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Thursday, December 4, 2014, what's in a Name? webinar with Anna Witter-Merithew, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

>> *Turner:* Good morning, everyone. I will go ahead and start just a couple of minutes early to go over some housekeeping. I am Randi Turner and welcome to this webinar session, what's in a name with Anna Witter-Merithew. And I will allow her to introduce herself and I will go over some housekeeping. All your microphones are muted. Should you have a question, you can pull out the question box. You can actually pull it from the panel that you have on your webinar screen. If you click just on the top like it is a tab, you can pull it out and see what you type in there in a larger format. And ask questions or respond to questions that way. We are going to try some poll questions in the middle of session so you will have to click on the answers. At that time, the captioning disappears. So just be patient while we let the poll kind of do its thing, take about 30 seconds and then we will

come back to the picture with Anna as well as the PowerPoint for the session.

There are two ways that you can listen to the session. You can use your own speakers on your computer or you can use the toll free number. (877)226-9790 and you will be asked for a access code 3799711. You can set up the captioning in a separate window. It is in the webinar session but if you want to have it larger, you can actually open up a separate window and set the captioning you want for your own use should you need to do so. TCC.1capapp.com is where you go. So it is tcc.1capapp.com and the user ID and passwords are DARS. We do have someone on our speaker phone so let's see. Also in about two weeks, you will receive your certificate of attendance. Do you have to do the pre and post test. I reminded everyone and recent the test out as well as those people that registered within the last 24 hours. So you do need to do both pre and post test and the evaluation at the end. Those are also things that the MARIE Center needs, which is where Anna is from. The mid America interpreter education center, part of the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Center. NCIEC. We will be sharing your contact information. If there is any problems with that, please let me know. You must keep the webinar screen active which means when you use the arrow like I am doing and I click on that screen, you need to be on that screen.

You need to have your arrow on that screen so that you clicked on that screen and you are not taking notes or doing something else on the side because then your webinar screen is not active and the system will calculate how much time you are actually on that screen. That is a way that we also judge attendance. If you have any problems, you can call or text me at that phone number (512)484-2240. And I will be happy to try to troubleshoot with you any problems you have.

Again, any comments or questions, just use the question box. I may-I will respond to things I can answer quickly. We will also have a time for question and answers at the end of the session. And I guess we will go ahead and get started. I will try to figure out if you are on the phone how to mute that. Someone is joining the conference. Otherwise, thank you, Anna for joining us and thank you MARIE Center for donating your services and hosting this webinar for us. Take it away, Anna.

>> *Witter-Merithew*: My appreciation to Randi for joining you a short period of time today. Randi, are you going to show my PowerPoint? Great. Thank you. So as Randi said, and as is stated on this slide, I am the director of the University of Northern Colorado MARIE Center and the MARIE Center is one of six member centers that comprise the national consortium of interpreter education centers. We are all funded by the department of education, rehabilitation services

administration with the goal of increasing the quality and quantity of sign language interpreters working with deaf individuals.

Today, I am going to be speaking about our identity as interpreters and how we perceive ourselves, our work, and the individuals that we serve and how those perceptions impact our professionalism. And when I am speaking about professionalism, I am generally speaking about the conduct, the aims that qualify a professional person. A professional person is someone like us who is engaged in an occupation that is recognized as a profession.

There is certainly some question in terms of how society might perceive our work and our role. We have been in the process of professionalization for several decades and I would say at this point in our evolution, we are from an, external perspective, we are an emerging profession but like many young professions and social service professions like teaching, et cetera, the progress to gainful social recognition, societal recognition has been slow.

The title that I am using for the presentation today is Interpreter: What's in a name? Next slide.

No, I don't think -- I think you went one too far.

>> *Turner:* Did I? Okay.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* I think so. Yes, there we go. Thank you.

So this well known quote, what's in a name comes from the work of William

Shakespeare and his play Romeo and Juliet. They meet and fall in love in Shakespeare's tale of these star crossed lovers. They are doomed from the start as members of two warring families and here Juliet tells Romeo that a name is an artificial and meaningless convention. And that she loves the person who is called Montague name and not the Montague family. He rejects his family name and vows to Juliet that he will deny his father and then be newly baptized as Juliet's lover. So this one line encapsulates the central struggle and strategy of the play and is one of Shakespeare's most famous quotes.

So my question to you is, was Juliet correct in a name is not -- is what is important? Now, we have to remember that Juliet is -- was very young. I think she was 14 to be exact. So she had little life experience to guide her. We certainly know that many of us, including myself, early in our careers when we first came to the career of interpreting, we may not have possessed all of the qualities and competencies and disposition that is are necessary to be considered a professional interpreter.

And you know, and so we claimed the name interpreter but may not have been able to fulfill the intention of that name. So next slide.

There is at least one poet that disagrees with Shakespeare, the poem, what's in a name, a young Indian poet offers an alternative

assessment. Here you can see what she says which is essentially what is in a name? Didn't the great poem claim? I dare to tell you what's in a name. Identities that represent who we are of laughter, kindness, love or fear! Could the Fuhrer and Bambi everybody called the same? Mom, the name that brings unconditional affection. Father whose name brings protection, how can it everybody just a name? A name is a founding stone to all emotional resurrection!

