

## ABSTRACTS for DEAF ACADEMICS WORKSHOP

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Carol Padden (University of California, San Diego)

### **Notes on Doing Science**

At the time I began working at the Language Research Lab (LRL) at Gallaudet, the idea of “American Sign Language” was a new one, and a very controversial one. The discipline of “linguistics” was brand new in deaf education, and it was also fairly new in the social sciences. Today, of course, as we all know, the study of sign language is not as exotic as it once was, but has become almost mainstream in language and cognitive studies. I feel fortunate to have been involved at the start of sign language studies, and I want to talk about what I have learned about what was done right – and what was done wrong. There were some glaring mistakes in this very short history. They can be lessons for those beginning a career in science.

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Richard Meier (The University of Texas at Austin)

### **Sign Communities within a Major University**

If I strike up a conversation with the person seated next to me on a plane and if I tell that person that my research focuses on signed languages, I will usually be asked two questions: 1) “Is sign language universal?” 2) “Is there deafness in your family?” The fact that my answer to both questions is no evokes disappointment and disbelief. Absent families ties, how do I find myself here? In my second year in graduate school at UCSD, happenstance led me into research on signed languages. Happenstance also landed me in the midst of a rather remarkable community of fellow students of signed languages. Part of the message of this conference is that it takes a community to be a successful researcher on signed languages.

Having some expertise about the linguistics of signed languages and knowing in particular about how deaf children acquire ASL didn’t fully prepare me to help Deaf graduate students learn about linguistics. In the years since I arrived at UT, I’ve been lucky enough to work with 6 Deaf students. Those Deaf students have helped me to learn how to be a better educator of Deaf and hearing students. The reason I say “Deaf and hearing” is that many of the “accommodations” that Deaf students seek also prove to be very helpful to the hearing as well.

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Ted Supalla: (U of Rochester)

**Ensuring full access in deaf-related fields for Deaf researchers**

Deaf sign language researchers need to have full access to public and private University facilities (i.e., a more visual curriculum and facilities designed for visually-oriented learning and teaching) as well as the opportunity to obtain support services from the society (i.e., quality interpreter services) to facilitate access. Dr. Supalla will share his perspectives on ways to improve connections to the academic world. He will first highlight important phases in development of his academic career in the interdisciplinary field of linguistics, psycholinguistics and cognitive science where he had opportunities to undertake research apprenticeships during graduate school, gain employment as an university professor, participate in a variety of peer-review and democratic processes in the academic life and compete for funds to build a sign language research facility. In particular, Supalla will discuss personal experiences in three areas of interacting with people in the academic world: 1) designing and implementing liberal arts and science curricula for sign language studies, performing scholarly mentorships with deaf and hearing students, and teaching at international workshops for Deaf researchers; 2) working with interpreters for facilitating his diverse roles as lecturer, participant and consumer in classroom settings, conferences and personal interactions; and 3) collaborating in a variety of research projects, community service and task forces with academic colleagues, policy makers and civic leaders. The goal is to give the audience some idea of what the academic life of a Deaf scholar with interdisciplinary interests and training looks like and what kind of support system would be ideal for maximizing access to resources and facilities for scholarship and research work.

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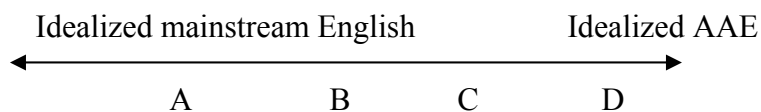
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Lisa Green (The University of Texas at Austin)

### **Communities and the Continuum**

Minority linguists often conduct research in their native communities or in communities in which they have close cultural ties. In such situations, the relationship between the linguist and community members goes beyond that of researcher and informants. By focusing on my work on African American English (AAE) in a small community in Southwest Louisiana, I consider some of the issues that arise when the minority linguist maintains close contact with her native community.

AAE is a linguistic variety that has set morphological, phonological and syntactic/semantic patterns that are intertwined with mainstream English. Speakers of AAE can be at different points on the continuum depending on their use of AAE:



For instance, in some environments, a speaker may choose to identify with the AAE speaking community and operate at some point between C and D, and yet in others, she may move toward the mainstream, somewhere near B. The continuum illustrates the linguistic situation; however, it also reflects the way the researcher negotiates between the native community she supports by promoting its advancement and the academy to which she has professional obligations. In addressing communities and the continuum, I discuss my involvement with Head Start and the ABC Reading Program and explain the way my relationship with these community-based programs affects my life in academia.

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Paddy Ladd (University of Bristol, England)

### **Deafness, Deafhood and Research Ethics**

It is commonly understood that research into issues concerning Deaf people has been dominated by the medical model of deafness and the effects of Oralism. It is less well understood how Deaf Studies itself is subtly dominated by these ideologies. This paper explores these issues, suggesting that Deaf Studies should be the key to Deaf liberation, and setting down ideas and research theories which can contribute towards these developments.

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