



INNOVATIONS IN DEAF STUDIES

Wednesday, 20 January 2016, 10:30-12:30

Conference Room 2 in the Convention Center by the Observatory

Tagungszentrum an der Sternwarte • Geismar Landstr. 11 • 37083 Göttingen

10:30-10:45	The three institutes introduce themselves
10:45-11:45	Presentation by Dr Annelies Kusters, Dr Dai O'Brien and Maartje De Meulder: „Innovations in Deaf Studies“
11:45-12:00	Break
12:00-12:30	Discussion

The event “Innovations in Deaf Studies” is based upon the creation of an edited volume for Oxford University Press, with the same title. What kind of innovations do deaf scholars deem necessary or desirable in the discipline of Deaf Studies? While Deaf Studies as a field has existed for 40 years and has been largely dominated by hearing scholars, there is a growing number of deaf scholars who conduct research informed by their own experience of being deaf. Deaf Studies research is entering the third wave. While the first wave of Deaf Studies persistently tried to identify and define “deaf community”, “deaf culture” or “deaf identity” as clearly delineated units, themes explored by researchers in the second wave are “deaf epistemologies” and “deaf ontologies”, in which the embodiment as a deaf person is central. The third wave of Deaf Studies, and the proposed volume, builds upon and extends the second wave’s research by arguing that this embodiment is central not only in the study of the research participants’ experiences but also in terms of the researchers’ positionalities. In the third wave of Deaf Studies, we finally begin to theorise about the implications of deaf ontological positioning for the conduct of research (including research methodologies and theoretical framings) and therefore the potential for the generation of new knowledge. Another important area of theory development in the third wave scrutinizes the relationships between deaf academics and deaf practitioners/activists on the one hand and between deaf academics and deaf research participants on the other. Thus, whilst there are a number of very good deaf-focused research studies done by hearing scholars, we want to specifically explore what kind of research deaf scholars produce, informed by their experience of being deaf, and put their research in the spotlight. In doing so, we are not aiming to create a false dichotomy between deaf and hearing researchers in the field of Deaf Studies, but we rather aim to create potential for new ways of collaboration with hearing researchers in the discipline of Deaf Studies.

The chapters in the proposed volume are organised around three themes: First, authors consider future directions in Deaf Studies, and the role of deaf scholars not only in the discipline of Deaf Studies but also in the wider academic field and in deaf communities. Second, authors experiment with theoretical frames which are based on the ontological experience of being deaf (such as deaf pedagogies and deaf theology). They illustrate what deaf ontologies could look like and reflect on how they inform deaf scholars’ work. In the third section, authors reflect on methodology used by deaf researchers, designed to engage closely and effectively with deaf participants and/or deaf experiences (such as using photography and film), and as such offer ideas for the future. In the methodologies section, authors also reflect on ownership of knowledge, language practices during research, and the multiple roles of the researcher.

One of the recurring themes in the book is the question whether and to what extent it is possible to speak about deaf ontologies: there are many ways to be deaf and whilst the authors in this volume investigate what they regard as deaf ways of being, they also are wary of essentialism. Another theme that permeates the various chapters in this book is the investigation of collaborative and power relationships between deaf scholars and deaf research participants, and between deaf scholars and deaf community members and activists, which is a pressing concern for many deaf scholars. In short, this book demonstrates that research frameworks and methodologies built around the ontologies of deaf people, i.e. the combined experience and study of ‘being deaf’, offer an exciting new way forward for the discipline as a whole and suggest potential for innovation in Deaf Studies.

The languages of presentation will be International Sign and English, and English-IS interpretation will be organized.