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**Dialogue: Sociolinguistics and
everyday (in)securitisation**

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Dialogue: Sociolinguistics and everyday (in)securitisation

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This dialogue starts from the perception that existential threats to national security has become an increasingly pervasive concern in daily life, spreading fear and suspicion through civil society. Communicative practices play a central role in these processes of (in)securitisation, but sociolinguists appear to have paid them less attention than they deserve. So in what follows, six researchers discuss the significance of (in)securitisation for our everyday experience and the implications for sociolinguistic theory and research.

The dialogue opens with Ben Rampton and Constadina Charalambous, who introduce the concept of (in)securitisation from International Relations research and sketch potential connections and challenges to standard sociolinguistic theories and concepts. Then the four papers that follow pick this up from different angles in different geographic locations. Ariana Mangual Figueroa discusses (in)securitisation's radical impact on research relationships in ethnography, focusing on the US. Zeena Zakharia addresses the effects of large-scale conflict on language education, both in the US and Lebanon. Erez Levon considers the connections between nationalism and sexuality, bringing in the strategies with which gay and lesbian Israelis navigate the insecuritising discourses they encounter. Then Rodney Jones discusses the interactional dynamics of surveillance, moving between police encounters and the internet to show the thin line between protection and precarity. At the end of the dialogue, we address three questions, collaboratively reaffirming the urgency of these issues, the significance of (in)securitisation in everyday communicative practice, and the ramifications for sociolinguistics.

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Sociolinguistics and everyday (in)securitisation

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2019

Since 9/11, suspicion and the fear of existential threats have become much more widespread in everyday life in liberal democracies in Europe, North America and elsewhere. Schools, nurseries, hospitals and community centres are becoming sites of security surveillance, ordinary people (medical and education staff, landlords, employers and so forth) are pressured to check the residence rights of their patients/students/tenants/etc, and racism is often treated as less significant than the threat of Islamist terrorism. These developments call for sociolinguistic analysis for at least two reasons.

First, in the tradition associated with figures like Gumperz, Hymes, Labov, Heath and Ochs, sociolinguistics involves the study of *everyday communicative practice in changing social conditions*. It follows from this that if fear and suspicion are growing more widespread and intense in everyday experience, the need to address them as mainstream sociolinguistic concerns is also increasing. Second, this tradition has never been politically indifferent. Sociolinguistics may be a primarily analytical rather than normative undertaking, focusing first on 'what is' rather than 'what should be', but in one influential early formulation, the careful comparative empirical study of communicative repertoires and practices ultimately serves the ethical objectives of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* because it "prepares [linguists] to speak concretely to actual inequalities" (Hymes 1969/1977:204-6). So the processes associated with growing insecurity deserve careful consideration, and in this dialogue, we discuss how and why. Can sociolinguistics provide some distinctive illumination of these shifts? Are there implications for its theories, frameworks and procedures? What kinds of interdisciplinary collaboration are needed to understand them better? What are the implications for sociolinguists' moral or political positioning and their professional roles and identities?

Fears and experiences of large-scale, institutionally authorised violence certainly aren't new for linguistics. The very term 'applied linguistics' sprang from the marriage of Bloomfield's structuralism with language training in the American army in the 1940s (Howatt 1984:265-9), and "there is a long history of linguists cooperating with intelligence services in areas like language teaching and cryptology" (Jones *etc*; Scollon & Scollon 2007), raising a host of major moral and political issues, both for individuals and for the discipline (Heller & McElhinny 2017; Price 2004). As well as being a shaping influence, processes notionally associated with security have also been the focus of analysis, and there are now substantial sociolinguistic studies covering, for example: intelligence gathering, translation/interpreting, language instruction, and personnel coordination in ongoing military conflict, sometimes close to the battlefield (see Footitt & Kelly's *Palgrave Studies in Languages at War*); language policy during and after conflict (Liddicoat 2008); narrations of militarised violence in reconciliation commissions (e.g. Verdoolaege 2015); and language in applications for asylum (e.g. Maryns 2006) (P. Charalambous 2017 provides a bibliography). There is a good deal of critical discourse research showing how, in recent years, policy and media texts portray particular groups as threats to the state (e.g. Hodges 2011, 2013; Macdonald & Hunter 2013), and some sociolinguistic studies have developed very general theoretical frameworks, reaching far beyond the specialised sites of acute insecurity that they

serve as their empirical starting point (cf Blommaert 2005, 2010; Busch 2016a, 2016b; Jacquemet 2011). But to understand whether and how the everyday is influenced by the discourses and effects of contemporary geopolitical conflict, is there still more to do?

In what follows, our own response to this question draws on International Relations, a field of study with which we have developed interdisciplinary links through recent work in Cyprus and the UK (see www.kcl.ac.uk/liep). In IR, which includes Security Studies and Peace & Conflict Studies, scholars are increasingly attentive to how traditionally state-level security concerns affect the everyday lives of ordinary people, and we begin the dialogue by sketching the scope for synergy between IR and sociolinguistics (following Khan [2014] 2017). After that, we discuss Goffman as a resource for understanding everyday insecuritisation, extending this to surveillance (a surprisingly neglected topic in sociolinguistics). We then provide three examples of how heavily (in)securitised settings call for the revision of sociolinguistic concepts and theories that were first formulated in conditions of relative peace and stability (intercultural language education, heritage languages, crossing), and we conclude this introductory discussion with some comments on the reflexive positioning of sociolinguistics amidst pervasive (in)securitisation processes.

It is worth underlining that the account we provide is very much the product of our own experience and vantage point(s), engaging, among other things, with a predominantly Anglophone research literature. But growing (in)securitisation is far too complex, dynamic and diffuse a set of processes to be adequately covered by any single paper on its own. So in the dialogue following this opening paper, Ariana Mangual Figueroa, Zeena Zakharia, Erez Levon and Rodney Jones also explore the significance of (in)securitisation, covering different issues (ethnographic methods, language education policy, gender and sexuality, social media), referring to different sites (US, Lebanon, UK, Israel), emphasising different intellectual figures (Garfinkel, Foucault), and making different interdisciplinary connections (anthropology, education, social psychology). Working across these different dimensions, all five papers suggest that acute insecurity deserves more attention in sociolinguistics, and in different ways, we all orient to three general questions: (a) Why now? Why should sociolinguists interested in everyday social relations want or need to talk about (in)securitisation just at this point in time? (b) What *exactly* is ‘(in)securitisation’? Just how clear and consistent a concept is this? (c) So what? What – if any – are the broader implications of (in)securitisation for sociolinguists who study everyday communicative practices? Our answers are drawn together in the short, collaboratively authored paper that closes our dialogue.

With these preliminaries in place, we should turn first to the synergies between sociolinguistics and IR.

IR, sociolinguistics and (in)securitisation in the everyday

Geopolitical processes are the central concern in International Relations research, which typically focuses on the relationships between sovereign states governing particular populations in specific territories. But within IR, more recent strands criticise this tradition for its idealisation of the nation-state, its dislike of “details, local events, or precise and complex life stories”, and its tendency to limit “the thickness of history and anthropology... to a varnish” (Bigo 2014:190-1).¹ Instead, this critical work looks at how everyday life in Europe and elsewhere is increasingly permeated by micro-practices of securitisation. These

¹ In most of what follows, we only distinguish between IR and ‘critical IR’, but the field is much more differentiated than this, and within critical IR, International Political Sociology is our main reference point (see Basaran et al (eds) 2017).

are driven by claims and suspicions that particular groups or phenomena present an existential threat, calling for special measures to ensure security, and they are also often expanded to cover ‘outsiders’ much more generally. These practices are frequently ratified by formal mechanisms of the state but they are not confined to them. Since the end of the Cold War, a transnational ‘archipelago’ of security experts has proliferated, blurring the lines between police, intelligence, military, immigration control, private companies, specialist lawyers and academics, and this continually seeks to e.g. extend the integration of police files with data from social security, taxes, insurance, credit bureaus, supermarkets etc (cf Bigo 2002, 2006; Huysmans 2011). Competition between these actors means that the security field lacks totalitarian coordination, but “[t]he professionals in charge of the management of risk and fear ... transfer the legitimacy they gain from struggles against terrorists, criminals, spies, and counterfeiters toward other targets, most notably transnational political activists, people crossing borders, or people born in the country but with foreign parents” (Bigo 2002:64). In this analysis, security is not seen as the condition of being safe from external threats, but is instead addressed as “a practice of making ‘enemy’ and ‘fear’ the integrative, energetic principle of politics displacing the democratic principles of freedom and justice” (Huysmans, 2014:3). The parenthetic prefix in ‘(in)security’ captures the fact that the effects of these practices are both unstable and relational: “depending on power relations, the[se] measures and routinised practices will be called either violence [and] insecurity or security and safety” (Bigo & Mc Cluskey 2018:126) – security to one person is insecurity to another, and this may change with the situation, sometimes quite quickly. Against a background like this, can sociolinguists in the west really continue to treat the ‘language of life and death’ only as data for studies of sound change and story structure, valuable though this is (Labov 2013)? Or should they also now try to make sense of the fear, precarity and/or silences to which this data may also point?

If sociolinguists opt for the latter, they can learn a lot about the contemporary spread of security concerns from researchers in critical IR, who investigate, for example, the interaction of state, supra-state and private organisations in the security field, the development and management of counter-terrorism programmes, the mechanisms of surveillance, the security dimensions in humanitarian support, the intersection between security, peace and neoliberalism, and so forth. For sociolinguists struggling with the new significance that ‘terrorist’ and ‘security’ have as officially-generated metasigns in the cultural and discursive climate where they try to describe everyday communication, this literature can be very informative. Indeed, critical IR scholars are themselves very receptive to cross-disciplinary dialogue, and they have recently started looking to ethnography, going beyond the empirical study of security professionals and political elites to the experiences of people who are securitised by these developments, also connecting with, for example, an emerging anthropology of security (Goldstein 2010; Maguire et al 2014; Mc Cluskey 2017, 2019). Critical IR refers quite extensively to the same major social theorists that sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists often invoke (e.g. Bourdieu and Foucault), and indeed key figures in sociolinguistics are themselves also sometimes cited.² Admittedly, for the most part, these cross-references are pointers to possibilities for the future, as yet unsupported by a substantial body of sociolinguistic research analysing the practices that “enact our world as if it is a dangerous world, a world saturated by insecurities” (Huysmans

² In Balzacq’s edited volume on the discursive processes involved in declaring a particular group or phenomenon to be an existential threat and persuading people that special measures are now warranted, Sapir, Goffman, Schegloff, Fairclough, Kress, Wetherell, Duranti and Goodwin (as well as Austin and Searle), are all indexed, and according to Bigo, “the vision [of] sociolinguists when they analyse everyday interactions” can capture the complex workings and effects of (in)securitisation (2017:31).

2014:3). But the potential for synergy looks substantial, and the benefits could also run the other way, with sociolinguistics adding depth to critical IR's conception of the 'everyday'.

Critical IR is increasingly interested how the experience of ordinary people can speak back to IR's traditional focus on political and professional elites – how “vernacular constructions, experiences and stories of (in)security have the *potential to disrupt* ‘official’ accounts and repoliticize the technocratic foundations of national security policies.” (Vaughan-Williams & Stevens 2015:42). In this context, ‘everyday’ signifies ‘non-standard’, ‘non-elite’, referring to people, groups and environments where access to powerful and prestigious symbolic, cultural and material resources is (more) limited. At the same time, however, a different understanding of ‘everyday’ emerges in the context of IR's long-standing interest in the states of ‘exception’ deemed necessary to deal with existential threats to the nation-state. These states of exception depart from the rules of normal politics in liberal democracy, and question “the viability of deliberation, contest of opinion and dissent” (Aradau 2004:392). Here, securitisation entails “a different logic, a logic of urgency and exceptionalism.... the politics of enmity, decision, and emergency” (ibid), and taken in the context of this exceptionalisation, ‘everyday’ becomes a matter of orientation or approach, meaning ‘normal’, ‘ordinary’ and ‘routine’. These two different meanings – everyday-as-non-elite and everyday-as-normal – shouldn't be conflated: conduct regarded as normal/conventional occurs in elite environments, just as there are acts treated as exceptional in lower status domains. But in currently seeking to examine how ‘exceptionalising’ securitisation penetrates routine activity while *simultaneously* broadening its empirical horizons beyond political elites, critical IR is vulnerable to this conflation, and the risk of confusion increases with the influence of romanticising work like de Certeau 1984, which talks as if situated practice and the creativity that it sometimes entails only occurs among non-elite people.

