

**Gallaudet University Department of Interpreting and Translation
2017-2018 Colloquium Lecture Series
Pamela Collins
April 13, 2018**

"Getting Scheduled: An Exploration Of The Process"

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Dr. Keith Cagle:

Welcome. Good morning and welcome to the final presentation in our lecture series. We are very excited to invite you to the colloquium. This colloquium is sponsored by the Department of Interpretation and Translation, as well as the Center for the Advancement of Interpretation and Translation Research. All presentations are archived in our webcast for you to view at a later time at no charge. We want to thank our two interpreters, Diana Markel, as well as Lorie Dutton, who will be interpreting for the colloquium presentation this morning. When Pamela has completed her presentation, we invite you all to a lunch at the second floor of the cafeteria to participate in a dialogue with Pamela Collins. I would like to now introduce Dr. Brenda Nicodemus to say a few words about the colloquium.

Dr. Brenda Nicodemus:

Thank you, Dr. Cagle. And, again, welcome to our audience. I want to say a few words about the colloquium. The lecture series is comprised of four lectures by a variety of scholars. We also invite scholars who are visiting audiences. Our last speaker is Pamela Collins who is a member of our faculty and is here to share with you her dissertation research about the scheduling of ASL-English interpreters, which I believe you will find fascinating.

The structure of today will start with Pamela's presentation. After that, we will invite Dr. Emily Shaw as a respondent to initiate some discussion with Pamela. When that response is over, we will then open it up for audience questions and comments. Please, at this point come to the front of the stage in order to ask your question. We will wrap up at about 11:30. And as Dr. Cagle said, you can then join us on the second floor of the cafeteria for a reception, in which we can celebrate Pam together.

One thing to note is that you can earn continuing education units for today. If you would like to benefit from CEUs, please see Marc Holmes. Marc, raise your hand. At the conclusion of this talk, you will need to sign a CEU form. Thank you to Marc for providing CEUs. I would like to now invite back Dr. Keith Cagle to introduce our speaker.

Dr. Keith Cagle:

We are thrilled to have Pamela Collins to come present this morning. A little bit about her background – She was born in Columbia, Maryland, which is a city not far away from D.C. She then moved to Atlanta, Georgia where she started learning ASL at the age of 25 from the Deaf community in Atlanta. She became part of that community and over the years traversed the career ladder. She has been full-time staff at Gallaudet Interpreting Service and we notice many GIS staff in the audience and former colleagues of Pamela's. Welcome!

Pamela then became a full-time professor in the Department of Interpretation and Translation last fall and we are thrilled to welcome her to our faculty. She is also a doctoral student in our program and plans to give her defense soon, which is something that we are all looking forward to. She has presented often internationally and nationally. And has been involved with PCRID, NAOBI DC, and DoIT support of students of color.

She is actively involved with the interpreting community. Pamela's mother is also in attendance. Her name is Jackie Cotton. Welcome! As a mother, she is proud of her daughter presenting today. To share a little bit about Pamela's family...Pamela has a grandmother in New York City who is in North Carolina, who is over 100. We are, again, thrilled to welcome Pamela Collins as our presenter this morning.

Pamela Collins:

Thank you. Thank you so much! So, hello! I am so excited to be here! And first, well, let me wait for Dr. Cagle to take a seat. Before I go on, I absolutely want to thank you for such a warm introduction and a welcome to me. Thank you, Keith and Dr. Nicodemus, thank you also, for being here and giving me this honor and inviting me to present today. So, hello, everyone! Thank you. There are so many familiar faces out there in the audience, those who are my supporters, it's lovely, and I'm thrilled and inspired that our all here! I don't want us to think we're in this room actually, this is a very formal room. I want you to think we're in my living room and a chance to chat.

Thank you again for coming. And I'm here to share some of the thinking that I've been doing over the last 18 years. From the moment I took on interpreting, there were situations that baffled me. There were situations that stopped me and paused me to think about why and that was continuous along my journey as an interpreter, and so I want to invite you into that journey and understand some of the things that I began to think about, and then four years ago actually started thinking about more seriously, more academically and decided to do more of an exploration. It doesn't just come from me. Obviously I wanted to have an approach, I didn't want just my personality and my opinions. I wanted to do a research explanation into this phenomenon. So, again, thank you for coming and welcome to my journey.

So what I'm talking about in some of these questions that arose is what to do and how interpreters were being scheduled. I was being scheduled and put on certain jobs and it raised questions for me. There were moments I was very baffled and those have stayed with me and continued on, and so I'm going to invite you into a parable, thinking of this as a village. It's a beautiful, sunny day and there's a river that goes through this town with a bridge over the river. And there's a woman who's gone out for a walk and she's

walking along the river. She looks over and she notices a baby floating down the river. She immediately jumps in and rescues the baby and takes it out, and then the next thing, a second baby comes floating down the river. And then another one. And then another. And at some point, it's no longer an individual baby but the babies are coming two by two and three by three and she's yelling to people in the town, "I need your help! Come! There are these babies all floating down the river!" And so people in the town come running and start helping to take the babies out. And it dawns on her that there's just too many babies. So she pauses and gets out of the river and people there are saying what are you doing? There are more babies? And she said "No, there are just too many babies, I'm going to start walking upstream and I need to figure out why are the babies in the river? How are they getting there?" So that's who I am, I am that woman. And I want to understand scheduling of interpreters.