So her point is that a name evokes many emotions and reactions. And I would suggest that the same is true with the name interpreter. Next slide.

Oh, this is the rest of the poem. I am sorry. So she is essentially saying, you know, would Shakespeare have gone by any other name than Shakespeare? That his name has such exalted fame, would he have accepted being called John Smith? Well, of course not. So feelings, the heart which rules half of man or was it with his mind he led? I'd tell him if I ever could, what's in a feeling? What would he have then said? Okay. Now, next slide.

So in the time that we have together, I want to explore a bit about what it means to be a K through 12 interpreter in today's society and how we represent ourselves as professionals, reveals how we feel about that name interpreter and impacts how others perceive that name interpreter.

Next slide.

There are many meanings attached to the name interpreter all representing efforts to determine just what is in the name interpreter. One such effort is to define the name interpreter through metaphorical representations. It seems to me that the metaphors used to define the name interpreter fall into two categories. Metaphor that is relate to an interpreter as some inanimate object like a conduit or a bridge or those that focus on the surface function of the interpreter. And such association speak volume about how an interpreter is perceived. So the inanimate metaphors remove any human element to the nature of an interpreter and instead focus on the early conceptions of our work in a were based on the notion of invisibility, noninvolvement, machine like approach. And this conception of our work was the result of the desire to create role boundaries that shift the identity of the interpreter from an over-engaged benevolent caretaker which was prior to our establishment of interpreting as a profession, that it then belonged to the consumer and power for managing the communication belonged to them. But in reality, it was a faulty orientation from the onset, wasn't it? Because interpreting is a socially constructed event that happens in the midst of human interaction. And therefore, it requires human behavior. The functional metaphors that exist give some inside into the nature of the interpreter as a human. And as we

have explored what it means to be an interpreter in the midst of human communication, those functional metaphors have evolved to reflect a growing understanding of who we are and what we do.

Helper is often seen as negative because it is seen as connected to the pre RID era when the benevolent caretaker often stepped into the role of helping deaf people communicate with those who didn't know sign language. The facilitator metaphor is another way of talking about helping but it communicates some degree of attachment or objectivity.

But as we begin looking at interpreting through the lens of both language and culture, labels like metaphor -- I mean like mediator or broker emerged and those were metaphors that conveyed at least to some degree the negotiations that -- in which we engage around meaning and those are often a very important part of what we do.

The more current metaphor is that of the interpreter as a co-participant or a co-constructor of meaning, indicating that the interpreter is someone who is contributing in an active way and therefore impacting the outcome. I feel like this label, this metaphor is an effort to recognize that interpreters do in fact impact each communication event whether intentionally or unintentionally. And it encourages us to consider how we engage as co-participants but while still remembering that the communication event is not ours. It is

owned by the consumers involved. Although it is impacted by our involvement.

So I am -- we would like to poll you with our first poll question to get a sense of which of these metaphors are most familiar to you or were part of how you were trained as you entered the field of interpreting. Randi, can we have that first poll question?

>> Yes, ma'am. Just remember when we have the question, I will give you about 30 seconds to answer and we will lose the captioning for that moment. But you will be able to see the question and answer. So here we go.

(First poll)

>> *Turner:* Okay. So that is one full minute. And what we have, and I am not sure that you can see this or not. But 65 percent of the participants said B. 16 percent of the participants said A. And 16 percent also said C. No one said D.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* well, great. Yes. So B related to the facilitator, the mediator and that particular metaphorical perspective, yes, there is the summary. Thank you.

>> *Turner:* I lost you. Can people still --

>> *Witter-Merithew:* I am now seeing the poll, the result.

>> *Turner:* So now I hide it. Okay.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* okay. Great.

>> *Turner:* Sorry.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* That is okay. So then B, which is notion of the interpreter as a communication facilitator, that generally seems to be the metaphor that most of us are the most comfortable with. Certainly the notion of the interpreter as a co-participant, it is a more recent perspective and is one that is -- it is significantly advances our perspective on the way we conceive our role and the way we apply our role and so it is one that is less familiar to people. So great. I appreciate that perspective. Could we have the next slide? Randi, could we have the next slide?

>> *Turner:* I have already gone forward, the theoretical slide is what I see.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* what I see is still the metaphorical slide.

>> *Turner:* It might be a delay in connection -- like internet connections.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* okay.

>> *Turner:* You can see that?

>> *Witter-Merithew:* No, it still says metaphorical for me. I am just wondering what the participants are seeing?

>> *Turner:* It looks like they are also seeing metaphorical. Okay. Give me one second. I don't know why it wouldn't be advancing. I am still connected or I wouldn't be able to talk. Hmm.

>> *Witter-Merithew*: It will be interesting to see if every time we do the poll question, it gets stuck like this and if so, we may want to eliminate that third part.

>> *Turner*: Okay. I have closed the poll questions. You can see?

