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# Articulating Lingual Life Histories and Language Ideological Assemblages: Indigenous Activists within the North Fork Mono and Village of Tewa Communities

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This article argues that a key value in focusing on linguistic life historical data is access to individual biographical details and how they inform the intellectual and affective significance speakers attribute to their heritage languages. Examining *lingual life histories* data from previous research—one from Western Mono in central California and the other from the Village of Tewa in northern Arizona, I explore how this research provides linguistic anthropologists with a means of understanding the interaction of *imposed relevances* and affect-laden significance experienced by individuals in their *milieu*—or “subjective worlds.” Understanding lingual life histories of influential speakers embedded in the language ideological assemblages of their language communities, this approach provides potentially valuable data for scholars attempting to understand processes of resistance, resilience, and adaptation that contribute to maintaining and revitalizing endangered heritage languages in Indigenous communities.

**Key words:** lingual life history, language ideological assemblages, language revitalization, language change, Western Mono, Village of Tewa (Arizona)

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Though the genre of “life history” has coexisted with “ethnography” throughout the history of anthropology, its focus on individual lives, as opposed to the social group, has attracted comparatively little attention from scholars. With notable exceptions (e.g., Dinwoodie 2006; Hill 1995; Johnstone 1996; Timm 1986; Webster 2015), this is especially true in linguistic anthropology where scholars have historically preferred to focus on language and speech communities rather than on linguistic individuals. Linguistic anthropologists such as Sapir, in the following quote, have certainly recognized the dynamic role of individuals even if they have not succeeded in capturing it in substantive rather than programmatic writings:

That culture is a superorganic, impersonal whole is a useful enough methodological principle to begin with but becomes a serious deterrent in the long run

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to the more dynamic study of the genesis and development of cultural patterns because these cannot be realistically disconnected from those organizations of ideas and feelings which constitute the individual. (Sapir 1949:512)

Some language scientists, including an anonymous reader of an earlier version of this article, have suggested that Leonard Bloomfield's (1927) "Literate and Illiterate Speech," with its famous description of White Thunder, one of several Menominee speakers named by Bloomfield as a man "who may be said to speak no language tolerably" (1927:437), represents an influential precedent in studies of linguistic individuals. A close examination of that article will find no significant biographical details other than "English language" names and thin descriptions of their variable use of their heritage languages. Surely this is not what Sapir imagined when he described the individual as a crucial yet missing part of language and cultural dynamics. In previous studies of two different Native American communities, I have attempted to demonstrate the value of *lingual life histories* for understanding the social distribution of linguistic knowledge (Kroskrity 1993) and the biographical basis of linguistic agency (Kroskrity 2009).<sup>1</sup> Here my goal is to briefly examine aspects of the lingual life histories of two Indigenous elders who were each devoted to the preservation of their heritage languages in an especially feelingful manner. Though deeply embedded in the constraints of their respective language ideological assemblages (Kroskrity 2018), these elders each selectively innovated new practices and ideologies that have become more widely circulated within their communities even as they reproduced most other beliefs, feelings, and practices. Lingual life histories allow us to enter and better understand the subjective worlds of individuals, or what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call their *milieu*, to view the articulation and expression of their emergent activity and its impact on the language ideological assemblages in which they are embedded. By developing the notion of *language ideological assemblage* (LIA), I attempted to expand the scope of language ideological research by further exploring ideological contact, multiplicity, conflict, and change within and across language communities:

By introducing the conceptual framework of LIA, I want to . . . understand their component language ideologies as part of a larger complex of relevant beliefs and feelings, both Indigenous and externally imposed, that may complement, contest, or otherwise dynamically interact with each other to modify language ideologies and linguistic practices. Frustrated by language ideological research that often looks at a single ideology—say that associated with purism or standardization—I am attempting to redirect attention to the interaction of clusters of ideologies that occur within or across linguistic communities. (Kroskrity 2018:134)

The focus of this use of lingual life histories is the dialectical "give and take" of how the social becomes personal and, in turn, the personal is transformed back into the intersubjective social world of a heritage language community.

Both of the elders that I will discuss here were my research partners in various projects associated with long-term and overlapping linguistic and ethnographic research in the Western Mono communities of central California (1980–2001) and the Village of Tewa, First Mesa, Hopi Reservation in northeastern Arizona (1973–2019).<sup>2</sup> The first elder I will introduce is Rosalie Bethel (1915–2009) of the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians. As a senior figure in the community, she combined her knowledge of the Western Mono language with a concern for the language as a critical resource for her own tribal identity as well as that of other tribal members. This prompted her both to begin to document her own language and to reach out to me, as a linguistic anthropologist who would be able to call upon a variety of professional resources in the effort of Mono language documentation and revitalization.

