

Discourse-Historical Approach in Critical Discourse Analysis:
Observations of Linguistic Shifts of Authority Between the Movement for Black Lives and the COVID-19 Anti-mask Rhetoric

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Intro

The current socio-political mood has taken multiple forms. This year has been a breaking point for minority populaces and an awakening for the majority. I write to analyze my documentation of the observed intersection between the Movement for Black Lives and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Movement for Black Lives was initiated out of a need for social reform, sparked by the 2013 murder of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman. Taking in account the historical processes of colonization, the oppression of racialized cultural groups is not a new conundrum. The Movement for Black Lives is a mere continuance of social activism aimed to disassociate the normative social expectations to White public spaces. However, this year, the movement was met with great restrictions because of the viral pandemic, COVID-19. The coronavirus pandemic is, in itself, a social movement on the premise of humanitarian welfare and health care accessibility. Local and statewide mandates were institutionalized to help lessen the spread of this fatal virus. Business closures, capacity restrictions, social distance measures, and face mask requirements have been enacted as, more or less, recommended protocol. Subsequently, we have observed a tremendous push back with these governance resolutions. I will refer to the pushback population as the anti-mask rhetoric. The anti-mask rhetoric seems to be continuously based on religious piety and constitutional association. Anti-mask ideologies have been witnessed in reference to the perception of intentional infringement of freedom to access public spaces, as if they equate these policies to White space disenfranchisement.

This year has brought visibility to the social disjunctions that inherently take precedence. The American experience has been documented, by social scientists, as perpetuating divisiveness within public social sectors by majoritizing the spaces for White ideologies. With further examination, I seek to present the ideas and evidence to explain linguistic shifts of authority from authenticity of the Movement for Black Lives to anonymity by the anti-mask rhetoric. I will detail speech events from digital media sources and explain their relevance. The phrase of analysis is that of, "I can't breathe." This phrase has been captured being utilized in forms of solidarity of George Floyd, who suffocated at the knee of Derek Chauvin, a police officer, on May 25, 2020. Demonstrations erupted worldwide in protest of police brutality, especially against persons of color, within days of widespread media attention of his death. Unfortunately, George Floyd was not the first to succumb to a murder at the hands of law enforcement. FatalEncounters.org has detailed documentation of 29,191 civilian deaths within police custody from January 1, 2000 to November 11, 2020. It's important to denote the year of examination of which relies on data recorded and collected in the 2020 year. Extracting evidence from previous years would contribute to a loose discursive argument in regards to my intended analysis of the intersection of movements specific to this year. However, additional transcriptional evidence, from previously documented speech events, is necessary to attribute to the observational use of the phrase "I can't breathe" as a form of linguistic authenticity associated with the Movement for Black Lives. For the point of this analysis, I will reference both the live recorded body-cam recording of the Minneapolis police during the confrontation with George Floyd and the official transcript. Both references are needed to adequately examine the discourse as an entire speech event, with verbal accuracy and social context. The evidence I reference in regards to the anti-mask rhetoric is sourced from news outlets, from which are credible. For the purpose of this

analysis, I will utilize two video clips that are from local news channels in St. George, Utah and Scottsdale, Arizona. I relied heavily on digital formats to research, collect, and observe the particularness in which the anti-mask rhetoric has presented itself as a social movement.

It is important to understand the immense risk associated with field ethnography during a global pandemic. Thankfully, digital mediascapes gave me the opportunity to pursue this research while adhering to ethical and moral appropriateness.

Methods and Background

I draw on the concepts of folk theory, because of which is observed as contributing to substantial hegemonic shifts within the context of linguistic authority. Folk theory allows anthropologists to examine the rationalizations of actions and social functions based on the premise that it is, ultimately, the autonomous individual's contribution to the society around them. It contrasts the idea of critical race theory in that the fluctuation of cultural shifts are attributed to how the individual receives, perceives, processes, and utilizes knowledge, rather than a strict socially constructed code of power and policies, to affect the individual's agency. To better connect theories, it's important to understand the basic premise of human agency theory. Sociologists refer to agency as the thoughts and actions taken by people that express their individual power. Anthropologists take it a step further to push those boundaries. The boundaries of human agency have the capacity to intentionally influence social events and circumstances. The rationalizations behind human agency is attributed to the ideological aspect of societal dealings. Ideologies are behind every decision and judgement. They can be used to critically analyse social actions, especially linguistic events, to subjectively explain the reasonings of why and how particular social productions occurred.