>> *Witter-Merithew*: It still says metaphorical on my end. Got to love technology.

>> *Turner*: Yeah, we are fine until --

>> *Witter-Merithew*: were they provided with a copy of the PowerPoint ahead of time.

>> *Turner*: I did not send it ahead of time. I was going to send it afterwards. Let me close the PowerPoint and reopen it, if you will give me just a second.

>> *Witter-Merithew*: sure. So while we are waiting, I will try speaking a little bit to the next slide which is -- it is essentially what is happening in the next few slides is that we are looking at this label, this name interpreter through a variety of lenses. So we just looked at it through a metaphorical lens and gave some thought to the, you know, what those images are intended represent and what may have motivated the particular metaphor. And now I want to begin talking to you about some philosophical -- I mean theoretical framework that is also contribute to answering the question, what's in a name.

>> *Turner*: All right D that do anything?

>> *Witter-Merithew*: Not for me. It still says metaphorical.

>> *Turner*: Hmm. I apologize, but I don't know what to do. I have never had this happen. The captions are frozen too. So I can refresh the captions so let me refresh that screen. And we won't do polls anymore.

>> *Witter-Merithew*: Okay. We will just eliminate those poll questions.

>> *Turner*: Okay. That means I have to change the font size too.

>> *Witter-Merithew*: Thanks to all of you for being patient while we are trying to get this glitch.

>> *Turner*: You can see captioning now?

>> *Witter-Merithew*: Can I see captioning but it is not moving on my end.

>> *Turner*: It is on mine.

>> *Witter-Merithew*: Is it for the participants?

>> *Turner*: Let me stop sharing the screen and-let me take my screen off and then start again.

>> *Witter-Merithew*: There it is. There is the theoretical.

>> *Turner*: well --

>> *Witter-Merithew*: And it looks like the caption is working -- that the captioning is working again.

>> *Turner*: So you can see it? Everything is good?

>> *Witter-Merithew*: Yeah.

>> *Turner*: Okay.

>> *Witter-Merithew*: Okay. Great. So theoretical frameworks as I mentioned also contribute to us answering the question, what's in a name? Like all professions, there are schools of thought and scholarship that contribute to the meaning of the name interpreter. These schools of thought are born from the research of scholars in our field. And they also rely on and integrate the scholarship of the broader field of language interpretation. Translation, linguistics and other related disciplines. The ones listed on this slide certainly don't represent all of the theories that exist in our field, the theoretical frameworks that exist in our field. But they are the ones that I view as the most prevailing. And what is interesting about each is that they strive to give meaning to the complexities of what we do. And as a result, they help to define how we behave, how we think, what acts and practices we employ.

Most of these theories focus on the act of communication itself and how we process information while interpreting. And the implications of that, how we process information for our decision-making during the interpreting process. The theory of interpreting as social justice is more -- one of the more current emerging theories and it actually speaks more directly to our

motivation as interpreters. Our intention. The politics of interpreting and it gives a heightened attention to the status of deaf people in the American society and the power dynamics that are involved with minority language speakers interfacing with the broader society. It is a model that encourages interpreters to recognize and use their power to create greater degrees of power balance and equity for deaf people.

Growth and maturity as a field and each encourages us to continue giving thought to what it means to be an interpreter. And although on the surface, it may seem like these theories are competing with one another. In reality, they are all the result of our quest to better understand what we do and offer us the opportunity to gain greater insight by looking at what it means to be an interpreter through a variety of lenses.

And although we might find ourselves ascribing to one theory more than the others, it is important that we understand and appreciate all of them and what they offer us in application of these theories the one that has been most fully conceptualized in terms of what it means for our practice, what we do specifically is the work of dean and pollard. And what I mean by that is the work of Dean and Pollard and interpreting as a practice profession and you may know their work more specifically under the label of demand control schema, demand

control schema. That it is very practical in that equips the interpreter with tools to guide them through the decision-making process and those reflect on their work and also how to collaborate in very specific ways with colleagues. And so in terms of it moving from just a theoretical framework to an actual practical framework for day to day decision-making within your practice as an interpreter, I think that it is the theory that is the most fully conceptualize. It provides a way that interpreting is impact. One of poll questions is which of these theories you feel you know the most about? which of these theories is the, you know, the most familiar to you? which is the one that or ones that have the greatest influence and application in your day to day work? And you can take sometime to think about that for yourself.

>> *Turner:* I am sorry, just one second. We had the caption freeze again. And hang on just one second. I kind of goofed here again. I want to increase the size.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* So am I correct that you don't want me to continue talking while you are working on this?

>> *Turner:* Go ahead. I got it.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* Okay. Great. And so again I just want to summarize the theoretical perspectives on what it means to be an interpreter. So again, all of these are efforts to try to capture the

complexities of what we do as an interpreter and for us to have the deepest, richest conceptualization of what we do as an interpreter, understanding all of these theories and what they mean for our work is the best case scenario.

But as I mentioned, it is common that there are schools for thought and so you know, different teachers in interpreter training programs may ascribe to one theory over another and they will use that theory as the framework in which they embed their instruction around what interpreting is.