So I'm walking upstream to figure out not just from my perspective, but from a scheduler's perspective, from Deaf consumers, from interpreters, and managers, what is it that throughout my career has given me pause or gotten me to wonder or been confused. So that's what I'm doing. And I am inviting all of you to come with me right now. Let's go upstream.

So to begin to look at scheduling, my question started with how did something happen? I had personal experiences. And I would be thinking, how did this happen? Why am I there? Well, here is an example of something that happened on the world stage, that I'm sure many of you wondered how did this event happen? I'm sure you wondered that. And then you can map it on to your own experiences. Well, instead of making assumptions about why something like this happens, I'll just break it down to the questions I had. Why me? Why now? So many questions come to mind.

So, to get to some of those answers, let me give you this example. If I asked you, how does a vacuum cleaner work? I'm pretty sure you would say to me that it sucks up the dirt. I mean, all of us have that understanding. You vacuum and the dirt will get sucked up. Right? But if you really want to understand the how, what's happening inside that vacuum cleaner, you would have to take it apart, open it up, and take a look at some of the springs or the motor or the pieces that are in there, the wires, whatever the specific parts are. That would give you a better understanding of how this is happening. So the same thing happens with scheduling. How does it actually happen? We think we understand it. We have a general understanding, just like we have a general understanding of a vacuum cleaner. But it's taking that extra time looking on an equal level, taking it apart. That was my goal.

So, I started out wanting to understand how the scheduling happened.

When I first joined the Deaf community, my understanding was to make sure that I was clear, people were understanding me, that I matched whatever situation I was going to. There were lots of things I had learned about that. But then as I began interpreting, that wasn't the experience that I had all of the time. Sometimes, but most of the time, there was someone else that would assign me to a particular job and I would ask certain questions, but often I wouldn't get some of those answers before I would get to that job. So, that was my experience and I wanted to start understanding from others' experience what was happening to them. I wanted to pull others into the conversation and learn from them so that we could then look at this whole process of actually scheduling

interpreters.

So, what we're doing, when scheduling was happening for interpreters, I mean, back in the '60s, I can remember being asked by individual deaf people, Pam, are you available to come do something for me? You know, if it was a doctor's appointment on Thursday at two o'clock, I would be individually asked by a person. And that's how I got on the job. It was a smaller community, people knew each other, people knew the skills that I brought, and so I was asked who I was. There wasn't any question about it. It was similar when we had a Mom and Pop retail, you would walk in and talk to the people there and you knew them on an individual basis. But what we have now is not so much Mom and Pop, we have big box stores like Walmart. And similar with scheduling interpreters, we don't often know the people, we just get assigned to jobs.

And what occurred with retailers similar to what happened in the scheduling process. I wanted to understand more of what was happening and how did that happen. And when a request is made and an interpreter gets placed on a job, in that gap right in there, what's actually happening? So, a request goes in for interpreting services and then an interpreter is assigned to a job. But there are a lot of things that are going on and my goal was to shine the light on what's occurring.

So, coming from interpreters, there is an occurring, you know, what they think is happening. But then there's also others who are involved, schedulers, and they have a view of what's occurring. What is actually there. So if we look back, there was more of a connection maybe between direct communication between the consumer and the interpreters. Similar to that Mom and Pop situation I was talking about, if you were going to the doctor's. Not as if we wanted to go back to that, it didn't have everything that we needed, but there were certain aspects of it that were really important, people knew each other and people were working with interpreters or this deaf person I was working with.

But sometimes now that's not what's happening with the scheduler. Are the actual schedulers trained to look at it that way? And those are some of the questions that started appearing in this. So, I knew what I wanted to look at, but I had to figure out what type of tool I wanted to use for the research, and I came upon Institutional Ethnography, which I'm going to refer to as IE. Dorothy Smith, and there were others involved, actually originated this and they created it as a frame to not only look at participants involved with some everyday experience. So they were asking participants. And from those conversations, what was emerging...certain policies and rules people were following, there were text examples, there were written e-mails. But hearing from participants, looking at the texts, understanding all of that, it actually tied it into some larger systematic influences, and it was all connected. So in interpreting, that's access, and there are some other things I'm going to continue on from my findings.

But that's why I chose this. It was a very flexible tool. And when you use institutional ethnography, you start from the researcher's perspective and standpoint. So, for me, I'm an interpreter, and I began asking other interpreters. I wanted to hear from them what were their experiences. And from those conversations, I would move on potentially to talking with others. So, I have categories set up here. One says text, I don't mean texting, one is documents, handbooks, policies, things like this that are all included under that category of text.

So, I did interviews. There were texts that I used, I showed up and did observations. I watched scheduling processes, when an event needed to be scheduled, what was it that they were doing and I started taking field notes of what I was observing. And then I actually conducted some focus groups, where I had two or three questions that I would pose to the groups, whether they were groups of interpreters, consumers. But there were various groups. And then we would get involved with the discussion. And I would collect all of the responses.

So, thinking back to the town and the river and all of the townspeople coming, I couldn't understand the other people's experiences, that's their view. I only have mine. As a researcher, I have mine. Now, everyone else's perspective is equally as important as mine, but I can't speak to that.