Language, in general, is perceived as just an audible form to interact with a fellow community member. However, language is much more than just an audible or physical production of sentences. Language should be viewed as a way to interact with social and communal surroundings, or rather, language is social action. A basic example of language as social action is “phone voices”. Because there is a severe lack of nonverbal expressions that our brain otherwise heavily relies on to make discursive connections, we compensate linguistically to be able to represent ourselves accordingly. Through this simple task we perform and accomplish social actions. Language is inherently powerful. Language and ideologies are behind all aspects of culture and society. Ideology is simply defined as the systems of ideas and ideals. Each particular set of ideologies greatly influence the paths of linguistic and cultural shifts. Language ideology explains that cultural and systemic biases and controls create a collective way of thinking about language and their views on how language is used and cultivated. Ideologies are so vital to the overall understanding of human identity and cultural processes. Deeper knowledge on how language ideologies work in the conscious and subconscious realms of social action is needed for this discourse analysis. Certain major qualities of language ideologies can be categorized into five principles (Kroskrity 2004). Those principles are-

1. *Language ideologies represent the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group.*
2. *Language ideologies are profitably conceived as multiple.*
3. *Members may display varying degrees of awareness of local language ideologies.*
4. *Members’ language ideologies mediate between social structures and forms of talk.*

5. *Language ideologies are productively used in the creation and representation of various social and cultural identities.*

I involve another step in language ideologies to give attribution of certain language features shared between the Movement for Black Lives and COVID-19 to the linguistic powers used in social hierarchies. The ideologies of linguistic authority are crucial for an accurate depiction of this analysis. I credit Kathryn Woolard (2005) for my knowledge of this aspect within linguistic anthropology. Language is directly linked to the socio-political echelon. Language is needed to be able to command, convince, and control an audience. Woolard exhibits a differentiation between the ideological concepts of linguistic authenticity and linguistic anonymity to demonstrate, further, the use of language as power.

Principles of linguistic authenticity are-

1. *It locates the value of a language in its relationship to a particular community.*
2. *It must be perceived as deeply rooted in social and geographic territory to have value.*
3. *It must be very much 'from somewhere' in speakers' consciousness, and thus its meaning is profoundly local.*
4. *It exhibits a pragmatic function of social indexicality, rather than semantic reference.*

Principles of linguistic anonymity are-

1. *It's an ideological foundation of political authority of the public sphere.*
 - a. *Public sphere abstracts away from each person's private and interested individual characteristic to distill a common or general voice.*

2. *It's exhibited through rational discourse from the constraints of a socially specific perspective, supposedly achieving a superior objectivity that can be called a view from nowhere.*
3. *It's to be socially neutral. It is not to be heard in the interests and experiences of a historically specific social group.*

“Each of these ideological complexes naturalizes a relation between linguistic form and a state of society,” (Woolard 2005). Linguistic hegemony, linked to linguistic anonymity, can index the social majority group. For example, the American experience relies heavily on the ability to be a social contributor within the English language standard. That’s to say, you will have a greater chance of being marginalized or perhaps ostracized without the ability to act efficiently with the English language. This directly explains observations on America’s adoption of White public space. For the premise of this research, Jane Hill (1998) references Page and Thomas (1994) stating, “White public space [is] a morally significant set of contexts that are the most important sites of the practices of a racializing hegemony, in which Whites are invisibly normal, and in which racialized populations are visibly marginal.”

The evidence gathered, in conjunction with the aforementioned aspects, are used to explicate observations of a current linguistic phenomenon, the linguistic shift of authority of the phrase, “I can’t breath,” from that of linguistic authenticity within the Movement for Black Lives to that of linguistic anonymity by the anti-mask rhetoric.

1. “I Can’t Breathe” as a Form of Linguistic Authenticity

This year, the words “I can’t breathe” have been readily seen, heard, and exclaimed as a social justice motto. It’s ubiquitous with the Movement for Black Lives, taking immense precedence in the beginning of the year and gaining even more attention, now, six months later. It’s been observed in use at rallies, protests, and riots. It’s also been observed as taking on multimodality, with the phrase being added on face masks and shirts, in comics and becoming main topics of street art. Historically, it’s understood to have been a part of a person-that-once-was ‘s voice. A current perspective gives the phrase an intrinsically valuable form of identity for the persons advocating for this social movement. From a linguistic anthropological approach, the linguistic authoritative perspective can be used to attribute the use of the phrase, “I can’t breathe,” as a form of linguistic authenticity specific to the Movement for Black Lives.

