignment and post-assignment controls
5 Perceived lack of agency	Unreasonable expectations accepted related to call centers' physical environments, training, and hiring practices
6 Complexity of the Work	Content, context, and intersubjective dynamics
7 Lack of collaboration with callers	Acquiesce to requests from callers without dialogue, failure to develop rapport, and unilateral decision making

Theme 1 Focus on Rules

All participants exhibited intentionality related to applying a teleological ethical approach with an emphasis on outcomes. However the findings show interpreters consistently were not successful in avoiding a shift to deontological ethics with a focus on rules within the multidimensional VRS system.

Colleen was thwarted in her intention to provide effective service in part due to her understanding of a federal regulation. When responding to a request to team, she was

unable to immediately replace a struggling interpreter because of the “ten-minute rule” which she believed mandated that an interpreter must remain in a call for a minimum of ten minutes. Her decision making was an example of deontological thinking with a focus on rules.

During supervision Laurie focused on the issue of procuring information from a VRS user that was **not** requested from a dispatcher. Laurie was processing a nonemergency call to a law enforcement agency regarding the health and safety of a third party. In addition to information that was being requested such as the party’s address, household composition, and if there were weapons present, Laurie anticipated the pertinence of conveying whether the third party was Deaf or hearing. After she solicited the information and relayed it to the dispatcher, Laurie enabled the mute button and said to the teaming interpreter, “Don’t judge me.” Laurie was keenly aware that, in her estimation, she had made an ethically sound liberal control choice. It was challenging to her to dismiss the pedagogy of her interpreter education program. Her decision would have been considered indefensible to her former educators according to Laurie. Laurie later acknowledged that her comment gave a misimpression of the conviction she had regarding her decision. She was aware that this was a gap between the conceptualization she had of working as a practice professional and fully abandoning a technical skill orientation toward interpreting.

Julie subjugated her discretion in performing a series of calls initiated by one person. The content of the first call was audio-recorded on an answering machine; the content of the second call was an interpretation of the content of the first call (from the recorded spoken English to signed ASL); in the third and final call the caller directed

Julie to transcribe the content of the first call. Although Julie's call center was equipped with whiteboards, transcription has never been a part of VRS protocol. Julie had unwittingly participated in a "performance evaluation." Julie commented that callers have a vast degree of decision latitude in the VRS setting and she failed to consider that the request was inappropriate. She characterized callers' access to an interpreter as "24/7 with assignments for any duration they choose." Julie attributed her apparent focus on rules to the marked difference between the settings of VRS interpreting and community interpreting and her inexperience in the VRS setting.

Theme 2 focus on self

The participants demonstrated various decisions based on what appeared to be self-interest. As discussed in Theme 1 Laurie requested a team interpreter but expressed the subsequent concern she had related to her colleagues' perception of her ethical decision making. When Laurie said, "Don't judge me," she was clearly focused on self. The preoccupation with face-saving measures could have been a distraction during a call that could have had implications for potentially serious negative outcomes.

Sarah also discussed how consideration of colleagues' perceptions impacted her decision making process. She indicated that the probability of colleagues' negative perception of her motivated her decision not to call for a team interpreter. She was conscious of the fact that less-experienced interpreters were likely to receive the request, and the process of rejecting a novice and *re-requesting* a team to get someone more experienced would make her "look mean." Her decision was to forego teaming support regardless of the fact that the call was to a law enforcement agency, and that the caller had what Sarah characterized as unrealistic expectations of the interpreting process.

The interpreters had discretion regarding teaming as well as the length of time they continued to interpret a call. Emily made the statement that the call was “not about me” but remained in the call for three hours in part for the “satisfaction of knowing it was resolved.” Although there is the possibility to transfer calls to another VRS interpreter and an opportunity to take a break in accordance with standard practice, it was at her discretion whether to do so or not.

Participants disclosed various instances of decision making guided by self-interest without expressing consideration of standard best practices to assure effective interpretations. While VRS interpreters are sharing a physical workplace, participants described an environment in which in some aspects they worked in isolation. As presented in the case studies the participants’ focus on self appeared to be fueled in part by lack of opportunity or willingness to regularly discuss issues of best practice with VRS colleagues.

Theme 3 Incidence of stress

Investigation of the data revealed that the five research participants experienced stress in the authentic interpreting experiences that they each chose to present in supervision. During Laurie’s case presentation she characterized the utterance to her team as “venting” the considerable stress she was experiencing. Laurie was distressed by the call content as she determined it related to a third party’s wellbeing.

