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Language, Emotion, and the Politics of Vulnerability

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Abstract

Previous research on language and emotion in anthropology has demonstrated that rather than being a private, subjective, and prediscursive experience belonging to individuals, emotion is an intersubjective, emergent process that is not only everywhere in language but also everywhere language is. In this review, I discuss how recent research in linguistic anthropology and related fields has continued to build on such insights in investigations of the flow of affect across bodies, the ways in which politically situated ideologies of language and emotion function at various institutional scales, and the role of language and emotion in the enactment of agency. Overall, my discussion is framed in a consideration of how this body of work contributes both theoretically and methodologically to understanding the role that language and emotion play in mediating the dynamic relationship between vulnerability and political agency.

INTRODUCTION

As I was finalizing this review, the world learned about the first case of the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Wuhan, China. Usually a time of year when China turns inside out as millions of people travel to celebrate the Lunar New Year with family, the traffic this year moved—virtually overnight—onto social media. In the posts instantly appearing on WeChat, Weibo, and other platforms, people began rapidly sharing information, speculations, and a vast array of feelings and thoughts. There was substantial fear and distress as people worried about themselves and their loved ones, but also concern and curiosity as people worked to piece together the story of where the virus had originated and how it had spread. When people learned that Li Wenliang—the Wuhan physician who had sent an early warning about a new severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)-like illness to friends and colleagues and was subsequently detained by police and forced to admit to online rumormongering—had died from the virus, there was an unprecedented online response from all corners of China. A fierce combination of grief, betrayal, and outrage was articulated in millions of posts, many of which posed scathing critiques of the government, and most of which were swiftly expunged by censors in less than 24 hours. As one author pointed out in an anonymized post before the shutdown, what seemed to resonate so deeply with Chinese citizens was the fact that Li never aspired to heroics. He was a good, police-fearing, harmony-loving citizen who was only trying to quietly alert his close friends and family members. For the millions of Chinese with no heroic ambitions other than "being able to protect those we love," the author wrote, "Li Wenliang is us." The fact that Li Wenliang was harshly punished by police for enacting care for his loved ones affected people in such a deeply personal way that even the most compliant citizens began to speak out.

A few weeks later, once the virus began to spread in the United States, a similar flurry of online activity ensued. As they had on Chinese social media, people used various platforms and multimodal tools to formulate a range of emotional responses. From fear to anger to betrayal to sadness, peoples' emotions often became more rather than less ambiguous in the rapid, simultaneous conversations emerging across multiple threads of comments and posts. As in China, many of these conversations in the United States involved an attempt to discern what national and state governments had and had not done to curb the spread of COVID-19. At once, millions of Americans began to acknowledge their own vulnerability—as much to the virus as to the governmental, health care, and educational infrastructures shaping the impact that the virus had on their everyday lives—in a way they had not before. This engagement led not only to an urgent collective scrutinization of the actors and structures involved, but also to a new sense of shared responsibility as citizens at all levels of society suddenly found themselves responsible for making decisions (closing private schools or businesses, for example) that could potentially impact thousands of lives.

As of this writing, the ultimate outcome in either country—indeed, globally—remains to be seen. What can be said about the reactions in both places, however—and what I focus on in the remainder of this review—is that the range of "affective-discursive practices" (Wetherell 2012) sparked by COVID-19 offers an opportunity to reflect on language, emotion, and the dynamic relationship between vulnerability and political agency (Butler et al. 2016b). In a recent interdisciplinary volume, Butler et al. (2016a) reframe vulnerability not as precarity or weakness but as "the condition of being affected" (p. 6). Overall, the authors address the pragmatic question of what possibilities emerge when vulnerability is acknowledged not as weakness or passivity but as a relationally grounded possibility for collective political action. Several contributors thus center their analyses on the ways in which affect flows across bodies in encounters within which vulnerability—or what Sabsay (2016) calls "permeability"—is alternately avowed or disavowed

(see also Gambetti 2016, Hirsch 2016). Sabsay, for example, foregrounds how such encounters, within which affects that exceed the capacity of speech are nevertheless entangled with discursive encounters, may open a "political space" over time (p. 293). Agency here is thus entangled with communication and affect, but also with temporality and indeterminacy.