Dewey Healing (1905–1992) was a major cultural and political figure in Tewa Village, now called the Village of Tewa in northeastern Arizona. Born during a time of significant social change in reservation life, Healing had powerful feelings for maintaining much of Tewa culture while simultaneously adopting useful elements of the dominant society and its techno-economy. Even before it was apparent to others in his community, Healing noticed early signs of a language shift that seemed to work against his community's almost three-century-long postdiasporic maintenance of their heritage language on Hopi land (Kroskrity 1993).<sup>3</sup> When I, as a linguistic anthropology graduate student, was looking for an Arizona Tewa linguistic consultant, Healing found in me a useful friend and ally in his own project of Tewa language documentation, and a twenty-year research partnership was effectively initiated.

My goal in this brief article will be to use lingual life historical data fragments to understand how the subjective worlds of these individuals influenced their language ideologies and discourse practices as well as their contributions to the language ideological assemblages in which they were enmeshed. I should add that in neither of the long-term fieldwork situations did I ever exclusively focus on gathering biographical information on these individuals. We worked together over decades, and in the course of focusing on other linguistic and cultural phenomena, linguistic life history episodes were conversationally introduced as both Rosalie Bethel and Dewey Healing revealed themselves in personal narratives, usually occasioned by a word, a task at hand, news of the day, or prior conversation. These lingual life history fragments are brief but revealing episodes of longer, discontinuous autobiographical narratives that were occasioned by discursive microcontexts and not as the result of systematic, targeted interviews. They emerged from a larger set of ethnographic and linguistic projects. In this very brief treatment of certain life historical episodes, I am attempting not to approximate anything like a comprehensive lingual life history of these two important individuals but rather to focus on key episodes that represented a subjective sense-making of their complex social worlds. Following Williams (1977), I describe such activities as “structures of feeling” guiding them to emergent outcomes in a quest for more satisfying personal resolutions that require modifications of inherited language ideological assemblages. Structures of feeling are impulses to shape and make meaning and order

that are both affective and rational: “not feeling against thought but thought as felt and feeling as thought; practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and inter-relating continuity” (Williams 1977:132). They can lead people to feel the need for a change of some sort without necessarily being able to fully explicate why. Rosalie Bethel felt the need for an innovative way of rethinking the Mono language not so much as a tool but as an emblem of her Indigenous identity. For Dewey Healing, this change involved rethinking Indigenous constraints on literacy and circulation in order to innovate collaborative, even if initially covert, documentation of a highly valued heritage language.

### THE JUXTAPOSITION OF INDIGENOUS AND SETTLER COLONIAL REGIMES

Any account of how the personal milieu of these individuals articulates with the *imposed relevances* (Schütz 1946) of the political-economic regimes contained in their language ideological assemblages cannot ignore the juxtaposition of Indigenous and imposed cultural practices in the early twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> Though settler colonialism (Wolfe 1999) deeply impacted both groups and subordinated them to a settler-state and its associated culture—including state ideologies of language and identity—these impacts assumed very contrastive forms for the two groups. For the Western Mono, though they maintained their traditional hunting-and-gathering economy into the twentieth century, their seasonal rounds which included harvest-season wage work for White farmers, gradually transformed into a year-round incorporation into the cash economy of settler society (Hurtado 1988:214). Seasonal movements associated with hunting and gathering were now restricted by the fences and barriers of private property, destroying the possibility of maintaining most of their traditional economic practices. In addition to being incorporated at the bottom of an encompassing cash economy, Western Monos—like other California Indians—were often racialized as “digger” Indians by most Euro-American settlers and their dominant institutions (Hinton 1994).<sup>5</sup> As a Mono elder who grew up early in the early twentieth century, Rosalie Bethel still painfully recalled the stigmatizing treatment of Native American students in public schools that routinely punished students for speaking their heritage languages and treated them as untouchables who should not make contact with Euro-American students (Kroskrity 2009:197).

Although “Indian Schools” that Tewa youth forcibly attended were hardly tolerant, they tended to be off-reservation boarding schools that lacked direct influence on daily life back on the Hopi Reservation to which the boarding students would return. Though the entire Hopi Reservation was regimented to many forms of political economic subordination, the Tewa were already a minority group among the Hopi and they had well-developed strategies of compartmentalization to limit the impact of Euro-American society and culture. They did not lose land or experience any sudden inability to practice their traditional economy. Less a transformation of their society than a supplementary adaptation, this settler-colonial contact was significantly less

disorienting for the Tewa than for the Western Mono. The newly imposed cash economy provided many Village of Tewa members with opportunities to experiment with commercial enterprises, ranching, and the paid positions made available by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian Health Service, and tribal bureaucracy. Economically, many Tewa played the role of “middleman,” often mediating between more conservative Hopi groups and the dominant Euro-American society which seemed to always require change—in economy, political organization, legal authority (Dozier 1966:27; Kroskrity 1993:23–24). In contrast to the Mono, Village of Tewa residents experienced contact with the settler state and its society as far less disruptive. Differing patterns of language shift parallel this disparity in cultural disruption. Today, Western Mono traditional speakers number no more than 20 elders, most of whom are in their seventies, whereas the Village of Tewa still has hundreds of speakers among those 40 or more years of age. But few speakers are youth or young adults, among whom only about 10% are fluent.