In contrast to critical IR, the distinction between ‘everyday’ referring to non-elite social strata and ‘everyday’ referring to a normal orientation is, the most part, very well-established in sociolinguistics. On the one hand, in the 1970s, sociolinguistic stratification and the speech associated with people, groups and environments where standard resources were (relatively) limited was a defining interest for the field (\approx non-elite), while on the other, at roughly the same time, in interactionist work influenced by Goffman and Garfinkel, the ‘everyday’ referred to a socio-cognitive perception or attitude – an orientation to the ‘normal’ in acts, events or people, perceiving them as routine and conventional rather than exceptional (terrifying, amazing, exciting etc.). Following from this, our own preference is to hold these two meanings analytically separate and to equate the everyday with something else – ‘lived experience’. This is often seen as the central concern in linguistic ethnography, and it also actually encompasses the other two meanings – the everyday-as-lived-experience happens to everyone everywhere, across social strata, both in- and outside elites, and everyone finds their sense of normality disturbed by exceptional events from time to time. Indeed, if sociolinguistics embraces ethnography and insists that unequally distributed resources and socio-cognitive orientations are analytically distinct, it should be able to produce a descriptively richer and more theoretically generative account of (in)securitisation, treating the *lived experience of (in)securitisation as an intensifying apprehension of institutionally authorised vulnerability and existential threat, produced (and received) in communicative practice in a range of social settings (both more and less elite)*.

The sociolinguistic resources for carrying forward this investigation of everyday (in)securitisation are substantial. The interactional sociolinguistics pioneered by John Gumperz is one example of a research programme that lends itself to this topic, and there are already broadly affiliated studies that take this forward (e.g. Erickson 2004; Blommaert 2005;

Jacquemet 2011; Rampton 2016, 2020). But for the directness with which it can speak to IR's central preoccupations, it is especially worth attending to the work of Erving Goffman.

(In)securitisation in Goffman

In IR, the terms 'security' and 'insecurity', 'existential threat', 'state of exception' and 'surveillance' occur again and again in the literature. They are traditionally conceptualised as large-scale state-level conditions and processes, and the distinction between normal socio-political relations and exceptional special measures is especially important. But these concepts are also central concerns for Goffman, as can be seen in his first two books. The first was the 1959 *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* but the second, just two years later, was *Asylums*, and this focused on total institutions where people are cut off from everyday life, often because they're deemed to be a threat to the community (1961:16). The proximity of these two books is no accident, and throughout Goffman's career, there was constant interest in the tension between the ordinary and exceptional, as well as in the actions and activities that are produced to handle the risks that their friction generates. Crucially, this dynamic relationship also works through into the fine details of face-to-face interaction. So to begin with, *Asylums* focuses on walled institutions set aside to contain threats to the community, and here Goffman looks at "what people do to flesh out their lives" when "existence is cut to the bone" (1961:268). But in later work, he focuses on the continual threats to the self that individuals have to deal with in interpersonal encounters: "When a person volunteers a statement or a message, however trivial or commonplace, [they]... place... everyone present in jeopardy" (1967:23), and to manage these incessant threats, individuals develop "a defensive orientation toward saving [their] own face, and a protective orientation toward saving the others' face" (1967:14). The same shifts of scale can be found in Goffman's account of how people try to evade the restrictive institutional regimes they inhabit. *Asylums* talks about the 'escape worlds' in sports, theatrical productions, games and so forth, in which inmates "temporarily blot... out all sense of the environment which, and in which, they must abide" (1961:271). But when Goffman talks about 'keying' in his 1974 *Frame Analysis*, he also shows that the everyday realities governing our lives can also be temporarily suspended within the small-scale practices of face-to-face interaction.

At this point, however, even sociolinguists may question whether this account of Goffman's relevance to contemporary (in)securitisation is overblown and/or reductionist, on at least two grounds.

First, some may wonder at the plausibility of scale shifts of this size, jumping from the analysis of, for example, government security regimes to the minutiae of interpersonal facework. In response, it is worth remembering that the idea of the sovereign state as a unit of analysis is itself now quite widely regarded as a reductive oversimplification. Instead, the state is increasingly conceptualised as the complicated assemblage of people, knowledges, texts, actions and disputes that the business of governing actually entails (Bourdieu 2014; Bigo 2017; Jessop 2007). In other words, governing entails social interaction, and in providing tools to analyse the 'interaction order' intrinsic to all social activity, Goffman's work provides a foundational reference point for understanding encounters at almost any point in the 'archipelago of security experts'.

Second, does a framework that is so widely used to study mundane social relations risk trivialising either the potentially dangerous processes that (in)securitisation speaks of, or alternatively, the traumatic experiences that it sometimes entails? To answer, it is first worth re-emphasising that although it might not figure prominently in sociolinguistics, some of Goffman's work addresses practices tied to rather acute institutionalised degradation and

insecurity (cf *Stigma* 1963b as well as *Asylums*). And crucially, second, the capacity of Goffman's work to engage *both* with the very stressed *and* with the routinised means that it is very well tuned to the unpredictable ways in which people respond in intensely difficult, conflict-troubled situations, where exceptional pressures *and* efforts to restore normality may coexist. Indeed, it is precisely because of the sensitive flexibility of Goffman's *oeuvre* that it features rather prominently in recent IR work on post-conflict peace-building (cf Mac Ginty 2014 on 'everyday peace').

In fact, there is another reason for dwelling on Goffman in this discussion of everyday (in)securitisation. He shows us how to start filling a glaring gap in sociolinguistics itself – a gap that really stands out in the juxtaposition of sociolinguistics and critical IR. Surveillance is a major theme in critical IR, and it is widely agreed to have transformed the social world for millions of people, especially in its digital forms (Lyon, Haggerty & Ball 2012:1). But the lived experience of this surveillance remains relatively uncharted, its effects “difficult to isolate or observe, as they are embedded within many normal aspects of daily life” (*ibid*; Ball 2009:640; Green & Zurawski 2015).

This ought to be something that sociolinguists can illuminate, especially if surveillance is an interactional relationship between watcher and watched, as many suggest. But somewhat remarkably, sociolinguistics has produced very little research on this, Jones being the most notable exception (2015,2017; see Rampton & Eley 2018:n.3 for a review). Goffman's influence on sociolinguistics is unquestionable, even inspiring a major sub-field (politeness studies). But both here and in adjacent fields of communication research, the overwhelming emphasis has been on what he calls '*focused interaction*', in which people do things together, rather than on people carrying out independent activities in each other's perceptual presence. In contrast, there is very little work on '*unfocused interaction*', which occurs between individuals who are physically co-present but engaged in different activities, maintaining only a 'side-of-the-eye', 'half-an-ear' awareness of objects, events and each other in the space around them. This kind of ambient monitoring, which everyone engages in as a routine matter-of-course, provides an obvious starting point for research into everyday experiences of being surveilled. But even when Goffman is invoked in surveillance studies, the account only addresses the most obvious ways in which people manage or evade surveillance in the 'underlife' of institutions. Interactionally fundamental practices like 'by-standing' and 'civil inattention' hardly feature; the sophisticated apparatus that Goffman developed to describe unfocused interaction in *Behaviour in Public Places* (1963a) and *Relations in Public* (1971) is largely untouched; and the opportunity to use this work to hold large-scale generalisations about 'the surveillance society' to account, revealing agentive responses to surveillance that are much too subtle to be described as 'subversion' and 'resistance', remains unexplored (Rampton & Eley 2018; Eley & Rampton [at press]).

Revising sociolinguistic concepts

So far, our discussion of sociolinguistics and everyday (in)securitisation has sketched some of the potentially two-way benefits generated in cross-disciplinary dialogue with critical IR, and we have also dwelt on Goffman's relevance. But much more generally, looking beyond these particular conversations and readings, it is likely that sociolinguistic concepts formulated in conditions of relative peace and stability will need substantial revision in conflict-troubled situations where (in)security is salient (see also Phipps 2014). Or at least,

this has been our experience in empirical research in Cyprus, focusing on adult and adolescent Greek-Cypriots learning Turkish, the language of the (former) enemy.³

In Cyprus, following violent conflict and displacement on a large scale, Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots have been separated by a UN buffer zone for 45 years, but with EU Accession (2004) and the opening of check-points across the buffer-zone, there were some moves towards reconciliation and these included the introduction of optional Turkish classes for Greek-Cypriots in adult institutes and secondary schools. Even so, there was still a great deal of hostility and people learning the language of the former enemy were quite often called ‘traitors’. In this context, at least three applied and sociolinguistic concepts have required substantial revision.

First, it was difficult to reconcile the processes we observed with standard accounts of *intercultural language education*, even though intercultural understanding featured prominently in government rhetoric at the outset. In lessons, especially in the secondary schools, any mention of native speakers and authentic situations was treated as controversial/inflammatory by the students, and instead the classes focused narrowly on lexico-grammar, excluding any engagement with Turkish-speaking culture. There is of course a long line of traditional teaching that treats language as a formal code, but rather than being blindly conservative, these teachers were reflexive about their practice – “how am I going to practice dialogues in the classroom between sales-men and buyers, when students are not supposed to cross to the other side and buy things from the occupied territories?” (interview 2006). Some scholars may suggest that in contexts of violent conflict, language educators should make “culture... the starting point of every individual class session” (Allen 2004:287), but in a context where even recruiting students to study Turkish was an achievement, grammar-focused pedagogy proved to be a culturally sensitive strategy that succeeded in holding open a space where students could start to work through their hostilities and political differences (for extended discussion see Charalambous & Rampton 2011; Charalambous, 2013; Charalambous et al 2017).

Second, the history of conflict and processes of (in)securitization in Cyprus led us to probe the notion of ‘*heritage language*’. Debates on Heritage Language Education have centred on the definition of ‘heritage speaker’ (e.g. Bale 2010, 2005; Valdés, 2014), but in Cyprus (and comparable sites mentioned in note 4), ‘heritage’ is highly contested (Charalambous, at press), requiring an analysis that is sensitive to the concept’s different economic, cultural and ideological functions and the power and identity struggles involved. So exactly what, for example, is considered ‘heritage’, for whom, with what social and political effects? In these language classes, some saw Turkish as part of a heritage that had been violently erased, with traces remaining in local vernaculars, place names, and family narratives; others regarded it as the language of ‘invaders’ who caused extensive trauma; and yet others approached it as an interpersonal medium for achieving reconciliation and understanding. There is also considerable scope for linking this Turkish language policy to a broader literature on ‘conflicted heritage’, seeing it as part of the wider set of heritage management practices that accompany reconciliatory efforts and negotiations (restoring monuments, building memorials etc – see Macdonald, 2006; Giblin, 2014; Constantinou & Hatay, 2010).

Third, we had to radically extend our conception of language *crossing* (Rampton et al 2019). Learning Turkish certainly fitted the definition of crossing as reflexive communicative action in which a person performs specially marked speech in a language or

³ Although certain aspects of this situation are specific to Cyprus, there are parallels to what we found elsewhere – for example, in Northern Ireland (Malcolm 2009) and Israel (Uhlmann 2010), in complementary schools run by migrant and refugee groups in Copenhagen (Karrebaek & Ghandchi 2015), as well as in a growing range of situations where people are affected by the sense or experience of existential threat (Zakharia & Bishop 2013).

style that can be heard as anomalously ‘other’, raising questions of legitimacy and entitlement for the participants (Rampton 1995:Ch.11.1-2, 2009:151-153) – it was ideologically controversial and entwined with shifting ethnolinguistic boundaries. But its broader sociolinguistic profile was dramatically different from the accounts elsewhere (see Rampton & Charalambous’s 2012 review). There, crossing is typically associated with youth in urban working-class areas; it emerges ‘bottom-up’ in multi-ethnic peer groups; and it is inspired by popular music and media, broadly counterposed to the values of schooling. In contrast, the legacy of hostile division was much more intense in Cyprus than in the cities where crossing is usually described; it was formal education rather than popular culture that provided a warrant/platform for crossing; and intergenerational kinship relations were as crucial to crossing as friendship groups (only a few adolescents learners had actually ever met a Turkish-speaker). In short, this was crossing of a very different kind, and as in our reconceptualization of intercultural education and heritage language, there are practical implications. Foreign language assessment generally only notices progress when someone begins to speak the language, or takes an interest in the culture, and it would struggle to appreciate the tentative and precarious exposure to ‘the Other’ that these classes involved. The notion of crossing, however, emphasises both the significance *and* the multivalent fragility of the part language can play in the renegotiation of group boundaries, and embedded in linguistic ethnography, the concept of crossing is much better equipped to grasp the dynamics of learning and ideological change that these classes entailed.