Sarah experienced considerable stress when one caller gave her directives that impacted her call management. She repeatedly commented that she felt critiqued and abandoned call management strategies that she deemed effective to “appease the caller.”

During her initial VRS training Julie had been told that there were several regular customers known as “abusive callers.” She felt stress prior to connecting the call when she recognized the caller I.D. belonged to an “abuser.”

Emily’s stress was from the frustration she experienced in interpreting a call to technical support. Emily presented a case in which a Deaf person initiated the call to resolve a problem with her cell phone. The Deaf person described the issue with the device to the technical support staff person. The technical support staff gave instructions to carry out a series of problem-solving steps in the attempt to resolve the technical issue. Emily interpreted the various steps the caller needed to follow in an attempt to resolve the technical issue “thirteen times!”

Colleen experienced stress due to the constraint of the “ten-minute rule” when she responded to a request to team a conference call. Colleen had considerable knowledge and experience of the conference call content from previous community interpreting assignments, but the density and pace of the call content made it difficult to achieve an effective interpretation without taking over the call.

In addition to specific instances of stress in the case presentations, some participants discussed various strategies of self-care they developed to deal with the ongoing incidence of stress in the VRS setting. One interpreter acknowledged she was dealing with a serious injurious condition as a result of occupational stress.

Theme 4 DC-S supervision generates awareness of more and varied controls

In the process of supervision, data was collected including demonstrative examples of developing strategies to improve practice. Laurie stated that she had developed the pre-assignment control of an extensive regime of self-care, and the

physiological benefit she experienced aided in stress management. She attributed her awareness to training in DC-S.

Julie learned from experience to “expect the unexpected” but found that she appreciated the feeling of validation she experienced in supervision. Applying DC-S and engaging in reflective practice supported her positive disposition while she continued to encounter “unique” challenges “that could never occur in community interpreting.” Colleen said DC-S enhanced her skill as a team interpreter. She was able to assess the constellation of demands and respond more effectively to support effective communication.

Sarah also appreciated the application of DC-S in reflective practice. She took notes during supervision related to a better understanding of “the complications that occurred” and “gaining perspective of callers thought worlds.” She stated that the reflective process was helpful to consider controls to better address concerns she had experienced. Supervision applying DC-S assisted in redirecting Sarah’s attention to callers. She acknowledged that the callers’ emotions were more likely related to her clients’ interaction with law enforcement and assessed “it’s not about me.”

Emily discussed a call to technical support during the supervision session. The caller had been repeatedly transferred and instructed to perform a series of steps to resolve the issue thirteen times. Emily was keenly aware that her choices in interpreting offensive language could negatively affect the provision of services the caller sought to obtain. Emily reviewed possible outcomes, mindful of each caller’s thought worlds as espoused by her DC-S training and chose corresponding linguistically accurate source-

target language. Her enthusiasm for the benefits of DC-S training led her to facilitate supervision sessions for VRS interpreters.

During the supervision session Laurie developed and rehearsed a control that would allow her to vent and reinforce a practice profession perspective. She decided she would develop a mantra after reflecting on the negative consequences of blurting out “Don’t judge me.” Laurie’s reflective practice led her to consider that in addition to inaccurately conveying a lack of conviction in her own decision making process, she may have undermined a sense of trust between herself and her colleague in VRS.

Further evidence of the impact of DC-S was found in the comments of the participants when they discussed various ways that they engaged their time, energy, and effort into improving their performance. In addition to holding positions in local chapters of the RID and attaining advanced degrees, collectively the VRS interpreters look for opportunities to participate in supervision groups, facilitated supervision, and apply DC-S training when mentoring students.

Theme 5 Perceived lack of agency

Consideration of the impact of corporate responsibility and government oversight on the participants practice were consistently underrepresented in the case study. Collectively, the participants did not discuss control options addressing the various components of the VRS system—stakeholders, regulators, and management—in the reflective practice of supervision. The interpreters’ willingly accept conditions in the VRS setting that are beyond what is considered appropriate in the field of signed language interpreting. The absence of critical reflection regarding the expectations, mandates, and policies in the VRS setting indicates a lack of agency.

