# UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

IRIS
Improving Rural Interpreter Skills

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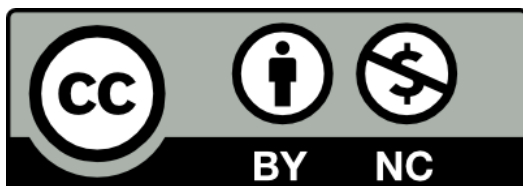
Module 5: Ethical Decision-Making Frameworks

Module content developed by Naomi Sheneman
[ASL lecture] **by Joe Toledo & Amy Williamson**

Module Overview & Objectives

Overview: Participants in this module will review the commonly discussed ethical decision-making frameworks in the sign language interpreting profession, the Demand-Control Schema and Role-Space Framework. Participants will also explore what it means to make deaf-centered ethical decisions.

Learning Outcomes and Objectives

Upon completion of this module participants will be able to:

1. Summarize the Demand-Control Schema and how it can be applied to ethical decision-making
2. Summarize the Role-Space Framework and how it can be applied to ethical decision-making
3. Describe how interpreters can shift their current practices to become a deaf-centered ethical practice

Pre-Test

NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this pre-test

Answer the following questions:

1. What is the Demand-Control Schema?
2. What is a demand?
3. What is a control?
4. What is the Role-Space Framework?
5. Give an example of each of the three axes in the Role-Space Framework.
6. Why should your ethical decisions be deaf-centered?

Introduction

In the recent decade within the sign language interpreting profession, there has been much attention on the Demand-Control Schema and the Role-Space Framework and how those can help us better understand/explore the thinking behind our ethical decisions. However, there is one missing framework. *What do deaf consumers want us to do?*

There is a need to explore how deaf consumers want us to approach ethical decisions. Our values and beliefs often shape/influence our ethical decisions. Do those values and beliefs support a deaf-centered perspective? Do those values and beliefs support other marginalized individuals?

In this module, you will learn about one study on Deaf interpreters' ethics which could offer insights on how we could incorporate more deaf-centered practices in our work to ensure quality communication access and interaction.

Finally, it is important to recognize that our work in rural communities may influence our approach to ethical decision making.

Demand-Control Schema

Overview

The Demand-Control Schema (DC-S) framework was developed by Robyn K. Dean and Robert Q. Pollard (2013) based on work done by Robert Karasek (1979) regarding occupational health. Dean and Pollard propose that our work efficiency is determined by our decision-making processes in our interpreting work. The more decisions we need to make, the higher our stress is. Dean and Pollard encourage interpreters to analyze their decision-making process in order to develop the tools needed to minimize stress levels and improve work efficiency. Additionally, interpreters need to be aware of their decisions and how they affect the consumers they work with by considering potential outcomes and consequences.

This module does not give an in-depth look at the DC-S but if you are interested to learn more, webcasts of Dean's lectures are available on the UNC-Project CLIMB website.

What is a demand?

A demand is defined as something that emerges during our interpreting work creating a significant impact on our ability to continue interpreting effectively. It is important to recognize that there are many *potential* demands within an interpreting situation but they become *actual* demands if we are compelled to make a decision to resolve them so that we might get back on track to interpret effectively.

Dean and Pollard divided demands into four categories:
- **E**nvironmental: related to the setting
- **I**nterpersonal: related to consumers and interpreters' interactions/communication needs
- **P**aralinguistic: related to how consumers express their languages
- **I**ntrapersonal: related to the interpreter's inner feelings and thoughts

Demand categories

In Dean and Pollard's book, they provided a grid offering an overview of each category (Dean & Pollard, 2013, p. 5).

Environmental	Interpersonal
• Goal of the environment • Physical surroundings • Personnel/Clientele • Specialized terminology	• Power/authority dynamics • Communication style • Communication goals • Emotional tone/mood • Cultural dynamics • Thought worlds
Paralinguistic • Physical limitations that impact clarity of signing/speech • Neurodivergence • Physical positioning • Idiosyncratic sign/speech • Volume • Pace • accents	**Intrapersonal** • Feelings/thoughts • Physiological distractions • Psychological responses

What is a control?

A control is defined as a *potential* option to address the demand. Interpreters should have more than one control to consider. Liz Mendoza's 2012 paper explored how novice and expert hearing interpreters make ethical decisions. Her data revealed that expert interpreters are more likely to have more options to resolve ethical dilemmas that emerge in our work.

While interpreters are processing ethical decisions, they have several control options to consider before taking action. Dean and Pollard propose that there is a spectrum of control options that range from conservative to liberal. Conservative means less action on the interpreter's part. Liberal means more action on the interpreter's part. Conservative and liberal do not equate bad vs. good. Some situations require less or more action on our part. Most ethical decisions that are made fall between conservative and liberal ends of this spectrum. Implemented controls that are too liberal or too conservative are considered unethical decisions and are not as common; those are considered outliers.