These, then, are three examples, just from our own work, of how sociolinguistic terms had to be reworked in the effort to describe practices of language teaching and learning where fear and enmity are being/have been institutionalised, and it is likely that other concepts – like surveillance – may also need to be revisited if the sociolinguistic investigation of (in)securitisation increases. But what stance should sociolinguists take when turning to the potentially intense, dangerous and highly consequential situations that (in)securitisation often involves? Are they moving out of their depth, putting themselves and others at risk?

Positioning sociolinguistics

Interaction with people in disciplines with more experience in areas of acute insecurity is often helpful, as we have found in our dialogue with critical IR scholars. It is also possible for sociolinguists to contribute ‘from the sidelines’, providing sociolinguistic training to researchers (from different disciplines) who are themselves working in conflict-affected field sites.⁴ However, in IR as elsewhere, there is also concern that work in troubled sites is often carried out by researchers who ‘parachute’ in with little local understanding (Mac Ginty & Richmond 2013), and here sociolinguistics may have its advantages. It is hard to imagine starting a linguistic ethnography without quite a high level of communicative competence in a local language, and in our own work, long term ongoing involvement in the field-site has been crucial, identifying the research questions, negotiating field-site access, appreciating discursive tropes, nuances and silences, formulating academic accounts alert to continuing tensions.

Within the process of knowledge production, researchers rooted like this in the settings being investigated may have to grapple with personal questions of positionality more

⁴ So for example, in an eight-hour/four-session doctoral training short course on ‘Security, Ethnography & Discourse’ at King’s, we teach the rudiments of multi-layered linguistic ethnography, Goffman and situated discourse analysis to students in fields like IR, area studies, international development, health care, and psychology by making space for their own projects and focussing heavily on data relevant to themes like ‘the institutional enactment of security policy’, ‘everyday surveillance’ and ‘interviewing geopolitical elites’.

intensely than those living far away (cf Khan 2018). Especially if they come from minoritized “suspect communities”, they themselves may risk being (in)securitized (Khan 2017; Charalambous et al. 2018). Researchers in conflict-affected settings who deviate from heavily securitised discourses may be perceived as traitors posing a threat, and research with groups and institutions in conflict can present serious dilemmas about how to represent different voices and perspectives and what to disclose or conceal. At the same time, despite the challenges, locally based researchers are well placed to put their work to practical use, in university teaching, youth workshops, policy committees and so forth.⁵ But to do so, they may have to give up the attempt to remain ‘neutral’ (treating equally the different voices encountered in research), instead taking a stance that is normative as well as active, or they may need to strategically mitigate some of their views to reach a wider audience. So, for example, Charalambous et al 2013 describe how in peace education teaching workshops, they used a ‘humanist discourse’ as a familiar and well-accepted basis for introducing otherwise controversial peace education ideas to teachers, even though they had critiqued this discourse in their academic work. These ethical issues aren’t new (see e.g. Plemmons and Barker (eds) 2016), but they become more intense in situations of acute insecurity when lives and livelihoods are threatened, requiring us to think about ethics, politics, relationships and our roles with potentially different lenses (see especially Mangual Figueroa’s contribution to the dialogue).

Finally, if sociolinguistics engages more fully with everyday (in)securitisation, what should this field of enquiry be called? It would be a mistake to call it the ‘sociolinguistics of (in)security’ for at least three reasons. First, this could separate (in)security-focused sociolinguistics from ordinary sociolinguistics, when in fact the often tense but also unpredictable relationship between the ordinary and the exceptionalised can be a key issue. Second, by imaging a viewing lens (sociolinguistics) apart and above its object of inspection ((in)security), the phrase ‘sociolinguistics of (in)security’ suggests a transcendent vantage point separate from (in)securitisation processes. This would risk obscuring the close relationship between power and disciplinary knowledge, and the fact that linguistics is often a significant part of the security apparatus. ‘Sociolinguistics *and* (in)security’ allows more room for reflexivity about this relationship, a reflexivity that is of cardinal significance for future work. Third, the ‘sociolinguistics of (in)security’ suggests a well-defined field, with its own canonical readings and empirical reference points. But this would risk under-estimating (in)securitisation’s pervasiveness, its protean character and significance across a plurality of sites and processes. Sociolinguistics *and* (in)security provides for a much wider ranging discussion, of the kind provided in the dialogue that follows.

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⁵ For example, Charalambous regularly runs teacher training workshops in Cyprus, and serves as a member of the Bi-communal Technical Committee on Education which makes education policy recommendations to the government of Cyprus, and organises ongoing bicomunal training for children across the buffer zone.

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Embodying the Breach: (In)Securitization and Ethnographic Engagement in the U.S.

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2019

In their opening essay, Ben Rampton and Constadina Charalambous call on sociolinguists to continue developing a mode of inquiry that “embraces ethnography” for the sake of developing a more “generative account of (in)securitization, treating the *lived experience of (in)securitization as an intensifying apprehension of institutionally authorized vulnerability and existential threat, produced (and received) in communicative practice in a range of social settings, both vernacular and elite.*” Building on this definition of (in)securitization, along with Rampton and Charalambous’ claim that “the lived experience of surveillance remains relatively uncharted,” I hope to make three contributions in my response: first, to offer a glimpse into an ongoing discussion taking place among U.S.-based ethnographers of color about the effects of surveillance on ethnography; second, to present an example of the impact of (in)securitization on the researcher/researched relationship that has impacted my own thinking about methodology; and third, to extend Garfinkel’s notion of the “breach” within our current sociopolitical context. Throughout this essay, I call for a greater sense of connection to and solidarity with those “vulnerable subjects” that we engage with ethnographically.

Ethnography as surveillance: Ongoing discussions

In a special issue of *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* in 2016—an issue that we could read as a companion to the present issue—U.S.-based educational anthropologists offer critical accounts of the ways in which contemporary systems of surveillance impact the ethnographer’s work from data collection through analysis and publication. My goal in reviewing selected contributions to this special issue is to highlight evidence of the ways in which the lived experience of (in)securitization evidenced through forms of everyday surveillance impacts children, youth, and young adults and, in turn, shapes ethnographic projects taking place across the U.S. today. The instances of “ethnographic refusal”—to borrow Audra Simpson’s (2007) phrase—that prompted these ethnographers to rethink their methods took place under two conditions: when study participants explicitly critiqued the research methods and when participants remained silent in fear of surveillance. Upon registering their participants’ concerns, how could these ethnographers employ standard research methods when their tools mirrored the very technologies used by state entities to surveil the communities at the heart of their studies?

Arshad Ali chronicles the ways in which—a decade after the September 11th attacks in New York City and the Pentagon—the socio-political construction of terror positions Muslim individuals as “citizen-suspects” and places them under constant suspicion by state entities implementing surveillance programs targeted at whole communities. Listening closely to the speech and the silences communicated by the Muslim youth in his study, Ali understood their fears that his research project—initially focused on documenting their grassroots efforts to resist surveillance—would in fact increase police gaze instead of supporting their efforts to ameliorate it. Meanwhile, Danny Martinez immersed himself in a Southern California high school serving Latina/o and black students depicted in national and

local arenas as threats to peaceful urban life. During the informed consent process, a number of the youth refused to be video recorded, likening the video recorder to the surveillance technologies familiar to them from the public spaces and housing projects in which they traveled and lived. In these accounts, Ali and Martinez reckon with the ways in which—as ethnographers of color—we are “a walking contradiction with a foot in both worlds—in the dominant privileged institutions *and* in the marginalized communities” (Villenas 1996: 714, emphasis in the original). Ali and Martinez worked to reconcile this dilemma by adapting their research methods. Rather than conducting a study that could “make the participants vulnerable in multiple ways,” Ali instead shifted his focus to “the effects of surveillance in their lives and communities rather than how they organized to challenge it” (2016: 92). Martinez adapted his ethnographic methods to include audio but not video recordings, concluding that “When conducting research among fragile and highly surveilled populations, we must attend to these matters in order to identify moments when our tools index systems of surveillance already questionable to these participants” (2016: 60).

Shirin Vossoughi and Megan Escudé’s (2016) contribution to that same special issue raises a related set of questions regarding the ethics of conducting ethnographic research alongside those populations referred to in the lexicon of U.S. social science research as *vulnerable*. Reflecting on ethnographic research conducted in an elementary-level science and arts-based afterschool program, Vossoughi and Escudé call for a scholarly stance that moves from “*surveillance to relationship*” by acknowledging the ways that our methods shape our research over time (2016: 42, emphasis in the original). By personifying the very tools that we use in our work—describing the camera as audience member, for example—they track the agentic ways in which children interacted with the videorecorder as an interlocutor whose gaze could produce negative feelings of being judged or create opportunities for witnessing moments of pride in classroom learning. These four ethnographers—Vossoughi, Escudé, Martinez, and Ali—all pivoted their locus of accountability, away from an imagined future audience (of dissertation chairs or peer reviewers, perhaps) to those youth participants engaged in the study itself (see Fox and Fine 2013 for a related discussion of “collective accountability”). In so doing, they adapted their methods after carefully listening to community members directly impacted by lived conditions of (in)securitization. This kind of ethnographic engagement involves attending to key ethical dilemmas that arise throughout the research process; such dilemmas are emergent and often unanticipated prior to beginning data collection (Mangual Figueroa 2014, 2016).

The (in)securitization of everyday life: An example

I will now consider the ways in which state policies that simultaneously produce and profit from (in)securitization render us all more vulnerable. The example I present can serve as a prism for our socio-political and legal context of (in)securitization, and I share it in the hopes of prompting ethnographers to rethink our roles in relation to the communities we study. I started this line of thinking in 2011 when the state of Alabama’s House Bill 56 was signed into law. It was known as one of the toughest anti-immigration bills in the country and it should be understood in the context of anti-immigration laws enacted at the state level which have served as prototypes for the executive orders issued since 2016 by President Donald Trump. Among the bill’s authors was Kris Kobach, the former Secretary of State of Kansas, who had been intimately involved in designing and defending restrictive state laws originating with Arizona’s 2010 State Bill 1070, known as the “show me your papers” law because it raised widespread concern about the racial profiling of non-whites in everyday life. Alabama and four other states enacted copycat legislation in the early 2010’s and Kobach

remains one of Trump's primary candidates for his proposed "immigration czar" position. The original Alabama law made it a crime to conduct activities considered "harboring" and "transporting" any undocumented immigrant while "know[ing] or recklessly disregard[ing] the fact that "the alien has come to, has entered, or remains in the United States in violation of federal law."

As the American Civil Liberties Union explains, harboring can include such activities as driving someone to a doctor, to church, or to a grocery store, which is then punishable by time in prison or hefty fines. The harbor clause caused an uproar from civil rights groups and members of the Alabama clergy because providing transport and safe haven are chief among the actions taken by churches working to provide sanctuary for those in need, regardless of their legal status (Lawson 2013). More recently, Arizona State University instructor and activist Scott Warren was convicted of harboring two undocumented immigrants who had crossed the Mexico-U.S. border into Arizona. At the time of writing, the case is being heard in federal court and Warren faces up to twenty years in prison for providing humanitarian aid and shelter to two migrants. In legal terms, he "has pleaded not guilty to one count of conspiracy to transport and harbor the two men and to two counts of harboring undocumented immigrants" (Ortega 2019). Reports from immigrant rights' activists in the region suggest that this case is meant to deter future humanitarian efforts by criminalizing the act of providing refuge to migrants along a border increasingly characterized by militarization and surveillance in the name of national security.

In the current context of anti-immigrant racism and the intensifying militarization of nation-state borders, routine activities that form part of the everyday life of an educational anthropologist and university professor may also be considered "harboring." This is especially true since former U.S. Attorney General Jeffrey Sessions issued a 2017 memorandum elevating "harboring" to high priority for enforcement. As an ethnographer, I routinely gave mixed-status families rides in my car when conducting fieldwork in Southwestern Pennsylvania, and I can often be found meeting or traveling with undocumented adults and children in New York City. Following HB 56, I consulted with my university IRB staff person, who advised me to think through what kind of story I would tell police if I were stopped while traveling with an undocumented study participant. One suggestion was to tell the police that the person and I were just friends. Would this story line be considered passable to a police officer given our distinct social locations? What would be the impact of telling such a story for me, the participants, and for the research itself? As a professor of education, I frequently support my students in organizing campus-wide events that seek to enhance practitioners' knowledge about and solidarity with undocumented students and families. Recently, after a graduate student organized a workshop focusing on undocumented students' educational rights I received a threatening letter from a white nationalist blogger accusing me of harboring undocumented students on a public university campus. How might my students' own preparation suffer if I feared advising them in the very activities I deem to be ethical and necessary for our field?