Colleen stated she was frustrated when she followed the “ten-minute rule” but did not consider any controls to further explore the constraint, although she acknowledged the negative impact on the effectiveness of interpreting services. The principal researcher suggested a control that satisfied her understanding of the letter and spirit of the “ten minute rule.” If the interpreters both work in view of the caller, the first interpreter remains in the call and the second interpreter can take the lead. In this way the rule is followed without sacrificing service. Colleen responded that her center’s cubicles were too small to accommodate two chairs in view of the videophone camera. In response she mentioned that other environmental demands existed (the center did not have air-conditioning, ran noisy fans) but made no comment that the environmental demand was a constraint to effective practice that she would consider addressing with management.

The training that Julie received included information regarding “abusive” callers but apparently did not prepare her to exercise professional autonomy. Julie acquiesced when confronted with a caller’s directive to perform a series of calls conducted as a skills assessment.

Sarah stated that it was preferable to go without a team interpreter in VRS due to the pool of inexperienced colleagues. Sarah characterized novice interpreters as “not savvy enough in skill or demeanor.” In contrast to community work where she could arrange who she had as a team interpreter, Sarah stated the increased hiring of inexperienced interpreters as “VRS’s downfall.” Sarah also made a passing reference that she had worked for an hour and half and “obviously went over break time.”

Emily presented a case regarding a call she continued interpreting for three hours. The researcher facilitated the discussion by inquiring on the issue of stamina. Emily’s

response did not venture into company policy relating to appropriate duration of interpreting calls or mandate for scheduled breaks. Emily included the comment that she was working with an existing injury and said she was resigned to the fact that she quite possibly would not continue VRS work.

Participants further demonstrated a lack of agency related to various domains within VRS setting. The participants seemed to accept the market trends and conditions of VRS related to physical environment, training, and hiring practice despite the deleterious impact on callers and interpreters.

Theme 6 Complexity of the work

All of the participants' case studies revealed a complexity of ethical dilemmas revolving around the multi-dimensional contexts of each call. Colleen's call and Sam's call occurred in the context of professional dialogues. One of those calls was a multiple-line conference call. Laurie's call was essentially a multiple-party call: the Deaf caller placed a call to a law enforcement agent and in addition to conveying their own dialogue, consulted with a third party via text messages and conveyed their responses as well. In addition to call content, and number of participants there are other factors contributing to the complexity of interpreting the VRS setting.

As in all interpreting settings, contextual information and duration are components that impact the overall complexity of an assignment. There was evidence of these features that rendered calls that were only connected to one, or two interlocutors to be complex. It was difficult for Julie to assess contextualization cues and ascertain the specific purpose of the caller who was attempting to assess her competency. Emily's

three-hour long call involved negotiating technical support between the callers with limited access to specific information regarding the device.

Although in some cases the interpreters developed schemas for calls, they consistently experienced unique contexts that were multi-dimensional. Each of the five cases presented were complex.

Theme 7 Lack of collaboration with callers

Four out of the five of the research participants provided evidence of a lack of collaboration with callers during the supervision sessions. Of the five participants Sarah was the most vocal expressing her decision to follow a caller's directives without communicating the negative impact it had on the interpreting process. Sarah expressed her self-talk during the supervision session saying, "Don't even say anything," and "...okay, whatever you want, lady." Sarah contrasted her VRS experience to an experience of strong collaborative relationships in the community interpreting setting. She particularly enjoyed a professional relationship that was "similar to a designated interpreter role" with a client who requested her for numerous post-graduate coursework.

When Colleen responded to the teaming request she did not consider eliciting the caller's preference for an interpreter with prior knowledge of the conference call content. Colleen acknowledged that her understanding of the "ten-minute rule" constrained the caller's choice to switch interpreters but she pondered "...develop rapport, can't?"

Sarah neglected to establish trust with a caller in the process of placing a series of three calls. Sarah processed the first of three calls and interpreted the caller's message that was recorded on an answering machine. The caller then placed a second call to access the message via Sarah's reverse interpretation of it. Sarah placed a third call to

access the message again, and the caller instructed Sarah to transcribe the recorded message on a whiteboard. Sarah indicated that she experienced apprehension as she performed the tasks per the caller's directives. Sarah did not feel as though she could make an inquiry regarding the caller's purpose. In supervision Sarah's discussion of the VRS case appeared to demonstrate that she had not successfully established an adequate level of professional rapport to inform her decision making process.

While Liz was comfortable in her control choice to gather information the dispatcher did not request, she made the decision unilaterally. She did not collaborate with the hearing or Deaf caller regarding the information she deemed critical.

Whether acquiescing to a caller's request, not developing adequate rapport, or making ethical decisions unilaterally, the research participants demonstrated behaviors they themselves sometimes noted as vastly different from community interpreting.