While making no claim to offer any kind of concrete solution for contributors' aspirations to further what they call a "radical politics of vulnerability" on a broad scale, the following sections consider how recent work in linguistic anthropology and neighboring fields contributes to answering the specific question of how language and affect are implicated in vulnerability and agency. As I highlight throughout, this contribution is as much theoretical as it is methodological. Theoretically, linguistic anthropologists thus seek to understand language and emotion in studies that are, as Nakassis (2016) puts it, "not the study of language." These studies are, rather, investigations of how emotion-in-interaction emerges as a historically and politically situated form of embodied social action. Linguistic anthropologists, for example, conduct detailed analyses of interactions, including lexis but also silence, overlap, grammar, prosody, turn-taking, and embodied markers of stance (to name just a few) in order to document not just that emotion or any other culturally situated process occurs but how it occurs in situated interactions over time (Kulick & Schieffelin 2004, Wortham & Reyes 2015). As past reviewers have noted (Besnier 1990, Wilce 2009, McElhinny 2010), linguistic anthropologists thus identify emotion as both (*a*) emergent within and inseparable from interaction (Ochs & Schieffelin 1989, Besnier 1992, Haviland 2003, Jaffe 2009, Wilce 2014); and (*b*) emergent within and inseparable from the multiple cultural, economic, and political processes mediating human experience (Irvine 1990, McElhinny 2010, McIntosh & Mendoza-Denton 2020). I propose that even a limited selection of recent studies building on these insights contributes to a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of language, emotion, vulnerability, and resistance at various scales. The first section below thus focuses on a selection of recent research examining the flow of affect across bodies and the moment-to-moment mechanisms through which the body becomes, as Butler (2016) suggests, "less an entity than a relation" (p. 19). The second section describes research showing how politically situated ideologies of language and emotion function in interactions across institutional and cultural encounters, pointing to what both Butler (2016) and Sabsay (2016) identify as the kinds of interpellating discourses that function to constrain agency. In the third section, I examine how recent research on language, emotion, and the enactment of resistance or what Butler (2016) might call "performative agency" is situated in complex, multivalent, and often uncertain interactions at various scales. This body of scholarship reveals the microinteractional dynamics through which agency or resistance is enacted not as a form of activity opposed to passivity but as an often subtle negotiation through which, as Sabsay (2016) suggests, humans are not only "mutually affected by each other and the world" but through which the world, even in small ways, is also affected (p. 286). I conclude with a return to my investigation of COVID-19 responses in China and the United States, considering questions such as, How did Li Wenliang's concern for his loved ones, which arguably lacked any form of political intent, serve as the affective basis for what ultimately became a collective political response? How, further, might the overwhelming and affectively charged response be seen not as a sudden awakening of social consciousness among otherwise complacent citizens, but instead as a response to what was collectively and simultaneously experienced as a disavowal of their right to continue acting as relational agents in the world? And how might the response of US citizens, whose racialized stance of presumed invulnerability was shattered once the virus spread throughout all 50 states, be similarly considered? How, finally, can the theories and methods of linguistic anthropology be applied in understanding the role of language and emotion in mediating these responses?