If I wanted to understand that, I would have to go ask to get their standpoints, and that's the crux of institutional ethnography, is to start from my own standpoint and then engage with others. So I conducted interviews and what I gained from the interviews, other things organically came up. I had the interviews and if manager were mentioned or deaf consumers were mentioned and others, I created the categories. I didn't create the categories, this emerged from the conversations that I had. So, I interviewed members from each of these groups. And during that, I noticed patterns, patterns of things that were happening.

So, I don't have everything in detail what happens in each of these, but as I began to shine the light by doing these interviews, these were the patterns that emerged. So, obviously before the request, there's something that's going on even to get you to people making the requests. And once there is a request, there are a lot of things that happen and when interpreters are providing services and afterwards, things that are happening. But these are patterns that emerged from me and what I'm now calling the Lifecycle of Scheduling – LCS – and that's what I'm focusing on.

But each of these, someone could take any phase and then do some more research and have their own documents on any one of these segments. I'm looking at the entire process, this Lifecycle, and that's what my study is about. And, again, I'm calling this LCS.

What you see on the slide is not a theme, but these were the realities that emerged from each participant's contribution. These are not all of the patterns that emerged. But when scheduling happens, somebody might remember – if you remember back to my situation where somebody told me that I was the best fit for a particular job, what and how were those connections made? How did society have influences on the end assignment of an interpreter to a request?

My aim was to shine the light on those influences. Again, these are not my words. These are findings from interpreters' perspectives. This interpreter noticed the difference in the original scheduling where a consumer would directly ask an interpreter to fill a job and the difference between that and the corporatization of the interpreting business.

Interpreters are trained to follow a Code of Professional Conduct. Do no harm. But

schedulers are not familiar with the CPC. One of the schedulers told me that the CPC was something that an interpreter had to deal with, not the scheduler...that they didn't have their own way of making decisions. And what I was trying to do was shine the light, lean into how they made their decisions.

Another viewpoint comes from managers, which is a different viewpoint than the interpreter, wondering if they are the best person for the job and even divergent from a scheduler's perspective about the efficiency of filling a particular job and the overall aspect of interpreting. And you'll see that each of these viewpoints is contradictory. Deaf people are not involved in that process of the request, of the staff being assigned, or the contractor being assigned. They may be involved in the initial request process, but not involved in the process between that request going to a scheduler and an interpreter being assigned.

This interpreter talks about special requests. Think back to the 1960s when an interpreter would be directly asked by a deaf person to fill their request. Which has now been replaced with other processes that I will talk about more later. Interpreters felt the change, but weren't involved in the decision-making process of how this change was made and where these special requests were coming from. As interpreters, we were used to being specially asked by a deaf person to fill a job, but the process of scheduling from a scheduler's perspective is very different. Understand, this is not a criticism of people. People are part of the system. We're simply shining a light on what happened.

The point of my research is not to criticize, but to simply shine a light on the process, to make it accessible for us to understand what is going on in interpreter scheduling. From a scheduling perspective, X number of jobs need to be filled and Y number of interpreters are available. Schedulers often feel pressure from above to get those jobs filled efficiently. This just goes to show that it does not mean that people don't value their worth, but often they're operating under a time constraint. What is going on because of that time constraint is something that I needed to explore, because it's not clear.

You have to know here that it's also very possible that the interpreter turned down the job because they had a conflict. We don't know the exact story of what's going on behind the scenes, but this is an alternate perspective on what happened. We don't know that later the interpreter told that deaf person that they were available during the time. But often we see interpreters saying that they were available, but were never asked. Remember, we saw that managers also need to make decisions about timing, about the business aspect of interpreting. And all of those scenarios come into play.

From many of the comments that were said, patterns emerged about race. Wondering why a particular policy that weren't written down anywhere led to certain decisions being made. The conclusion was that societal racism was having a direct effect on how interpreters were being scheduled. Schedulers are making a decision about what consumers wanted, but did they ever ask if the deaf participants would rather have a race/skin match without skill? These were questions that never came up. What happened when somebody assumed that the audience wants an interpreter to look like them, once scheduling exhausted all of the possibilities, if it happened here at Gallaudet, certainly interpreters would be asked first. And if they were not available,

another interpreter may be brought in to fill that job. If none of those people were available, somebody else would be brought in to fill the request.

Because of participant contributions, I started to lean in to understand policies, requests that were having a direct impact on the scheduling process. Text, as well as institutional discourse, arises in all of these phases. Like I said, each phase could be its own dissertation, because there is so much that shows up in each one of those phases of scheduling an interpreter. With each conversation, with each policy, with each rule, structures were uncovered. The influence of capitalism, the goal of access, larger social structures that were directly impacting the rules and policies that were leading to the decisions people made on a daily basis. This study is situated in a larger context of access; access as defined by the ADA. But we have not looked at what we are doing to get to the place of providing access. Houston, we've got a problem.

We continue to respond to businesses, people, requests, in our growing profession. We know that this is important and we're all here because we think it's important. We often go about our daily lives and our activities that don't lead to access. But access is the primary goal of providing interpreting, and that happens because we don't step back and shine a light on what it is we're actually doing. In order to make a change, we first need to understand the processes and structures that lead to these decisions being made.

I showed you a few quotes from interpreters and schedulers. And why do these controversy exist? Because we don't do a good job of understanding what other stakeholders do. And what does it mean to be the best fit? We don't define what we mean. And each of us comes into the scheduling process with different views. Often you see job announcements where schedulers say things, like, "Good with people, can manage Excel, can handle...can multitask." But often, the job descriptions say nothing about making decisions about the interpreting task or having any knowledge of the Code of Professional Conduct. Furthermore, surprise, surprise, this is nothing new, interpreting has become corporatized. It's part of a big business.