DISCUSSION

Video relay service was conceived as a technological advancement in telecommunication access for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Presumably, a considerable number of members of those communities have functionally sanctioned the service considering that the demand has continued to increase. The continued demand for VRS interpreters and the areas of concern as outlined in the literature review clearly signify the ongoing need for research. This qualitative research contributes a measure of insight into the ethical decision-making process of VRS interpreters. Exploration of the research questions has pragmatic application for programs considering drafting VRS curriculum development, training, discussion, and further research.

The broad goal of this research was to observe the ethical decision-making process of VRS interpreters and explore whether current practice "...places the field's values and stated behavioral requirements squarely in front of the interpreter" (Stauffer and Hebert, 2008, p. 252). The research questions endeavor to explore the values and behaviors of the participants through the analysis of ethical decision making. For the purpose of discussion, research questions are addressed individually. Understandably due to the co-occurrence of the different variables of the described phenomena, the discussion reflects the concomitance of the findings.

1. Which ethical framework (deontological, teleological, combined approach, or other) do interpreters follow?

The five participants, who all expressed an understanding of demand control schema and the reflective practice of supervision applying a teleological ethical approach

to decision making, applied both teleological and deontological ethical reasoning during their case presentations. In fact the analysis of the data reveals that the interpreters were predominately applying deontological ethics.

Colleen's focus on the "ten-minute rule" is evidence of a deontological ethical frame. The literature review and data show that FCC orders are not clearly understood by VRS interpreters. Although the "ten-minute rule" was revised in 2006 and currently acknowledges the efficacy of interpreters to transfer a call in service to effective communication (Federal Registry, 2006), it continues to be misinterpreted (Peterson, 2011; Alley, 2013). Research has identified that it is challenging for interpreters to understand the delineation between corporate practice and federal mandates (Alley, 2013). The fact that "Never before, in the history of interpreting profession, have interpreters worked in settings where the federal government and large corporations have played such an important role in the provision of interpreting services" (RID, 2007) has posed new challenging. I believe it is reasonable to consider that the corpus of demands may have depleted some interpreters of the energy or will to maintain a focus on outcomes especially if they believe they are adhering to federal mandates.

Deontological ethical framing with a focus on rules was also evident related to the concept of "call ownership." The term appears in the NCIEC (2007) document that identifies VRS interpreting competencies. Domain 5.9.1 reads that VRS interpreters should have knowledge of specific concepts and terminology including "call ownership" (NCIEC, 2007). The literature review and data suggests that in essence a cyclical pattern may have formed: interpreters are trained to prioritize "call ownership" and subsequently minimize the value of collaboration, which may contribute to callers' perception of the

interpreters' role as a conduit—according to the participants, and subsequently interpreters feel their role construct is constrained by callers' expectations. This model aligns with the identification of issues in the field— “insufficient consumer and public awareness, appreciation, and value regarding the complex work of interpreting practitioners” (Witter-Merithew & Johnson, 2004). Sarah characterized the caller's expectations as unreasonable. She found it difficult to follow the caller's directives and incorporate strategies she had developed for effective practice. The cycle seemed evident in the case presentations by Julie and Sarah. Julie and Sarah did not succeed in collaborating with their callers in part because they maintaining a standard of “call-ownership”—interpreters can't very well *respect* callers' decision latitude and also *question* it.

While the participants engaged predominantly in deontological ethical reasoning there were numerous examples of teleological ethical decision making as well. Emily presented a case in which she synthesized various contextual clues to inform her decision and critically consider the outcomes. Laurie was guided by potentially serious negative consequences in her decision.

According to Hetherington (2011) interpreters continue to experience occupational stress in the VRS setting due in part to a deontological ethical approach. Further exploration of corporate policies and training—in consideration of maintaining a healthy workforce—may align with a teleological ethical framework.

2. What evidence of a gap between the interpreters' emerging concept of ethics, role, and decision making (rhetoric) and actual practice of ethical application (*de facto*) is apparent in supervision sessions applying demand control schema?

I believe the findings from the data and literature review addressing both the first research question (interpreters are predominately applying deontological ethics) and the third research question (interpreters continue to explore opportunities to increase the application of teleological ethics) provide ample evidence to the existing gap. A limitation of the study—that the participants were self-reporting regarding their current conceptualization of ethics, role, and decision making—was a consideration in analyzing the data. Presumably the participants' voluntary involvement in professional development related to ethical considerations, and ongoing commitment to seek out discussion of their work—including what they considered problematic or ineffective in the case presentations—demonstrates some commitment to the conceptualization espoused in DC-S. Julie acknowledged that the choices she made, while deontological occurred early in her experience in VRS interpreting. Julie exhibited a positive disposition in viewing the development in her work. She also expressed an appreciation for the validation she received in supervision and how it reduced stress.

