

Perception Conflicts

The Role of Sign Language
Interpreters in Court



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Power in perceptions

- Court's schema
- Deaf community's schema
- Interpreter's conduct
 - affects Court's perceptions
 - affects Deaf party's perceptions
- Do no harm



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Power in perceptions

- Deaf-heart
 - Forego ego, pride & unwillingness to fight for what is right (Colonomos, 2013)
 - Relationships with Deaf people should take precedence over other relationships (Coyne, 2013)
 - Interpreters can situationally disempower Deaf people (Suggs, 2013)



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Core value conflicts

Interpreter conduct

- A comforting hand
- A police interrogation
- Deaf preference
- Shepherding Deaf witnesses
- Transparent interpreting
- Trampling Deaf rights
- Perceptions/implications?
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- Perceptions/implications?



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Comfort levels

Court is uncomfortable

- Being aware of down line consequences
- Noticing decisions
- Evaluating consequences
- Transforming decisions to reduce harm

Legal norms unyielding

- Who can talk
- When can talk
- What topics
- Conduct before, during and after



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The role of the Deaf court interpreter

- More able to mediate the clash?
- Strict conventions tolerated more easily?
- Lead role in explanation of legal norms and expectations?



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Today and forward

- Be aware
- Notice decision points
- Evaluate and interpret options
- Transform decisions to modify patterns
- Never stop caring



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