Think about when you go shopping, you can't interact with the cashier anymore. You're off with your own cashier. Think about interacting with a business. Often, you get a phone tree. Click one for X, Y, and Z. In the end, you never even get a live person. As the interpreting profession, we have failed to acknowledge that fact. Truly, we need to make a change. We can't stop this process, but we need to shine the light on why we're not getting to the end goal of access.

I want to take you full circle. Come back to the town with me. You are those townspeople. You are seeing the babies in the water and I am calling those babies access. I shared with you what I see from my point of view. But from each perspective, managers, schedulers, deaf consumers, we need everyone's view in order to understand the bigger picture. My research is not enough. We need more. Remember, the end goal is access and it's not occurring. Often, we feel this sense of mistrust, that there is no -- that access is not happening. And I suggest that we take a step back and look at why. Let's reframe the dialogue. This is my village.

[Applause]

Dr. Brenda Nicodemus:

Pamela, thank you so much. This is such an important comment. Often it's important for us to be – to do what we did in the "Wizard of Oz," to look behind the curtain and to understand who is the man behind the curtain. Thank you for this groundbreaking work! It is very much appreciated. I would like to now introduce Dr. Emily Shaw as respondent to offer her thoughts and comments on your presentation.

Dr. Emily Shaw:

Honestly, I feel lucky, because I have direct access to our presenter! [Laughter]. And I'm sorry none of you have this opportunity, but I do. Pamela, I am thrilled to see your work! I have many thoughts, one directly about the parable of the stream. As interpreters, we are on the front line and many of you are working in government agencies, sitting on call. Do you often wonder who's in charge? Who's making the decisions? They might have hired a staff interpreter and that would taken care of all of the problem. From an EEO perspective, they hire a staff interpreter and I'm following the policy, as long as they have an interpreter, that's fine. So us as interpreters, this works and this is uniquely important. You know this already, I'm just coming up to second what you've already said. Can you explain a little bit more of Institutional Ethnography as an approach? Why don't you start with your view and view of interpreters instead of starting with the deaf consumer?

Pamela Collins:

Sure. And just so looking at Institutional Ethnography, the experience I had with mine, I don't have the experience of the deaf consumer. Absolutely I can see from my view what I think is happening, but I don't own that experience. So, a requirement for Institutional Ethnography is that the researchers start from where their experience comes from, their standpoint. And so I can talk to other interpreters. And, again, based on what I'm learning, from the contributions they're making, they will then guide me to who I might want to talk to and, for me, it's turned to managers and schedulers and deaf consumers. But I need to start from my everyday experience and begin to unpack that first.

Dr. Emily Shaw:

And that experience and those contributions then guide you to make the connections to other participants. You mean other participants' perspectives are within your research?

Pamela Collins:

Yes, to get a full view of everything, you have to ask others and their perspective, what is other individual's perspective and their daily experience, the deaf consumer, what are they experiencing? So if they were to do research, they would start from their own perspective. So, if someone is saying I want this particular interpreter, they might ask that of the agency. If the process occurs, whatever is happening in the agency, they ask for Jen and Kim shows up on the assignment, how did that happen? The deaf consumer is saying "Wait a second, I asked for a particular interpreter who knows me, who knows

the content area, and I show up on the site and I have someone who has no background. How did that happen?" That's the everyday experience coming from the deaf consumer. And what is that? From mine, I look at it from a perspective of an interpreter, schedulers have theirs, and it's all of us working in concert to impact this as opposed to just blaming others, assuming they know what's going on, and not until we start exploring it together. And then there's larger society and things that impact the process, too.

Dr. Emily Shaw:

It's an interesting idea to start from your agency as an individual within a systematic structure and how do we have agency within that system. Often as interpreters, we see the problem, but how do we shift from what is in our realm of control? Can you speak to that?

Pamela Collins:

I say we do that just by shining a light on all of this together. We're all stakeholders and it's understanding and looking at the other, not just looking at from scheduling, not just looking at it from any of the other participant groups, but really uncovering all of it. So we hear from so many that this is important. You know, we need to get rid of a particular part, we need to hire all deaf people and they become schedulers and then it would work. No, institutional ethnography says no, understand it first, pull it apart, shine that light on it. You can't really make change. First you have to understand what's happening, how is it happening.

So each and every one of us here can go back to agencies we work with and scheduling groups and say let's look at what we do, what are all these parts that come together that affect the actual scheduling and engaging with all of the stakeholders and getting everyone's view.

Dr. Emily Shaw:

Thank you. And I know that that's difficult. But what's great about your approach is that you interview people to understand their experience, but you also are looking at policies, because, of course, the policies that are established impact an individual's agency. And often, decisions are made based on policy.

Pamela Collins:

Absolutely. Individual views, policies, the whole systematic nature of it, all of it works in concert.

Dr. Emily Shaw:

I want to go back to your idea of Mom and Pop store as the nostalgic views, back in the good old days, and that mandate of people having access is a good thing; having more interpreters is a good thing. But we now have to look at the profession of interpreters and how we can expand the number of interpreters to meet the supply, meet the demand with CPC but still keeping that direct aspect of the request being made, instead

of inviting in a middle man. Can you speak to that experience?