Though settler-colonial influence has been consequential and very impactful on language practices, many existing language practices in each community, including current and past projects of language revitalization, still exhibit the influence of their distinctive complexes of Indigenous language ideologies as I have previously demonstrated (Kroskrity 2018). Space does not permit me to fully discuss all the features of the Indigenous language ideological components for each assemblage, but for the purpose of providing relevant background I can generalize that differences in the Indigenous language ideologies were clearly related to the traditional economies and social organizations of which they were a critical part. Such language ideologies as utilitarianism, syncretism, variationism, and egalitarian multilingualism (Kroskrity 2009, 2018) were linguistic adaptations to a band-level, egalitarian, hunter-gatherer economy in which Mono bands would move seasonally and develop cooperative relations with neighboring groups through such practices as intermarriage and multilingualism. In contrast, the sedentary agricultural adaptation and ceremonial system of the Tewa promoted ideologies that featured Indigenous purism, compartmentalization, the replication of tradition, and language as an expression of social identity (Kroskrity 1993, 1998, 2017, 2018). These sets of Indigenous language ideologies were pervasive features of the social worlds and the experienced milieu of the individuals and thus provide a grounding orientation for their lingual life histories.

#### ROSALIE BETHEL

Though many Western Mono Indigenous language ideologies provided adaptive resources that would be useful to an Indigenous community experiencing massive sociocultural change, others provided challenges for individuals such as Rosalie Bethel. An emphasis on practical, economically appropriate choices certainly would favor the use of English and the adoption of English loanwords and English language practices. Syncretism and intermarriage were well-established ideologies and practices, but most intermarriages were with other Indigenous neighboring groups such as the Southern

Sierra Miwok or the Chukchansi Yokuts. As the product of an intermarriage involving White settlers, Rosalie's unusual situation would eventually provide an imposed relevance (Schütz 1946) regarding heritage language and identity that few others in her community would need to confront. Her mother, Annie Wenz, was a relatively monolingual Mono woman from the North Fork band; her father was a German immigrant who came to California initially as a mason who expected to find work after the great San Francisco earthquake had leveled much of the city. Despite linguistic differences that were never fully bridged, Rosalie Bethel's parents managed to maintain a stable household in which Rosalie prospered in her early childhood years. Though her father was a good provider for the family, he later became intolerant of his wife's and daughter's participation in Indigenous cultural activities shortly before he abandoned them altogether. Unlike other Mono families that embraced syncretism and promoted individual difference via language ideologies of variationism, Rosalie's rejected this hybridity and attempted to impose a purely settler adaptation. As an interracial child in a family in which cultural differences regularly contended and conflicted, Rosalie early on experienced a more polarized social world in which languages were iconized (Irvine and Gal 2000) to cultural identities.<sup>6</sup> While other Mono children experienced a more syncretic, or hybridizing, approach to cultural differences within and outside their homes, Rosalie's experience was one of polarization, of having to choose between mutually exclusive identities rather than adopt a hybridized identity. Her father, after divorcing Rosalie's mother and persuading legal authorities that she would be an "unfit" mother, attempted to remove Rosalie from additional Mono influence by placing her in a mission orphanage rather than in maternal custody (Kroskrity 2009:197). In one of the many times she conveyed the impact of this family trauma on her own language ideologies and practices, she stated:

*I-biya-tadubaan*, it's my mother's language—the only way I could talk to her and our people. My father, when things were going bad in our family said we shouldn't speak it, but my mother did not know English or German too good. She wanted to talk to me in *her* language and help me make it *my* language, too. When they put me in the orphanage, oh how I missed my mother, and when she visited all we spoke was Mono! When she would have to leave, I spoke it to myself and tried to repeat all the things she had told me. It made me feel whole and all put together. It gave me a relief from my sadness of missing her. My [Mono] language is what saved me. . . . It kept me safe when I was growing up and it still heals me today.

This episode in her lingual life history provides an important view of the articulation of Rosalie's subjective milieu and the actual workings of subordination and racialization associated with settler-colonial structures. Her expressed structures of feeling display both the sense of painful disjuncture but also the emergent role of the Mono language as a resource that offers the healing associated with belonging and identity.<sup>7</sup>

This traumatic mission experience as well as her early experience in public schools confirmed for Rosalie the experience of a polarization of “Indian” and “White”—as she was subjected to teachings and practices which clearly stigmatized Indigenous cultures and languages and attempted to expunge them from the children. The stigma of being “Indian,” as Rosalie Bethel still recalls, was so polluting that non-Indian children were encouraged to use sticks rather than directly touch or hold hands with Indian children in the course of classroom and general school activities. But whereas Rosalie’s interracial status and her Indigenous cultural orientation denied her the status of being “White,” they did not pose any problems for her complete acceptance in the Mono community, with its emphasis on syncretism and hybridity. Since local criteria for inclusion were long on cultural requirements and exceedingly short on genetic purity, Rosalie was consistently acknowledged as a central member because of her fluency in the language and her acquisition of a vast storehouse of Mono cultural knowledge which she continued to learn—as an adult—from cultural leaders in the community even after the death of her mother. These elders were willing to converse with a relatively young woman who spoke Mono so well and who seemed so interested in the cultural details of gathering plants, dispensing native medicines, and performing important ritual events.