1.1 Historical Evidence of Indexicality

The significance of the historical evidence is paramount to apply appropriate attributions of the authoritative ideologies to the Movement for Black Lives. I exemplify the speech events of three separate instances that had taken place in the year 2014, 2017, and 2019; of which involved victims of police brutality. Their names are Eric Garner, Hector Arreola, and Javier Antonio Ambler II, respectfully. I examine the last living words of these individuals with the utmost respect. It is important to note my intention to represent these words appropriately, respectfully, and diligently.

1.1.1 Eric Garner, 43, Male, African-American/Black. Not imputed. Died 07/17/2014.

Victory Boulevard and Bay Street. Staten Island, NY 1030. 40.6377602

-74.0768887. City of New York Police Department. Asphyxiated/Restrained. The

400-pound asthmatic Staten Island dad died after an officer put him in a chokehold and other officers appeared to slam his head against the sidewalk, video of the incident shows. Evidently, the cops suspected him of selling untaxed cigarettes. Deemed justified. Deemed less-than-lethal force.^[1]

Extensive research on the circumstances resulting in Eric Garner's death came up with little to no officiated documents to provide credible evidence. A legal disclosure decision was filed in 2015, denying the public release of the court minutes and documents pertaining to the lawsuit filed on behalf of Eric Garner. I chose to transcribe a video on a sharing platform that combined two recordings from two separate perspectives of the event. The total length of the video was 10 minutes 34 seconds, however, the speech event that included Eric Garner's participation only occurred for 4 minutes and 8 seconds.^[2]

1.1.1.a

Eric Garner and the officer exchange words pertaining to assumptions of Garner selling loose cigarettes, which is understood to only be a minor law infraction. From the perspective of Garner, this is not the first instance in which he believes he has been harassed by the New York Police Department (NYPD). When Garner asked for clarification of the accusations, the officer responded with an attitude of disregard. He wasn't able to adequately show or describe the accusations. An interesting stance was taken by the officer talking to Garner, posing the question, "Why you making a scene for?" The questioning could be observed as a phrasing to justify his intentions of the situation, as if he wanted to rationalize his actions based on Garner being emotionally charged.

Garner: Wait wait guys tell me right people -ladies don't walk away? Are you serious? I don't do nothing, what'd I do? Take me down for what? I didn't sell anything. I didn't do nothing, I've been standing here the whole time minding my business.

Officer: I watched you.

Garner: You watch me do what, who'd I sell cigarette to?

Officer: [turns around and points generally] That dude in the red shirt.. Not that red shirt, there's another guy in a red shirt.

Garner: (inaudible) everytime you see me you wanna mess with me. I'm tired of it, it stops today. (man recording video talks) Everybody's standing here, they're too lazy to do nothing.

Officer: We saw you selling cigarettes to (inaudible).

Garner: I didn't sell nothing.

Officer: Why you making a scene for?

Garner: Because everytime you see me you wanna harass me, you'll wanna stop me twice over a cigarette. I'm minding my business officer. I'm minding my business.

Please, just leave me alone. I told you the last time. Please, just leave me alone.

Officer: (inaudible)

Garner: Please, don't touch me. Don't touch me. Don't touch me, don't touch me.

Don't fucking touch me. DO NOT FUCKING TOUCH ME.

[one officer proceeded to enact the choke-hold from behind Garner. The officer in front of him proceeds to grab Garner's wrists. Four officers from around close in as Garner is thrown to the ground by the officer using the choke-hold on Garner's neck.]

1.1.1.b

Garner didn't say anything until he was on the ground. Garner's view on the severity of the event was imminent by the way he continuously stated "I can't breathe." Again and again, the officers did not acknowledge, understand, or respect his ideology.

Officers: Alright, right. Let's stop, he's down. Get ya hands buddy.

Garner: [gasps like gurgling sound]

Officer: Put ya hand behind ya back

Garner: [muffled] I can't br...I can't breathe! I can't... I can't breathe!

[officer is pinning Garner's head down on the cement]

Garner: I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe.

Bystander: [recording] Once again, police being up on people I love right here.

Garner: I can't breathe. I can't breathe.

