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Advocating & navigating in the (non-)academic landscape

Ander Beristain, Shannon Bryant, Joshua Dees, Luis Gaytán-Soto, Iyad Ghanim, Alexandra Johnston, Miranda McCarvel, Michelle Perdomo, Emily Silvano, & Tran Truong*

Abstract. In recent years, the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) has reinforced its commitment not only to serve as a venue for the dissemination of current research, but also as a site of professionalization and capacity building for linguists of a variety of career interests and trajectories. This paper represents a collaboration between two bodies within the LSA: the First-Generation Access and Equity Committee and the Linguistics Beyond Academia Special Interest Group. It collects together insights from a workshop on mentorship, advocacy, and navigation of landscapes both within academia (with a special emphasis on R1/R2 institutions and liberal arts colleges) and beyond academia (with a special emphasis on the informational interview, a named genre of interaction that is likely to be new to linguists from more academia-focused contexts). Although the workshop centered the perspectives and leadership of first-generation scholars, the demystification of the hidden curriculum—including the hidden and unstated expectations of faculty on and off the tenure track—pursued here will be broadly useful to all linguists, including continuing-generation scholars who wish to support first-generation scholars.

Keywords. mentorship; advocacy; professionalization; tenure; networking; hidden curriculum; academia; first-generation.

1. Introduction. The discipline of linguistics is at a crossroads. In recent years, the field has come to a welcome acknowledgment that a complete understanding of the human language faculty should minimally include, and ideally center, the productions and intuitions of language users of all varieties, including socially stigmatized, institutionally disenfranchised, endangered, racialized, and/or non-auditory-vocal varieties. At the same time, although it is clear that all forms of linguistic *data* are valued by the intellectual standards of the discipline, it is not at all the case that all *linguists* are valued by the professional standards of the discipline, especially with respect to who is and is not supported in a linguistics career, be this inside or outside the academy. Linguists who occupy racially minoritized, non-male, queer, disabled, first-generation and/or undocumented positionalities continue to endure structural barriers to success as a result of differential access to the so-called *hidden curriculum*, a set of implicit values that structure the Anglo-American academic context. This hidden curriculum compounds with the much more overt hostility to diversity of identity and linguistic practice that characterizes the current political administration in the United States (cf. LSA Statement Against Designating English as the Official Language 2025). Under these conditions, it becomes necessary for linguists of a

* Authors: Ander Beristain, Saint Louis University (ander.beristain@slu.edu), Shannon Bryant, Rutgers University (sgb103@ruccs.rutgers.edu), Joshua Dees, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (dees3@illinois.edu), Luis David Gaytán-Soto, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (lgaytan2@illinois.edu), Iyad Ghanim, Kean University (iyaghani@kean.edu), Alexandra Johnston, Georgetown University (alexandra.johnston@georgetown.edu), Miranda McCarvel, Smith College (mmccarvel@smith.edu), Michelle Perdomo, Vanderbilt University (michelle.perdomo@vanderbilt.edu), Emily Silvano, Johns Hopkins University (esilva8@jhu.edu), & Tran Truong, Pennsylvania State University (tpt5331@psu.edu).

wide variety of backgrounds, research interests, and career trajectories to collaborate in order to render life in the discipline more livable via mentorship, advocacy, networking, and awareness-raising. The foregoing exemplifies one such collaboration between stakeholders in the First-Generation Access and Equity Committee (FGAE) and Linguistics Beyond Academia Special Interest Group of the Linguistic Society of America.

The organization of this paper is as follows. §2 introduces mentorship and advocacy in brief, before zeroing in on the major differences between undergraduate vs. graduate mentorship (§2.1) and how to make the best use of institution-internal resources for first-generation scholars (§2.2). §3 unpacks various aspects of the academic hidden curriculum for graduate students at research-oriented institutions (§3.1) from an asset-based perspective (cf. Bucholtz et al. 2017, *inter alia*). §3.2 discusses strategies for how faculty can navigate the unique ecology of liberal arts colleges, where administrators tend to hold less institutional knowledge than long-term staff, and §3.3 focuses on navigating the tenure track at research-oriented institutions. Recognizing that not all linguists seek a career in the academy, §4 is an exploration of how to navigate the world beyond academia, with a special emphasis on the informational interview, a genre of interaction that may be unknown to linguists who have been trained in academic-centric departments. §5 concludes.