Though Rosalie’s schooling experiences in North Fork Public School and later at Sherman Indian School in Riverside, California, were designed to socialize her into the settler society at the lowest economic level and to “erase and replace” (Lomawaima 2015) her Indigenous culture, she managed to redirect this attempted conversion and subordination experience into one that revalorized her Mono linguistic and cultural heritage even while it was being attacked by hegemonic institutions.

You know they taught us to cook and clean house, I guess we were being trained to be maids. But I was never much good at it! All that work and in a short while all that dust and mess, it just comes right back! But what I really liked was getting to meet so many other Indian women about my age. They seemed to come from everywhere—there were Chukchansis and Mojaves, Paiutes and Cahuillas. We seemed to have so much in common with each other and we sure got along real well. Some of those girls knew things about their own ways of doing things that I didn’t know about mine. So right then I made up my mind to go back to North Fork and learn everything I could about my people. I felt like this [Mono language] was something they were trying to take away from me by keeping me from speaking it . . . but I was not going to let them.

When Rosalie did return to North Fork, it was not to practice the domestic skills that she had learned but rather to learn more about her culture and to begin to play a role as an important curator of cultural and linguistic knowledge as well as a mediator between her community and institutions of the dominant society. One of her earliest experiences in this regard was her service as a translator for the linguist Sydney Lamb,



who performed his dissertation research in North Fork using the largely monolingual Lucy Kinsman, a North Fork Mono, as his principal consultant. Later in life, Rosalie would be elected the president of the Sierra Mono Museum and become a major ceremonial leader who assumed responsibility for traditional funeral ceremonies and for reburial of Indigenous remains associated with development and construction in the North Fork, Auberry, and Cold Springs area. In addition, she told Mono stories in public events at the museum and elsewhere in central California. In 1979 she directed her niece, a graduate student at UCLA, to contact me about the possibility of engaging in a documentation project that might expand and standardize her efforts at preserving and collecting Mono vocabulary items. It is clear that she took this work seriously even though she lacked any formal training in linguistics, for when I first met her in 1980 she had compiled two shoeboxes full of index cards, each containing a Mono vocabulary item. For the next 20 years, she would become the central figure of the community-based UCLA Mono Language Project that would ultimately produce a descriptive grammar, a dictionary (Bethel et al. 1984), and even a CD-ROM (Kroskirty, Bethel, and Reynolds 2002; also Kroskirty 2002, 2017).

From her words and deeds, we can see that Rosalie's own experience of self-identification was impacted by the polarizing environment of her childhood home. In contrast to those whose utilitarian ideologies of language saw value primarily in the way the languages in their linguistic repertoire provided valuable economic resources, Rosalie could not help but find in her heritage language a critical resource for connecting to her mother and to her Indigenous cultural community. Though most other Mono families experienced language shift to English and the marginalization of Mono language as comparatively unproblematic, Rosalie could not let her father, or the dominant society he represented, take her heritage language away.

For her, the Mono language was more than just a reference guide to plant names and gathering strategies; it was inextricably connected with issues of identity. For her, the ancestral language, which linked her to her mother and her maternal culture, became deeply connected with her personal and cultural identity as a Mono person, with a means, as she put it, "for knowing who we are" (Kroskirty et al. 2002). Unable to simply accept an Indigenous view of languages as primarily valuable for their practical worth, Rosalie Bethel's rethinking of culturally available ways of linking language and identity was not the result of some private meditation but rather the outcome of an imposed agenda which intruded upon her early on and required her to problematize notions (of language and identity) that others in her community could more easily take for granted.

Within her milieu, Rosalie Bethel's reformulation of language and identity relations provided a personal solution for questions of belonging and identity that were imposed upon her by the circumstances of her early childhood and amplified by the overt racism of a settler-colonial society. She was her mother's child and she was a Mono person. Her phenotypic appearance as Indigenous combined with her actions

as someone deeply committed to her heritage language and culture in her embodied performance of Mono identity made her a paragon member of the Mono community. No one in the Mono or central California Native American community ever mentioned her “mixed race” identity because it was so obvious to all that she was a central and authoritative member of their communities. But her personal innovation of making her Mono language the emblem of her social identity was a selective modification of a language ideological assemblage otherwise largely reproduced in patterns she shared with most members of her community. As with others in her generation, she replaced Miwok and Yokuts in her linguistic repertoire with English. Since that was the language of hegemonic institutions such as schools, of the cash economy that enveloped the Mono, and of the ever-growing majority of White settlers who now occupied most of Mono land, she was conforming to the sweeping pattern of language shift toward English. But unlike many who were guided by Mono ideologies of utilitarianism and state practices of linguistic discrimination to displace Mono with a more economically rewarding English, Rosalie Bethel could not countenance the practical view of language that viewed it primarily as an economic resource. In her milieu, language was foremost a means of belonging, of identifying; one’s heritage language could not be given up. And so, the personal meaning of her heritage language was overtly manifested as the language activism which fueled her dictionary-making and later her participation in the Taitaduhaan (CD-ROM) Project in which her performances of stories, songs, and prayers were offered as teaching examples for a language community lacking in fluent elders (Kroskrity 2017). But even in these projects of language revitalization, she displayed two key features of Indigenous language ideologies: syncretism and variationism.