THE FLOW OF AFFECT ACROSS BODIES

Studies of language and emotion in linguistic anthropology and neighboring fields demonstrate that affect emerges as a key component of the kinds of "co-operative action" within which interlocutors come to "inhabit each other's actions" (C. Goodwin 2018, p. 11). Here, scholars foreground the constant reconfiguration of embodied boundaries in the moment-to-moment affective attunement to an Other (see also Ochs 2012). This process, conversation analysts have demonstrated, includes spoken language but also gaze, gesture, prosody, silence, and engagement with objects in space (Hakulinen & Sorjonen 2012, M. Goodwin et al. 2012, Ruusuvuori 2013). In a study examining facial expressions made at turn transitions in dyadic interactions in Finland, for example, Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori (2012) demonstrate that "facial pursuits"—in combination with gaze, prosody, and gesture—do far more than express speakers' preexisting emotions, instead functioning interactionally to cue affiliative responses, direct attention, and invite reconsidered appraisals (pp. 88–90). Based on these findings, Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori pose a challenge to psychobiological theories of self-regulation, calling for a reframing of the concept of emotion regulation as, instead, a social process in which interactants coregulate one another's emotions. Recent research has further demonstrated that even within intimate, primarily affiliative relationships, the flow of affect is constantly mediated by shifting dynamics of closeness and distance. Katila (2018), for example, examines interpersonal touch between mothers and children at a day facility in Finland, showing how touch serves as the basis of a continuous haptic negotiation of bodily boundaries. This process, her data reveal, is never completely seamless and always involves the negotiation of power through moves that function "to claim or cancel the availability of the other's body" (p. 214). In a close examination of everyday interaction among American and Swedish family members, Goodwin & Cekaite (2018) similarly demonstrate how emotion-in-interaction emerges through what they describe as the "choreography" of moving, speaking bodies. Examining video-recorded interactions showing parents and children preparing for their day, eating dinner, helping/being helped with homework, and winding down in the evening, the authors demonstrate how family members become involved with one another through touch, prosody, gaze, gestures, words, and engagement with objects and space. Throughout the book, they further show how language and emotion are collaboratively co-constructed as a bidirectional rhythmic entrainment between two or more bodies (Goodwin & Cekaite 2018, p. 121). This embodied entrainment does not necessarily mean that the emotion experienced within specific interactions is reciprocal or even welcome, however (p. 19). Interactions among family members, the authors suggest, can be understood as simultaneously affording and constraining participants' agency in distinct ways, often instigating emotion-laden negotiations of power and control. Finally, in the examination of two dyadic interactions in Senegal and the United States, Perrino and I (Perrino & Pritzker 2019) highlight the contingency and precariousness of intimacy-in-interaction, showing that intimacy is best thought of a verb rather than as a noun. Because intimacy-in-interaction is "constantly made and remade in specific contexts and interactional moments" (Perrino & Pritzker, p. 2), certain words or forms of discourse in interaction cannot be designated as either affiliative or dismissive, even within the context of particular cultures or relationships. Intimacy-in-interaction, we argue, should thus ideally be approached in the context of ethnographic studies attending to the dynamic ways in which feelings of closeness are tempered by—and constructed in relation to—feelings of distance as relationships emerge over time. Work on emotion-in-interaction even among intimate partners and family members thus demonstrates the importance of both theoretical and methodological approaches that are capable of appropriately contextualizing the dynamic, situated emergence of emotion between and across bodies.

Recent studies integrating psychophysiology with the study of interaction have further investigated interlocutors' biological responses to emotion in interaction. Peräkylä et al. (2015), for example, found biological evidence for the interactive regulation of emotion in a Finnish study where researchers measured interlocutors' electrodermal activity (EDA) during prompted sessions of dyadic storytelling. This study found that speakers' arousal patterns correlated to the expression of both affiliation and nonaffiliation as they were expressed by listeners in both verbal and nonverbal ways (p. 302). The authors conclude that the decreased arousal speakers demonstrated when listeners expressed affiliation can be framed as engendering a social and physiological process they refer to as "sharing the emotional load" (p. 302), a dynamic they contrast with speakers' increased arousal patterns in the face of nonaffiliation or what they describe as "asymmetries in emotional engagement" (p. 318). Numerous other studies examine the embodied process of "intercorporeal synchrony" during interaction, suggesting that syncing one's body to another's is often associated with pleasure and other positive emotions (Müller & Lindenberger 2011). Bodies in interaction, at least in studies conducted primarily with European and American populations, thus frequently show signs of brain coupling and other signs of embodied coregulation or counterregulation (e.g., Konvalinka et al. 2011, Hasson et al. 2012, Konvalinka & Roepstorff 2012, Rochet-Capellan & Fuchs 2014, Fusaroli et al. 2016). Here, the neurocognitive coupling process is further conceived of as an alternation between "in-phase" and "antiphase" synchronization (Koban et al. 2019) rather than as an exact "mirroring" of embodied responses between interlocutors (Tylén et al. 2012, p. 2). In this research, the flow of affect across bodies seems to be mediated by an oscillation between various forms of biological merging and distance.