2. Mentoring and advocacy. Mentorship plays a critical role in higher education, shaping students' academic, professional, and personal development. While both undergraduate and graduate students benefit from mentorship, the nature of the support that they require may differ significantly as a result of their distinct academic and career trajectories. Undergraduate students often seek guidance in navigating college life, developing foundational academic skills, and identifying career interests. In contrast, graduate students, who have already acquired a level of scholarly independence, require mentorship that focuses on professional development, research program advancement, and career placement in academic and non-academic fields.

Understanding these differences is essential for institutions and mentors aiming to provide effective support tailored to students' evolving needs. This section examines the key distinctions between undergraduate and graduate mentorship, highlighting the differing levels of independence, career focus, and resource needs. Additionally, it explores the role of mentorship in fostering academic success and professional growth while emphasizing the importance of emotional and peer support across both student groups. By recognizing the diversity of student needs, mentors and institutions can implement strategies that maximize the impact of their guidance and better prepare students for their future endeavors.

2.1. Undergraduate vs. graduate mentorship. Mentorship plays a crucial role in both undergraduate and graduate education (Mantenuto et al. 2024), but the needs and objectives of students at these different levels vary significantly. Undergraduate mentorship (UM) primarily focuses on fostering academic success through guidance in course selection, study skills, and personal and academic life balance. Advisors may be faculty in the student' field of study, or professional advisors with experience in academia more broadly but without relevant disciplinary experience. Depending on their familiarity with higher education, undergraduate students may need support in navigating campus resources, such as tutoring and writing centers, career services, and first-generation-specific organizations. Additionally, mentorship at this level serves as a means of capacity building, helping students develop foundational skills, such as time management and networking, while offering emotional support and confidence-building strategies, particularly for first-generation college students.

In contrast, graduate mentorship (GM) is centered on professional development and preparing students for both academic and non-academic career paths. Mentors at this level assist students with job application materials, including cover letters, CVs, and teaching and research statements. Furthermore, GM involves guidance in networking, mock interviews, and research supervision, enabling students to sharpen their research skills and manage independent projects, all while taking graduate courses and teaching. Participating in conferences and securing research funding are also critical components of graduate mentorship. A key distinction between UM and GM is the latter's emphasis on networking and career advancement. Additionally, graduate students must learn to navigate institutional structures, understand academic hierarchies, and balance teaching responsibilities. The tenure and promotion process, as well as non-tenure-track career opportunities, also become central considerations for graduate students, requiring specific guidance as they advance further and further into candidacy.

Several fundamental differences distinguish undergraduate from graduate mentoring. One of the primary distinctions is the level of independence expected from the student. Graduate students work more independently, even as they may require support in managing complex, long-term projects, whereas undergraduates often benefit from more structured, hands-on guidance. Another significant difference is the career focus of mentorship. UM emphasizes skill-building and exploration, helping students discover their academic and professional interests, whereas GM is more career-oriented, helping students to achieve their professional and academic goals. Resource needs also differ between these two groups. Undergraduates often need help accessing academic resources that they may not be aware are provided by their institution. At the same time, graduate students require strategic support for professional resources, such as research funding and conference attendance grants. For example, a travel grant from an organization like the Linguistics Society of America First Generation Access and Equity can be instrumental in supporting graduate students' professional development. Despite the differences in mentoring needs described above, both undergraduate and graduate students benefit from emotional and peer support. Mentorship at both levels should provide guidance on balancing academic demands with personal life, ensuring that students have the necessary support to thrive in their educational journeys (Bowie et al. 2024).