The *Practical Dictionary of Western Mono* (Bethel et al. 1984) contained a large number of loanwords from Spanish, Yokuts, Miwok, and English, and even though her linguistic performances in the CD-ROM (Kroskrity et al. 2002) were strictly in Mono, several of the genres and specific performances displayed various forms of hybridity. For example, though traditional Mono songs consist solely of vocables, Rosalie composed a children’s song with words that could be used as a pedagogical model. And in her telling of the story “Coyote Races Mole” she added an unprecedented explanation that was not a normal part of the Mono story but rather a pedagogical device designed for those unfamiliar with the norms of Mono storytelling.<sup>8</sup> In the actual performance of that story that was recorded as an audience of Mono elders and cultural authorities viewed, Rosalie ignored an audience member’s effort to close the story in favor of closing her own story (in accord with the norms recognized by her group). When I discussed this minor conflict later with her, she explained it without value judgment in accord with the ideology of variationism: “that’s the way he learned it in his family and there is nothing wrong in that; it’s just that our way is different since we were taught by our people.” Rosalie Bethel also appealed to variationist logics in accounting for why some very prominent Mono people were not heritage language speakers but chose to demonstrate their connection to Mono cultural resources using nonlinguistic

means such as basket-making, use of Native plants, and the practice of “controlled burns” in forest management. “We are given different ways of knowing and different things we know about, and we go on from there.”

### DEWEY HEALING

In contrast to Rosalie Bethel, whose life began on the margins of her cultural group, Dewey Healing grew up at the center of early-twentieth-century Village of Tewa society. Like other members of the Tewa community, he valued a multilingual adaptation, and like the majority of “progressive” members of the Tewa community, he attempted to integrate the economic benefits associated with the dominant society and its cash economy while simultaneously working to preserve many aspects of traditional Tewa language and culture through practices of compartmentalization (Dozier 1966; Kroskrity 1998). In the early twentieth century, the Tewa benefitted from their comparatively quick addition of English to their linguistic repertoire and their willingness to play mediating roles between more conservative Hopis and the increasingly influential dominant society. Unlike the minoritized Mono, the Tewa were not displaced by any Euro-American settlers and they often played a role in modernizing the Hopi Reservation by mediating the influence of Euro-American institutions and political economic structures. Tewa people were among the first official translators, tribal policemen, judges (Black 2001), and store owners on the Hopi Reservation. Dewey Healing’s grandmother was the famous Nampeyo, who was a major figure in the revival of Hopi pottery and the transformation of functional pottery-making into marketable commodities that could be sold to museums, collectors, and tourists (Kramer 1996). Her husband (and Dewey’s grandfather) was a Hopi man who served as a guide with the Fewkes archaeological expedition that excavated the Sikyatki ruins and unearthed hundreds of older vessels, which enabled Nampeyo to revive pottery forms and designs that had vanished from use. Dewey was related to Tom Polacca—the first store owner and the namesake of a new community that developed just below the First Mesa villages. Since all reservation land was off-limits to Euro-American settlers, the federal government wielded primarily an indirect colonial rule through its institutions and the engulfing cash economy. Though Dewey was raised as a child to participate in agricultural and pastoral activities associated with the traditional economy, he also enjoyed his schooling at Phoenix Indian School and caught on to the literacy skills associated with the assimilationist curriculum. His parents had encouraged him not to resist learning the useful skills but also not to believe any claims that teachers made about the superiority of mainstream society.

Though Dewey Healing was not well-placed by birth in the ceremonial system, he was active enough in ceremonial life and very active in the performance of social dance songs, which were more open to voluntary participation and to composing new songs. He was also especially active in tribal politics, and after serving multiple terms in the unified delegation that First Mesa villages sent to the Hopi Tribal Council, he became recognized as an effective political leader on the Hopi Reservation. An outstanding speaker of both Tewa and Hopi, he ran successfully to become the elected chairman

of the Hopi Tribe in 1958–1959 and 1963–1966. His fiery rhetorical style and willingness to confront Navajo leaders were attributes that won him many Hopi followers and made him an omnipresent member of Hopi delegations sent to negotiate details of the Hopi-Navajo border dispute even after his retirement from political life.

In terms of lingual life history, Dewey grew up in a home in which both his Tewa parents spoke it as the regular language of domestic activity. During his early years, when he was asked to herd sheep for his family, he learned Navajo from interacting with young Navajos who were grazing their sheep in adjacent areas near springs that were used by both tribes. Even though he heard many traditional stories in Tewa, his Hopi grandfather was also a gifted storyteller who performed his stories in Hopi.