Officer [to bystander recording]: Back up. Back up, then get up on those steps.
 Garner: I can't breathe.
 I can't breathe.
 Bystander: Okay.
 Officer: Back up.
 Garner: I can't breathe.
 Bystander: All he did was break up a fight and this what happens for breaking up a fight. This shit's crazy.
 Officers: Everybody back up! Everybody back up!
 [at this point there is nothing audible and no physical movements coming from Garner. There's eight officers now surrounding him.]

4 minutes 8 seconds into the video, it exhibited Eric Garner's last words.^[2] Eric Garner cried "I can't breathe" at least eighteen times during this speech event that, unfortunately, ended in his death. These words are specific to Eric Garner, they represent his experience and his voice.

1.1.2 Hector Arreola, 30, Male, Hispanic/Latino. Not imputed. Died 01/09/2017.

Moss Drive and Lichfield Road. Columbus, GA 31904. 32.5158984 -84.984281.
 Columbus Police Department. Asphyxiated/Restrained. Members of the
 Columbus Police Department's Patrol Division responded to a call on Moss Drive.
 During the investigation, Arreola resisted officers' efforts to place him in custody
 and sustained an injury, which apparently killed him. Pending investigation.
 Deemed less-than-lethal force.^[1]

Pages 6-19 from court documents filed with *The United States District Court For The Middle District Of Georgia Columbus Division* on 12/13/2019 represent the official transcription of the recorded body-cam footage, providing textual evidence of discourse between Hector Arreola (HA) and Officer Aguilar (Off. Aguilar).^[3]

1.1.2.a

Page 9 provides us with the first instance in which the phrase “I can’t breathe” was expressed.

HA: [shrieks] - Maaaa! Heeeeelllppp!
 [high pitched shrieking.] Help me!
 16:38
 [Radio] Dispatch: “10-4 subject involved. 760 Moss Drive.”
 HA: Help!
 16:40 [05:27:15]
 Off. Aguilar: I’m flattening him.
 16:43 [05:27:17]
 HA: Ow. I can’t Breath!
 16:45
 Off. Aguilar: Stay right there, Ma.
 HA: [losing breath] Ahhh - you’re going to - you’re going to kill me -
 16:52 [05:27:25]
 [Radio] Off. Aguilar to Disp.: “28, Dispatch. Subject is fighting.”
 Concepcion: Hector, por favor!
 16:54 [05:27:28]
 HA: With who? With who!?
 16:58 [05:27:32]
 Off. Aguilar: [To Dispatch] Right now we got him contained - but we do not have him handcuffed.
 Dispatch: 10-4.
 17:03 [05:27:36]
 HA: Ma!

1.1.2.b

Page 10 exhibits the second time in which the phrase “I can’t breathe” was expressed. In response to Arreola’s views of the situation, Officer Aguilar negated his views, as a way to disregard Arreola’s truth of the situation he was experiencing. We then observe the phrase “I can’t breathe” expressed four additional times.

Concepcion: He can't breathe.
 HA: Ma! I can't breathe!
 17:04 [05:27:38] Off. Aguilar: He's fine. He can breathe.
 HA: I can't...
 Off. Aguilar: Put your hands behind your back.
 17:08 [05:27:42]
 HA: [pleading] I can't breathe.
 17:14 [05:27:47]
 HA: Ma! I can't breathe.
 17:16 [05:27:49]
 HA: [repeats in agony] I can't breathe. I can't...
 17:19 [05:27:53]
 HA: I can't breathe, Ma. Maaaaaaaaa!
 Off. Aguilar: Put your hand over here.
 17:23
 [Hector continues to scream in agony]
 Off. Dudley: Huh. (Unintelligible)
 17:30 [05:28:04]
 Off. Aguilar: Hey, get... right there.
 17:33 [05:28:07] [Sounds of cuffing HA.]
 HA: [Moaning.]

Hector Arreola proceeds to express the phrase "I can't breathe" four more times, totaling nine examples of direct communication, before an alternate phrase was used.

1.1.2.c

Page 12 of the transcript presents the phrase "I can't breathe in!" which indicates a shift of views on the situation. Hector, again, directly communicates his views on his experience, but this time with the addition of the word *in*. This displays the physicality of restrictions, which takes on an increased urgency of concern. The phrase "I can't breathe", alone, could be argued as an emotional response by the defendants, however, the inclusion of the word '*in*' insinuates the action of the verb '*breathe*', the act of breathing in, the act of intaking oxygen. This creates a shift of ideologic concern for

Hector Arreola. But yet, the direct communication is neglected, not understood, and not respected as a valid truth or perspective of the interaction.