Okay. So the next slide.

A third lens through which we can consider the question interpreter, what is in a name is what I call the experiential lens. And I divided this -- into two, one relating to consumers and one relating to our experience as practitioners. And I suspect that it is at this experiential level that the words of the Indian poet that we looked at earlier are most easily applied. Because it is our experiences that evoke the greatest feelings about what it means to be an interpreter. This isn't an all inclusive list but it is one that represents the more common references that Dr. Leilani Johnson and I encountered when we did a study from 2000 to 2005 about interpreter competencies. We had the privilege of talking with over 400 consumers and interpreters about their perceptions and experiences related to

what makes an interpreter competent and ready for practice. As part of this, their experiences as interpreters or with interpreters were discussed. This study was very informative on many levels. One of the ways I was most personally impacted by the work that we did was to realize how differently we as interpreters see ourselves versus how others see us. Particularly it was surprising to hear so many consumers particularly hearing consumers, talk about the lack of interpersonal skills that impacted their relationships with interpreters. And how interpreters struggled in their interpersonal relationships with members that work within the systems. In which interpreters work. So for example, we heard most commonly related to K through 12 interpreters that school administrators found them to be the most difficult portion of the workforce that they had to work with, that they were often at odds with one another, and that they were often at odds with teachers. And interpreters often talked about this as part of the internal conflict they had to manage and they perceived it as a general lack of respect or professional recognition for the work that they did.

So interpreters perceived that tension as being the result of lack of value for their contributions and the hearing consumers perceived it as a lack of an interpreter's ability to get along well and to function well as part of a team and to be collaborative as part

of a team.

And this feedback wasn't just limited to K through 12 interpreters. We heard this from doctors, from, you know, hospital personnel who talked about how offended they were by the lack of interpersonal skills on the part of interpreters who would show up and sit in a chair, reading a book or, you know, engaged in playing games, you know, on their phone while they were waiting for a doctor to arrive rather than engaging with the health care professionals to see if they could have better communication with the deaf patient. So again, I was just really taken back because my perception -- my personal experience has been as an interpreter that typically people are really happy to see me and I am happy to see them and I had felt well received and well respected. And so my perception is that we have had a fairly good public image. But that was not consistent with the research data that we collected.

So certainly we can recognize that our focus on being recognized as professionals has consumed a great deal of our energy and that what we desire in terms of recognition is often elusive. Right? So what would it look like if we were being respected? I think another piece of this is that we often receive a lot of stress and tension if we perceive that deaf people are not being treated well and that that, you know, concerns us. And we somehow feel a greater degree of

responsibility in those types of situations. So consumers perceive interpreters as a means of access. Conversely some consumers perceive interpreters as a barrier to access. And as they talked about interpreters as a barrier to access, it was always twofold. Part of it was that deaf people said, you know, it is hard when interpreters can't get along with hearing people because that blocks my, you know, navigation through hearing systems and they also said that when an interpreter is incompetent but accept assignments that they are not qualified for, then they become a barrier to the deaf person gaining access.

We heard from a lot of consumers that they felt interpreters were just focused on themselves and that it was always about the interpreter. They were very interpreter centered rather than either consumer centric or system centric. We talked to other consumers who absolutely saw the interpreter -- this was true primarily of hearing consumers who absolutely saw interpreters as the expert on anything deaf, including the individual deaf person that they might be interpreting for. You know, that they would have insight into that person's background and personal data and personal information as if they were their companion or, you know, have some deep personal relationship with them.

But we also talked with consumers who saw interpreters as very

present and engaged and they had very positive experience was interpreters. And there were those that saw interpreters as detached and disinterested. So very broad base of experiences that consumers have had with interpreters and their observations of our behaviors and our actions let them to perceive what it means to be an interpreter.

Conversely in the same research project in talking with interpreters, interpreters felt that they were often perceived as volunteers who were just engaged in doing this activity as a, you know, as a volunteer contribution or almost as if it was just a side interest that they had.

And practitioners talked a lot about feeling conflicted. So their experience is that they often felt conflicted and the conflict was -- the source of the conflict was varied. Sometimes the conflict was based in the knowledge that they didn't possess all that they needed to be able to do what was required of them. Sometimes it was that they were acutely aware, particularly in K through 12 settings, that depended on the profile of the child they were working with, that regardless of what they did, it was not going to be enough to meet the needs that the child had.

Interpreters talked a lot about the role conflict and people expecting them to do things that they didn't feel either prepared to do or they were unsure if it was okay to do. So interpreters as

conflicted was a significant experience that was talked about. Another part of the interpreter experience was the interpreters undervalued or underappreciated. But as well, there were interpreters who talked about the interpreter as a partner, a collaborator, a team player. And the interpreter as professional. So again, wide range of experiences and these experiences may not be consistent with your own, meaning that there maybe additional experience that is are not represented in the list here.

So again, give some thought as you are thinking about what is in the name from that metaphorical lens or through that metaphorical lens, through that theoretical lens and now through this experiential lens, what does being an interpreter mean to you?