Control categories

Dean and Pollard proposed three control categories (Dean & Pollard, 2013, p. 19)**:**

- **Pre-assignment:** actions you could take prior to the interpreting assignment
  - Examples: personal characteristics, education, personal and work-related experience, direct preparation for the assignment
- **During assignment**: actions you take during the interpreting assignment
  - Examples: acknowledgement of demands, positive self-talk, behavioral interventions, all interpretations/translations, quality of relationships, The Code of Professional Conduct
- **Post-assignment:** actions you take after the interpreting assignment
  - Examples: Follow-up with consumers, follow-up with referring party, further education on the topic, debriefing/venting, self-care, supervision

Concurrent Demands

Dean and Pollard argue that sometimes our chosen control(s) may immediately resolve the demand. However, in some other situations, our chosen control may result in a concurrent demand. That is, a new demand that emerges resulting from our control. That would mean we need to go through the process of creating a new control to resolve the concurrent demand.

DC-S in Summary

As an additional resource
for DC-S, see this summary
of concepts produced by
Project CLIMB.

NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

Create an original post based on your knowledge of DC-S along with the refresher in this module addressing the following prompts:

- How do (or could) you use DC-S in your work? Give an example of how it shapes your ethical decision making process.
- Describe how potential demands and controls are related to rural contexts.
- From your perspective, are there any limitations the DC-S framework?

Response post directions:

React to the post of one of your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

Role-Space Framework

What is Role-Space?

Llewellyn-Jones and Lee (2014) challenged the premise that the interpreter's role is fixed and static in all interpreting interactions. They argue that interpreters should adapt accordingly to each situation and who they are working with. This means the interpreter's role as well as how they insert themselves in interpreting spaces are constantly dynamic. Their model has three axes:

- *x-axis:* Participant alignment- how the interpreter aligns with the hearing and deaf consumers
- *y-axis*: Interaction management: how the interpreter manages the interaction
- *z-axis:* Presentation of self: how much of the interpreter's self is apparent/revealed in the interpreting situation

Additional Resource: This Conversation Role-Space and Translation video is available for you to review if you have the time and want to learn more about role-space framework and its application.

Alignments: An Overview

As with the DC-S's conservative vs. liberal control spectrum, those three alignments represent degrees of an interpreter's actions. In some situations, interpreters do more to manage the interaction but do not do much to align with the participants nor present themselves. In other situations, there could be less action on the interaction management and more action on other axes.

Watch this video for a further explanation on the alignments.

Finally, watch this video on the relationship between this framework and ethics
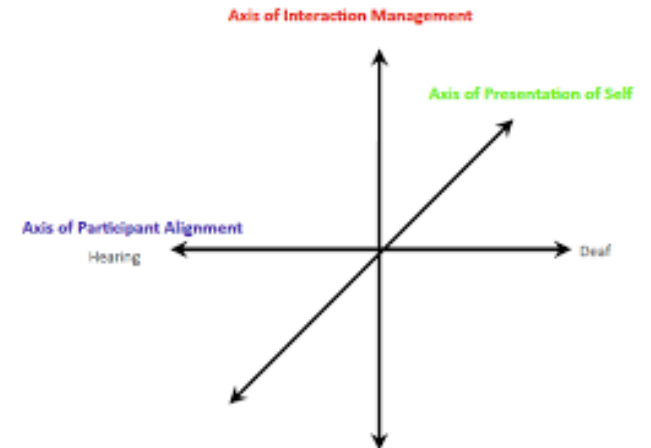
GoReact Discussion: Role-Space Framework

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___NOTE:___ You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

Create an original post addressing the following prompts:

- What are your thoughts about the role-space framework?
- Do you think role-space in rural contexts is different than what has been described by Llewellyn-Jones and Lee? Why or why not?
- Give some of examples of alignments you have incorporated in your work as interpreters?

Response post directions:

React to the post of one of your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

GoReact Discussion: Deaf-centered ethical decisions

NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

Create an original posting in GoReact addressing the following questions:

- Do you think interpreters and deaf consumers share the same perspective on what is ethically sound? Why or why not?
- What do you think deaf-centered ethical decisions would look like?
- Do you feel you have made deaf-centered ethical decisions? Without disclosing assignment specifics, give a few examples of the following:
  - deaf-centered ethical decisions you have made and
  - decisions that might not be deaf-centered. If you could redo those situations, how would you change those decisions?

Response post directions:

Review and respond to at least two other participants' proposed resources by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

Impact of values on our ethical decisions, part I

Our own values do have influences on how we approach ethical decisions. Read Deaf Interpreters' Ethics: Reflections on Training and Decision-Making by Naomi Sheneman (2016) and watch a summary Deaf Interpreter Ethics video of this research, which discusses how Deaf interpreters' values influence how they make ethical decisions.

