

I'd like to thank the organizers for giving us an opportunity to reflect individually, and as a group, on why we're doing what we're doing when we're doing phonology.

I'd be especially interested in hearing from those of you who aren't working with violable constraints about how you do typology, about how you formalize the various effects of constraints (blocking, triggering...), and also how you do research on learning.

I find it very hard to see how to do those things with inviolable constraints (it's not because we didn't try).

I'll also be interested to talk with people about what they see as the goals of their work. One thing that makes our field interesting, and also confusing at times, is that it's possible to do theoretical phonology with a variety of goals. I think it'd be less confusing and also more interesting if we were clearer about our goals.

I'm going to start by talking about how violable constraints have contributed to the goals of what I call Classical Universal Phonology. My impression about what's changing in our field is not that there has been some kind of deep failure of OT in meeting the goals of CUP, but instead, that phonologists are increasingly doing work that doesn't have the same goals as CUP. I'll summarize some of that work, in terms of how it is aiming at the broader goals of generative phonology, especially focusing on how violable constraints have proved to be useful in it.

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Some other goals besides those of CUP:

You can imagine other goals. For example, you might try to make frequent systems have some kind of formal advantage - this is the stated goal of feature geometry (see McCarthy's 1988 overview) What's not stated anywhere that I know of in the feature geometry literature, is how exactly formal simplicity leads to typological frequency. You might also try to generate all languages using a formal system that makes this an interesting challenge; it looks to me like some research in Government Phonology, as well as in syntax has that character. A pitfall of that kind of work, that we often see in syntax, and sometimes in phonology I'm afraid, is that you need to make sure that the domain of explanation is not just those things that your formally restricted system can generate, and that if you do push some phenomenon off to another module, you make sure that this other module's properties are also well defined.