Next slide. Yes, so mixed messages. We certainly have received and likely projected a lot of mixed messages. On one hand, theories about our work continue to show the complexities that are involved in our work. On the other hand, different consumers want very different things from us. On one hand, we are told we are members of a profession and we are guided by a long list of ethical tenets. On the other hand, not all settings in which interpreters work respond to the position of interpreter as a profession. On one hand, we often demand professional recognition. On the other hand we have not achieved the credentials necessary to be considered professional. So

in reality, in this era of such market disorder where there are great variation necessary standards, interpreter readiness, levels of authority granted to interpreter, the only thing we can really control is our own behavior and actions as professionals. It is easy, I think, to get caught up in the politics of interpreting and how much we are getting paid or how we are being treated by employers or what new standard is being imposed on us. And in doing so, we become distracted from being clear about who we see ourselves as being and what we are willing to do in the name of interpreting.

Next slide. So this graphic provides a model that can guide us into a clear understanding of ourselves. It represents a cycle of professional engagement in which we can participate that leads to professional action. The cycle is comprised of three aspects. Our professional values and professional commitment to those values. Our professional knowledge and understanding. And I know that in a recent survey that Dr. Leilani Johnson did, she mentioned that a very high percent of K through 12 interpreters believed that they needed their own organization and that signifies a desire for career identify and mechanism for promoting that identity and the specific needs of interpreters in the K through 12 setting. An important part of the ability to create and maintain a organization is a clear definition of what are the professional values of the members. If the

professional values are the same as other interpreters such as upholding the rights of deaf people to linguistic access and the competent and ethical practice of interpreting, then what specific application of these values underscores the needs for a separate identify? And equally important is what personal commitment do we each individually have to the collective professional values and ensuring their application not only to our work but to the work of our colleagues every day?

In terms of professional skills and abilities, the research into the patterns and practices of interpreters is, you know, for example, what are the acts and practices of interpreters in legal settings? There is a document that delineates what are the best practices. Dr. Leilani Johnson at the UNC do it center is working on a similar project to define what are the acts and practices that constitute best practice in K through 12 settings. What are the best practices in healthcare, you know, in other settings?

It is important that we understand that and that I think that regardless of the settings in which we work, it is important that we have a strong orientation to the system itself and we are able to bring a systems-thinking orientation versus an interpreter centric orientation.

And if we have that system orientation, system thinking

orientation then I think we can advance our ability to understand and respond more effectively to the demands that exist within that system.

When we are balanced in these three aspects of professionalism, it increases our ability to engage in a professional action with higher degrees of leverage. And higher leverage leads to improved outcomes. So if we are looking in anyone of these three areas, our professional actions are less effective because our actions tend to be more reactionary and when we react, it is often negative. And our reactions lead to low leverage and inability effect change.

So in other words, in order to achieve what we want in terms of professional standing, we have to have our own house in order. And so the question is, do we individually and collectively have a balance, the balance needed, in these three aspects of professionalism? Are we -- are we acutely, deeply aware of what we value and what our personal commitment is to those values? Are we equipped with the appropriate degree of skills and abilities that we need to do the work that is before us every day? Do we have sufficient professional knowledge and understanding of the systems in which we work, of our own field of interpreting, of the implication of the decisions that we make? Are we balanced in all of those areas? Next slide.

>> *Turner:* Anna, we have a question that I think really fits appropriate to this slide and the one before it so would I like to put

it forward to you. Will the interpreters who have been rude and detached know that they have to change their individual behavior? Or will they just keep on keeping on while other interpreters are already self aware or becoming more so?

>> *Witter-Merithew*: Yes, well, you know, this is an age old question; right? Self awareness is a process. And I would have to say, you know, in my own experience as an interpreter, that the one's awareness of self, who they are, why they are here, what they believe about themselves, what they believe about what they are doing is an evolving process. Some of us are more inclined to embrace that process and in doing so, we sort of expediate, we create a quicker path to understanding and with that understanding, humility. Others are more resistant. And the resistance, you know, it can come from a lot of different places. It can come from difficult life experiences that they have had, that have left them hurt or -- yeah. Hurt or scared in some way. It can relate somewhat to personality. Stopping to reflect is a deliberate action and it suits certain personalities than others. I have always been known since ways a very small child as a very serious-minded individual who spent a lot of time worrying and thinking and reflecting. And so it clearly, it is an inherent part of my personality so I find it easy to do.

But I have wonderful, loving close relationships with many

people whose personality guides them in a different way and they find the exercise of reflection and always focusing on one self and ways to improve one self as a bit overindulgent. So your question, it is like right, you know, will there continue to be practitioners who have limited self awareness and as a result of that, will perpetuate negative reactions from consumers and, you know, and have difficult work experiences? Yes. I suggest that we probably will continue to have those people. And because I think you will find them in any and all professions. And what we can hope for and what we can strive for is leading by example versus by preaching or taken someone else's agenda and trying to convert them. Rather try to just be as insightful as we possibly can and as collaborative as we possibly can and hope that the number and the body of reflective practitioners increases and so the quality of our collective identity continues to improve.