The data demonstrates the co-occurrence of applying deontological and teleological ethical approaches within one assignment and contributing to the stress interpreters experienced (see Theme 3). Stress management, whether in the form of validation or extensive self-care regime, was in some measure accredited to reflective practice applying DC-S.

The coexistence of Theme 1 (Focus on Rules) and Theme 4 (DC-S Generates Awareness of More/Varied Controls) is further evidence of the gap between the conceptualization of interpreting as a practice profession and interpreters' technical skill orientation (see Theme 1). The fulcrum in the gap between the rhetoric of ethical decision

making and VRS interpreters' de facto application of ethical decision making appears to be the interpreters' perceived lack of agency (Theme 1).

The data shows the first theme, perception of lack of agency, as a contributing factor to the VRS interpreters decision making whether in relation to callers, corporate administration, or government administration: Colleen acknowledged numerous environmental demands that constrained effective teaming, Julie acquiesced to a caller's request to transcribe from an answering machine her own interpreted message, Laurie solicited information from a caller without being transparent about her decision making process, Sarah acknowledged an increasingly inexperienced pool of interpreters, and Emily worked through three 'scheduled' breaks. Unfortunately, interpreters struggle to follow their own, self-proclaimed guide to ethical decision making in the isolation of their VRS cubicles.

3. How did the application of the DC-S framework in reflective practice affect VRS interpreters' decision-making process?

The evidence of a gap between interpreters' emerging concept of ethics, role, and decision making (foundations of DC-S framework) and actual practice of deontological ethics does not cancel out the affects of applying DC-S framework. Nor is it possible to compartmentalize reflective practice from other developments in the field: revision to the RID Code of Ethics, and the addition of an ethics portion for RID certification. The consideration of further research projects is more fully discussed in the recommendation for more research.

I believe the data findings (Theme 4) provided ample evidence that the reflective practice of supervision applying DC-S did contribute to guiding interpreters to

teleological-based ethical decisions and guided their commitment to improve their effectiveness. Colleen noted that reflective practice improved her teaming strategies. Sarah requested examples—and took extensive notes—of dialogue to expand her interpersonal communication with colleagues to improve her practice. Although given the mixed success of applying teleological ethical constructs to their work, there is no guarantee that the interpreters would fully change their philosophy just by having more behavioral options.

Recommendations for further research

It is my recommendation that research be done in the areas of functional leadership with collaboration between service providers and clients. I also recommend a review of successful corporate models in similar service professions, and the efficacy of the reflective practice of supervision on advancing ethical standards in VRS interpreting.

I believe the VRS setting of signed language interpreting might benefit from exploring the merits of applying the theory of functional leadership. It is recommended that the research be conducted through a continuing collaborative partnership, such as the VRS workgroup (NCIEC, 2008) composed of interpreting professionals, federal government agents, and corporate representation, and VRS customers. It is critical that the research participants should include callers who subscribe to VRS service, along with interpreters to explore Gish's view of leadership—incorporating interpreters' involvement in the interactions and maintenance of relationships within the interactions, although not in the content or topics discussed (Swabey & Mickelson, 2008).

Considering the changes that have occurred between patients and medical personnel in the last few decades, a review of the process that occurred might serve as a

guide the interpreting profession. I recommend that additional research include a review of the efficacy of functional leadership in various service fields (e.g., medical) to provide insight and direction. Research may assist in determining how interpreters might be able to perform leadership functions—that relate to the VRS interpreting process—while remaining faithful to the responsibilities of interpreting.

Lastly, I believe a *series* of research projects are necessary to further explore the efficacy of supervision applying demand control schema to advance the ethical standards in VRS. I would recommend that research addressing broader concerns for the development of ethical practice skills for signed language interpreters include VRS interpreters.

CONCLUSION

Ethics cannot be imparted to employees as factual knowledge. Ethics is constructed and relational, changing based on who interpreters are working with during interpreted VRS calls—*Ethics*, and interpreting—are intersubjective. Evidence within the small sample of this study suggests a lack of consideration for clients and their call outcomes in VRS interpreting practice points within the challenging setting of VRS. Emphasis on industry policies and callers' expectations may influence what equates to a deontological ethical construct.