18:25
 HA: Ma! Ma! Ma! Ma! I can't breathe! Help! Helpppp!
 [Hector continues to scream and sob. Can hear sirens in the background]
 18:30 [05:29:03]
 [Can hear 2nd cuff lock.]
 [Siren in distance.]
 18:32 [05:29:06]
 HA: I can't breathe!
 18:34 [05:29:09]
 Off. Dudley: Got it. [meaning cuffs]
 HA: MA!!!!!! Help me. [screaming] Ma!
 Concepcion: [Speaking Spanish.]
 18:42 [05:29:16]
 Off. Aguilar: 28 to Dispatch.
 HA: [screaming in agony] Ma!
 18:44 [05:29:18]
 Off. Aguilar: We finally got him in handcuffs. You can slow down all the units.
 18:50 [05:29:24]
 Dispatch: 10-4. All units be advised [unintelligible.]
 [Off. Evrard's siren is loud as he pulls up.]
 18:54 [05:29:28]
 HA: I can't breathe in!
 Dispatch: 10-4 one in custody at 5:29. Cleared for EMS?

Two minutes and 3 seconds after, he is found to be unresponsive within the transcription.^[3]

Arreola cried that he could not breathe at least 13 times during this speech event that, unfortunately, ended in his death. These words are specific to Hector Arreola, they represent his experience and his voice.

1.1.3 Javier Ambler II, 40, Male, African-American/Black. Not imputed. Died 03/28/2019.

1000 East Johns Avenue. Austin, TX 78752. 30.330611 -97.698965. Williamson County Sheriff's Office. Asphyxiated/Restrained. Javier Ambler was driving home from playing poker, when he failed to dim the headlights of his SUV to

oncoming traffic. A Williamson County sheriff's deputy initiated a stop and began chasing him. After Ambler apparently refused to pull over, a pursuit that lasted 22 minutes and ended when Ambler's Honda Pilot crashed. Minutes later, Ambler, a 40-year-old father of two, was killed. Records obtained by the KVUE Defenders and the Austin American-Statesman showed that Deputies J.J. Johnson, Zach Camden shocked him with stun guns on him at least three times, even as he told them multiple times that he had a heart condition and could not breathe. A reality TV television show was riding along. Deemed justified by outside agency. Deemed less-than-lethal force.^[1]

Facts no. 143-192 from court documents filed with *The United States District Court For The Western District Of Texas Austin Division* on 10/25/2020 represent the official transcription of the recorded body-cam footage, providing textual evidence of discourse between Javier Ambler (Ambler) and Officers Camden and Johnson (Officers).^[4]

1.1.3.a

Transcription evidence reveals Ambler's consciousness of the event. His view of the situation is represented by his explicit communication of his medical status. The officers are understood to have entered this speech event with an aggressive attitude which potentially exhibits an aggressive ideology of the situation. Ambler knew it was pertinent to verbally express his condition. His words seem to have not been received accordingly, resulting in an attempt to express that he couldn't breathe. Ambler's ideology of the situation was neglected by law enforcement is exemplified by their continued actions of aggressed demands.

159. Both officers screamed at Ambler to lay down on his stomach so they could handcuff him behind his back.

160. Requiring a person who is obese to lay on their stomach can be very dangerous, as being so can compress the body's chest cavity and inhibit breathing.

161. Ambler gasped, "I have congestive heart failure, I have congestive heart failure."

162. Johnson and Camden did not relent, and continued to force Ambler into the ground. [One of the officers held his TASER into Ambler's neck.]

163. Ambler gasped, "I can't breathe."

164. The officers yelled orders at Ambler.

165. Ambler explained he was trying to comply with their orders: "I'm about to get on my knees, sir."

166. Officers screamed at Ambler, "give me your hand!"

167. Ambler explained he was trying to comply: "I'm about to give it to you, sir."

1.1.3.b

Each of Ambler's five expressions of "I can't breath" were repressed by the officers.

Ambler's words were observed as being received as an action of resistance. The officer's ideology of resistance was directly communicated, which was received as intended by Ambler through his distressed articulation of "I'm not resisting."