Growing up I was very lucky to be in a home where we never lacked food and to have so many relatives who could tell all kinds of stories. We really value the stories because, as I have been telling you, they help people grow up the right way to have the sense of what is right and what is wrong. We think they build what you call “character” and they do it with funny stories, scary stories that make you understand more. They are not just for kids and I don’t think there are as many people telling them today as when I grew up. I can still see my Hopi grandfather making these expressions on his face as he would say the words Old Man Coyote was saying in the story.

Dewey Healing learned by observation and participation in the storytelling events of his youth to become an outstanding storyteller for his own friends and family as a mature man and later as an elder. When we worked together in the 1970s, he was able to tell Tewa stories fluently (Kroskrity and Healing 1978, 1980) and to tell any story in his repertoire in either Tewa or Hopi without hesitation. It was also clear from the many aspects of Tewa storytelling that he was able to convey as both a performer and analyst that he had a very sophisticated knowledge of performance details as well as of the moral significance of storytelling (Kroskrity 2012).

Dewey Healing valued performative language use in various forms—including the more confrontational rhetoric of political discourse—but he preferred to speak with the beauty and power of song.

When I was a younger man, I used my booming voice to oppose some others—maybe they were Hopi “traditionalists,” maybe Navajos. But my uncles were also teaching me to use my voice to sing our social dance songs. After many years of singing and learning, I also tried my hand at composing songs. First the tune, then the words. When you have it sounding right, then you teach it to the others in the kiva as you practice in the weeks before the dance. ‘Specially the younger ones. Now I teach them! The same way my uncles taught me!

In various lingual life history episodes revealed in autobiographical asides, commentaries, and even conversational narratives, a pervasive theme was the personal importance

of heritage language practices, especially those—such as the social dance songs mentioned above—performed in Tewa. Within the juxtaposition of cultures and political economic regimes of his personal milieu, Dewey Healing managed a passage into Tewa modernity by compartmentalizing his languages and practicing an Indigenous purism in those sectors of his personal and social life that related to family, clan, and the Village of Tewa.

But this sense of balance and control was broken both by personal health crises and by social processes that were bringing greater influence from the dominant society in terms of mass media, economic integration, and political domination. The traditional economy was now completely transformed into a cash economy. English was not just the language of instruction in the on-reservation elementary and, later, high schools, it had become the dominant language for younger generations. Language shift and incipient sociolinguistic tip were probably still largely imperceptible to most in the Tewa community in 1973, but not for Dewey Healing. In my very first day in the Village of Tewa I was escorted to Dewey's house by a couple of his nephews who were living in the adjacent village of Sichomovi. Dewey agreed to meet with me on an everyday basis so I could record Tewa examples of speech—both elicited and more naturally occurring—and help document the language. At the time, I did not know that language documentation might be a controversial issue because of cultural protocols regarding the circulation of Tewa language materials. C. F. (Carl) Voegelin, my academic advisor, had suggested that I avoid ceremonial speech since this was strictly regulated esoteric knowledge that was inappropriate for outsiders to know. And at the time, I did not know that Dewey had previously refused to work with linguists when he had been approached by them in the village in previous years. He told me that we needed to conduct our project as a low-profile operation since there were many in the community who might object strenuously to his working on linguistic research with outsiders. I agreed, but later I asked him why he was now willing to risk personal exposure to controversy. He replied:

Many reasons why. For one thing, some really old and knowing men died just last month or just before. They did not pass on enough of what they knew. Now I hear some of the younger men in the kiva composing social dance songs in Hopi even though they are Tewa! And when I talk Tewa to the little boys and girls right here in the plaza, they answer me in English. When I think about these things, I feel like . . . sick. It . . . these things . . . worry me about our Tewa language. So I needed to do something.

For Dewey Healing, the balance of an enduring multilingual and multicultural adaptation—one which enabled a feeling of connection to the valued traditions while benefitting from the techno-economic change of the modernizing Hopi Reservation—was being upset by a gradual, but increasingly apparent, *linguistic tip* (Dorian 1981).<sup>9</sup> This is one version of what Everhart (2021) terms the “endangerment frame” in which

speakers see their heritage languages in a new light. On many occasions over the two decades we worked together, Healing remarked about how disorienting Tewa sociolinguistic life had become.

If we don't speak Tewa, how can we continue as a people? The little ones who don't know it yet may still have a chance to learn, but what about the men who are making their social dance songs in Hopi? Some sing them in our kiva! This *never* happened in the past. This is NOT the way we should be using our languages!

What Dewey Healing was objecting to here was the first time he noticed social dance songs for dances in the Village of Tewa being composed in Hopi. This violates traditional notions of compartmentalization—speaking Hopi is fine, even necessary, but one should not do it during Tewa social events taking place in the Village of Tewa. For him, Tewa and Hopi were not interchangeable Indigenous languages but rather completely different languages associated with different social worlds and distinct group identities.

Dewey Healing did not elaborate any further on what he regarded as a highly inappropriate violation of linguistic norms, but he did mention that he had composed a song earlier that year and that he was pleased to be able to teach it in the kiva. The song text of “Where Shells Are Shaken by the Waves” was for an upcoming *Yaniiwe* dance and it appears below.