The sample of interpreters' case presentations offered insight into the challenges to achieving competent autonomy in VRS and the considerable stress related to the performance of their professional responsibilities. Professional autonomy is viewed as the hallmark of a profession and refers to the degree of authority professionals are able to exert over their work and working conditions (Stewart & Witter-Merithew, 2006). The characteristics of default autonomy are *lack of merit* and result from isolation, insufficient training and market trends and conditions (Stewart & Witter-Merithew, 2006).

To achieve *merit* and combat isolation VRS interpreters need training in: the actual mandates of the FCC regulations, critical thinking regarding business practices of the corporate service providers that employ VRS interpreters, and ongoing reflective practice with the recognition that ethical dilemmas revolve around individuals within unique contexts.

Competent autonomy constitutes functional leadership *without* taking power or leadership away from involved consumers. Interpreters and consumers deserve a forum in which they can collectively identify concerns.

The profession of signed language interpreting—and individual interpreters acting as functional leaders—should endeavor to assure VRS callers that interpreters are sufficiently prepared to perform consistently and accurately as collaborative and autonomous professionals.

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APPENDIX A: Request to Participate Notice

I am inviting you to participate in a research study that will look at how interpreters respond to the demands of interpreting in the VRS setting. Please consider participating if you are a signed language interpreter with experience and/or knowledge of the application of Demand-Control Schema and Supervision and have experience working in the setting of VRS for at least two years for an average of ten hours a week minimally.

Your involvement would consist of: signing the attached informed consent form; presenting a case in one-on-one Supervision with me, the lead investigator, lasting approximately one hour (with the knowledge that I will conduct a confidential review of a summary of the Supervision case and research findings with my adviser after identifying and classifying any unique controls); participating in a follow-up interview to review the Supervision case summary and findings with me, lasting approximately 45 minutes.

Please respond to participate in this study and schedule an on-line Supervision session and follow-up interview. If you also would share this request with your VRS colleagues with D-C S/Supervision experience, I would be very appreciative.

Thank you for your consideration, and do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Respectfully,

Kathleen Holcombe, BA, NIC and Ed: K-12, D-C S Supervision Trained Facilitator

APPENDIX B: Informed Consent Form

This study is to investigate the demands and identify any unique controls used by interpreters in video relay service. For this study you will present one case applying Demand-Control Schema and Supervision practice. After completing the case presentation, the lead investigator will facilitate the identification of the constellation of demands, main demand, controls, consequence, and resulting demand. Following an analysis of the Supervision session by the lead investigator and confidential review by her faculty advisor, you will be presented with a summary. In a follow-up interview you will have an opportunity to comment on the summary of the Supervision case and/or the findings. The Supervision session and interview will be conducted and recorded on-line through a video conference feature of Fuze Box.

Interpreters/participants will not be identified by name, nor will their recorded image be included or viewed by anyone other than the lead investigator. Recordings of Supervision and interview will remain in the Cloud and encrypted through Fuze Box, and files will be deleted within five years of publication of the thesis.

In addition to the benefit of facilitated Supervision as a reflective practice and exercise in professional development, participants are knowingly contributing to the exploration of the interpreting process in the setting of video relay service. Participants are assisting in the collection of data that can be used to better understand any differences in effective interpretation, guide further research, and inform curriculum design in the video relay service setting. Participants are supporting the improved understanding of any unique features of the interpreting process in video relay service interpreting that can inform students considering practicing, current practitioners, and instructors preparing students in interpreter training programs for work in this setting.

If in the process of Supervision, case presentation, or the follow-up interview, you are experiencing the potential risk of stress and/or embarrassment, you understand you have the right to withdraw and are advised to seek counseling or other appropriate support services.

Participants' refusal to participate in the study or decision to withdraw will be honored and respected by the lead investigator and have no effect on their relationship with Western Oregon University.

I am available to answer any inquiries concerning the procedures of this research project and appreciate your consideration.

Kathleen C. Holcombe
(585) 503-4410

CONSENT STATEMENT:

I have read the above comments and agree to participate in this experiment. I give my permission to be video recorded under the terms outlined above. I understand that if I have any questions or concerns regarding this project, I can contact the investigator at the above location or the WOU Institutional Review Board at (503) 838-9200 or e-mail: irb@wou.edu

(Participant's signature) (date)

(Print Name)

Kathleen C.
Holcombe

(Researcher's signature) (date)

APPENDIX C: DC-S Supervision Document

Welcome to Supervision!