2.2. INSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVES. The increasing recognition of first-generation identities and perspectives has made it so that there may be first-generation-specific resources available in students' home institutions. This includes peer mentoring programs for undergraduate and graduate students as well as mentoring programs for first-generation faculty. Administrators in admissions offices, student unions, residence life, and other bodies may also have small-scale ways of increasing visibility of first-generation status (e.g., stickers, buttons, posters, door signs, lanyards, etc.). Given that some students may not feel comfortable "outing" themselves as first-generation, senior faculty and others with lower precarity could consider that magnifying the presence of first-generation status in the campus linguistic landscape may be deeply meaningful and inspirational for these students. This is especially true if the faculty or staff hold a leadership position within their department or in the wider institutional context.

Institutional cultures are unique, and first-generation-targeted initiatives can emerge in a variety of contexts. For instance, Smith College hosts a student-run First Generation Student Alliance. At St. Louis University, first-generation resources can be found in the Division of Student Development; at Penn State, in the Chaiken Center for Student Success; at Rutgers University, in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions; and at Kean University, in the Office of Student Retention and Educational Innovation. Programming created by these bodies often include academic bridge programs that facilitate transition into collegiate studies and the campus community (Arendale & Lee 2018), university-internal grants and awards for first-generation students, and first-generation-specific affinity groups in order to promote social connection and retention. As an example, The University of Kentucky organizes a graduation ceremony to recognize first-generation graduates. Campus initiatives may also provide career preparation services to support the continued success of first-generation students after graduation, including readiness workshops for interviews, CVs, and research statements; abstract writing and publication submission workshops; pedagogy workshops; and networking events with other scholars and community partners.

In institutional contexts in which first-generation awareness is low and first-generation resources are sparse, first-generation scholars may feel the need to remedy this situation themselves. As first-generation students are resourceful and self-advocating, there can be a certain "If I can't find it, I'll find it" attitude. Given that first-generation graduate students may also be juggling teaching, research, political advocacy, and family responsibilities, they should be judicious about the amount of additional service work they can take on. Of course, there are many circumstances in which doing work around a first-generation-targeted initiative can be nourishing and directly facilitative of these other responsibilities!

Incorporating these initiatives may involve finding a partner institution outside of the university—such as FGAE within the LSA—or leveraging the intersectionality of first-generation status by building a coalition with another minoritized affinity group within the university. In support of institutional initiatives for first-generation students, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, or NASPA, plays a major role in developing best practices for institutions to support first-generation students as part of its larger mission supporting students' academic success outside the classroom. Initiatives like First-Gen Forward and First Scholars through NASPA publicly recognize schools that offer strong support for first-generation students, offering opportunities for mentoring, coaching, and professional development geared towards supporting students. Also offering support for first-generation supporting institutions are federal grant programs like the McNair Scholars Program, and Upward Bound for pre-college students.

Institutions that wish to support first-generation scholars can work on collecting, preserving, and disseminating more data about the first-generation experience, including retention and graduation rates and career outcomes. They can also maintain a database to link first-generation students with first-generation alums. Another way is to maintain involvement in first-generation student success programs that work with institutions, as well as promoting or sponsoring events from "I'm First!", a national campaign designed to support and empower first-generation scholars.

Anecdotally, even in institutional contexts in which first-generation students are ample and first-generation-targeted initiatives are common, there can be an issue of underutilization, as continuing-generation staff and faculty do not always know how to effectively reach and advertise to first-generation students. If there is a fantastic mailing list with first-generation resources, but first-generation students are not regularly being added to it, this is a crisis of access and navigation. Continuing-generation staff and faculty can create a culture of assuming that first-generation students are in the room by explicitly calling attention to first-generation resources in their syllabi, mailing list announcements, and face-to-face meetings with advisees. These horizontal interactions become ever more pivotal in a political climate that is increasingly hostile to efforts to combat educational inequity, entrenching the hiddenness of the hidden curriculum.

3. Navigating academia. Bowie et al. (2024) note that feelings of 'imposter syndrome' (cf. Clance & Imes 1978) among first-generation scholars are more aptly understood as symptoms of navigating the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum is best described as "implicit academic, social, and cultural messages; unwritten rules and unspoken expectations; and unofficial norms, behaviors, and values of the dominant-culture in which all teaching and learning is situated" (Boston University Teaching Writing 2019). In this section, we provide selected tips geared towards—but not limited to—first-generation scholars in three different roles: graduate students at R1 institutions, faculty at liberal arts institutions, and faculty at R1/R2 institutions.