Pamela Collins:

So, let's back up and think about the good old days, the nostalgia you talked about, and I would say that's right, we can't go back and say everything was perfect then. No. You can go back to that and say now there's more professional standards and there's guidelines that have come out of that that may not have all originally been.... but as each new step has come along the way, maybe we forgot about some of the stakeholders, the consumers.

So we've grown, it's become more corporatized, but what were some of the things that were really important initially? So there's strengths now, it's almost as if, like, we're -- we can't just take people who drove on country roads and put them on a highway. There may be a car crash.

Recognize the shifts and the changes. For me, it's been 18 years. We can't expect everyone to just see from my point of view now or what's happening in this new way of scheduling. The potential approaches and ways to make some changes, and I'm an interpreter, so that's why I'm pulling out the interpreting, but as a group, looking at what's happening in real time, politics and all the systematic ways of looking at what's there, can we create ways? I mean, if you have a list of names of interpreters and a deaf person makes a direct request, they have the contract and they say I want this particular interpreter, they have their own blue book or their black book, they have a group of interpreters that they're comfortable working with, right? I know some and I don't know others. Where is that idea previously the way we scheduled of people getting their preference, how does that fit in this larger field of how we interpret and how we schedule interpreters right now? So shining some light on the process of change and what we don't want to lose helps us all.

Dr. Emily Shaw:

Focusing on the scheduling aspect is key. I will stop now and turn it over to the audience.

Pamela Collins:

And I do want to add something else, if you don't mind? I know currently in interpreter training programs, they become in students. If you graduate from our program, you're ready to go as a full-fledged interpreter. It could work that way. But why isn't there a track or a course that talks about scheduling? Why don't we bring students in? And some students might not go on to become interpreters, but as they begin, maybe they see and recognize that scheduling is a field they want to get into. But they actually receive training on what scheduling is and how and why.

Right now, we pick schedulers that typically have no background in this whole process! Now, spoken language agencies, which have no connection to the deaf community, are having the contracts to schedule interpreters or even government agencies are scheduling sign language interpreters. So, does the deaf consumer have to go with the lowest bid the way they purchase, the procurement and other ways, go with the lowest

agencies in interpreting? That's what's happening. And there is no understanding, and yet deaf people are getting services based on the lowest bid.

Dr. Brenda Nicodemus:

Thank you, Dr. Shaw. We appreciate your comments and perspective. First off, this is a full house! I see people from so many different positions, students who may graduate and face those scheduling conundrums, some of you are schedulers and some of you are interpreters who experience this effect. We now are going to open it up to the audience for questions and comments to our speaker. If you have a question or comment, please come to the front.

MJ Jones:

Can I hug you? Sorry, my hand's a little bit wet [Laughter]. I'm sweating because I'm so inspired by your presentation! Thank you again. Based on my experience as a new interpreter within the DC area, I often feel that different freelance agencies are always asking me to go interpret at this job or another. But as an interpreter, I want to go where my skills are of best use. What advice would you provide for a new interpreter who is still developing themselves as a professional? How do I manage where I go and where I'm scheduled?

Pamela Collins:

Great. And that's a really important question. I don't have all of the answers because, again, I can say I have my experience and I've worked for many years, but this has been my journey and my experience. So I start within my own group; other interpreters. And we have a similar goal. Maybe we work in the same place. For me, it's an agency and working in that agency, I started making connections and bond with others who were doing the same work. We were a group of interpreters. Our goal was to become certified and we were going to be on that journey together. Form these networks for yourself. Get involved with them. I mean, this is my community. I actually was part of instituting TruBiz, other members who are here today, please stand up and be recognized! You're in the audience! This is my group! So, before I really jumped in and took assignments, also I got involved with the Deaf community. I started asking questions. But let me back up.

I know there are businesses out there and agencies, they want to fill the job, you know, and that's fine, and they can do that. But for me as an individual, and they'll tell me I'll be fine on a particular job, but I have my own thought and I would check in maybe with various people, Folami, Kathy, Candace, is this a job that I'm ready to do? What do you think? And that was the first part. I needed to build a more formal way to approach this. I couldn't just rely on myself. It's almost like thinking about Swiss cheese. There's a lot of holes in Swiss cheese, right? So how am I going to fill in those holes? And now I have to figure out how to do that and I will need to build up my network and my skills.

MJ Jones:

Thank you again. I need another hug [Laughter].

Candace Barnes:

I'm Candace Barnes. Wow! I have no words....because there are no words. One of the things that struck me the most today is the village that came out in support of this [Applause].

Pamela Collins:

Yes, I noticed. I absolutely took note.

Candace Barnes:

That in and of itself is a testimony of the importance of this work and to who you are as a professional, as a person, as my colleague, my advisor, my mentor, my friend. And the list goes on. I don't have any questions, I'm just coming in here as like a mom to say "Amazing." That's all. And congratulations.

Pamela Collins:

Stop making me cry.

I told you I'm not going to mention anyone in particular because there's too many people, but I have to say there was one person who said – who was always giving me advice and the point is we really have to continue supporting each other.

Alec:

I'm Alec, I'm now a senior and will soon be graduating. I'm wondering about the unique situation of a deaf interpreter working within the Deaf community. How do you figure out – often I get strange agencies contacting me as an interpreter. How do you handle that process?