So this slide actually relates nicely to the question that was posed because professionalism really is that aspect of your personal identity and character that must develop if it isn't already present from a deeper commitment over time. So that is what -- what would it take for these individuals to change would be either a renewed commitment or a deepening of the commitment that they have to their work as an interpreter. I certainly know from myself that the reason that I came to this profession and the reason I have stayed are not

the same. I came to this profession by way of invitation. I grew up in a deaf family and many members of the deaf community encouraged me to consider interpreting. It was not something that I ever planned on or intended to do. But I accepted the invitation and began the process. Always in the back of my mind with the intention or possibility that I might do something else at some later point. I had done something else before I came to interpreting and I always thought that maybe I might go off and do something else at a later point in time.

But what happened over time, again, is that my commitment deepened because I grew and began to understand and appreciate the opportunities that interpreting provided to make a difference. And making a difference became increasingly important to me and to make a difference, I grew in my appreciation that I had to be the most profound way that I could make a difference was to be the most competent practitioner possible.

And that is what I set my mind to do. You know, and along the way, I have done a number of other things that include program development and program administration and teaching and consultation, you know, et cetera. But at my heart, you know, I am a practitioner. I have always been a practitioner and will -- that is my primary orientation to the field.

So I think that if we can respect that we all grow in different

ways and at different intervals and we don't necessarily all grow at the same time and we can respect that this professional identity is something that involves character, our character and that it must develop if it is not present over time and it can only develop when we have a deeper commitment. Deepening our commitment, you know, I would say that one of the greatest challenges before us as a field today rests in that very thing, that we need to more deeply, number one, we need the more deeply conceptualize what is our role as interpreters and some of these new theories about interpreting, like the social justice lens, et cetera, they challenge our thinking. And to say, right, what should we be doing?

>> *Turner:* I am sorry to interrupt you. We have lost the captioning so give me one second. It is totally gone. I think we are back in. One second. Okay. I think we are okay. Go ahead.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* Okay. So can we have the next slide? No, back one.

>> *Turner:* Oops.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* Yeah. So I want to underscore the importance of the commitment piece. We all live in a society where we all want things now and we want them fast and for the least amount of effort possible. Working hard for long periods of time is not our mind-set. Faster, quicker, easier is the route. So being committed

to increasing what we have to offer our consumer, our abilities and knowledge, as well as spending the time necessary to deepen our values it is active engagement. The I kind of engagement that not what we wish to have or expressing what we think we should have or believe we are entitled to or what we think others should be doing. It is the kind of engagement that is based on a deep and abiding commitment. And personally, it has been my experience and I strongly believe that without engagement, without connection, connection to deaf people, connection to other practitioners, connection to yourself and why you do what you do without that engagement, there is no commitment. And with no commitment then there is no ability the influence change or to create the professional standing that we all desire.

Next slide. So this graphic offers insight into how we will know we are engage and demonstrating a commitment to create the desired professional standing that we have as interpreters.

(Phone ringing)

>> *Turner:* Something of yours in that room.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* I am sorry, there is -- I am at my sister's home, and I believe this must be her phone. So I am sorry. I am sorry. So sorry.

So this particular graphic discusses the behaviors associated with professionalism and this particular graphic was drawn from the

healthcare field. I still find it very applicable to our experience. Each of these behaviors are important and some are more familiar to us than others. As an interpreter and interpreter educator, I focus on the scholarship and commitment to learning behaviors. And also due to my upbringing and personal values the area of responsibility and sense of duty are behaviors that are more readily identified in my way of being.

But all of these really are important. Some maybe just more important to you. The idea of self-care and self growth which is what we are talking about, the area of self awareness is essential to all of the others because knowing yourself is central to your ability to demonstrate all the other behaviors. So for example, self awareness is an essential element of being an effective collaborative team. The awareness that each member brings to the team process will significantly impact that team dynamic. And team dynamics are the typically unconscious, psychological forces that influence the direction of a team's interaction, behavior, and performance.

There is one researcher, Myers who compares team dynamics to the under currents in the sea which can carry boats that different direction than they intend to sail. Right? So he indicates the team dynamics are perceived as good when they improve the overall team performance and/or elicit the best out of the individual members. But

the team dynamic is perceived as problematic when they cause unproductive conflicts, demotivation or prevent team from achieving its common goals.

So this then ties back a bit to that feedback that Leilani and I received from like school administrators, hospital administrators, about the behaviors of interpreters and how those impacted the perception of the team, meaning the systems dynamic. Certainly there is other factors that can impact team dynamics such as the individual personalities within the team and among the consumers and the nature of the context in which the work is being done. But the one factor that each interpreter can control beyond the others in this cycle, is that of self awareness. Self awareness is an essential part of becoming a mature and ethically fit practitioner. So by exploring our own thoughts around identity, personal traits, experience was others, and your openness to feedback, you can begin the process of reflection towards the goal of increased self awareness.

This is an area of professionalism that we each have total control over because it depends solely on us and our ability to care for ourselves, look at ourselves, reflect, learn and grow. Next slide.