Embodying the breach: A contemporary lens

In his *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967), the sociologist Harold Garfinkel examines the way that breakdowns in normative conversations—what Garfinkel terms "breaches"—reveal the normative structure that underpins language. Garfinkel states that the importance of studying how speakers respond to breaks in the normative discourse lies in the tacit knowledge that is revealed when these breaches occur. As Garfinkel asserts, "For...background expectancies to come into view one must either be a stranger to the 'life

as usual' character of everyday scenes, or become estranged from them" (340). When a person is "subjected to a breach" the normative backdrop to language use is revealed (54). This ethnomethodological approach to analyzing interaction has informed my own ethnographic work by focusing my attention on moments of dissonance and discontinuity as key sites for tracking interlocutors' beliefs. Rather than relying solely on self-reports (elicited via interview), I have found that documenting moments of discord and repair that unfold throughout the course of everyday interaction have taught me a lot about how children and adults make sense of legal categories of national citizenship. In those moments, speakers reveal ideologies that they might not furnish when asked explicit questions.

Here I'd like to suggest that we scale up our use of the breach to account not only for the tacit rules revealed when speakers attempt to repair breakdowns in linguistic interactions, but also for the ways in which racialized Spanish-speakers have come to signify a threat to everyday life within the larger semiotic system of the nation-state. Non-white, non-English speaking communities subject to (in)securitization within the U.S.—through state-sanctioned surveillance, profiling, and criminalization—are routinely framed in political and mainstream discourses as threats to a fictive monolingual white nation borne out of a settler colonial ideology. The communities I work alongside include non-white Spanish-speaking undocumented migrants from Mexico and Central America that routinely experience breaches in face-to-face conversation, or breaches in a traditional sense. But due to federal and local law enforcement policies, these community members also experience more than everyday miscommunication and interactional repair. They also live in fear of detention and deportation in a state that seeks to remediate their presence by forcible removal. Since their very presence in the U.S. is considered a transgression—framed as a threat to national security—undocumented migrants are themselves considered a breach to normative social life (oftentimes without saying a word). In this era of heightened (in)securitization, the undocumented immigrant signifies an imminent rupture to the stability of the nation. However, immigration and enforcement policies that continue to deny migrants the possibility of legal citizenship and social integration ensure that migrants never become full members of the polity. They may therefore embody the breach indefinitely.

My goal in expanding Garfinkel's notion of the breach is to emphasize how we as ethnographers must consider not only the significance of breakdowns in everyday conversation between interlocutors of relatively equal social standing, but also to track the ideologies that surface when the presence of particular speakers is treated as a social transgression regardless of the content of the exchange. Ethnographers of color might themselves have ample experience of how one can signify a breach prior to saying a word; consider the familiar racist trope of dismissing women of color as "angry" or "aggressive" independent of the actual content of our speech. I can also recall many instances in which I have been told—despite having learned English and Spanish simultaneously and speaking them both with ease—that I have an interesting accent, followed immediately by being asked where I'm from. The notion that, because one might also speak Spanish, one must be "from" somewhere else reveals a deeply ingrained equation between homeland and monolingualism. As Spanish has increasingly been criminalized, there is no shortage of examples of raciolinguistic profiling that treats the presence Spanish speakers as a breach in the American mythology. Take the high school teacher in New Jersey who berated her immigrant-origin students for speaking Spanish to one another during a class in which they were working to complete academic assignments in English. By yelling "men and women are fighting...not fighting for your right to speak Spanish, they are fighting for your right to speak American" she equated U.S. military intervention with the preservation of a monolingual nation and framed speaking Spanish as an act of disloyalty. Finally, consider President Donald Trump's rallying cry to repeal birthright citizenship for children born to undocumented parents. The

president and his supporters have made clear that they hope to restrict the rights of unborn immigrant-heritage children before their first cry is heard; unrealistic as it is, this policy proposal foments the fictitious image of a majority white and English-speaking nation impervious to demographic change due to immigration. Simply put, these examples offer evidence of a powerful social condition in which the non-white, Spanish-speaking body is treated as a breach by interlocutors with the power to define the normative. In an era of (in)securitization, embodying the breach comes with consequences issuing from everyday injunctions of foreignness and disloyalty: leading, at best, to routine experiences of unbelonging and, at worst, to the possibility of detention and deportation.

As an ethnographer, parents and children often invite me to accompany them to meetings at school, at social service offices, and in other public spaces. In so doing, they invite me to break down those walls of socioeconomic, legal, linguistic, and other differences that might otherwise keep us separate. Social policies and institutional practices that turn these forms of human connection into liabilities jeopardize the possibility for solidarity and truth telling that the field of sociolinguistics can offer us. While the main provisions of Alabama's anti-immigrant law were suspended in a lawsuit filed by a number of prominent civil rights organizations, including the harboring clause that criminalized the act of offering a car ride to an undocumented immigrant, fear reverberated through immigrant communities in and beyond Alabama as the case was being heard. And in the years since, ongoing threats to the possibility of meaningful face-to-face interactions within communities and across difference have only grown. In an increasingly polarizing historical moment characterized by fraught debates about who belongs and who can be trusted within the U.S. nation-state, public school teachers report fear about broaching such essential subjects as social studies, immigration, and politics (Gándara and Ee 2018; Rogers et al. 2018). We all become more vulnerable in the face of extremism and, as this extremism takes hold in the (in)securitization of our institutions and daily life, we all have a stake in keeping alive the possibility of meaningful exchange within communities and across our varying social positions.

I emphasize the vulnerability of undocumented and mixed-status families and I position the researcher as vulnerable in the hopes of countering the prevailing researcher-as-stable/participant-as-vulnerable binary that perpetuates a mythical detachment from the lived experiences of (in)securitization of the communities I work in and care about (see Behar's 1996 discussion of the purposeful exposure of ethnographer vulnerability). As Dolores Calderon (2016) writes of the enduring narrative tropes of settler colonialism upon which the U.S. was founded and which pervade the social sciences today through enduring constructs such as "civilized/uncivilized," deficient/proficient, citizen/non-citizen, our: "binary representation of research methods needs to be complicated" (16) and "we need to engage in an unsettling reflexivity that troubles our social location" (13). In doing so, we might consider how our own vulnerability in the face of (in)security brings us closer to our participants. And as we listen closely to the words of communities most severely impacted by a condition of (in)securitization, I believe that we can recenter a collective fragility that can foster new forms solidarity through and beyond ethnography.

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Language and (In)Securitization: Observations from Educational Research and Practice in Conflict-Affected Contexts

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Spurred in part by violent conflict and natural disaster, the surge in global migration calls for renewed attention to the central role of language in everyday (in)securitization. There are an estimated 68.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, with over half of these school-aged children (UNHCR, 2018). Of these, 66% are in countries with a different official language than their country of origin. This means that 31 million displaced children are schooled in a language that differs from their country of origin (UNICEF, 2017). These issues are as significant in high- and middle-income countries as they are in the low-income countries that host 85% of those forcibly displaced by conflict and natural disaster (UNHCR, 2018).⁶

Increasingly, young people's lived experiences of schooling are characterized by (in)securitization, or "an intensifying apprehension of vulnerability and existential threat" (Rampton & Charalambous, this issue). My research focuses on the particular vulnerabilities wrought by violent conflict and forced displacement to shed light on how these seemingly "extraordinary"⁷ circumstances might reveal the very ordinary "violences" (Williams, 2013) of everyday schooling for minoritized⁸ children and youth worldwide. One strand of this work has centred on the nexus between language policy and peace and conflict studies in education, with a particular focus on the Middle East and Arabic speaking populations in the United States. By situating language policy within global, national, and localized processes of (in)securitization, I have sought to gain particular insights into the broader trajectories in which languages and their speakers are (re)positioned in particular historical moments. Research at the intersection of these fields illuminates the racialization and stigmatization of particular groups--both locally at particular geographic locations, and transnationally across space--through global and national policies and mundane school practices that serve to shape the educational experiences of children and youth (Zakharia, 2009).

In this brief response, I draw on my work in the Middle East and among Arabic speaking populations in the US to offer some illustration of the instantiation of global, macro-processes of (in)securitization and surveillance in the everyday micro-practices of

⁶ Approximately 60% of students in high income countries are assessed in languages other than those of their countries of origin, resulting in poor outcomes and increased likelihood of students leaving school (Nicolai, Wales, & Aiazzi, 2017; UNESCO, 2018).

⁷ In this essay, I use "seemingly" to refer to "extraordinary" circumstances and place the latter in scare quotes to indicate the unstable nature of what constitutes the "extraordinary," not only because what is perceived to be extraordinary is contingent and perspectival, but also because the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary is as much about how a phenomenon is experienced as it is about the conditions that produce it and the gaze it is put under. I posit that the extra/ordinary binary has limited utility for understanding the lived experience of (in)securitization. For example, the acute ways in which young Black boys, undocumented families, materially poor, and gender fluid children experience (in)securitization (i.e. with their bodies and their lives) in, for example, the United States are "extraordinary," even as the pervasiveness or mundane quality of the violences that produce these effects (e.g. the normality of racial discrimination) make it appear altogether unremarkable.

⁸ I use the term minoritized to refer to populations that have been socially, politically, and economically marginalized through asymmetric processes of power.

schooling—issues that are possible to “see” when language policy is the site of inquiry. Indeed language policy is a powerful conduit for observing global and localized phenomena, such as, the enactment of global security and neoliberal agendas in schools, and sectarianism and surveillance at national and community levels (Charalambous, Charalambous, Khan, & Rampton, 2016; Zakharia, 2009). Language policy implies the practice of power (Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead 2009) and the production of discourse (Bacchi, 2000), reflected in the ideologies produced by sociopolitical and economic conditions (Schieffelin, Woolard, & Kroskrity, 1998). These ideologies and conditions (re)position languages and their speakers, materially and discursively, for example, as victims, problems, or threats. In centering everyday communicative practice, sociolinguistics provides a distinctive entry point for examining the lived experience of this (in)securitization, by illuminating pervasive and mundane micro-processes within the “extraordinary” and routinised social interactions of everyday schooling.

Schools as microcosms of macro-processes of (in)securitization

When I arrive 5 minutes before the start of class, students are already on task with the teacher, even though it is not yet 7:30 AM and students from other classes are still roaming the hallways, making their way to first period. The teacher greets me with “*bonjour*.”... The students stand and greet me in unison with “*bonne journée*.” On the board, under the words “*En Son Nom*” [In His Name] it reads:

En employant des phrase simples et de phrases complexes, racontez en 3 lignes ce qui se passe à Tripoli.—10'

The teacher says in French, “Don’t write your opinions—just what you think is happening in Tripoli.” They quickly review the structure of simple and complex sentences together, and then students work silently on their texts. (fieldnotes, May 29, 2007)

In this French lesson, Grade 7 boys at a Shi‘i Islamic school in Beirut’s southern suburb were given 10 minutes to write three lines about what they understood to be happening in Tripoli in the north of Lebanon. At the time of the lesson, there was fierce fighting taking place there, between an al Qaeda-inspired militant group, Fatah al Islam, and the Lebanese army within a Palestinian refugee camp and its surroundings. The sudden outbreak of violence had created a national crisis as civilians became entrapped by the fighting. When the 10-minute individual writing time was over, Ms. Amna (pseudonym) asked each student to share a new word from his paper to generate a collective vocabulary list on the board.

One student asks [in French, except where Arabic indicated in italics], “How do you say, *mukhayyam* [refugee camp]?” The teacher responds by asking, “What do you call the place where children play, or where scouts meet and sleep?”... Eventually, one student suggests “camp” and she corrects his pronunciation.” (fieldnotes, May 29, 2007)

During the vocabulary discussion, the teacher facilitated student understanding through word associations, and without offering definitions herself. For example, one student contributed the word “*missile*.” Ms. Amna checked the class for understanding by citing the common local names for three types of missiles with which the students had personal familiarity. A

long list of vocabulary words was generated, which students copied into their notebooks. It included:

guerre – massacre – le mouvement de “Fatah al Islam” – les soldats libanais
[war – massacre – the Fatah al Islam movement – Lebanese soldiers]

In the next segment of the lesson, the students engaged in writing a paragraph together as a class on the events in Tripoli. They began by discussing the events in French. The discussion was animated by expressions of fear (e.g. “We don’t want terrorists breeding here.”) and political disagreement (e.g. “The army is protecting us from a civil war.” “No, they are weak; they don’t know what they are doing.”). The class then formulated a paragraph generated from the discussion, with students contributing sentences that they could agree on.