3.1. GRADUATE STUDENTS AT RESEARCH-ORIENTED INSTITUTIONS. Given that the hidden curriculum is implicit, institutions and mentors rarely communicate or formalize its rules. Consequently, it is crucial, as first-generation scholars, to cultivate strategies that facilitate navigation of research-intensive academic environments. This section discusses three strategies for navigating graduate school: identifying key individuals and building a network, familiarizing oneself with explicit expectations, and getting involved on campus.

Calhoun et al. (2022) highlight that there is no one-stop shop for support in graduate school—this is true of all students, but first-generation scholars often rely more heavily on extra-familial support than their continuing-generation counterparts. For this reason, building a diverse network of individuals who can act as resources during a student's graduate school experience is crucial. This network should include (but not be limited to) the advisor(s), the director of graduate studies (DGS), a leader or officer of the departmental graduate student organization (if one exists), more senior graduate students, faculty in the department (outside of advisors and the DGS), and administrative staff. First-generation graduate students, especially those who have encountered structural barriers as a result of their first-generation status, may feel isolated, unrepresented, and unaware of how to build a network and/or access mentorship (Mantenuto et al., 2024). For those who find networking daunting, it is advisable to start small. Students are encouraged to initiate contact with at least one potential mentor to begin building their support network. To maintain a degree of comfort, one may opt to reach out to a more senior student initially. Similarly, it may be easier to ask built-in mentors (i.e., advisors) if they have any recommendations regarding additional faculty mentors. A robust support network enables students to seek guidance, exchange knowledge, and access institutional resources more effectively.[1]

Although students are encouraged to lean on their support networks and avoid self-isolation, cultivating an appropriate level of self-sufficiency is pivotal. First-generation scholars bring many skills to the proverbial academic table, including resourcefulness, persistence, independence, and self-reliance (Calhoun et al. 2022). There are many implicit rules within academia, but there are also explicit ones. First-generation scholars may need to rely on their network to better understand the implicit rules. However, they can utilize the soft skills they already possess to develop a strong understanding of the expectations of their university, college, school, and department. Outside of a few orientation presentations, students may not learn much about these requirements. However, the requirements will often be available on university web pages and handbooks. Therefore, first-generation graduate students should leverage their resourcefulness and self-reliance in order to keep themselves aware of deadlines, expectations, and requirements. Organizational strategies, such as maintaining accessible copies of graduate

[1] For more information on traits and characteristics of a good mentor, we encourage the reader to take a look at Bowie et al. (2024).

handbooks and bookmarking relevant departmental websites, can enhance students' ability to meet administrative expectations efficiently.

Finally, we encourage intradepartmental as well as campus-wide engagement. Kuh (2009: 683) defines this type of "engagement" as the time and effort students "devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college." Far from being a distraction, campus involvement may provide additional support in navigating the hidden curriculum. Where possible, graduate students should join groups, such as their departmental graduate student organization, departmental committees (as a student representative), campus-wide graduate student unions, campus-wide discipline-specific organizations, and/or culture- and identity-based organizations appropriate to their background and/or research specializations. Participation and leadership in these groups expands, strengthens, and diversifies one's academic network. Additionally, these experiences provide insights on academic affairs that are crucial to deconstructing the hidden curriculum while fostering a sense of belonging and community that can often be absent in a research-driven atmosphere.

This set of strategies is by no means exhaustive; however, in regard to learning and understanding the hidden curriculum of graduate school, they are impactful and beneficial.