While much of this research employs an experimental design, several recent studies in the United States and Europe have highlighted the value of integrating biological measures into both ethnographic and conversation analytic approaches to emotion-in-interaction (Campos et al. 2013, Mendoza-Denton et al. 2017, Eisenhauer 2019, Pritzker et al. 2020b). Mendoza-Denton et al. (2017), for example, conducted an analysis of interaction and EDA measurements among three men and one woman playing the video game Mario Party. In a set of interactions that developed during the minigame Shake It Up, for example, which the authors describe as "mimetic masturbation" (p. 552), there was a great deal of laughter and joking among the three men at the exclusion of the woman. The authors' analysis of the EDA levels of the woman's male teammate—who was her best friend at the time, according to the woman—suggests that despite his involvement in the gendered levity, he was simultaneously physiologically affected by his friend's discomfort. The authors suggest that he was experiencing a kind of "second-hand sexism" and point to how the study of interaction can contribute to the growing body of research on vicarious emotion (p. 569). An ongoing interdisciplinary study combining linguistic anthropology, biocultural anthropology, and communication studies in the ethnographic study of physiological responses (heart rate variability) time-matched to video-recorded interactions among couples over the course of three days at home, which I am conducting with colleagues in the southeastern United States, further demonstrates the dynamic ways in which (*a*) physiology and emotion are co-constructed in real-time interactions (Pritzker et al. 2020b); and (*b*) both emotional and physiological responses are always deeply entangled with the historical, political, and economic circumstances in which people live (Hinton 1999, Leatherman 2005, Seligman 2014, DeCaro 2015). In a preliminary investigation of randomized selections of interactions among several couples, moreover, we have found that physiological patterns emerging in interaction often correspond to couples' narrativized accounts of their identity as a couple (DeCaro et al. 2019). Data also show, however, that physiological patterns in the same couple often vary over time and across different activities. Such variance suggests that researchers combining physiology and interaction would benefit from conducting analyses that situate physiological outcomes as but one aspect of a complex semiotic field that can be

understood only within a detailed analysis of particular interactions and/or in relationships over time (Pritzker 2017).

Studies of single interactions or relationships over time—whether focusing on facial expressions, bodies in space, or physiological outcomes—demonstrate the intricate communicative dynamics through which affect flows across bodies. Ethnographic research across diverse communities has further demonstrated that the flow of emotion across bodies is not limited to dyadic or even contemporaneous interactions. Emerging within and across families of any size (Shohet 2013, 2017; Goodwin & Cekaite 2018) as well as in larger groups such as churches (Richards-Greaves 2016), convents (Corwin 2012, Corwin & Brown 2020), and choirs (Black 2012), the flow of affect also mediates interactions in temporally detached interactions such as those occurring online (Deumert 2014, Jones & Schieffelin 2015, Danesi 2020), interactions with media and public signage (Shankar 2013, Lyons & Karimzad 2019, Kunreuther & Kohl 2020), or even during séances (Manning 2018). At an even broader scale, culture itself is seen to move in semiotic encounters that variably engage peoples' affects (Urban & Urban 2020; see also Park 2020, Webster 2020, Stromberg 2020), as well as in socialization in culturally appropriate ways of feeling and displaying emotion (Kulick & Schieffelin 2004, Burdelski 2020, Scheidecker 2020). The dynamic movement of affect society, moreover, has had far-reaching cultural consequences, leading to language contraction (Graber 2020), for example, as well as the formation or dissolution of particular communities (Monaghan 2020).

IDEOLOGIES OF LANGUAGE AND EMOTION

As Black (2018, p. 89) writes, "[E]mbodied language affords the basic recognition of an Other as a thinking, feeling subject," an encounter he frames in terms of the way care—or lack of care—becomes possible only within situated interaction. Within such interactions, moreover, the "power to act as a speaker" is often asymmetrical and unevenly distributed (Goodwin 2018, p. 90). As argued by Stevanovic & Peräkylä (2014), this asymmetry relates to the uneven distributions of the "rights and obligations" to which interlocutors constantly adjust in interaction (p. 186), positioning themselves vis-à-vis their own knowledge and feelings, their awareness of the knowledge and feelings of their interactant, and sociocultural expectations regarding social status (p. 190). Such expectations, linguistic anthropologists have demonstrated, include interlocutors' ideologies of language, which Briggs (2005, p. 274) succinctly defines as peoples' "socially situated conceptions of the nature and functions of language" (see also Silverstein 1979). As many scholars have shown, language ideologies are far from simply conceptual, often involving embodied orientations toward certain ways of speaking or writing that function as indexical and/or iconic representations of certain people or groups (Bucholtz & Hall 2016, p. 178; see also Schieffelin et al. 1998, Irvine & Gal 2000). Mendoza-Denton (2011), for example, examines how Latina gang girls in California use creaky voice (e.g., vocal or glottal fry) in what she calls "a locally-defined economy of affect" within with endurance of suffering is marked (p. 266). Mainstream media representations use creaky voice to index racialized forms of masculinity and disorder, however. Mendoza-Denton thus calls creaky voice a "semiotic hitchhiker" that functions to enregister racial stereotypes and erase local affective economies. Further showing how attitudes toward different varieties of language as well as specific "forms of talk" are entangled with emotion, McIntosh (2020) analyzes the feelings that third- and fourth-generation white Kenyans express about Kiswahili (the national language of Kenya). Whereas European colonial settlers regarded Kiswahili with a sense of "deep disdain" (McIntosh 2020, p. 261), since Kenyan independence (established in 1963), white Kenyans have begun to express an appreciation for the "beauty" of Kiswahili as a language and pathway for forming social connections with black Kenyans (p. 263). This shift, McIntosh (2020) argues, is deeply