Ambler, again, coherently voices "I can't breathe" in what can be recognized as a way to divert the ideological negligence of his explicitly communicated needs.

168. The officers ordered Ambler to lay "flat on your stomach, flat on your stomach."

169. Ambler explained he could not lay on his stomach, gasping, "I can't breathe."

170. Ignoring Ambler's pleas, the officers again ordered him to lay "Flat on your stomach!"

171. Ambler again gasped, "I can't breathe!"

172. Officers again commanded, "Flat on your stomach!"

173. Ambler whimpered in distress.

174. In response, the officers yell, "Stop resisting!"

175. Ambler responded, "I can't breathe."

176. One of the officers told Ambler, "you need to comply."

177. Ambler desperately explained, "I'm not resisting."

178. Ambler again cries out, "I can't breathe!"

179. The officers, nonetheless, force Ambler's arms behind his back.

180. Ambler continues gasping for breath.

181. Ambler gasps, “please!” while attempting to hold his chest off the ground with his left arm, so that he can keep breathing.

182. Ambler cries again.

183. Ambler gasps, “save me!” and tries to get off his stomach so he can breathe.

184. Officers yell at Ambler to “roll over!” and “stay on your stomach!”

185. Ambler whimpers and cries.

186. Officers respond by screaming, “Do it now!” and order Ambler to “Stay on your stomach!”

187. Officers then use the TASER again, shocking Ambler, while again commanding him to “roll over” onto his stomach.

Fact no. 185 is the last of Ambler’s participation in discourse. Fact no. 195 Ambler stopped breathing.^[4] Javier Ambler II cried at least five times during this speech event that, unfortunately, ended in his death. These words are specific to Javier Antonio Ambler II, they represent his experience and his voice.

1.1.4 George Floyd, 46, Male, African-American/Black. Not imputed. Died 05/25/2020.

3759 Chicago Ave. Minneapolis, MN 55407. Hennepin. 44.93434 -93.262173.

Minneapolis Police Department. Asphyxiated/Restrained. Police responded to a call from a grocery store that claimed George Floyd had used a forged check.

When located in his car, police said, he resisted officers. Cell phone video showed Officer Derek Chauvin kneeling on Floyd's neck until he was incapacitated and died. Three other officers were present and didn't stop the assault. Administrative discipline. Deemed Less-than-lethal force.

George Floyd represents both the historical contribution of identity as well as the current provenance of authenticity. The recording of his death event went viral across social media platforms. News outlets covered the story in almost every state, creating a social awakening from the observations of autonomous negligence. The corpus is taken from an official transcript of Derek Chauvin’s body-cam footage. The document was filed with the Minnesota Judicial Branch

on 07/07/2020. The 25 page transcript provides textual evidence of discourse between George Floyd (George Floyd) and Officers Derek Chauvin (Chauvin), J. Alexander Kueng (Keung), Thomas Lane (Lane), and Tou Thao (Thao).

1.1.4.a

Page 12 and 13 indicate the first use of the phrase “I can’t breathe.” George Floyd expressed reasoning and the potential outcomes based on his claustrophobia. He communicated that he’d do better on the ground rather than in the enclosed backseat of the police unit. The officers responded accordingly. However, it’s observed that George Floyd’s truth of the situation is that he could not breathe. It’s observed that his ideology of the event was negated several times.

George Floyd: I can’t choke, I can’t breathe. Mr. Officer! Please! Please!
 Kueng: Fine.
 George Floyd: My wrist, my wrist man. Okay, okay. I want to lay on the ground. I want to lay on the ground. I want to lay on the ground.
 Lane: You're getting in the squad.
 George Floyd: I want to lay on the ground! I'm going down, I'm-going down, I'm going down.
 Kueng: Take a squat.
 George Floyd: I'm going down.
 Speaker 9: Bro, you about to have a heart attack and shit man, get in the car!
 George Floyd: I know I can't breathe. I can't breathe.
 [crosstalk 00:10:18].
 Lane: Get him on the ground.
 George Floyd: Let go of me man, I can't breathe. I can't breathe.
 Lane: Take a seat.
 George Floyd: Please, man. Please listen to me.
 Chauvin: Is he going to jail?
 George Floyd: Please listen to me.
 Kueng: He's under arrest right now for forgery. [inaudible 00:11:04] what's going on. George
 Floyd: Forgery for what? for what?
 Lane: Let's take him out and just MRE.
 George Floyd: I can't fucking breathe man. I can't fucking breathe.
 Kueng: Here, Come on out!
 George Floyd: [inaudible 00:11:10] thank you. Thank you.
 Thao: Just lay him on the ground.
 Lane: Can you just get up on the, I appreciate that, I do.
 Chauvin: Do you got your ah, restraint, Hobble?