3.2. FACULTY AT LIBERAL ARTS INSTITUTIONS. Obtaining a faculty position is challenging in and of itself. Johnston and Steele (2024) note that newly minted linguistics PhDs have a less than 10% chance of obtaining a tenure-track position. While new and junior faculty may have an idea of what such a position entails, they most likely do not have a solid understanding of how their new institution functions unless they have been hired at the institution from which they received their doctoral degree. This is not the case for most faculty, who are navigating a new institution with unfamiliar norms and practices, and which may be of a different institutional type than their *alma mater*. Therefore, this subsection begins by highlighting that institutions may be broadly categorized into four primary types (but see Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education 1973 for other types of classifications): public universities, private universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges. Institutional type is often correlated with institutional focus, but not perfectly so. Universities tend to be larger, research-focused, and house graduate programs, while colleges, especially liberal arts colleges, tend to be smaller, teaching-focused, and less likely to award graduate degrees. Exceptions to these tendencies exist: for instance, Dartmouth is an R1 liberal arts college with both undergraduate and graduate programs. Community colleges are almost exclusively two-year, undergraduate-serving institutions, although there are some that offer four-year degrees in cooperation with state public universities.

By definition, most new faculty will not have received their doctoral degree from a liberal arts college, but some may end up teaching at one. It is therefore vital to understand how the liberal arts college is organized. First, according to the Carnegie classification, the teaching load for liberal arts colleges in general is higher than at other types of institutions, with many tenure-track faculty teaching at least two courses per semester and non-tenure-track faculty teaching five or more courses per year. For those on the tenure track, research is also still expected, often with a premium on research that can engage and include undergraduates.

Skillful navigation of the liberal arts college begins with knowing exactly whom to report to as well as an understanding of the internal structure of the institution from the department, center, or program up to the president of the college. The first level of supervision for new faculty may be the department, center, or program chair or director, but some may also report to various deans (e.g., of the faculty or of the college), vice presidents, and provosts. It is important for faculty to know who these people are, what they are responsible for, and whom they report to. Knowing this will allow faculty to access resources, get answers to questions, and understand the working relationships in the institution.

However, those who occupy higher positions of provost, dean, center director, and so forth are not often the best people to approach for inquiries specific to the concerns of new faculty. Many such positions at liberal arts institutions are limited in term. A highly-placed administrator who is an outside hire may be as unfamiliar with the norms and practices of the college as a new faculty hire. In such an ecology, the people who act as stores of long-term institutional knowledge are most likely to be the staff. It is often the case that staff remain in key roles for decades. They acquire and nurture the institutional memory necessary to keep the college functioning smoothly. They will be the primary resource for concerns related to promotion, review, funding, and the associated deadlines and forms.

Along with understanding the structure of the institution, faculty need to understand the expectations of their roles. The first document that outlines this is a contract, which often includes teaching, service, and research expectations, start date, position type and title, renewability and review schedule, and other important logistics. However, particularly important aspects of a faculty appointment, such as evaluation criteria, timeline and frequency of evaluation, the identity of the evaluators, and the faculty member's role in instigating aspects of their evaluation, may be tucked away in institutional documents, such as the faculty code and employee handbook. It is vital to understand the expectations that come with an institutional role in the context of these documents. If there are terms regarding a position with which one is unfamiliar, clarification should be sought immediately.

Greene et al. (2008) find that most colleges and universities do not clearly communicate what they value most when making promotion decisions. As a result, expectations may be vague, especially with respect to service-related obligations, which could or could not include service to the department, center, or program, to the college, to the discipline, to name a few. Often what is expected is hidden, and may include aspects of a faculty role that would not be considered service-oriented at first glance, such as writing letters of recommendation for students. There are also hidden social expectations. For example, faculty may be expected to attend particular social events on campus. The college may be faculty-governed, and new faculty may be expected to attend and vote at faculty meetings. It is crucial to seek out senior faculty in equivalent positions, recognizing that these may not exist, if the position is limited-term. In such cases, building relationships with staff and faculty with broad institutional knowledge who have been present at the institution for decades and who understand the history and culture of the institution should be prioritized.

