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Essays in Honor of Maria Polinsky

Title

Preface

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Preface

This festschrift is a testament to Maria Polinsky's impact on the field of linguistics and the lasting legacy of her work—a legacy whose impact will only grow over time. In fact, speaking of Masha's legacy feels wildly premature, given that there is certainly so much more to come. The contributions in this festschrift represent a small sampling of the many lines of inquiry that her work has both addressed and inspired. Featuring theoretical incisiveness, cutting-edge empirical tools, and thoughtful reflection, each paper honors her passion for understanding the deep mysteries of human language.

As the title of this volume highlights, Masha's ambitious research program has taken her from the Caucasus Mountains, to the plateaus of Madagascar, to the Guatemala highlands, to the beaches of Mo'orea. Yet Masha's internal compass always leads her back to the ocean, a theme beautifully captured by the cover of this volume. The photograph of her favorite beach near La Jolla was taken by her younger son Abi Polinsky, on a camera made around the year she was born. Abi shares the significance of the thin bars at the bottom: pink—a combination of the red/white/blue in the Russian and US flags—and brown—a combination of the colors in the Californian flag, the state she has chosen as her home.

The geographic sampling of Masha's work only speaks to one dimension of her intrepid spirit; the domains of inquiry are no less trailblazing. Masha has made significant contributions to our understanding of word order, argument structure, and the syntax of control. She is as adept at traditional field method techniques as she is at experimental methods, making her uniquely able to investigate language processing in understudied languages. Masha is also a leading figure in the study of heritage languages, examining how bilingual speakers maintain both their home language and the broader societal language.

Beyond her own research contributions, Masha is a generous mentor who invests considerable time, energy, and resources into helping junior scholars refine their ideas, achieve research objectives, and disseminate their results. Her commitment to the next generation transcends institutional, national, and disciplinary boundaries; she readily makes time for anyone hoping to meet with her. Researchers around the globe, including those in fields beyond formal linguistics, count themselves among Masha's mentees. Scheduling a meeting with Masha means being prepared to engage in a detailed discussion about how one's theory would account for some pattern found in a variety of Shona or Telugu, or really any language any linguist has ever worked on. Her recall of linguistic data is unparalleled; if she encountered it in an LSA talk back in 1998, it's still very much on the table.

We are grateful to the authors for writing the thought-provoking pieces herein contained while meeting a rigorous publication schedule. We are also grateful to Carrie Gillon for editorial assistance. Most importantly, we are grateful to Masha for her mentorship and friendship.

With respect and admiration,

Lauren Clemens, Vera Griбанова, and Gregory Scontras