entangled with what she describes as white Kenyans' "emotionally saturated" (p. 259) efforts to maintain legitimacy in a country where they no longer have authority or power. As in Mendoza-Denton's study, ways of speaking thus emerge within and produce both local affective economies as well as enregistering stereotypes. Perrino (2018, 2020) further shows how affect-laden ideologies of language intersect with problematic ideologies of ethnicity and nationality in Northern Italy. Focusing on the ways in which anti-immigration discourses draw on the revitalization of the local Venetan language to construct boundaries between true Italians and immigrants, Perrino (2018, p. 31) shows how people code-switch in order to display affiliation or tell jokes that mock immigrants in everyday interaction. Here, Perrino suggests, affective ties to dialect enact what she calls "exclusionary intimacies" that simultaneously bond native Italians and position immigrants as unwelcome intruders.

Ideologies of emotion, including the kinds of "appropriateness-based discourses" (Flores & Rosa 2015) informing where, when, and with whom certain types of emotion may be experienced or expressed, have further constituted the focus of several recent studies. Looking at the dynamic role of emotion in Texas death penalty trials, Conley (2016) shows how lawyers and jurors alike use lexical, deictic, and performative forms to emotionally distance themselves from defendants. Based on an ideology of emotion that makes it possible to set emotions aside, Conley (2016) explains, jurors "generally considered their [personal] emotions irrelevant and harmful to their decisions" (p. 47). In the criminal justice system, ideologies of emotion, race, and criminality thus work together in interactions that afford disavowal, and defense attorneys are tasked with the discursive project of moving jurors toward an empathic engagement that humanizes the defendant (Conley Riner & Vartkessian 2019). Rys (2018) concentrates on the everyday impact of ideologies of emotion in a different American institutional context: the classroom. Her analysis centers on how a remark made by a white student in a language and social justice program, who asked, "When are people finally going to get over colonization?," led to an enduring tension in the group (Rys 2018, p. 30). The student's question, Rys explains, was experienced as a violent disavowal for students of color, who were well aware of the ways in which they continued to be affected by discourses entangled with colonial projects (Beliso-De Jesús & Pierre 2020). A rift developed between those who expressed hurt at the comment and those who felt that the expression of such emotion was inappropriate in the classroom space, where, they argued, rational conversation should prevail. Rys analyzes the latter expectation as entrenched within a Western ideology of emotion that locates emotion in the subjective experience of individuals (see Fenigsen et al. 2020). This ideology, she argues, not only erases the ways in which history and society affect emotional experience, but also intersects with ideologies of language by dictating where, when, and for whom it is appropriate to express emotion (Rys 2018, p. 35). The effects of this ideological assemblage include the simultaneous privileging of white speakers' affective attachment to personalist ideologies of emotion as well as the construction of people of color who do not adhere to it as "inappropriately emotional" (p. 38). Pointing to what Ramos-Zayas (2011) calls "embodied racialized affect," Rys (2018) demonstrates, alongside others described in this section, how ideologies of language, ideologies of emotion, and feelings about both are implicated in interactions that work to silence some speakers while privileging others. Even within such systems, however, Rosa (2019) shows how language and affect in everyday interaction afford strategic engagement and destabilization of such ethnoracial logics among Latinx high school students in Chicago. This study leads Rosa to conclude that, despite how systemic and entrenched structures of power constrain agency in real and problematic ways, "worlds beyond. . .are not just possible, but in fact already in existence and waiting to be recognized as such" (Rosa 2019, p. 213). Rosa's study thus underscores the ways in which alternative ideologies of language, emotion, and race may emerge concurrently and alongside dominant structures of power.

LANGUAGE, EMOTION, AND AGENCY

Agency has been shown by linguistic anthropologists to be closely imbricated with language, including grammatical forms (Ahearn 2001b, Duranti 2004b), conventional forms of interaction (Duranti 2004b), and the multiple semiotic entailments of signs in interaction (Kockelman 2007). From this perspective, agency—like emotion—is always co-constituted in situated interaction. Agency-in-interaction, however, is also always "embedded within a larger social matrix" that simultaneously affords the very possibility of agency in the first place (Goodwin 2018, p. 440). Wortham & Reyes (2015) thus argue that it is only through research that prioritizes the linking of "connected events over time" in temporally unfolding processes that we can understand how "agency" is mediated by political, economic, linguistic, and social constraints (p. 10).