Mentoring, networking, and socializing are crucial to succeeding at smaller (and larger) colleges (Gardiner et al. 2007). These skills are often not covered in graduate school, but are critical to being noticed, seen, and valued as a faculty member. Often, new faculty are assigned mentors when they are hired. Mentors should be regarded as key institutional resources whenever available. If a mentor has not been assigned, or the mentor is discovered to be less than useful, it is imperative to reach out to senior people (i.e., faculty or staff) who can act as mentors. Faculty benefit from developing a diverse set of mentors, each contributing guidance on distinct aspects of academic life. Jessi Grieser (personal communication) advocates for approaching mentorship in the manner of an advisory board. It is important to have multiple mentors for different aspects of one's career. Mentors need not be linguists, and could be sourced from a variety of other departments and divisions and career stages. *Younger* mentors in particular become important as one approaches the mid-career stage, in order to keep current on new social, professional, and disciplinary developments.

Networking and socializing should occur at all levels—department, division, college, and profession. As much as possible, one should attend events to connect to a variety of people who can assist in the transition to a new institution and position. During these events, one may identify faculty to form research collaborations with, to refer students to, and to ask questions of. Linguistics programs at small liberal arts colleges are typically small, and may house as few as 1-3 linguists. The returns to forging cross disciplinary social and professional connections increases significantly in such a context. Casual conversations may yield aspects of the hidden curriculum that would normally not appear on a form, website, or handbook. Furthermore, regular appearance at social events leads to recognition by people, including deans and provosts, and can lead to you being seen as a valuable and integral part of the campus community, which is vital when it comes to review, promotion, and tenure.

Although the initial transition to a liberal arts college may present unique challenges, proactive engagement in social and professional settings fosters integration and visibility within the institution. The strategies discussed in this section will facilitate social connection, the acquisition of institutional knowledge, and wider recognition of one's presence and achievements.

3.3. FACULTY AT RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS. The *tenure-track* is a probationary period, lasting up to six years, during which assistant professors must meet the requirements set by their institutions. If a faculty member satisfies these requirements, they will be granted tenure. Extensions to or stoppage of the tenure clock may be granted in light of extenuating circumstances, such as parental leave, sick leave, or significant disruptions to research (e.g., COVID-19). Tenure requirements typically focus on the faculty member's performance in (1) research, (2) teaching, and (3) service (Lang 2005). The relative importance and prioritization of these categories can vary depending on the type of institution (Carnegie Commission on Higher Education 1973), in a way that aligns with the institution's mission statement.

With rare exceptions, it is generally expected that *Doctoral Universities—Very High Research Activity* (also known as *R1 institutions*), prioritize research-related endeavors over teaching and service. *Doctoral Universities—High Research Activity* (also known as *R2 institutions*) tend to be more diverse in their priorities, but research and teaching will usually come first, followed by service. While certain types of *Baccalaureate Colleges* (also known as *liberal arts colleges*, cf. §3.2) may focus on undergraduate education, they may still emphasize research productivity and prioritize it over teaching and service. In *Community Colleges*, the primary foci are generally teaching and service.

Navigating the tenure track as a new Assistant Professor can be daunting, especially without prior mentorship (Kelsky 2015), or if unexpected life events arise (Lang 2005). Early-career faculty frequently report a heightened sense of urgency as a result of fixed-term evaluation periods. However, expectations should be clearly outlined by the new faculty member's department from the beginning. It is advisable to consult departmental promotion and tenure guidelines early in one's appointment in order to ascertain institutional expectations, keeping in mind that some institutional contexts make these expectations easier to find than others. For instance, the University of Georgia displays all departments' promotion and tenure guidelines publicly on the Faculty Affairs website.

The tenure process may feel isolating, and there is a risk of constantly and unproductively comparing oneself to others. Remember that each tenure dossier is unique, and that each faculty member has different requirements, even across departments within the same university. In most cases, meeting clearly defined publication benchmarks—anywhere from six articles on the low end to 12 at R1 institutions—will be the most important component of a successful tenure application. At the risk of stating the obvious, it is imperative that the tenure application be submitted only once all the stated requirements have been met. Importantly, even in universities that prioritize research, teaching effectiveness and service will still be considered. Once tenure has been awarded and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor has been achieved, the number and range of service obligations typically increases (Hazelkorn 2015).