This ethnographic excerpt is drawn from the language classroom of a historically underserved population in Lebanon during the school year immediately following the 2006 July war between Hizbullah and Israel, wherein the majority of the school population was displaced (Zakharia, 2010). During this precarious time, the French, English, and Arabic language teachers at a school ostensibly aligned with a “terrorist” organization brought the collective insecurity of the student population into the workings of teaching and learning, explicitly addressing direct and structural forms of violence⁹ in their interactions with students, and discursively aligning themselves with racialized Others in the Global North.¹⁰

The excerpt above from a seemingly “extraordinary” lesson provides some illumination into the seepage of (in)securitization into the everyday micropractices of teaching and learning. Schools, as sociopolitical and sociohistoric spaces, are microcosms of a larger context of (in)securitization, comprised of nested systems of global, regional, national, and localized conflict. According to the French teacher, by “having students discuss issues relevant to their daily lives,” she is able to actively engage students and thereby promote French usage among students from the largely monolingual Arabic-speaking neighborhood of the school. She also promotes French as a means to dissipate trauma by engaging students in topics linked to their everyday vulnerabilities (Zakharia, 2010). For these students and teachers, the macro-processes of (in)securitization are pervasive, and they are instantiated in the “ordinary” social interactions of the classroom.

“Extraordinary” circumstances, ordinary violences

The complex relationships between language and conflict demonstrate the centrality of language-in-education policy to global, transnational, and mundane (in)securitization processes (Zakharia & Bartlett, 2014). The top five countries of origin where migrant students do not speak their host language of assessment at home—Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Myanmar, and South Sudan—are all contexts of forced displacement (UNICEF, 2017). Within the transnational context of conflict, forcibly displaced children who gain access to schooling in new geographies are often met with the enactment of new violences.

⁹ Direct violence refers to overt, physical and often visible forms of violence and verbal humiliation. Structural violence, on the other hand, is generally understood as systemic social injustice that manifests itself as inequality. This includes inequality in power over, or participation in, decision-making processes and resource distribution, resulting in “unequal life chances” (Galtung, 1969, p. 171).

¹⁰ The term “Global North” refers to populations in positions of power based on “patterns of wealth, privilege, and development” tied to colonial and neo-imperial histories through which “large inequalities in living standards, live expectancy, and access to resources are maintained” (Dados & Connell, 2012, p. 13). The use of the terms Global North and South signal a “shift from a central focus on development or cultural difference toward an emphasis on geopolitical relations of power” (Dados & Connell, 2012, p. 12).

Whether permanently settled or in temporary asylum, forcibly displaced children often face the subordination or illegitimacy of their languages through educational systems that normalize (in)securitization. What appear to be the “extraordinary” circumstances of war or natural disaster permeate within the everyday structures and processes of schooling, enmeshing physical, material, and psychosocial insecurities within the mundane, routinized, technocratic practices of schooling, such as testing and sorting students into language programs. Thus, for example, in the context of the United States, refugees come to be labeled as English learners or Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE), joining other minoritized populations in their marginal status as learners, and as objects of securitization and surveillance. In this way, seemingly “extraordinary” violences give way to the violences of everyday schooling. Thus, while education in contexts of humanitarian crisis in the Global South is largely governed by global security agendas (Novelli & Smith, 2011), similar patterns of securitization may be observed within urban education in the Global North (e.g. Nguyen, 2015).

Within the seemingly “extraordinary” context of violent conflict and forced displacement are the ordinary violences of everyday schooling, including the racialization and stigmatization of particular groups. During the same period of study as that captured in the previous excerpt, the mass displacement of Shi‘a Muslims in Lebanon brought them to new schools and neighborhoods in Lebanon and to other locations, including the US. In noting the changing student demographics immediately following the 2006 July War between Hizbullah and Israel, an administrator of a school situated in a Sunni Muslim-majority neighborhood told me:

We were obliged to take students who are sub-par this year... The students speak in Arabic in the playground. It is a cultural problem. They are not exposed socially to societies that use these [foreign] languages. (Interview in English, Administrator, secular private school, October 16, 2007)

She then explained that a majority of enrolled students were from Beirut’s southern suburb, thus signaling that, in her view, the “sub-par” students with a “cultural problem” are the Shi‘a. During the period of study it was not uncommon for administrators and teachers at a number of bilingual schools to refer to displaced populations to explain the wide-scale use of Arabic by students—a phenomenon they linked to deficiencies in students and their families (Zakharia, 2009).

I use this example to suggest the interconnection between the “extraordinary” circumstances of violent conflict and forced displacement and the ordinary violences of everyday schooling. Indeed, my research on language and security in Lebanon during a period of acute political violence and mass displacement (2005-2007) demonstrates both the high value placed on the Arabic language by young people and the ways in which it was simultaneously undermined by various actors through global, national, and localized policy processes and everyday school practices that alternately positioned Arabic as first cherished and then devalued vis-à-vis other school languages and subjects (Zakharia, 2009). This devaluing was further expressed through the racialization and stigmatization of the monolingual Arabic speaker, particularly when the speakers were forcibly displaced religious “Others.”

The insecurity engendered by the political economy further shaped students’ perceptions of which languages are most instrumental for their futures. As one Shi‘i student explained to me:

When I grow older, I think I will face problems. I might not be able to find employment...I will need to know several languages and will not be able to rely solely on my Arabic...I must have the goal of having the basics in all these languages. I wish I could do all these things in Arabic, in a language that I love...but I know that in the future, when I become an adult, and I need to find work, the opportunity may be elsewhere...I cannot just cling to the Arabic language and say, "I don't want anything except Arabic." (Interview in Arabic, June 14, 2005)

In this excerpt, Ali's (pseudonym) articulated sense of insecurity is clearly shaped by forces outside the classroom. Like other young people, he negotiates the realities of his monolingual Arabic identity in relation to these forces and in tension with his own values (Zakharia, 2009).

Dialectical processes of (in)securitization

As a site of inquiry, language policy in the context of conflict and forced displacement makes plain the dialectical processes of (in)securitization through the lived experience of violences in everyday schooling. As suggested by Rampton and Charalambous (this issue), in this dialectical relationship, the securitization of some entails the insecurity of others. Arabic language education in the US provides an excellent exemplar of this dialectical relationship.

Arabic speaking populations have long experienced racist practices in the US (Abu El-Haj, 2008), with the New York Arabic press citing "race prejudice" as a problem facing Syrian American youth as early as 1927 (Di Napoli, 2002). However, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan catapulted Arabic speaking peoples from largely "invisible citizens" to "visible subjects" (Naber, 2008), framing Arab American youth as the new "problem" of American society (Bayoumi 2008, 2). Consequently, a 1,700% surge in violence against people perceived to be Arab, Muslim, or Middle Eastern ensued in the first six months after September 11, 2001 (Bayoumi 2008).

For students, this "hypervisibility" resulted in overt displays of bigotry and surveillance from other students, teachers, and the larger public (Abu El-Haj 2005; Ali, 2013; Cristillo 2008). The principal of an Arabic bilingual Islamic school in New York described the surveillance as being characterized by frequent school visits from members of the police department, the State Department, and journalists all of whom probed the content and methods of teaching. According to the principal, the effect was to prevent the school from being able to engage students fully with current events, their sense of insecurity, and programming that could help them to see their positive role as global ambassadors out of fear that comments might be used against the school (Zakharia & Menchaca-Bishop 2013). Within this context of surveillance, teachers reported that students openly questioned their teachers about why they should learn the Arabic language (focus group, 2011) and a teacher noted, "How can we teach Arabic well, when we don't feel good about ourselves?"

Conversely, spurred by national security interests, a surge in US government-led initiatives to teach the Arabic language coincided with this period, with federal funds earmarked to increase Arabic language programming in schools and universities since 2006 (Zakharia 2016). Within a sociopolitical climate that simultaneously promotes and opposes Arabic language education, (in)securitization has the dialectical effect of, on the one hand, a rush to learn Arabic among Americans of non-Arabic speaking backgrounds, and on the other hand, a reluctance of those with Arabic-speaking backgrounds to teach their children the Arabic language or the resistance of youth of Arab descent to learn Arabic in US schools.

A case for engaging sociolinguistics

In presenting these few illustrations of the instantiation of macro-processes of (in)securitization and surveillance in the everyday micro-practices of schooling, I hint at the centrality of language as a locus of study for observing the lived experience of (in)securitization in schools. I also suggest that an examination of the seemingly “extraordinary” circumstances of violent conflict and forced displacement give way to deeper understandings of ordinary violences and the ways in which global and transnational processes of (in)securitization transcend space and connect Global North and South in a dialectical relationship. As the principal of an Arabic bilingual Islamic school in New York told me: “Enrollment numbers act as a barometer for conflict in the Middle East... When there is less stability in the Arab World, our enrollments increase; when there is more stability, our enrollments go down.” (Interview, 2011).

Sociolinguistics provides a distinctive entry point for examining the lived experience and effects of this (in)securitization, by illuminating pervasive and mundane micro-processes within the “extraordinary” and routinised social interactions of everyday schooling. As Rampton and Charalambous (this issue) point out, global and localized conflicts affect the discursive and cultural climate in which social interaction takes place. Sociolinguistics has the potential to speak more directly to the centrality of language factors in exacerbating and mitigating the lived experience of (in)securitization. In focusing on communicative practices, sociolinguistics also offers a unique lens to demonstrate how discursive violence (Williams, 2013) serves as an enabler of neocolonial educational arrangements and justifications for processes of global and localized forms of (in)securitization more generally. In line with critical strands of International Relations and Security Studies (e.g. Bigo 2002; Henderson 2013; Moffette & Vadasaria, 2016), critical sociolinguistics further has a role to play in laying bare the ways in which these global processes are deeply entrenched in racialized colonial histories worldwide. Finally, the engagement of sociolinguistics at the intersection of language policy and peace and conflict studies may help demonstrate the pervasiveness of (in)securitization in the Global North and South, and the false distinction between (in)securitization in seemingly “extraordinary” contexts and that of everyday schooling for minoritized children and youth.

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Language, (in)security and sexuality

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2019

I came out of the closet two weeks before my sixteenth birthday, in the summer before my junior year in high school. This was in the early 1990s in a large and more or less progressive suburb of Los Angeles. At the time, it was still fairly unusual for people my age to be “out”, and I remember spending much of that summer talking with my friends about whether other students at school would know that I was gay and, if so, how they would react. As I quickly realized on the first day back at school in September, everybody knew. There was a great deal of pointing and whispering as I walked around campus, and on numerous occasions over the first few weeks of that year my friends had to step in to shout down hecklers and to do their best to make me feel safe and protected. I was very lucky to have such generous and courageous friends- friends who stood up for me, who put themselves between me and repeated threats of homophobic violence, and whose efforts ultimately enabled me to become if not accepted, then at least normalized as “the gay kid” at the school.

The following school year, a new gay student, whom I’ll call Tom, arrived. Tom was a year younger than me and had transferred from a different school in a different city. Maybe because he was new and so did not yet have any friends or maybe because he was physically smaller and somewhat “campier” in his behaviour than me, Tom suffered much more extreme homophobic harassment and violence than I ever did. Tom was repeatedly threatened and physically assaulted. The situation became so severe that the local police provided Tom with an escort – all day, every day – so that he could get to and from his classes safely. Though we were never close, Tom and I were friendly, and we would often talk about why his treatment by other students was so different from my own. We never really came up with a satisfying explanation, other than to conclude that, for whatever reason, Tom was the unlucky one among us.

I recount this anecdote about Tom and me in high school to make the point that issues of insecurity, vulnerability and precarity pervade the lived experiences of people whose embodiments of gender and/or sexuality do not conform to hegemonic societal norms. As a scholar of the relationship between language use and gender/sexuality, questions of securitization have thus always been at the heart of my research, though, admittedly, I have not used this term specifically in my own work. In this comment, I briefly sketch how the notion of (in)securitization is relevant to language, gender and sexuality scholarship, and how scholars in this field can benefit from engaging with it explicitly. I go on to outline what I see as a shortcoming of an (in)securitization perspective: its current lack of consideration of individual psychology in shaping how individuals navigate precarity in the everyday. I close by suggesting ways that sociolinguistics can help address this gap, and so enhance current understandings of everyday (in)security.