In both momentary interactions and interactions over time, recent research has demonstrated that the situated experience of emotion also serves as an important foundation for the enactment of agency (Podesva 2016). Scholars examining the enactment of online resistance, for example, foreground the role of language and emotion in allowing participants' to co-construct moral reevaluations and discursive interruptions of problematic political, racial, and gendered ideologies. Fine (2019) thus investigates how practitioners engaged in the #MagicResistance movement enact what she calls "microsocial agency" (p. 1) in their cathartic and affective—if not always politically effective—participation in anti-Trump rituals. The register enabled and circulated by the movement is not entirely ineffective, however, often working to "antagonistically incite adverse reactions in conservative audiences" (p. 16) and thus enacting what we might call a dialogic form of resistance. Several studies of interaction on the various platforms constituting the world of Black Twitter, moreover, emphasize the role affect plays in the coenactment of resistance. Smalls (2019) thus examines how the unapologetic and affectively imbued use of varieties of African American English establish Black Twitter as a space for participants to enact a situated, agentive response to dominant ideologies of language, race, and gender. For Smalls (2019), the key to understanding this affordance is how participants draw on multimodal representations to "affirm the value of black bodies, minds, and hearts" (p. 52), an avowal made even more powerful as it occurs alongside of and in relation to the "white public spaces" that constitute both the broader Internet and American society at large (p. 55). In a study of King Bach videos on Vine, Calhoun (2019) further calls attention to the ways in which online multimodality affords the possibility for the development of new genres of counterhegemonic humor. These new genres, Calhoun concludes, point to the creative possibilities for drawing together affect, interaction, medium, and form in the disruption of racial as well as political ideologies.

Other recent studies examining how language and emotion are implicated in various forms of discursively enacted agency and/or resistance suggest that such agency is often far from a straightforward enactment of intentional social action. De León (2017), for example, examines the intersection of language, emotion, and agency in an analysis of romantic WhatsApp messages sent among Tzotzil Mayan youth in Zinacantán. The relationships afforded by such communication (which notably rely heavily on mediated forms of Spanish instead of Mayan Tzotzil) tend to deviate from traditional romantic arrangements, in which there is little room for intimacy prior to marriage (p. 464). Drawing on Ahearn's (2001a) analysis of love letters among youth in Nepal, De León (2017) argues that WhatsApp affords the youth's "agentive construction of affect and sociality" (p. 469). The new relationships formed across this platform further enact a kind of social agency for the youth with regard to how such relationships afford "the creation, resistance, and transformation of linguistic and social structures" (p. 469). If agency is defined as "the sociocultural capacity to act" (Ahearn 2001b, p. 122), De León concludes, then young peoples' participation in these romantic engagements certainly counts (2017, p. 469). She further highlights, however, the

ways in which the kind of agency that is afforded by digitally mediated interactions often includes a distinct form of uncertainty in terms of how it forces youth to face new and ambiguous social arrangements. Here, what De León (2017, p. 481) calls "ambivalent agency" is co-constituted with a range of fluctuating emotions that are anything but straightforward and are often enacted in ways that elide the analyst's capacity to attribute active intentionality to the actor.

Recent examinations of how language and emotion function in peoples' engagement with so-called neoliberal ideologies of emotion (e.g., Rose 1996, Illouz 2008, Teo 2018) offer further examples of the multiple, simultaneous, and often ambivalent agencies enacted in various contexts. In a recent study of Toraja "grammars of desire," for example, Donzelli (2019, p. 22) examines language used within everyday practices such as food sharing, political campaigning, and public auctions. Traditional discourses of language and emotion in Toraja, Donzelli explains, require speakers to convey their affects and desires through a linked set of discursive practices in an overall affective–discursive strategy that Donzelli glosses as "unintentionalism" (Donzelli 2019, p. 21). Neoliberal transformations in Indonesian politics and economy have reshaped Toraja discursive practices, however, which now commonly include the expression of personal emotions, intentions, and desire. Examining how these interactions are mediated by historical as well as contemporary events and political structures, Donzelli (2019) proposes that rather than seeing this transformation simply in terms of interpellation, scholars must attend to the ways in which becoming any kind of self requires "hospitable subjectivities and life forms" (p. 164). Neoliberal emotions, from this perspective, are never completely uniform but instead are enacted within the situated lives of particular actors whose very adoption of such discourses can itself be construed as a kind of responsive, if deeply constrained, form of agency.