**“WHERE SHELLS ARE SHAKEN BY THE WAVES”  
Yaniiwe composed by Dewey Healing**

Far, far away where shells are shaken by the waves,  
From there the Tewa people came, bearing life-giving corn.  
This is what our elders have always said.  
This is what our grandmothers have always said.

Heeding their words, we exchange greetings and kind words here.  
This is how we should live our lives!  
But how far will we carry on our Tewa language,  
We elders, as we live out our days?

When I think about this, I look to my grandchildren.  
When I think about this, I embrace my great-grandchildren.  
May our people live on!

**Ka;yi-'iwe kayi-'iwe 'ook'a 'akyan p'o-kwin na-k'ó,**  
Far-there-at far-there-at shell shake water-spring it-lies

**'iwaē-dam-ba téēwa-t'owa khúúlú-wokan woowatsi-in-kán**

There from-they.say Tewa people corn-bearing life-them-with

**Ho 'íbí-kháá;di-ma'a.**

Already they-move-hither.

**Kin haawan naambí senóó ho díbí-tú-ma'a**

This something our elders already they-say-hither

**Kín haawan naambí sáaya-'in ho díbí-tú-ma'a.**

This something our grandmothers already they-say-hither.

**Hedán kwen 'imbí hiili-'an 'íi-t'ó-yan-di,**

Then if their words we listen

**Newe sengi-tú sígí-tú waakan ho 'íbí-hú-mí**

Here greet-word kind-word this let's we-live-should.

**Wehe heyáma nembí Téēwa hiili-yán ho 'ii-hú-mí,**

Distance how our Tewa language let's we-live-should

**Wehe heyáma naa-'in senóó ho 'íbí-ka-mí**

Distance how we elders let us-live-should

**Kín haawan naa-bí 'ankhyaw déh-mún-dí naa-bí thétéé-'e**

This what our thought I-see-when my grandchildren

**Naaví pápáá-'e ho dee-same-'an.**

My great-grandchildren already I-embrace-d

**Gasineweeyan t'owa t'éme ho díi-kwo-mí.**

May-it-be people all let's they-live-should.

An entextualized embodiment of a cautiously hopeful nostalgia, the song lyrics cross temporal borders and connect the ancient past to the present and future through the mediation of the Tewa language. It begins with the very first emergence of the Tewa—into this world—in or near an alkali lake in southwestern Colorado. The words express the composer's concern about the Tewa language and how far “we elders” can carry it forward through their lifetimes. The hope is that, somehow, following the ways of the elders and the grandmothers will keep the Tewa people and their language living on for generations to come. After a couple months of working together in my first year of fieldwork in the Village of Tewa, Dewey sang this song so it could be recorded and transcribed. Those notes along with those recordings and others made from 1973 to 1992 became the foundation of the current dictionary for the Village of Tewa and the continuing project of documentation that is now an officially approved collaborative project.<sup>10</sup> Healing later revealed to me that had he not composed the song, and not felt compelled to do something, he might not have agreed to our collaboration, but these activities had prepared him to think that something needed to be done even if it violated norms about writing, recording, or circulating language materials to outsiders.

The aesthetic and moral milieu of Dewey Healing was predicated on maintaining a balance between his deep attachment to traditional Tewa language and culture and his desire to recontextualize these practices and values within a modern world. His familiarity with English language literacy and with working with external specialists (such as lawyers) made him feel confident that these new technologies and intercultural collaborations provided resources for the maintenance of Tewa language and culture. Repurposed to document the language he loved and to maintain it as a touchstone of Tewa identity for future generations, these innovations—in his view—could be properly integrated into Tewa cultural practice.

### CONCLUSIONS

The preceding brief and fragmentary lingual life histories of Rosalie Bethel and Dewey Healing suggest the promise of an approach that illuminates the personal meanings of language use that individuals draw on as they selectively reproduce and influence their social worlds through their own emergent linguistic activity. Life histories, as both Rao and Everhart (2021) and Webster (2021) detail, are long-standing genres of anthropology. But in much of conventional life history work, language is all too often taken for granted; it is, like the labor of immigration court interpreters analyzed by Rao (2021), made invisible and/or inaudible. In these studies, the authors have relied on ethnographic interviews—on hearing the personal voices of individuals they know from participant-observation projects. In the case of Webster's discussion of Kay and mine of Dewey Healing, we find an interdiscursive connection between their lingual life history fragments and the verbal art of poetry and song produced by these individuals. Even in the highly abbreviated form necessitated by the genre of a brief academic article, lingual life histories enable us to understand individuals—their thoughts and actions—not merely as typifications of various cultures but as people, situated in particular social worlds, attempting to make sense of themselves and their relationship to it through their languages (and other semiotic resources). They help us to better view what Perley (2009) has termed “the contingencies of emergence” as speakers improvise new practices and ideologies while negotiating their changing worlds.