George Floyd: I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe.
 Lane: Jesus Christ.
 George Floyd: I can't breathe.
 Lane: Thank you.
 George Floyd: I can't breathe.
 Kueng: Stop moving.
 George Floyd: Mama, mama, mama, mama.

1.1.4.b

Page 15 shows us the evidence of George Floyd's continuity of his ideological stance of the situation. A solemn observation is that of his consciousness of the event, he explicitly communicates that he believes that he will die. Previously he set himself up with the reality of this possibility. He cried out to his mother and he said to tell his children he loves them. His indications of his physical restrictions, again, are verbally negated by the officers. Officer Lane hasn't received George Floyd's clear warnings of his status, it's exhibited by his questioning "He's got to be on something. What are you on?", as if his reason for the claims of "I can't breathe" is strictly synonymous with intoxication.

George Floyd: My face is gone. [crosstalk 00:12:33]. I can't breathe. I can't breathe man. Please! Please, let me stand. Please, man I can't breathe.
 Lane: Can you get up on the sidewalk please, one side or the other please?
 George Floyd: My face is getting it bad.
 Lane: Here, should we get his legs up, or is this good?
 Chauvin: Leave him.
 Kueng: Just leave him yep.
 Chauvin: Just leave him.
 Lane: All right. Hopefully Park's still sitting on the car. They were, He was acting real shady like something's in there.
 Thao: Is he high on something?
 Lane: I'm assuming so.
 Kueng: I believe so, we found a pipe.
 Lane: He wouldn't get out of the car. He wasn't following instructions. [crosstalk 00:13:10]. Yeah, it's across the street, Park's watching it, two other people with him.
 George Floyd: Please, I can't breathe. Please, man. Please man!
 Thao: Do you have EMS coming code 3?
 Lane: Ah code 2, we can probably step it up then. You got it? [crosstalk 00:13:29]. George
 Floyd: Please, man!
 Thao: Relax!

George Floyd: I can't breathe.
 Kueng: You're fine, you're talking fine.
 Lane: Your talken, Deep breath.
 George Floyd: I can't breathe. I can't breathe. Ah! I'll probably just die this way.
 Thao: Relax.
 George Floyd: I can't breathe, my face.
 Lane: He's got to be on something. What are you on?
 George Floyd: I can't breathe. Please, [inaudible 00:14:00] I can't breathe. Shit.

1.1.4.c

Page 16 presents us the last of George Floyd's expressions. Again, George Floyd's concerns and truths were regarded with justification instead of coherent understanding. It can be analyzed that Chauvin's ideology of the situation was that George Floyd, potentially, is only perceiving breathlessness and not actually experiencing it. This is a form of erasure by way of linguistic silencing and ideological negligence. It's seen by his response to George Floyd's claims, "Then stop talking, stop yelling, it takes a heck of a lot of oxygen to talk."

George Floyd: I'm through, I'm through. I'm claustrophobic. My stomach hurts. My neck hurts. Everything hurts. I need some water or something, please. Please? I can't breathe, officer.
 Chauvin: Then stop talking, stop yelling.
 George Floyd: You're going to kill me, man.
 Chauvin: Then stop talking, stop yelling, it takes a heck of a lot of oxygen to talk.
 George Floyd: Come on, man. Oh, oh. [crosstalk 00:15:03]. I cannot breathe. I cannot breathe. Ah! They'll kill me. They'll kill me. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. Oh!
 Speaker 8: We tried that for 10 minutes.
 George Floyd: Ah! Ah! Please. Please. Please-
 Lane: Should we roll him on his side?
 Chauvin: No, he's staying put where we got him.
 Lane: Okay. I just worry about the excited delirium or whatever.
 Chauvin: Well that's why we got the ambulance coming.
 Lane: Okay, I suppose.

Page 16 observes the last of George Floyd's participation in discourse. A few seconds after the transcript's timestamp at [15:03] is the end of discursive language between the parties.^[5] George

Floyd cried at least twenty-two times during this speech event that, unfortunately, ended in his death. These words are specific to George Floyd, they represent his experience and his voice.