Several scholars further highlight various forms of agentive resistance within the context of "emotion pedagogy" workshops and classes (Wilce & Fenigsen 2016). Referring to formal training courses that inculcate neoliberal forms of "self-managed, self-responsible neoliberal selfhood" (Wilce & Fenigsen 2016, p. 86), emotion pedagogies teach people to enact the management of their emotions, for example, by encouraging them to use "I-messages," in which speakers express only their own thoughts or emotional experiences, along with explicit emotion labels to describe their feelings in a calm and unthreatening manner (p. 83). Though many scholars critique emotion pedagogies for creating certain kinds of "enterprising selves" whose attention is directed toward themselves and away from the social (Bialostok & Aronson 2016, Dunn 2016, Pritzker 2016, Simchai & Shoshana 2018), others foreground what Sa'ar (2016, p. 183) calls the "potentially multiple effects" of emotion pedagogies. In a discussion of an "economic empowerment" workshop for women in Israel, for example, Sa'ar (2016) acknowledges that the workshop guides participants toward self-cultivation rather than engaging with the underlying sociopolitical processes causing their continued disempowerment. At the same time, however, she shows that participants not only are very much aware of the ineffectiveness of the teachings for changing their economic situation, but also enjoy the workshops as opportunities to connect with others like themselves. These women might therefore be seen as engaged in a situated form of participation that falls somewhere between outright resistance and total subjectification. My own research on family constellation therapy (FCT) and inner child workshops in China (Pritzker 2016, Pritzker & Duncan 2019) similarly suggests that the ways in which language and emotion emerge in situated encounters within emotion pedagogical settings may generate multiple effects. In Pritzker & Duncan (2019), we thus examine how the reframing of the self as a "we" instead of an "I" often (though not always) motivates participants in FCT workshops in Beijing and Oaxaca to turn toward, rather than away from, the kinds of pressing social issues purportedly elided in neoliberal ideologies of the self. Arguing that FCT can work simultaneously as a technology of the self as well as a "technology of the social," we conclude that, despite FCT's reproduction of several

problematic neoliberal norms, engagement with the practice does not necessarily preclude—indeed, it sometimes even affords—the possibility of inciting reflections that motivate people to "disrupt (if not overturn) the status quo" (Pritzer & Duncan 2019, p. 490). Methodological attention to interaction in pedagogical contexts is thus crucial to understanding the indeterminate effects such conversations may have among individual participants.

Several recent studies analyze peoples' agentive enactment of their relationship to history and culturally situated ideologies. Wirtz (2016), for example, examines how her Cuban interlocutors use deictic shifts, poetic structure, and rapid juxtapositions to variably presence the past in specific moments. When people draw on different chronotopes (Bakhtin 1981) to situate themselves in space and time, often in multiple and shifting relationships that are formed with other people or with spirits who are engaged with as "immanent copresences" rather than historical actors (p. 346), they thus enact a situated form of relating to and with the past (see also Divita 2019). Perrino and I, for example, examine narratives collected in Italy and China to show how speakers often "zoom in" and "pan out" of time and space in the scaling of their relationships with various cultural forms and ideologies, which they often narrate as being "inside" their bodies (Pritzker & Perrino 2020). Taking care to note that the consequences of such positioning can be determined only in long-term ethnographies, we suggest that what we call "scalar intimacy" provides an analytic framework for apprehending the ways in which people discursively "navigate their embodied, emotional relationship with (or felt connection to) various cultural forms" in ways that variably maintain or disrupt dominant ideologies within particular interactions.

CONCLUSION

At the outset of this review, I have included a brief discussion of Chinese and American citizens' responses to the spread of COVID-19 as they were enacted online. Pointing to recent work reframing vulnerability as "the condition of being affected" (Butler et al. 2016a, p. 6), I posed a series of questions regarding how the complex emotions that emerged in tandem with citizens' recognition of their vulnerability served as a basis for new forms of social engagement. I return here to a reconsideration of these questions in light of the scholarship I have presented in the previous sections, examining how recent research in linguistic anthropology and related fields can support a nuanced analysis of how language and emotion might be understood as mediating the variable politics of invulnerability, vulnerability, and social action.