It is uncontroversial that gender and sexuality play a crucial role in imaginings of the nation (e.g, Mosse 1985; McClintock 1995, 2010; Yuval-Davis 1997; Levon 2010). Boellstorff (2005), for example, discusses how postcolonial discourses of nationalism in Indonesia were founded on the iconic image of the *citizen family*- an idealized heterosexual couple comprised of a powerful man and an obedient woman who married for love (as opposed to by arrangement). Similarly, Inoue (2006) describes how during the late Meiji Period in Japan (1888-1910) – a time when the contours of the modern Japanese nation-state were being codified and institutionalized – the figure of the *modern Japanese woman*

emerged as a culturally important site for negotiating the nation's transition to modernity. As these and other examples illustrate, gendered and sexual figures of personhood often serve as cornerstones for consolidating normative discourses of national belonging, helping to delineate what counts as "appropriate" embodiments of national identity. Put more simply, national belonging is very often inextricably linked to specific (and normative) articulations of gender and sexuality. This has the effect of rendering as *abject* people who do not conform to these gendered and sexual norms, such that their very existence can be construed as an existential threat to the nation (Phelan 2001; Canaday 2009; Richardson 2017). In the most extreme cases, such discourses of abjection are institutionalised in the policies and practices of the state. As of 2019, 70 UN member states maintained statutes that criminalize either same-sex activity between consenting adults or the so-called "promotion" of homosexuality (or both), with penalties ranging from incarceration to death (ILGA 2019). These laws are often justified on the grounds of there being an inherent conflict between sexual non-conformity and national identity, as when Kenya's High Court unanimously upheld the country's ban on same-sex activity arguing that homosexuality "clashes with the broader, traditional moral values encapsulated in Kenya's constitution" (Ndiso 2019). In a similar vein, individuals suspected of homosexual activity were purged from government departments in the United States during the Cold War, under the assumption that sexual non-conformity was somehow "un-American" (see Johnson 2003; for a similar example in South Africa under the apartheid regime, see Retief 1995). Yet even in places where such legislation is not (or is no longer) enshrined in law, there exist a range of banal practices that serve to conflate gendered and sexual alterity with national menace and provide the ideological scaffolding for a bottom-up politics of exclusion and discrimination. These include, for example, the activities of the US-based Focus on the Family movement, prominent in the US since the 1970s; the Save Ulster from Sodomy campaign in Northern Ireland in the 1980s; and the recent rise of "anti-gender" movements in Europe (Kuhar & Paternotte 2017) and Latin America (Borba 2018). Movements such as these help to promote and sustain an atmosphere of hostility and violence against gendered and sexual non-conformity. In the UK, 20 percent of lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals reported having been the victim of a hate crime because of their gender or sexuality in 2017 (Stonewall 2017); that figure rises to 41% among trans people in the UK (Stonewall 2018). What all of this means is that, whether directly from the state or via the activities of non-state-sponsored groups and individuals, people who are gender and sexuality non-conforming (i.e., who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, genderqueer, non-binary, etc.) are constantly subjected to discourses of securitization that depict them as a threat to national continuity and so, to varying degrees of severity, subject them to both mundane and institutionalized forms of surveillance.¹

In my own research, I am interested in how people react to these discourses, and how they use language to *navigate* the constraints on their daily lives that discourses of marginalization and securitization impose. To date, I have focused on this issue primarily among Jewish lesbian and gay Israelis, where in a series of studies over the past ten years I have documented the different linguistic strategies (phonetic, lexical, interactional) individuals use to position themselves in relation to dominant gendered discourses of the nation (Levon 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2018). Glossing over the details of these analyses, my over-arching finding has been that lesbian and gay Israelis can be divided into roughly two groups based on their sociolinguistic practice: those whom I call the "mainstream" group largely accept dominant Israeli ideologies of gender and nation, and use language in ways that conform to Israeli gendered and sexual norms. The "radical" group, in contrast, rejects these norms, and deploys patterns of variability in language that aim to subvert entrenched Israeli ideologies of gender.

While, as I note above, I have not drawn explicitly on theories of (in)securitization in articulating my arguments on this topic, my findings resonate deeply with frameworks of surveillance and governmentality (e.g., Foucault 1991, 2009) that have been developed in the field of critical security studies (e.g., Bigo 2006; Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008; Huysmans 2011; Aradau et al. 2015). In essence, I understand the linguistic behaviour of Israeli lesbians and gays as a form of strategic practice – a technology of the self (Foucault 1988) – through which individuals attempt to resist, reconfigure and/or overcome systematic patterns of exclusion and marginalization. These strategies run the gamut from attempting to incorporate lesbian and gay identities into the Israeli mainstream through to efforts to redefine the ideological connections between gender, sexuality and Israeli national belonging entirely. Crucially, I argue that all of these strategies, whether more “radical” or more “mainstream” in orientation, are ways for individuals to negotiate insecurity and to attempt to forge a position for themselves within a society from which they are normatively excluded.²

It is in this respect that I find the perspective of (in)securitization particularly helpful for sociolinguistic research on language and gender/sexuality, since it forces us to look beyond the immediate confines of individuals and their desired identities when providing analyses of identity-linked practice. As Cameron (2011) notes, the emergence of sexuality (or any social identity) is ultimately a political phenomenon, the result of a negotiation between individual desires and larger social and material constraints. A focus on (in)securitization helps us to remain attentive to the contours of the broader socio-political landscape, encouraging us to investigate the dialectic and interscalar relationship between personal projects of identity enactment and larger political struggles for visibility, acceptance and belonging. In this regard, I also find the parenthetical prefix in “(in)security” particularly useful, since it reminds us that discourses of exclusion at the societal level often provide the building blocks for different forms of resistance at the individual level. For the “mainstream” gays and lesbians I worked with in Israel, embracing dominant beliefs about gender and the nation was one way in which they struggled against their exclusion from Israeli society. This is a practice that has been documented in many gay and lesbian communities around the world, and has undergirded movements for things like LGBT inclusion in the armed forces and the legalisation of same-sex marriage. While practices such as these have been heavily critiqued in both activist and scholarly literature for the ways in which they fall short of achieving full gendered and sexual emancipation (e.g., Lorde 1984; Vaid 1995; Duggan 2002; Seidman 2002), as sociolinguists it is nevertheless incumbent upon us to understand and respect the choices our participants make about what strategies to adopt as they navigate the complexities of the everyday (Hall 2013; see also Hall, Levon & Milani 2019). The parenthetical prefix of “(in)securitization” makes this duty explicit, reminding us that technologies of exclusion can (for some people, in some situations) be re-purposed as demands for equality, inclusion and respect.

An (in)securitization perspective is thus incredibly useful in getting us to expand the focus of sociolinguistics research from the micro-interactional to the macro-social. However, I would argue that as a framework, (in)securitization has largely neglected to engage with the flip-side of the phenomenon: i.e., the psychological motivations that encourage or prevent people from adopting particular insecurity management strategies. As I outline above, Israeli lesbians and gays in both the mainstream and the radical groups all make use of specific linguistic practices designed to cope with and/or overcome their structural marginalization. But the specific shape those practices take are markedly different. At present, these differences are not something that current theories of (in)securitization are equipped to explain. In his framework of *everyday peace*, for example, Mac Ginty (2014, 2017) acknowledges that the extent to which people engage in conflict-mitigating and conflict-deferring activities varies, depending, among other things, on their individual

psychological dispositions, though he neglects to theorize what those different dispositions may be or how they are linked to broader social forces. What is lacking is an integrated approach that unites a close analysis of socio-political structure with a nuanced account of individual psychology so as to provide a holistic picture of the factors that influence how individuals navigate everyday insecurity.

I am currently in the process of developing such an approach, focusing on the experiences of (in)securitization and conflict management among lesbian and gay Palestinians in Israel, Afrikaners in South Africa and Protestants in Northern Ireland. In this work, I draw heavily on research on identity conflict in social psychology, which has documented a variety of different psychological strategies for managing a perceived tension between an individual's multiple identities and affiliations (see Bodenhausen 2010; Kang & Bodenhausen 2015 for reviews). As summarized by Jones and Hynie (2017:3), the various strategies proposed to date can be grouped into those involving *reconciliation*, or the combination of different identities into an integrated whole; *realignment*, the hierarchical ordering of one identity over others; or *retreat*, the compartmentalisation of identities and the avoidance of conflict. This body of work has begun to clarify the processes underlying how identity conflict is experienced and managed. Nevertheless, our understanding in this area remains limited by an insufficient focus on identity conflict in situations of broader identity-linked subordination and stigmatization. As Kang and Bodenhausen (2015:565) note, 'frameworks for understanding multiple-identity management ... could profitably be expanded to provide a more in-depth consideration of the specific psychological issues that surround *socially devalued identities*' (emphasis added).

Though in its earliest stages, the goal of my current research is to achieve this expansion by using the tools and methods of sociolinguistics to link psychological theories of identity conflict with sociological frameworks of everyday peace. Sociolinguistics is ideally suited to building a scalar bridge between these two perspectives given the capacity of subtle details of linguistic practice to reveal aspects of underlying psychology and motivation that otherwise remain hidden. Over the past thirty years, sociolinguists have developed a sophisticated understanding of how variability in the formal properties of language use is a vehicle for communicating a speaker's inner beliefs, values, affiliations and interactional goals (e.g., Eckert & Rickford 2001; Eckert 2012; Rampton 2017). It is this detailed psychological understanding, grounded in the empirical facts of situated sociolinguistic practice, that I aim to bring to bear on the question of what conditions participation in different (in)securitization management activities. As Rampton and Charalambous (this issue) note in their lead paper for this dialogue section, sociolinguistic analysis is uniquely placed to investigate how 'the lived experience of (in)securitization ... [is] produced and received in communicative practice in a range of social settings'. I would stress that the strength of sociolinguistics lies in its ability to provide insight into the social and the psychological antecedents of social practice, dimensions which are both absolutely crucial to developing a robust understanding of how (in)securitization unfolds in the everyday.

Notes

- 1 I focus here exclusively on gendered and sexual non-conformity, though it is important to note that similar patterns of (in)securitization and surveillance also apply to racially minoritized and otherwise socially and culturally excluded groups (e.g., Alim & Smitherman 2012; Alim, Rickford, & Ball 2016; Rosa 2019).
- 2 For an excellent analysis of this type of practice at the sub-national level, see Podesva and Van Hofwegen (2016) on language and gender/sexual non-normativity in rural California.

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Accounting for surveillance

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A few weeks ago I came across an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* by tech writer Karen Swisher (2019) entitled: ‘We’re not going to take it anymore,’ arguing that it’s time for the US to follow Europe in passing tough legislation to make internet companies *accountable* for the way they relentlessly gather data about us. Since I was accessing the article from the UK (which is, for now, part of Europe), in order to read it I had to engage in an interaction, mandated by the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), in which I was asked to agree to allow the installation of cookies on my computer to enable its owners to relentlessly gather data about me. The goal of the law is to make the *Times* accountable by forcing them to elicit my consent for gathering my data. But the result of the interaction was to make *me* accountable — as soon as I clicked ‘agree’, I was the one who took responsibility for allowing the surveillance to commence.

To my mind, the most productive intervention Rampton and Charalambous make in their introduction to this discussion is their attempt to draw our attention to the relationship between the macro structures of power around securitization and their instantiation in everyday social interaction, and nowhere is this relationship more evident than in the way people navigate the *infrastructures of accountability* around everyday practices of surveillance. Practices such as agreeing to allow cookies to be deposited on my computer may not rise to level of the terrorist alerts, cross boarder conflicts and widespread programs of government surveillance one usually thinks of in the context of (in)securitization. My argument here, picking up the thread offered by Rampton and Charalambous (as well as Rampton & Eley, 2018), is that where sociolinguistics can make its most useful contribution to this debate is in helping us to understand how these broader contexts of (in)securitization are dependent on the everyday architectures of social interaction through which we manage our social relationships. ‘Governing’ Rampton and Charalambous remind us ‘entails social interaction,’ and so solutions to abuses of power don’t just lie in the principles of ‘rights’ and ‘responsibilities’ that form the basis of most privacy laws, but require that we pay attention to the *interactional* basis of surveillance (Jones, 2017; Rampton & Eley, 2018), the ways these rights and responsibilities are negotiated, ratified, challenged or ignored in the moment by moment unfolding of communication.