Additionally, view the video accompanying Thinking Through Ethics: The Processes of Ethical Decision Making by Novice and Expert American Sign Language Interpreters by Liz Mendoza (2012).
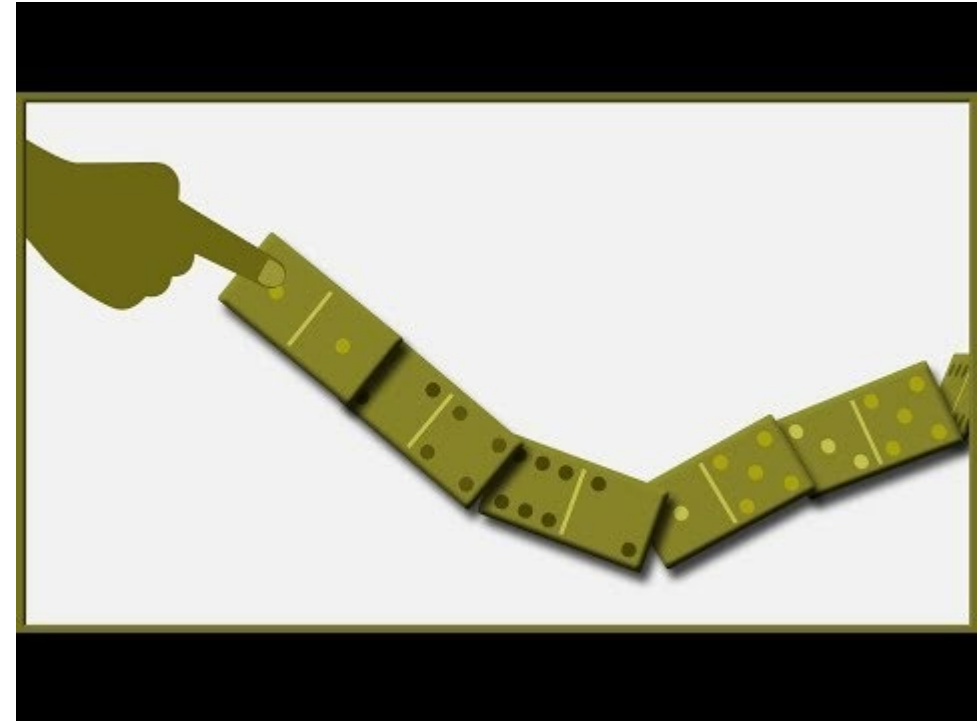
What are your ethical values?

Ethics demands a closer look that goes beyond the scope of a simple right vs. wrong. When going a bit further into the study of ethics there are additional ways to look at ethical decisions and the impact of said decisions.

- **Deontological** ethics determines the goodness or badness of the action by examining the action itself.
- **Teleological/Consequentialism** determines the goodness or badness of an action by examining its impact.

View these two videos to see examples of each and consider how your work in rural communities influence your approach to ethical decisions.

Impact of values on our ethical decisions, part II

GoReact Discussion: Impact of values on our ethical decisions

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NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

Create an original post sharing your reflection addressing the following questions:

- What lessons did you get from either the Sheneman (2016) or Mendoza (2012) study?
- Are you more deontological or consequential/teleological? Why? What factors influence you to be one or another?
- What values do you want to develop to make different ethical decisions?

Response post directions:

Review and respond to at least two other participants' proposed resources by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

Synchronous Session: "It depends!"

This module **requires your attendance** at a synchronous session. Your facilitator(s) will share the exact details of the date and time of this session.

Come prepared to discuss the following questions:
- When we talk about ethical situations, the most commonly used comment is: "It depends!" Discuss what this phrase means and why it is problematic.
- Why are interpreters not comfortable with discussing/identifying various factors that would lead us to different ethical decisions? (It depends on *what?)*
- In this module, we reviewed different important discussions related to ethical conduct. What was the most profound point for you that will shape how you approach your work going forward?
- Why is it important to adopt a deaf-centered ethical practice? How might we support others in that avenue?

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Post-Test

Answer the following questions:

1. What is the Demand-Control Schema?
2. What is a demand?
3. What is a control?
4. What is the Role-Space Framework?
5. Give an example of each of the three axes in the Role-Space Framework.
6. Why should your ethical decisions be deaf-centered?

Correct responses: 1. DC-S is a framework to help process ethical decisions by identifying demands and controls., 2. A demand is something that affects their interpreting work, 3. A control is a possible solution to address the demand., 4. The Role-Space Framework challenges the premise that interpreters enters each interpreting situation with the same approach and boundaries., 5. Three alignments: participant, interaction management, presentation of self. Examples will vary., 6. Various answers will apply.

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