Pamela Collins:

So, this approach that I took of looking at what the how, it also applies to CDI, interpreting, all of it, because we're talking about scheduling, and so I would say to you, if you're going to do more research, what is your experience? And you start with Institutional Ethnography and getting into this conversation from your own experience and talking with others. Bring that into this body of research and knowledge so that we continue on with this exploration. And from that, we will be able to make places of change. We need to look at it first. It's going to help us look at all of it. When we started in the old days, we needed to include that, and it's really become more complex now. So continue that. Keep sharing your experience, keep sharing your ideas, things that impact you daily, and that's going to help move us in the right direction for change.

Alec:

Thank you.

Hilary Mayhew:

First of all, your talk was inspiring. Thank you for the research that you've done. And as Candace has said, thank you for the mentoring and all of the other roles that you have played in my life. You mentioned the how. And I know that you said it's very important to shine a light on what is going on now. But may I ask, what are your future visions? What do you want to see happen? Often interpreters work in isolation. We work alone. And we don't necessarily have the community support that we used to have. We don't have the opportunities to gather and talk about our work. I've often heard interpreters say that I'm isolated and I don't know where to go for support. Do you envision this conversation to be situated within Gallaudet? In RID?

Pamela Collins:

So, what I would say is each of us bring our own experience and we need to come together and have conversations, to remember to involve everyone. Again, those different categories of consumers, managers, participants. We can have town hall meetings, that's a place to start. And it's sharing everyday experiences, instead of just assuming -- like I assume I know what a deaf person wants or their experience, I assume what a scheduler is -- why a scheduler is doing something. We can share our experience. Not on Facebook! I'm not talking about sharing this experience on social media in this conversation, but I'm talking about coming together in face-to-face interactions. We have Dr. Risa Shaw here, we come together, discussing it, unpacking it and what's emerging in some of these patterns. That's what we need to do.

Hilary Mayhew:

I know that you have to finish your defense, but later, when you get your doctorate, I hope that we will be there.

Pamela Collins:

Right, well, we're all in this complex phenomenon, right? It's not just me. I am a Black interpreter and there are different views from other people also, and we can't just spring out one person's point of view, we have to do this together.

Janis Cole:

I have to say, I'm proud of you. Hillary and I had a similar question, and so I won't repeat it, but I think that this is so important that we create a dialogue like this quickly. Something like a town hall, to keep this conversation going. And I do think that this conversation could have a place in RID. Yes, RID is our professional organization, and I think that they do need to be included in the conversation. Somehow we need to invite them into the dialogue. But, yes, it is also for us to do too.

Pamela Collins:

So I go back to thinking about TrueBiz, the group that I was involved with setting up. The idea of a town hall and scheduling and how is race impacted by that? A lot of that is there. Maybe picking four topics and questions and inviting people to come. But having

a town hall. So we've discussed this amongst ourselves. We're out to change the world! But we can't do it alone as TrueBiz. The truth is we've definitely had these conversations. We cannot solve everything. But another idea is a way to start, I think, and we can then bring this conversation and show our ideas and conversations that we want to have.

Janis Cole:

I think that we should bring RID to the table now so that they are even part of the stakeholder group and we can all process this together.

Pamela Collins:

I agree.

Janis Cole:

Pam, I love you.

Annie Marks:

Thank you. I feel that it's not often we get to watch a dissertation defense before it's actually defended!

Pamela Collins:

Don't get me started!

Annie Marks:

I'm looking forward to your official defense and I'm sure it will be quite different than what we heard today.

Pamela Collins:

Me too.

Annie Marks:

I have a short story, which will lead into my question and I think that my question is very similar to what M.J. shared. I was in Texas many years ago, I was newly certified under the Texas certification system, and I considered myself a baby interpreter. I contracted with an agency after passing their screening and the first time I was contacted by a scheduler to offer me a job, they asked me to go to the emergency room. And, of course, my answer was no. And I felt that I stood strongly my ground. I said this is my first job with the agency. I'm a newly-certified interpreter. And this is not my place. I was told by the scheduler if I was not willing to accept this job, the opportunities to take any job at that agency would be diminished. I still said no.

But as a new interpreter, that scared me! I thought what if I turned down several jobs?

Does that mean that I will miss out on future opportunities? Of course now I teach interpreting and I share that story with my students. I think it's so important that we emphasize that new interpreters need to stand up for themselves, to protect not only themselves but the consumers involved and their work. Can you share what, if anything, your participants said about novice interpreters? Because we often now look at the gap from school to work or from graduation to certification. What have your participants said, if anything, about scheduling novice interpreters?

Pamela Collins:

They did talk about that, being nervous to turn down jobs. But if they were following what they believed and what they had been taught, which was to say no and not being the best fit, they definitely went through what you just mentioned, will that future work and future opportunities? And now interpreters ended up accepting jobs that maybe they weren't ready for and they are impacting consumers that weren't getting the clear message, and that's the repeated cycle. So I get what you're talking about now at this point and this is such an important point for interpreter training programs to raise, Juniper Sussman talks about this, and RID talks about this with interpreters, talking about this regardless of schedulers and managers, the individual interpreter needs to consider certain things before they get to any assignments. There are certain questions they need to ask themselves. But that's not always taught in an interpreter training program. That has to be. That has to be part of the conversation. You share your story and I share my story. But it has to become more formalized that this is part of the curriculum.

Annie Marks:

I was told by a scheduler that often the emergency room situation that they would send interpreters to would be somebody with a cold. But how am I ever to know what I'm walking into?