Making infrastructures of accountability explicit

One way to attend to this is through the study of the ways people *account* (Garfinkel, 1967) for practices of surveillance. In IR theory informed by the Copenhagen school, securitization itself might be regarded as a means of discursively constructing infrastructures of accountability around extraordinary measures taken by those in power to ‘protect’ citizens from perceived threats. But infrastructures of accountability are equally relevant to more ordinary practices of privacy and security, such as when we are asked to agree to accept cookie from a website. Sometimes what should be accounted for and who should do the accounting are mandated by laws like the GDPR. But in most everyday situations, infrastructures of accountability are implicit, only made visible when social norms about who

has the right to watch whom under what circumstances are violated, as in the case of Surveillance Camera Man, whose *YouTube* videos¹¹ show people's reactions to him when he videos them without their consent. Below are two brief excerpts from one of his videos:

Excerpt 1

- 1 Student: whaddaya doin↑ (0.4)
 2 SCM: I'm just taking a video (0.4)
 3 Student: why:: are you taking a video without asking us↑↓
 4 SCM: what↓↑ (0.2)
 5 Student: shouldn't you ASK us first↑ before taking a video↓↑ (1.0)
 6 SCM: oh you seem confused↓ (1.1)
 7 Student: yeah you're not (.) we:: have this room↓ and you just like barge in↑↓ (0.4)
 8 SCM: oh (1.1)
 9 Student: can you leave↓↑ (1.0) DUDE (.) what's your problem can you just leave↓↑
 10 SCM: huh↑ (0.4)
 11 Student: can you ask us why↑↓ you're taking the video↓↑ (0.4)
 12 SCM: I'm just takin a video↓ (0.7)
 13 Student: okay (.) well I don't want:: to be taken a video of↑ (1.1)
 14 SCM: why are you so WORried about it↓
 15 Student: I'm NOT WORried (.) you're just being anNOYing↓

Excerpt 2

- 21 Teacher: who are you and why are you taking our photo↑↓ (0.4)
 22 SCM: oh I'm taking a video (0.7)
 23 Teacher: why↑↓=
 23 Student: =why (.) hehehe=
 24 SCM: what↓↑ (.) why [not
 25 Teacher: [is what we're asking (.) you don't have permission to↓↑ (0.5)
 26 SCM: oh (0.2)
 27 Teacher: we're not free subjects (0.4) you ask↓ (0.3)
 28 SCM: huh (.) okay (0.1)
 29 Teacher: that's usually how that works
 30 SCM: nah it's it's fine (.) I'm just takin a video (0.3)
 31 Teacher: it's alright but we're saying (.) we don't want to be PART↑↓ (.) of that video=
 32 SCM: oh
 33 Teacher: and that's our choice↓ (.) it's a private class↓↑room and people have paid for this
 34 time↓

By refusing to be accountable for his behavior, Surveillance Camera Man compels his victims to articulate the principles underlying their claims *not* to be surveilled – the main one being that of a certain reciprocity in monitoring rights expected by people in symmetrical relationships: the problem is not so much the surveillance but the fact that the surveiller has not elicited the *consent* of the surveilled. The second key principle articulated has to do with individuals' rights to control the boundaries of what Goffman (1971) calls 'territories of the self', in both cases depicted as physical spaces to which the victims claim 'ownership' ('we:: have this room↓ and you just like barge in↑↓'; 'it's a private class↓↑room and people have paid for this time↓'). Both of these principles – the principle of consent and the principle of territorial integrity, are, in fact, the basis of legal definitions of privacy in most 'Western' nations, rooted in enlightenment ideas about individual autonomy, egalitarianism, and the sanctity of 'private property'.

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLd-8dbneh6QHH2pd55u6kA>

Challenging surveillance in police stops

Infrastructures of accountability also become visible in situations in which people challenge the norms surrounding surveillance, as was the case with Alvin, a 17-year-old boy in Harlem who surreptitiously recorded himself challenging police officers' practice of searching him¹². Here is a brief excerpt from his recording:

Excerpt 3

- 1 O1: Oh YOU again man↓↑ (0.1)
2 A: I was I just got stopped like [two blocks ago
3 O1: [you know why↑ (.) you look very suspicious=
4 A: =cos you're always [looking] I'm CRAZY=
5 O1: [it's ahh] =it's because you keep
6 it's because you keep looking back at us man [(inaudible)
7 A: [COS you always you're always
8 looking crazy yo
9 O2: [why does he have an empty
10 bookbag?
11 A: comin up the block always↑↓
12 O2: It's because that's our job man (0.1) it's our [job (inaudible)
13 A: [to stare at me↑=
14 O1: =listen to me (0.5) listen to me (2.5) our job is to look for suspicious behavior
15 (.) when you keep looking at us like that (.) lookin back=
16 A: =cos you're always like sta (.) I just got [stopped like] two blocks away like=
17 O2: [put your hands up
18 O1: =because ↑↓ you keep DOIN that shit man (.) we stopped you last time
19 because
20 A: [you]
21 O1: listen to me (0.8) when you're walking the block with your hood up and you
22 keep looking back at us like that↑
23 O2: why do you have a fuckin empty [bookbag
24 O1: [we think you might have somethin

In contrast to Surveillance Camera Man, police officers are normally permitted to openly monitor citizens in public and under certain conditions to search them, a fact that the officers make clear in their account ('It's because that's our job man'). What is interesting here, though, is that the main thrust of the account is a counter-challenge: the officers are surveilling Alvin because *he* was surveilling them – echoing a protocol that Sacks (1972) observed in his study of police stops; 'Those who treat the presence of the police as other than normal are themselves seen as other than normal.' Apparently, all rights to individual autonomy are forfeited as soon as one is marked as 'other than normal', and Alvin's attempt to suggest a reciprocity of monitoring rights results in the threat of arrest:

Excerpt 4

- 46 O1: You wanna go to jail↓↑
47 A: wha bo wha what for↑↓
48 O2: SHUT [your FUCKIN mouth↓
49 A: [what for↑↓ =
50 O2: = shut you fuckin MOUTH [kid
51 A: [for (.) what am I being arrested for↓ =
52 O1: = for bein a fuckin mutt ↓ you know [that↑
53 A: [oh so

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rWtDMPaRD8>

54 that's a law↓↑ (.) gettin (.) being a mutt↑ (0.9)
55 O1: who the fuck do you think your talkin to↓

At this point, infrastructures of accountability based on ‘rights’ and ‘responsibilities’, whether they involve the principles of consent and autonomy articulated in the first two excerpts, or principles of ‘justified suspicion’ and ‘probable cause’ articulated in excerpt 3, or even whether or not there is an legal basis for the threat of arrest, break down. Because, the fact is, despite these infrastructures, in most situations such as this, what really matters is the raw exercise of power officers are able to engage in *in the moment* (regardless of how they may or may not be called on to account for it later).

Clicking ‘Continue with cookies’

At first glance there may not seem to be much of a resemblance between the examples above and dialogue windows such as that shown in Figure 1 that pop up on our screens on a daily basis, but such windows also constitute everyday instances of surveillance for which parties are called on to be accountable. The primary aim of the GDPR is to enforce the kinds of infrastructures of accountability articulated in excerpts 1 and 2, based on principles of consent and autonomy. In order to conduct surveillance on me (via a cookie deposited on my computer), this website must inform me why they wish to do this and the purposes for which my data will be used, and must elicit my explicit consent (though, in this case, getting me to click on a button that says ‘Continue with Recommended Cookies’). These principles are really only upheld, however, if you regard this widow as a *text*, something like a contract that people read and sign, rather than as an *interaction*, subject to all of the norms and contingencies that govern other interactions around surveillance such as Alvin’s run-in with the police discussed above.

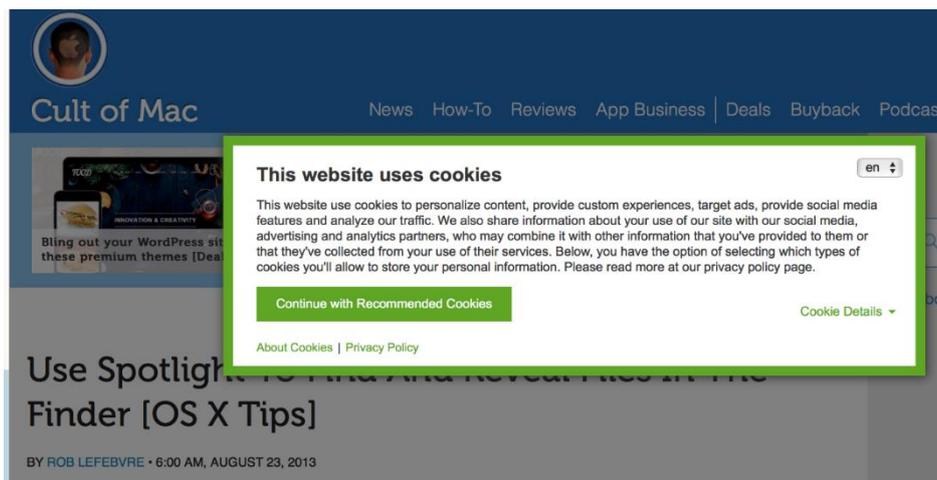


Figure 1: A ‘clickwrap’ contract

When viewed as an interaction it becomes clear that my choice to give consent is not much of a choice at all. First of all, there is no obvious alternative ‘speech act’ to ‘Continue with Recommended Cookies’; opportunities to change the default recommendations are hidden behind a tiny piece of hypertext on the right side of the window that says ‘cookie details’. Second, this request for consent has come just at the moment that I wish to read the article it obscures, and my ability to read it appears to be contingent upon my consent, much like a citizen’s wish to ‘be on their way’ often seems contingent on their consent to intrusive

searches by police officers or security guards. In her book on wrap contracts, Kim (2013) points out that online clickwrap contracts such as these are designed in ways that make *not* reading the terms and conditions and *not* trying to adjust one's 'cookie preferences' the rational choice, since the cost of trying to understand the legal significance of these actions outweighs the prospective benefit.

But what makes such 'performances' of accountability most insidious is their *everyday*, iterative nature. As Derrida—and later Kristeva— have pointed out, the real force of most speech acts (including the speech act of securitization) comes not from the felicity conditions under which it is produced but from the sheer weight of its iterativity – the fact that it is performed over and over again. Every action of clicking 'I agree' makes it more likely that I will do the same next time, because 'I agree' has come to be the means by which I can be 'on my way'. In other words, rather than giving people more control over their data, the GDPR has more likely resulted in *conditioning* citizens to more readily –more *automatically*– relinquish control.

Situated dynamics along the thin line between protection and precarity

The point I am trying to make here is that sociolinguistics is uniquely situated to make a contribution to conversations about (in)securitization because of the tools it provides to analyse the *dynamic, situated realization* of (in)securitization in everyday social interaction. As Rampton and Charalambous point out, however, there is a danger of being perceived as trivializing (in)securitization in extraordinary contexts characterized by fear and precarity by pointing out its basis in more ordinary social interactions. But understanding the way fear and precarity affect social interaction in exceptional conditions can benefit from uncovering the way people deal with everyday micro moments of fear and precarity involved, for example, in dealing with small or large breeches of etiquette around who has the right to look at us or to take our picture. It is also good to remember that what for many of us are practices relatively free of precarity, such as walking down the street, are, for others in our midst, sites of constant uncertainty in which at any moment they might be detained, accosted, searched, or even shot by the very agents of state security that promise to keep us safe. This, for them, constitutes the 'everyday'. Finally, what such an approach can reveal is that sometimes infrastructures of accountability based on enlightenment notions of autonomy and consent that are supposed to protect our privacy, when subjected to the contingences of interaction, can actually end up making it *more* likely that we become complicit to regimens of surveillance and securitization.

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Closing questions

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As the ‘dialogue’ heading suggests, the papers in this section of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* really have taken shape within interaction between the contributors (via email). As well as focusing on particular points raised in individual contributions, several general questions have emerged from this discussion, and three stand out:

- a) Why this now? Why should sociolinguists interested in everyday social relations want or need to talk about (in)securitisation just at this point in time?
- b) So, what exactly is ‘(in)securitisation’? The term has recurred in our discussion of different fields and topics: IR, research methodology, language policy, gender and sexuality, new media. But just how clear and consistent a concept is this?
- c) So what? What – if any – are the broader implications of (in)securitisation for sociolinguists who study everyday communicative practices?

We can take each of these in turn.

a) Why this now?

Violent conflict, fear, suspicion and surveillance are hardly novel or limited phenomena, and our papers mention the legacies of war (in Cyprus and the Middle East), an estimated 68.5 million people forcibly displaced worldwide (Zakharia), homophobia and the criminalisation of same-sex activity in 70 UN member states (Levon), and “the acute ways in which young Black boys, undocumented families, materially poor and gender fluid children experience (in)securitisation (ie with their bodies and their lives)” (Zakharia note 2; also Jones; Mangual Figueroa). Potentially violent processes like these certainly haven’t been ignored in sociolinguistics, but for a long time in high-income countries, it has been possible for many university sociolinguists studying everyday communication to think of such processes as happening elsewhere spatially, as affecting only particular groups, and/or as belonging temporally only to earlier moments in their own national histories. But this detachment is now increasingly hard.