Pre-assignment Controls	Environmental Demands	Interpersonal Demands	Assignment Controls
<p>Controls that are employed before or in the preparation for the formal assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Education Formal (ITP) Informal ➤ Experience Work-related Personal ➤ Direct Preparation for the assignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contacts Team Interpreter Consumers Materials/Readings 	<p>Environmental Demands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Physical surroundings (room temp., chemicals and odors, seating arrangements/sight lines, lighting quality, visual distractions, background noise, space – people, furniture, equipment) ➤ Goal/Purpose of setting ➤ Terminology ➤ Personnel/Clientele (Who's present?) ➤ SAFETY <p>Paralinguistic Demands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Idiosyncrasies of speaking/signing ➤ Volume/Sign Space ➤ Pace ➤ Accents/Regional Signs ➤ Clarity of speech/signs ➤ Physical position ➤ Physical or cognitive limitations 	<p>Interpersonal Demands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Power & personal dynamics ➤ Communication style and goals ➤ Emotional tone or mood ➤ Role & cultural differences ➤ Communication flow (turn-taking, etc...) ➤ Relationship nuances (new, familiar, intimate, tension, power, etc...) ➤ "thought worlds" <p>Intrapersonal Demands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feelings or ruminations one may have about own safety, interpreting performance, liability, the people and the dynamics, the environment ➤ Physiological distractions ➤ Psychological responses or distractions ➤ Availability of supervision and support ➤ Anonymity and isolation 	<p>Assignment Controls</p> <p>Controls that are employed during the interpreting assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Acknowledgments ➤ Self-talk ➤ Direct Interventions ➤ Adjusted Translations ➤ Prior Relationships ➤ Code of Ethics ➤ Role Metaphors
<p>Post-Assignment Controls</p> <p>Controls that are employed after the assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Debriefing/Venting with support system ➤ Self-Care ➤ Follow-up with people involved, with further education, with referring party ➤ Supervision: Formal with supervisor; Informal with colleagues 			

Based on the Demand-Control Schema for Interpreting developed by Robyn Dean and Robert Pollard (graphic by Lenetha Zinsky)

APPENDIX D: Facsimile of supervision session notes

1. Initial documentation of presented case (representing partial case).

Interpreter working typical four-hour shift at VRS

Beginning of shift, weekday morning

Non-emergency call to law enforcement agency

Caller was in office environment, woman, 40's

“Call”

Call to a detective

The caller was agitated, started asking about 2 people/2 separate incidents –

“Big Ed” and “Little Ed”

She kept asking the detective the same questions over and over again

2. Subsequent documentation of case after completing process of identifying demands and controls. Yellow highlighting identifies demands and blue highlighting represents control categories (E-environmental, I-interpersonal, P-paralinguistic, and Ia-intrapersonal).

Interpreter working typical four-hour (E) shift at VRS (E)

Beginning of shift, weekday morning

Non-emergency call (E) to law enforcement agency (C-prior knowledge/schema)

Caller was in office environment, woman, 40's

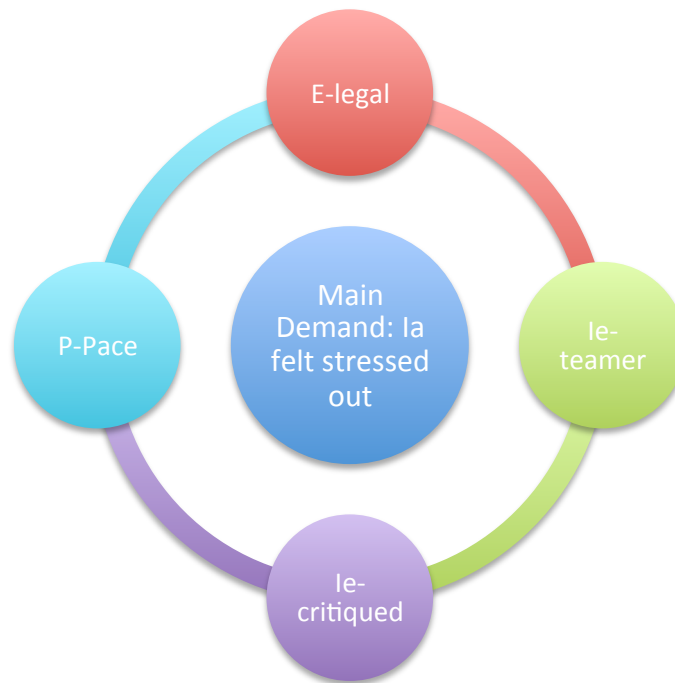
“Call” – “unrealistic expectations” (E, Ie & Ia) (C-didn't ask for info)