In conclusion, the first take-home message of this subsection is that networking within the institution is essential for navigating the system more smoothly. When in doubt, ask the necessary questions of senior faculty, who may have encountered similar situations in the past. Second, be aware of both stated and hidden expectations associated with one's position. Third and lastly, strive to become an integral and reliable member of your institution. For further recommendations, see Trower (2012).

4. Navigating beyond academia. There is a growing number of resources tailored for linguists seeking career pathways in business, government, nonprofit and technology. Given that almost all degree holders in linguistics will find employment outside of the tenure track, these resources are essential to managing post-graduate job placements and lifelong career management. Many of these resources have been created by the Linguistics Beyond Academia Special Interest group of the LSA and made freely available through their Linguistics Career Launch nonprofit project. The Linguistics Career Launch YouTube channel and the first-ever podcast devoted to the career journeys of linguists (the Linguistics CareerCast podcast) deliver post-academic career content made by linguists for linguists. Trester (2017) offers instruction in using one's own linguistics skillset to guide career discernment and management and Trester (2022) showcases the pathways of a cohort of linguists 10 years post-degree. Additionally, the contents of this section are adapted from a monograph in progress titled *Career Pathways for Linguists: Finding Your Fit in the World of Work*, under contract with Wiley.

First-generation scholars who have completed a doctoral degree in linguistics may not be able to, or may not wish to, pursue an academic career on the tenure track. Depending on their individual institutional context and advisor relationships, they also may not feel prepared for a job search outside the academy. For instance, they may underestimate the extent to which building networks and professional relationships are key to career opportunities outside the academy. Indeed, they may even consider this to be a form of soft nepotism. It isn't. Networks are transformative and fundamental to career research and post-graduate employment placement. This section invites the reader to build a habit of having *career conversations* across a range of formal and informal contexts and interactions from day one of their academic degree program. One formalized genre is the *informational interview*, a named genre of interaction known to professionals outside of academe.

In brief, an informational interview is an interview with a person in a position, organization, or field that the interviewer wishes to learn more about. It is a way to seek career information and advice and learn about the interviewee's career journey and personal experience. The informational interview is a common and accepted practice that most professionals have made use of in their career development trajectory, and continues to be used by established professionals in order to research new opportunities, build relationships, and stay on top of trends in their own or adjacent fields. Although the goal of this section is to invite first-generation scholars to begin informational interviewing in order to do essential research on possibilities for their post-academic employment, the habit of networking, relationship-building and cultivating mentors is essential within academia as well, as mentioned above.

It is important to stress that an information interview is not, and should not be used as, a way to "ask for a job". Likewise, it is not a way to mine insider information about current open positions at the interviewee's place of employment (that is for the interviewee to offer on their own volition, if they choose). In fact, the interviewer should not be actively seeking employment at the interviewee's organization at the time of the informational interview. The informational interview is a research tool for the interviewer on their career journey. Using the informational interview, one can discover career possibilities that one never knew existed, and gain first-hand, specific, and relevant information about the day-to-day realities of employment in a given position, organization, or sector. The informational interview also establishes a professional connection between the two parties that, if nurtured, has the potential to be long-lasting and effective.

Who should be the subject of an informational interview? Especially if one is anxious about trying an unfamiliar genre of interaction, it can be best to start with one's own inner circle in order to build comfort and confidence. These first-degree connections include friends, family, neighbors, teachers, and colleagues. Get familiar with holding 'interviews' with people who are known to you but perhaps have not spoken directly about their career journey yet. Building familiarity with the genre through known first-degree connections makes it easier to move on to second-degree connections. These are people whom one does not know, but with whom one shares a mutual connection or organizational tie. This could include alumni of your educational institutions, others who belong to professional organizations (including the LSA), and crucially, referrals from first-degree connections. In order to tap into the maximum diversity of experience, one then branches out to interview referrals from the second-degree connections (third-degree connections) and people in one's LinkedIn network.