In the UK, for example, central government’s Prevent Strategy enjoins academics to watch their own students for signs of radicalisation and terrorist leanings (e.g. HM Government 2015); university security surveils students and staff with CCTV footage and access gate information (*The Guardian* 2019); faculty are instructed to be more rigorous checking international students’ attendance to ensure that they are *bone fide*; and scholars from Africa and the Middle East are routinely denied visitor visas to participate in UK conferences (APPG 2019). Much of this is underpinned by the UK government’s coordinated, cross-departmental ‘hostile environment’ strategy (Liberty 2018), in which new forms of racism become official policy, to be enacted both by the state and the organisations, businesses and NGOs contracted or compelled to develop or carry it out (Yuval-Davis et al 2019). Mangual Figueroa shows how in the US, similar “[s]ocial policies and institutional practices... turn the... forms of human connection [underpinning ethnographic research] into liabilities [and] jeopardise the possibility for solidarity and truth-telling that the field of

sociolinguistics can offer us” (this issue). The distinction between research and surveillance visibly blurs, and on our own doorsteps, urban education starts to show patterns of securitization that resemble the security agendas governing education in contexts of humanitarian crisis (Zakharia this issue). So it is more difficult now for sociolinguists to think that fear and suspicion only operate as political principles somewhere else, at some other time.

The factors driving this securitisation are multiple, and our papers refer to major conflicts and upheavals, settler colonial histories, technological developments, and specific policies and laws. At a more abstract level, one could also point to the increasingly consequential interplay of neoliberal globalisation, structural racism, inequality and nationalism¹³ – factors buttressed by digital infrastructures of surveillance and accountability (Jones). These wide-reaching/large-scale processes and events certainly fall within the ambit of sociolinguistic research on language policy or political discourse – as Zakharia notes, “language policy is a powerful conduit for observing global and localised phenomena such as the enactment of global security and neoliberal agendas in schools, and sectarianism and surveillance at national and community levels” (this issue). But the case for seeing them as being too big to figure at the centre of sociolinguistic analyses of interaction, as being different/separate from the stuff of research on mundane language and communication, also falls away if we turn to the meaning of (in)securitisation.

b) (In)securitisation?

Insecurity has of course been a sociolinguistic theme for a long time, made prominent in Labov’s account of *linguistic* insecurity, the “strongly negative attitudes” that certain social groups hold “towards their [own] native speech pattern” (Labov 1972:117). This gains sociological weight in Bourdieu’s theory of social reproduction, where linguistic insecurity is attributed to “symbolic violence”, involving “*intimidation* that is not aware of what it is (to the extent that it implies *no act of intimidation*) [and] can only be exerted on a person predisposed... to feel it, whereas others will ignore it” (1991:51; original emphases). This insecurity is also linked to the body when Bourdieu argues that “[t]he sense of acceptability which orients linguistic practices is inscribed in the most deep-rooted of bodily dispositions... Linguistic, especially phonetic, competence is a dimension of bodily hexis in which one’s whole relation to the social world... [is] expressed” (1991:86). These are all certainly very important insights into everyday sociolinguistic experience, but they have at least two shortcomings.

First, there are many environments in which language-linked insecurity is much more than just an internalised condition, and the violence is more than merely symbolic, only impacting on embodied self-presentation (see Burawoy & von Holdt 2012 on Bourdieu’s relevance to South Africa; also e.g. Briggs 1997; Ehrlich 2003). As Mangual Figueroa notes, many US community members have much more to worry about than the embarrassment of linguistic *faux pas* - “due to federal and local law enforcement policies... [t]hey also live in

¹³ Since the 1990s in countries like the UK and US, neoliberalism has (as elsewhere) intensified inequalities, and “the ‘iron fist’ of the penal state” has joined “the ‘invisible hand’ of the market in conjunction with the fraying of the social safety net.” (Wacquant 2012:67). This has produced something of a ‘dual society’, where “a hypercompetitive, fully networked zone coexists with a marginal sector of excluded low-achievers” (Fraser 2003:169). But as the benefits of the market are experienced by fewer and fewer people, there has been a loss of faith in traditional politics, and in their attempts to regain credibility, a number of governments now declare themselves opposed to globalisation, targeting migrants and racialised minorities, reasserting borders (Yuval-Davis et al 2019).

fear of detention and deportation in a state that seeks to remediate their presence by forcible removal” (this issue). In the UK’s officially hostile environment for migrants, signs of foreignness can close access to employment, housing and free health care, and/or result in being reported to the immigration authorities (Liberty 2018; Yuval-Davis et al 2019). And for LGBT+ people in many countries, dominant ideologies of gender and nation generate threats of exclusion, discrimination and physical violence navigated *inter alia* in linguistic practice (Levon). So the conception of linguistic insecurity that we draw from Labov and Bourdieu clearly needs to be extended to very material, sometimes existential insecurities.

There is also another limitation which is overcome by the ‘(in)’ and ‘-isation’ affixes in ‘(in)securitisation’. Traditional sociolinguistic discussions of linguistic insecurity talk of a condition produced by largely invisible processes, occurring almost by osmosis in, for example, standard language schooling, and they seldom show us the damage actually getting done (Rampton 2006:276). In contrast, rather than treating it as a tacitly developed state, the suffix ‘isation’ relocates insecurity in practice theory. This is consistent with Huysman’s definition of insecurity as “the *practice* of making ‘enemy’ and ‘fear’ the integrative, energetic principle of politics” (2014:3; added emphasis), and it fits with the conception of government as a complex assemblage of activities, people, knowledge, texts etc (Jessop 2007). Crucially, this alignment with practice theory opens up insecurity as an issue for linguistic ethnographies of interaction, and when this happens, there are at least two effects: elaborations and inversions of the practice start to emerge, and it sometimes becomes less clear exactly who the agents, targets and victims are.¹⁴

So for example, the question of exactly who is watching whom in a surveillance relationship stands out in the account of Alvin’s encounter with the police in Jones’ paper. Mangual Figueroa describes how as researchers, she and other academics have been securitised by the state during fieldwork, revealing a “collective fragility”; “in the face of extremism”, she notes, “we all become more vulnerable” (this issue); and Jones illustrates how, albeit reluctantly, he himself routinely colludes in his own on-line surveillance clicking cookies. In Zakharia’s formulation, the dividing lines between the ordinary and the ‘extraordinary’, between the normal and the securitised, are “contingent and perspectival”, “as much about how a phenomenon is experienced as it is about the conditions that produce it and the gaze it is put under” (this issue n.2). Indeed, as Levon’s phrase “insecuritisation management strategies” suggests (cf Goffman 1963), the closer one focuses on practical activity, the less likely it is that on its own, the ‘in-’ prefix will be sufficient to cover the plurality of ways in which people and institutions are positioned and manoeuvre around suspicion and fear (see for example P. Charalambous et al 2017 on ‘*de*-securitisation’). All this is compatible with Rampton & Charalambous’ characterisation of the “lived experience of (in)securitisation as an intensifying apprehension of institutionally authorised vulnerability and existential threat, produced (and received) in communicative practice in a range of social settings (both more and less elite)” (this issue). But it underlines the potential instability in secure/insecure relationships, the scope for collusion, and the tactical intricacy of the positioning involved.

Recognition of this complexity certainly doesn’t erase massive differences in the precarity of different groups and individuals, and in their resources for resisting securitisation. As Mangual Figueroa notes, some people come to ‘embody the breach’ (this issue), and activities that are relatively free of precarity for many, like walking down the street, are for others “sites of constant uncertainty in which at any moment they might be detained, accosted, searched, or even shot by the very agents of state security that promise to

¹⁴ On some of the (previously uncharted) interactional complexities around specifically *linguistic* insecuritisation in practice, see e.g. Rampton 2006:Ch.8, P. Charalambous et al 2016, and Clark 2003.

keep us safe” (Jones, this issue). Indeed, the notion of (in)securitisation can operate as a powerful ‘scalar bridge’, allowing us to connect large-scale, institutionalised inequalities to ground-level practices, potentially extending to the psychology of individuals (Levon). But at the same time, there are elements of unpredictable instability in relations of (in)security that can create unexpected possibilities for solidarity (Mangual Figueroa), and in at least some circumstances, an understanding of the range and subtlety of (in)securitisation management strategies can be constructively shared – for example, in post-conflict reconciliation settings, or helping school teachers handle acute insecurities in class (Levon; Rampton & Charalambous; Jones).

So there is a good case for claiming that our conceptualisation of (in)securitization goes beyond canonical notions of insecurity in sociolinguistics, tuning into political changes that are now increasingly salient while also incorporating perspectives developed in ethnographic and situated interaction analysis. Does our discussion have any more general implications for sociolinguistics?

c) Broader implications for sociolinguistics?

This dialogue certainly isn’t asking sociolinguists to abandon their traditional focus on mundane language and communication. An overwhelming sociolinguistic emphasis on exceptionality could miss the way in which many people still do produce liveable lives in very difficult conditions (Papadopoulos & Tsianos 2013), and if analysts thematise fear and suspicion in their description of sociolinguistic actors as a matter of routine, they could end up supporting rather than interrogating the (in)securitising discourses that call for special measures for particular groups. Even so, the tradition of elevating mundane interaction to the be-all and end-all of empirical research – whether this is referred to as ‘unself-conscious talk’ or ‘natural conversation’ – obviously isn’t sufficient (cf Briggs 1997). In addition, on its own, the differentiation of routine and special framings of interaction is unlikely to capture the significance, in (in)securitised conditions, of the ordinary/exceptional binary itself, since in such circumstances, ‘ordinary’ and ‘everyday’ are themselves heavily ideologised. For example, for people living in precarity, an ‘ordinary’ life with similar opportunities to others can be a driving ideal; in post-conflict peace-building, routine social relations are a thematised objective; and conversely, regimes of suspicion scrutinise everyday appearances for signs of threats beneath the surface.

So (in)securitisation intensifies and complicates the significance of the canonical sociolinguistic distinction between the ordinary and the exceptional. It also complicates the ways in which we imagine the dynamics of social structure.

Securitisation is often closely linked to what Yuval-Davis et al (2019) call ‘everyday bordering’, a set of discourses and practices that extend far beyond “counter-terrorism, territorial border control, and frontline policing”. Everyday bordering determines who is and isn’t protected by rights legislation and policies “on the basis of the citizenship and immigration status as they intersect with[,for example,] racialised and gendered identities” (2019:98). “Everyday bordering”, suggest Yuval-Davis et al.,

“has become a major governance technology, controlling diversity and constructing hierarchies of exclusion and exploitation. As such, it affects not only migrants and racialised minorities; and it affects other people not only when they actually cross a border or are in employment in a border zone. Bordering has become a new citizenship duty and major influence on social and communal solidarities... [I]n different and new

contexts, citizens are required to become untrained and unpaid border guards, and more of us are falling under suspicion as illegitimate border crossers” (p162,17)

In sociolinguistics, the relationship between ‘gatekeeping’ and inequality is a very well-established research topic (cf Gumperz (ed) 1982; Erickson & Shultz 1982), and scholars like Blommaert (2009), Maryns (2006) and Jacquemet (2011) have extended these analyses to asylum application procedures, where the stakes are raised from wealth and status stratification to territorial exclusion (see also Erickson 2004:Ch.4 *et passim* on military conscription). But the notion of ‘everyday bordering’ takes this further, pointing to the pervasiveness of these practices, operating well beyond the offices of the immigration authorities. Comparably, with (in)securitisation, our conception of sociolinguistic subordination expands beyond denigration, inhibition and misunderstanding to scaled-up surveillance, and this means that among other things, sociolinguists need to think twice about celebrating the resistance of their informants, since “documenting... grassroots efforts to resist surveillance... can in fact increase police gaze” (Mangual Figueroa, this issue). Indeed, Bigo’s 2002 ‘banopticon’ captures the hard edge of the (in)securitisation regimes in which this surveillance is embedded, going well beyond the disciplinary ‘soul-training’ that Foucault’s panopticon entails (1977; Fraser 2003).

For certain aspects of (in)securitisation, sociolinguistics does need to develop new avenues of enquiry, surveillance being the prime example (Jones; Rampton & Charalambous). More generally, it may well be a matter of either mainstreaming topics that have hitherto featured more as specialist niches within the discipline, or of extending established concepts in the same way that we now need to supplement but not replace ‘gatekeeping’ with ‘bordering’. But whether or not there are already resources to hand, ‘enemy’ and ‘alien’ need to be added to the list of ‘Othering’ identifications that sociolinguists analyse; ‘endangered’ as well as ‘expressive’ bodies deserve consideration; and suspicion, coercion and violence require attention alongside ideology, conviviality, and consent.

As Mangual Figueroa notes at the end of her contribution, serious engagement with (in)securitisation may well lead beyond research, and it is very difficult to understate the importance of democratic politics, policy and law. But whatever hope of balance and moderation democratic processes offer in themselves, the impact of policy documents and legal texts still depends on their situated interactional interpretation (Jones, this issue), and here once again, sociolinguistics can provide essential insight.

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