Demonstrating how the relational body emerges in continuous negotiations of embodied boundaries that both afford and constrain agency, the first section of this review presents studies of primarily affiliative interactions. Here, scholarship suggests that the permeability of the embodied and emotional self is constantly reconfigured within intimate interactions through which affect, though often refracted through the lens of (bio)cultural experience, travels across bodies. Furthermore, this research demonstrates how intimate relationships variably afford and constrain participants' agency (Goodwin & Cekaite 2018). For Chinese and American citizens trying to make sense of governmental responses to COVID-19, this research helps clarify the moment-to-moment interactions through which emotions traveled at lightning speeds across social media platforms and bodies. It also explains how government responses to COVID-19 functioned as a powerful index not only of peoples' biological vulnerability, but also their relational vulnerability in terms of their right to care for those they love. In China, then, it was precisely because Li Wenliang's efforts to enact such care lacked political intent that people understood his persecution and death as pointing to the ways in which their own basic rights to enact relational agency were coimplicated with structures of power. For Americans, a similar set of affective responses was triggered by the recognition that the sense of invulnerability with which so many had approached

the virus was not only inaccurate, but also entangled within governmental efforts to protect not citizens but themselves.

Research presented in the second section above highlights how power, both institutionally and within specific dyads, is enacted through peoples' attachment to and situated performance of ideologies of language and emotion. Such ideologies point to the kinds of interpellating discourses that Butler (2016) identifies as constituting the basis of our "linguistic vulnerability" (p. 16). They further point to the ways in which ideologically situated stances of invulnerability function to expose others to considerable precarity (Gambetti 2016, Sabsay 2016). Interpreting COVID-19 responses within this context benefits from a consideration of some of the situated "answers" posed by Chinese and American governments. The swift removal of all critiques from the Chinese Internet after Li's death, for example, indexes dominant ideologies of (invulnerable) national harmony by dictating what kinds of sentiments can be expressed by citizens. Though the censorship suggests extreme disavowal, after the online outbursts, Beijing did launch an investigation into the Wuhan police department's handling of Li's case. In late March 2020, in a surprising reversal, Beijing officially exonerated Li (Associated Press 2020), an outcome that is tempting to interpret as evidence of the effectiveness of online resistance, even in an authoritarian state. The question of whether Li's exoneration will ultimately satisfy Chinese netizens, however, remains open. In the United States, on the other hand, public outrage became increasingly divergent over the course of the pandemic, and, with limited centralized guidance, individual states took very different forms of action in response to different social sectors. Both "vulnerability" and "resistance" in the context of the pandemic have come to take on a variety of meanings in terms of economic, biological, and social vulnerability as well as resistance to state-imposed restrictions or resistance to state inaction. At the time of this writing, the outcomes in both the United States and China remain to be seen.

"Agency" or "resistance" within the global pandemic of 2020 might thus be considered as situated within highly emotional interactions that hinge on the oscillation between various parties' continually shifting recognitions or denials of vulnerability. As discussed by scholarship presented in the third section of this review, such interactions point to the nuanced ways in which agency is not only often ambivalent (De León 2017) but also always situated within and repeatedly enacted within multiple simultaneous conversations that draw on multimodal and multivalent discursive strategies as people position themselves in relation to actors, ideologies, and structures of power. As this literature suggests, these discursive encounters become powerful in part because they are saturated with emotion, and though they often work to reproduce dominant structures, they also sometimes work to challenge, disrupt, and reconfigure those same structures in indeterminate ways. Studies that employ a microanalytic attention to the details of interaction here demonstrate that it is possible to track the "something queer" that Butler (2016, p. 18) argues can happen in the performative response to vulnerability (see also Kulick & Schieffelin 2004, p. 352).

In conclusion, I reiterate how theoretical and methodological approaches in linguistic anthropology and neighboring fields might contribute to answering the specific question of how affect is entangled within the dynamics of vulnerability and resistance at various scales. Specifically, methods that emphasize how language and emotion emerge indexically through interactions over time and in relation to multiple ideologies of race, gender, language, and emotion that both constrain and afford agency demonstrate how vulnerability and resistance are entangled with historically, economically, and politically situated affective encounters. Though I refrain from suggesting that these perspectives offer concrete answers to the complex problem of developing an enduring politics of vulnerability outside of the context of a global pandemic, I am optimistic about how they might afford the development of a more permeable and engaged critical dialogue among scholars who are engaged in this mission.

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