In all cases, it helps to reach out with an invitation that follows the following guidelines:

(1) If you know your interviewee through another connection (a "bridge person"), and you have your bridge person's permission, mention that you were recommended to interview them by this third party.

(2) Be specific about the nature of your request: "Would you have about 20 minutes for an informational interview about how you transitioned into your role as a User Experience Researcher at (organization) given your background in (area of) linguistics?" Make the invitation about the interviewee's own experiences. This means they don't have to prepare; they can discuss their own experiences while being guided by your prepared and prioritized questions.

(3) Include specific dates and times and manage all logistics (e.g., locating a nearby coffee shop or setting up a Zoom link) and be flexible and responsive to the availability of the interviewee. Allowing your interviewee to "select a time at their convenience" is not the courtesy you might imagine; busy professionals prefer considering specific times and dates rather than figuring out when they can work you into their limited, unscheduled time. Take the work of scheduling out of their hands as much as possible.

Prior to the interview, research your interviewee, their organization and their professional space. Read their LinkedIn profile. This is why they've created it: to provide information for professional networking purposes. Rest assured that it's not "stalking" to look up their LinkedIn profile and refer to information you found there in your interview; this is acceptable behavior and reassures your interviewee that you invested time in preparing. Review any related personal website or other public-facing social media platforms your interviewee uses. Read about their place of employment. Make an effort to learn something about their field so that you are able to ask specific questions that would not be immediately answered via a quick internet search. Asking your interviewee about projects they're working on (that they can discuss publicly) or the methods and tools that they use in their work is also appropriate. Asking them elementary questions about their field is less so. An example: Rather than asking, "What is User Experience Research (UXR)?", ask them "What qualitative UXR methods do you most often use in your work? Where should I focus on developing my own skills?" is better.

Finally, end every interview by asking for recommendations about one or two additional people to do future informational interviews with–and ask for consent in using your interviewee's name in securing that interview. This is how you grow your network and create connections with new people who have actionable information you can use in career discernment and job placement.

5. Conclusion. The authors wish to end with a list of "Things I Wish I Knew Before Starting Graduate School in Linguistics [as a first-generation scholar or as a continuing-generation ally]" from the workshop that precipitated this paper. Although it is not possible to give a detailed treatment of all the concerns enumerated here, it is hoped that the foregoing has amounted to a worthy start to the mission of demystifying the hidden curriculum in a way that centers the insights, resilience, and leadership of first-generation scholars.

- There is a lot to be done before an annual meeting—reaching out to make coffee dates, etc.
- I need to cultivate relationships, especially to people who are going to write letters of reference.
- How to network.
- How to create my own opportunities.
- That linguists can also work in industry.
- Apply, apply, apply—to schools, internships, summer schools, conferences, grants, fellowships.
- About mentorship programs.
- About emotional and peer support.
- To ask more questions.
- Try to find someone (ideally mentors, but also peers) like you. Your institution may have a resource for this. Learn from them. These people are invaluable.
- Find mentors and a therapist for guidance on how to avoid conflicts of interest.

The increasing prominence of language and linguistics in public life, in no small part due to public communicators such as Nicole Holliday (Pohl 2024), Sharese King (Lee 2024), and Gretchen McCulloch (2020), has made it so that the field now need not only work on inviting more linguists into the field, but *also* on welcoming and supporting the ones who are already here. It is now important not only to warn newcomers of the existence of the hidden curriculum, but *also* to actively demystify and deconstruct it, in a way that acknowledges that intersectionality of linguists and the diversity of their career trajectories. Continuing-generation linguists (i.e., those who are not first-generation baccalaureate degree holders), and especially those who come from multigenerational academic households, can work together with undergraduates, graduate students, and new faculty in order to establish formal and informal mentorship relationships to facilitate this demystification. Lastly, this paper and the workshop that preceded it provide a proof of principle that mentorship and advocacy need not be seen as walled off from research and teaching and localized to specific mentor-mentee relationships—rather, it is possible to, so to speak, leave a paper trail of one's service as a contribution to the scholarship of teaching, learning, and mentorship, thereby maximizing the dissemination of best practices.

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