Without entering the milieu of Rosalie Bethel, how do we understand her affective attachment to the Western Mono language and the manner in which she devoted herself to documentary and revitalization efforts (Kroskirty 2009, 2017)? Though her embrace of a profound relationship between her heritage language and her personal identity was not successfully communicated to many in her community in the form of a lasting exemplary influence, her own “becoming” Mono was a personal achievement that brought her the self-healing she sought. In Dewey Healing's milieu, the intricate management and integration of Indigenous languages and cultures with English speakers and their technologies and socioeconomic institutions had produced precarity. Based on his experience with the modernization of Hopi Reservation life, he was willing to defy, or suspend, language ideological norms and collaborate with a linguistic



anthropologist (me) in order to document a heritage language to which he was deeply attached in order to preserve it for future generations. His actions anticipated future efforts by Village of Tewa members that would ultimately win the approval of the majority of his community. Many there still sing his songs today. Tewa literacy is now more routinely practiced and seen by most as a necessary resource for language revitalization, although it is still viewed as a regulated body of knowledge that should be provided only to those who have a right and/or a need to know.

For those interested in language contact and change, “the reintegration of the individual into the overall matrix of the speech community” (Sankoff 2002:659) has long been an unachieved objective. But lingual life histories clearly provide a means for relating the personal milieu of individuals to the language ideological assemblages in which they are enmeshed. As in SturtzSreetharan’s (2021) representation of the “lives of resilience” of Toru and Kikue, or the “managed linguistic identities” of Sawada and Narita described by Everhart (2021), lingual life histories allow us to inquire closely “into what gives lives a sense of purpose or direction, or how people search for the best way to live” (Walker and Kavedzija 2015:17).

#### NOTES

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1. My attempts to systematize the linguistic study of individuals, *lingual life histories* were a means of better understanding the “biographical acquisition of linguistic knowledge” (e.g., grammar, languages, registers, ideologies) through social interaction with significant others (Kroskrity 1993:114).

2. My field research in the Village of Tewa consisted of slightly more than three composite years of various research projects from 1973 to 1992 and again from 2011 to the present. In matters of the ethnonym, I use the community’s preferred name for itself (in English). The Tewa name is Óók’a’á Owinge (Shell Village). But most readers will know this community by one of several other names including Hopi-Tewa (Dozier 1954; Stanislawski 1979), Hano (Dozier 1966)—a strongly dispreferred term, and Arizona Tewa (Dozier 1955; Kroskrity 1993). In contrast to this much longer period of research on Tewa, my research on Western Mono occurred between 1980 and 2001.

3. Prior to the Second Pueblo Revolt in 1696, the ancestors of the Village of Tewa were the Southern Tewa who lived in the Galisteo Basin along the Rio Grande in

New Mexico. After that revolt, they refused to resettle their villages and, after receiving invitations to move west by the Hopi, they eventually moved to their present location as the easternmost village on First Mesa of the Hopi Reservation. Each clan has its own history of this event and their particular migration narrative, but they agree on the basic facts of the refusal to resettle their Rio Grande villages and the invitation by the Hopi for them to serve as protectors of the Hopi in exchange for land use rights and a new homeland.

4. I am using *imposed relevances*, from phenomenological sociology, to summarize the constraints and resources that language ideological assemblages (LIA) provide to individuals according to their positionality within and experiences derived from those assemblages. Whereas LIA represent the intersubjective, obdurate social and cultural reality (including social inequality, racialization, symbolic domination, cultural norms), I use imposed relevances to label the personal, the “felt” impact of these external forces on the subjective milieu of these individuals.

5. California Indians routinely experienced overt racism. Unknown to most people today, the epithet “digger” was used as a racial slur (modeled on the N-word) for denigrating Indigenous hunters and gatherers of California (Hinton 1994:167–68).

6. Though many scholars use the term *iconization* (Irvine and Gal 2000) to describe the semiotic process of how a language becomes an emblem of a group of people, the authors who coined the term have suggested that *rhematization* would be more semiotically appropriate (e.g., Gal 2013).

7. Though Rosalie explicitly related her heritage language to self-healing, she was not alone in her community in making this linkage. Leanne Hinton (2002) has also discussed the healing emphasis as one shared by members of many Native American communities.

8. In the Indigenous aesthetics of Western Mono storytelling, storytellers do not explain stories because they are generally well-known by audiences and it would be culturally inappropriate to tell people something they already know. For the uninitiated, the Monos expected them to inquire from appropriate others if they did not understand. See Kroskrity 2013 for how this feature was viewed as a deficiency by salvage-era scholars.

9. Nancy Dorian (1981:51) first defined *linguistic tip* in the following manner: “A language which has been demographically highly stable for several centuries may experience a sudden ‘tip,’ after which the demographic tide flows strongly in favor of some other language.”

10. After a series of public talks, meetings with interested clan leaders, and community commentary from members of all ages over a period of several years, I was given official approval by the Village Board in 2012 to engage in a collaborative project to produce a practical dictionary of Tewa (Village of Tewa). So the once-covert documentary operation now enjoys explicit approval and cooperation. The work continues as of this writing.

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