So this is one more graphic that represents aspects of professionalism from a little different orientation but one that is still very compatible to what we have been discussing. In this

graphic, professionalism is seen as involving eight aspects, compliance, character, comfort, conduct, communication, cognizance, commitment and completion. In most respects, these are simply different labels for some of the things that we have already discussed. So as I mentioned, cognizance parallel was self awareness as does conduct and compliance parallels with meeting professional standards. Process -- possessing the requisite skills and knowledge, attitudes, attributes that are important to being an interpreter. The character piece relates to our intention. What do we intend to achieve when we sit in the chair or stand in the spot and begin to raise our hands origin to use our voice to engage in the interpreting process? What is our intention? And what energy and level of focus do we bring to that? So character also relates to -- I mean comfort relates to our relationship with each other, our relationship to the content, how comfortable do we feel with them? How comfortable do we help them feel with us? How comfortable do we feel with our colleagues? And how comfortable do we make them feel with us?

Communication relation to our professional knowledge and our ability to communicate what we know in effective way that involves high leverage strategies versus reactionary load leverage statements. Just think about how we talk about our work to those that are unfamiliar with our work. And of course our work is very important to us but we

are often, if we think about hearing consumers, we are often interfacing with people for whom interpreting represents a very small part of what they are having to deal with on a day to day basis. It is 100 percent of what we are having to deal with but it represents a very small part. So how can I communicate what I do in a way that is efficient and meaningful to them, captures their attention but requires a limited amount of their time or investment to address?

Because in doing that, then I am recognizing -- I am able to look at what is happening through their perspective and to gain some insight into what it means to have an interpreter in their presence and I look for ways to make that process go as smoothly and efficiently as possible. So I think all of us can benefit from continuing to grow in our ability to talk about our work, to explain our work to others, to engage others for the little bit of time they need to be engaged to enable the interpreting process to work effectively. But particularly in our ability to always see what is happening through not just our own lens but the lens of the other people that are involved in the event.

So communication is a big one. And we have already talked about commitment. This graphic shows the necessity of a balance between our commitment to our professional interests, to that of the organization and system in which we work as a whole. And so that, you know, that

is very true. That goes back to what I was saying about being able to be systems thinker instead of interpreter centric. And completion refers to the outcome of our efforts. Are the situations in which we work, is that achieving the intended outcome? That is a big question at the end of the day for all of us.

So a big part of the measure of whether we have been successful or not how what happened impacts the consumers that were relying on our service, are they achieving what they intended to achieve? And if not, why not? What are we contributing to the process that is helpful or creating barriers?

Next slide. With this foundation in place and as you attempt to answer the question what is in a name? Where do you fall in the continuum of professional behavior? Are you under-involved? Meaning that you are failing to take action where action is necessary? Or are you over-involved, meaning you are pushing too hard and taking action that is not productive? Or are in the zone of helpfulness and in tune with behaviors that will yield high leverage outcomes?

Next slide.

I would leave you with these thoughts as you are deciding where on that continuum that your behavior and your actions reside. That when our practices and our acts work in opposition to our basic intention, meaning, I intend to be helpful in creating effective communication

events but my behavior is working in opposition to that basic intention or when we keep promoting self-interest over consumer well-being. Or when our behaviors are oppressive. Or when our behaviors lead to indifference, detachment, fear or complacency, then we are absolutely out of integrity with ourselves, with the label of what it means to be an interpreter and certainly with consumers.

Next slide.

So whatever habits we have forged up to this point, wherever we are today, we can decide to be in a different space and circumstances by remembering that a habit is the intersection of what we do, how we do it and the want to do it. Right? So I hope that my comments today have targeted all three of these aspects of a habit. But particularly our desire, because it is our commitment to change that is the most important. And as I said earlier, without engagement or relationship with ourselves, with one another, with consumers, there can be no commitment. So it is important to remember that our relationships are what will inspire our desire and commitment to do better.

Next slide. So I leave you with the same question that I began with and that is interpreter: what's in the name? I hope you will spend sometime thinking about the answering for yourself and deciding that what is in the name is of such significance to you that you will honor it and the people who are served by it. Thanks. And I guess

we will open it up for a bit of question and answers.

>> *Turner:* Okay. I will read a couple that we had during the session. Is there some kind of survey we can provide to the consumers so that we as interpreters can improve? And this was back when were you talking about I think the two different areas, how you -- your research on the businesses and the deaf community and then on interpreters and the different perspectives.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* Yes. I think this is a very hard one. I think that the -- because, you know, it is absolutely necessary, isn't it, that we gain regular, ongoing feedback so we can know how we are doing and whether we are meeting the needs of consumers. At the same time, it is a bit self focused when we ask consumers to take time out of whatever their schedule is to -- and add to their experience a layer of now having to provide us with feedback. Because doing that is a very political experience. It is very political on a number of levels. Number one, we know if we have been paying any attention, we know the dynamic exists between deaf people and interpreters and we know that it is at best it is a strained relationship. And so it is -- and that in the moment that is we are engaged in interpreting situation, there is just not a sufficient situation, to create sufficient relationship. I give you a bit of feedback and now you want me to give you specific examples. So I tried giving you specific examples but you want to tell

me now why you did that and what was motivating your decision. And now we are engaged in this discussion that goes beyond number what I as a consumer have time for or what I have interested in. Maybe even what I feel qualified to address. And so I think that our quest for feedback has to come through broader options, you know, like through the agencies with which we work, who can elicit feedback from consumers in a more private manner so that consumers can feel comfortable in being more honest. Through the use of deaf and hearing mentors who are paid for their time and focus on our growth and development and can be observing us during the moments that we are working and, you know, provide us with the kind of feedback we are looking for, as part of their job and their work with us.