Pamela Collins:

We laugh about it, but this is happening often. You're right.

Kafi Lemons:

Pam, thank you so much. And I have so much appreciation of learning from you and your journey. I also wanted to acknowledge myself as a certified interpreter. I am often working part-time and I feel that the agencies don't know my skill. And I often rely on deaf people asking me to interpret or other interpreters calling me, because they know my skill set and they'll ask for me.

Often we get emails daily from an agency and we don't even know who these agencies are. They might have just found our name on the RID list and they're asking us to fill a job. I learned so much from your research experience and your studies that help me mature in my own decision-making, and I look forward to further conversations. And for all others like me who often think should I accept these jobs through big business, the big business agencies that I'm interpreting?

Pamela Collins:

So you're talking about the value of getting requests of the community as opposed to being in a larger system. And, again, not saying that that, in itself, is bad, but it's something to take note of. We're getting requests from particular deaf people and it's all of value, and yes, we want to go back and mention RID and they have created a direct directories with all of us, and now it's often being used as a vetted list and everyone on that has a certain amount of skills, and anyone out of state or isn't really in the business, do these agencies have students, they have various people, but they're going through this list and requesting interpreters for jobs and there are people who accept these types of requests, so that is happening out there. It's kind of scary.

Kafi Lemons:

You're right, it is so important! Pam, thank you so much for your experience over the 25 years.

Dr. Lori Whynot:

All right. I'm going to move my notes up here, because I forget things easily. This is such rich research and I am so thrilled for you! I have to look at my notes because there's so much. I think you're right, there are many people here, because this is such an important topic. This is like a can of worms that you've opened! I feel we did it. We've all known the can is sitting there. They're all over the place. The can is open. And we peek at the can of worms and we don't want to open up the can.

Pamela Collins:

I want us to keep looking at it.

Dr. Lori Whynot:

No, I have to say, I like the worms and I am not afraid of them, so let's open up that can of worms. I think who owns interpreting is really behind a lot of the research that you do. Interpreters say that they own interpreting, does the community own interpreting, does the agency own the interpreting? Where does it belong? I'm curious to hear your thoughts, and I know there's no right or wrong answer and no one way to solve this problem, but how do we take back the power that the community can take back that power? How do we as interpreters take back the decision-making power? Is that through licensure? Is it licensing agencies? Licensing schedulers? How is it that the community and interpreters can take back the power?

Pamela Collins:

Sure, and that's something that's being discussed more and more about licensure, and I think it's a reaction. I think we're jumping to that before, how do we understand and look at what's going on. So right at this point we don't have a let's do this or let's not, we really need to continue to look and to explore more what that means. Of course we want to decide -- of course we know that access is important and that's ultimately the goal, but even at this point interpreters can say regardless of how they're getting assigned,

no, I'm not the appropriate person for this job.

But you're asking who owns this. And so I want to go back and looking at the stakeholders and including schedulers as part of the stakeholders, that's where the discussion has to be. All of us own it and so decisions are not made by some business entity for economic reasons, that's not where the decisions are ultimately made. It really has to be made and getting the stakeholders involved.

Obviously management and businesses are a part of the conversations, but they're not the open decision makers without engaging the stakeholders. This is a complex -- they have been and this is where some of the changes come from and it's creating a more complex phenomenon and we have to impact it and look at it together. It's not easy, but it's something that we have to do.

Dr. Lori Whynot:

Thank you for your wonderful research. Your research will light the fire to part people thinking about this conversation.

Pamela Collins:

The people have been thinking about this. I'm not saying it's something new. There have been a lot of thoughts and feelings about it but it's beginning academically and through research and looking at it, as opposed to just sharing stories and opinions about it, really, academically, what are we actually looking at? Instead of just complaining, instead of just quitting and moving on, let's take a quicker dive in looking at it.

Dr. Lori Whynot:

I look forward to more from your dissertation defense and ideas of how to frame this, to not just think about it, but to actually engage in the doing of it.

Pamela Collins:

Thank you. Thank you so much.

Marcus Island:

Hello, everyone. I first wanted to say that I'm here in support of my sister. You've been with me for so many years. This is such a wonderful topic. I want to talk about this from a federal staff perspective. Often, there are so many interpreting agencies that have their way of doing things, but at a federal agency, we often feel stuck because of the role that we're in. For example, managers, contractors, interpreters. I rely on an interpreter often as an interpreter scheduler, I need to find an interpreter for this job NOW! Sometimes I take the scheduling role. And then as an interpreter, sometimes I know I'm not the best fit, and so often we are disconnected from the community because we're situated in a particular federal office. We feel lost because of those mandates and this workshop is perfect to impact that. And it's time to get to the "What do we do about it?"

Pamela Collins:

So that takes me right back to the vacuum cleaner. How does that vacuum cleaner work, right? If you got rid of certain parts, it won't suck up the dirt anymore, right? All of the parts have to work with integrity and that's why I'm talking about the parts with scheduling with all of these different stakeholders. If you take one thing away, it won't work. We have to get everyone involved.

Marcus Island:

The system has failed. I would love to see more of that discussion more than federal workers and we can guide policy to action. What can we do?

Pamela Collins:

You just talked about you as the agency. What about the interpreters? How are decisions being made? Like I said, ordering cup and pen, often going with the cheapest bid, right? What about interpreting? If all agencies are following that, it won't work. There are other parts involved.