Call to a detective (E)

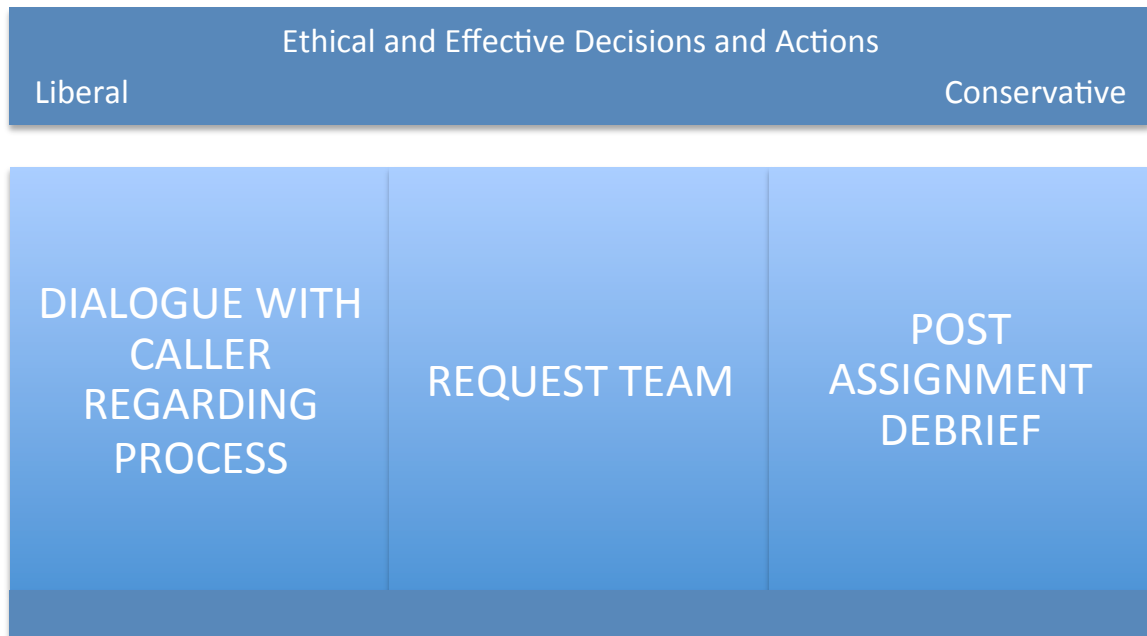
The caller was agitated P (pace)(C-didn't ask to slow down) started asking about 2 people/2 separate incidents – “Big Ed” and “Little Ed” Ia (C-vented frustration to teamer by typing on Wordpad)

She kept asking (E) the detective the same questions over and over again (Ia)(C-checked with teamer for suggestions, & C-took feeds)

3. Graphic documentation identifying the constellation of demands and the main demand.



4. Documentation of possible control options in response to main demand within the constellation.



APPENDIX E: Typical clarifying questions and responses during supervision sessions

Q: The call was initiated by the woman in an office, right?

A: Yes she didn't offer any details; she just said "call," the number was already entered in the system.

Q: You knew it was an office setting because it was a cubicle or saw office furniture?

A: She was at a desk and there were file cabinets and a bulletin board with documents displayed, and I could see other office spaces in the background.

Q: You said the calls place "unrealistic expectations" on interpreters. What do you mean?

A: I felt this call is representative of the unrealistic expectations about "what we do."

The caller is going at this very fast pace, she is critiquing me and we can't even do engage in our process. She directed me maintain eye contact but I was leaning in and saw her peripherally while I was processing the detective's message.

Q: What was your understanding of her role?

A: She wasn't providing legal representation. She was an advocate from an agency like vocational rehabilitation.

Q: What did she do that indicated she was agitated?

A: Her facial expressions were very strong, her body language was very tense and her rate of speed she responded was quick and "sharp."

Q: Where "Big Ed" and "Little Ed" her clients' sign names?

A: Oh, now that I think about it, probably. At the time it just added to the confusion that both clients had the same name.

Q: At that point, did you think she was asking the same questions because she...was seeking more details? Trying to clarify something the detective said or it was related to the interpretation?

A: I didn't know but I was really started to "sweat", which was exactly what the interpreter I replaced had said. It was so stressful.