I think we need to add a layer of supervision to the field that currently doesn't exist where practitioners, at least for the, you know, a reasonable amount of time which would I say at least a couple of years when they are newly inducted to the field, that there is someone who is helping to regulate their work and to provide both consumer feedback and support and engagement for improving.

I think we have to pay attention to the blogs to what deaf people are saying and have to be connected with other consumers to talk about and, you know, how what deaf people are talking about fits with our own experiences and what in our behavior may contribute to some of the

perceptions that deaf people have. I think about, as another resource, street leverage which is a great social media site where a lot of consumers and practitioners offers articles, thought pieces and engage in discussion. Around those, there is a number of really profound consumer presentations that are presented both in ASL and in written form that you can access there. So street leverage is a great social media site where a lot of insight can be gleaned.

>> *Turner:* Okay. Another comment that I think is pretty cool is once ITP system it looks like is going to implement this at the university at the end of each semester starting next spring. We need to find a balance in our behavior and maintain integrity and appropriate professionalism. But also to see how the interpreter support offers can provide better support for the interpreter. So it will be good information for everyone to have.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* Okay. So I am missing something. What is it that they are going to implement at the end of each semester?

>> *Turner:* It looks like something with this program. Let me ask the individual that made the comment. Hector Flores, I am going to open your microphone. Give me just a seconds. There we go. So Hector, you can -- I am not sure if you are hearing or deaf so your microphone is open if you are hearing. If you are deaf, type your comment into the questions box, what you were referring to. Oh, a

survey. A survey is what they will be implementing for the students at the university.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* It is a way for the deaf students to speak to their general experiences with interpreters and make observations and that data can be shared with the interpreting staff. Do I have it correctly?

>> *Turner:* Yes, ma'am, I think so. University of Texas El Paso.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* That is a great idea.

>> *Turner:* They will also include the professors it indicates here.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* Great. Great.

>> *Turner:* And Daniel Campbell, I would like to open your mic too because you had a comment earlier but I am not really sure which section it was relating to. So I will open your mic. Would you go ahead and you said I have been in both different situations. Do you have a microphone, Daniel? Maybe not. Maybe that was the two perspectives too. He says I don't have a mic. Don't worry about it. Maybe it was when we were talking about the two perspectives as an interpreter. Also I know Daniel is an administrator individual within the system and so the system there and so probably has that perspective as well as the --

>> *Witter-Merithew:* Yes. Yes, I know that, you know, I have

been on the consumer side. For example, in meetings where maybe you are using VRS for a phone conference and you have deaf colleagues that are participating in the meeting and you have consumer and so you are in the role of a consumer, listening to the interpretation and I know my own frustrations when that has happened and so I can imagine -- I can use that to help me remain sensitive to what it must be like to have to rely on interpreting services. And to offer ways of being and behaving that can help consumers to feel more comfortable. Yeah.

Or been on the side of trying to provide interpreting services and having limited resources, you know. For a number of years, I was at NTID as the coordinator of interpreting services and we provided over a thousand hours of week of interpreting so students and faculty members all over the campus and we had lots of interpreters but sometimes there were scheduling conflicts and the preferences of consumers couldn't be honored and it was very difficult. So for sure what we do is very complex. It is not easy. The solutions aren't easy. So it is easy to get overwhelm and just to say, well, then I just give up and what I am suggesting is that to the best of our ability, we stay focused on the one thing that we can control and that is our own behavior, our own commitment, what we contribute and our own commitment to collaborating with colleagues, consumers, to try the to improve the situation.

>> *Turner:* well, very good. Thank you very much, Anna, I don't ever any other questions. I will send the PowerPoints with the certificate of attendance.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* Can I get a copy of that, great.

>> *Turner:* And I have requested the CART transcript because some people want to go back and see what did she say about that part and she look at the transcript. I will record the evenings, so we have it electronically but there is no reason to record both. It has been awhile since I posted a webinar so hopefully the glitches are figured out. I think I have the polling thing.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* Thank you to all the participants for their cooperation in working through those.

>> *Turner:* And your attentiveness. It looks like it was well received. Lots of excellent feedback here that I will share with you in an e-mail. And we will get-we will send an evaluation out as well. A survey monkey evaluation of the session and the post test. So thank you. Have a wonderful day and the rest of your day in Reno and we will see you this evening at five o'clock, three o'clock your time, Anna.

>> *Witter-Merithew:* Bye-bye.

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