Marcus Island:

And I think that that's something for further discussion. That not all interpreters are created equal.

Tiffany Hill:

I don't actually have a question, I just came to get a hug from Pam [Laughter].

Pamela Collins:

She's out there getting me to exercise all the time! She is a rock in my life; I'm not going to say anymore!

Dr. Brenda Nicodemus:

Any additional questions? I have to say, that you have been the best audience we've ever had! We often think of scheduling as having a middle role, but who knew that this topic of scheduling would draw so much excitement and emotion? Thank you for your analysis, for unpacking the process of scheduling interpreters. Really, a thank you from all of us. There's one more comment? I want to invite that person to the front; actually, two more.

Jenese Portee:

I am taller now.

Pamela Collins:

You have beautiful shoes [Laughter]

Jenese Portee:

I know, that happens when you're sick feet tall. I will also disclose that I work in the Federal Government and I had to arrive late because of my interpreting schedule. But luckily I was just told that I will be able to watch your presentation later because it's going to be archived. And also I can catch up on some of the historical colloquium presentations. So anybody who missed the beginning of this presentation know that you can catch up as well. My comments are more broad as a person who schedules interpreters and all of the layers that go into that.

It's a difficult task. And often people don't respect us as professionals. For me specifically, most people who meet me think that I'm young, that I don't know what I'm doing. And I am constantly trying to fight for what I know is right. And like you just said, most of the decision-makers have no idea what they're doing. Often, I have to defend my decisions and I am told that that's not how we do it here. How do you respond to that conundrum?

Pamela Collins:

First by understanding that really you're within all of this complexity and there's experience being brought in from every different stakeholder group and some of it might impact negatively, right? But it's experiences that we all have. And not to look at it personally, even though it feels like it, but we're all caught up with the same -- within the whole system.

So looking at what your experience is as a scheduler, what is it that schedulers don't know about? I mean, you saw one comment there that one scheduler said, you know, CPC, that doesn't relate to me. That came from a scheduler! Where does that thought come from?

Maybe there are formulas or way to work all this out, but that was from a scheduler. Looking at scheduling and talk about this and inviting others. And don't tell people what it is that they need to do, but work together. Not as "you do this, you do that" but separating it out and get people to have conversations about all this, you know. What impact will this have? Why are you doing that? You know, if there's research and we can look at this and bring everyone in. Invite stakeholders to engage together. It's not always possible, but do that as much as you can. And I think that will start.

Jenese Portee:

Thank you. All of this feedback helps me plan for the future. And my next comment is that I am so thankful to see you here presenting and starting this discussion, defending your dissertation. It means so much to me personally as an interpreter of color, as a friend, with you as my mentor, all of the things, as all of the above [Applause].

Pamela Collins:

And she's the current president of NAOBI, and I want to introduce her to the crowd too.

Jenese Portee:

I'm that too. But I am able to still be in contact with you, we're not out of touch, with Folami, Kathy, Tiffany, Candace, we can all reach out and have this conversation together and that community means the world to me. And that's our village. We don't want to lose those connections. And so we all need to be engaged as much as possible with the deaf community and with interpreting.

Pamela Collins:

So I do want to mention something. We have created this village and we're all together, but we have to reach out and connect with all of the other stakeholders. That's on us as well, and you know that. So I'm not going to say more.

Jenese Portee:

I digress. But thank you so much. Love you big time.

Sequoia Taylor-EI):

Thank you. Yeah, I knew I was coming here, so I couldn't bring the baby with me. In my lifetime, I have been involved in several different things. Now my wife is an educator and you mentioned education. I wouldn't think necessarily about that topic as part of a stakeholder for this, so how do you envision pulling in educators? We know that these changes can't be made overnight. Now, often educational interpreters, how do we engage educational interpreters who are -- my wife is a K-12 interpreter and so how do we engage K-12 interpreters? Often they're not scheduled like university interpreters are.

Pamela Collins:

It's almost as if it's been there so long and you're bringing it right back and saying we can't forget about it. In that conversations, we have to think about what is the scheduling process? It involves the training and educating of interpreters and getting people involved. We're not admin, I don't look at it that way. So your partner, your wife... And I'm not sure of the exact context, but figuring out how to include people from education in the conversation. The scheduling of interpreters, deaf consumers, obviously we're talking about access, everything, really, is all within that reach and involved in the conversation. I don't have the answer at this point. I'm still in the exploration of all this. I'm still bringing it to light, seeing what's emerging. Sometimes concerned with what I'm seeing, sometimes not, but I'm still in that process. And we have to continue with this.

Sequoia Taylor-EI):

Thank you. This is amazing. We have interpreters, schedulers, students, I feel like I'm always a student because I'm constantly learning, so I want to thank you for this.

Pamela Collins:

Me too!

Sequoia Taylor-EI):

Thank you for what you've given me today.

Dr. Brenda Nicodemus:

All right. I know that we could go on, but we are coming to the close of our time. Thank you again. I think that it shows it's so important and that -- wow, Pam, that you can discuss these worms, if you will, this dicey subject with compassion and grace. Before I close again, I want to invite everyone to the cafeteria, please join us for a reception in honor of Pamela.

I want to also invite you to next year's colloquium. We will have four additional presenters next year.

Thank you for coming. And thank you, Pam, for your wonderful presentation!

Pamela Collins:

Thank you, everyone [Applause].