1.2 “I Can’t Breathe” Indexical of Linguistic Authenticity

Following Woolard’s (2005) standards, the principles of linguistic authenticity are that it locates the value of a language in its relationship to a particular community, that it must be perceived as deeply rooted in social and geographic territory to have value, that it must be very much ‘from somewhere’ in speakers’ consciousness, and that it exhibits a pragmatic function of social indexicality, rather than semantic reference. The evidence presented on the usage of the phrase “I can’t breathe” indexes the application of linguistic authenticity to the Movement for Black Lives. The premise of this attribution is distinguished by the patterns in which linguistic authenticity exists. This phrase was produced from someone’s consciousness. Eric Garner, Hector Arreola, and Javier Ambler II all used it to deliberately communicate the physical restrictions they experienced. This phrase is a sensible and realistic function of social meaning. The commonality of these men’s last words have become integral to their everlasting memory, which intrinsically, becomes integral to the continuity of the Movement for Black Lives. Thus, the historically exhibited phrase, “I can’t breathe,” directly links authentic identity to authentic meaning. The examined corpus independently, and collectively, feature an almost formulaic pattern of fatal discourse. To ignore these observations would be an act of ethical negligence.

2. Demonstrations of the Anti-Mask Rhetoric

This year has brought about a new socio-political movement. The COVID-19 pandemic is, in fact, a humanitarian movement by its natural disposition in societies. This viral health crisis has

directly and indirectly affected almost every single human one earth. The basic social functions of communities had to stop with locally and nationally instated closures. Schools and universities switched to online learning and teaching techniques and countless businesses enacted remote work days. Restaurants, bars, and retail stores shut down causing hundreds of thousands of hourly-wage workers to lose their only source of income. Musicians and artists began to play on virtual platforms in hopes of gaining enough traction to fiscally keep afloat. What was first put in a way of, *we are going into lockdown for two weeks, and then we will see where we stand afterwards*, was quickly revealed to the majority to not be ending anytime soon. Business closures, capacity restrictions, social distance measures, and face mask requirements have been enacted as, more or less, recommended protocol for an extended period of time. Even as reports come in with anticipation of a federally approved vaccine, the safety and health guidelines will still remain recommended for the foreseeable future. Subsequently, we have observed a tremendously populated push back pertaining to these resolutions, to which I will refer as the anti-mask rhetoric. The anti-mask rhetoric seems to be continuously based on religious exceptionalism and constitutional association.

2.1 Observations of “I Can’t Breathe” in Anti-Mask Rhetoric

Anti-mask demonstrations were observed as being performed in a public way. They justify their angst against government orders that have made masks mandatory by congregating in a very public way. Anti-mask ideologies have been witnessed in reference to the perception of intentional infringement of freedom to access public spaces. The anti-mask rhetoric has proclaimed the issues surrounding their ideological complex is due to the fact that they “can’t breathe.” The scenarios presented are sourced from original news channels’ coverage on protests

pertaining to regional mask governances. The corpus cited is the audio transcript^[6] of which YouTube provides as an accessibility service to its users.

2.1.1 Councilman Guy Phillip. Scottsdale, Arizona. 06/24/2020.

Councilman Guy Phillips of Scottsdale, Arizona attended and spoke at an anti-mask rally on June 24, 2020, one day shy of a month since the death of George Floyd. The speaking portion of the rally lasted approximately 43 minutes, with six keynote speakers.^[6] The following is a transcript of his speech. It's observed that his opening remarks involved the statement, "I can't breathe," twice, whilst wearing a black face mask.

49:45

I can't breathe! I can't breathe!

49:51 [Music]

49:51 [Applause]

49:54 [Music]

Insanity! Insanity! I'm gonna start with a quote someone just told me from Benjamin Franklin, this is in the 1700s, so they had the same problem, "Anyone who would give up his freedom for temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety." 250 years later, it's the same thing.

Anybody here from Teens for Trump, yesterday. Awesome, awesome. Can I see your signs, hold your signs up. Awesome. Awesome. Play no more fear. I love that, freedom over fear, so to wear or not to wear, that is the question. You know I'd happily wear a mask. Got respect from my fellow citizen, when, when government threatens me with a fine or a possible arrest if I don't conform, then I protest. It's alright as Americans, we are not in Russia. We are in the USA. We can make our own choice.

51:25 [Music]

Whose choice, whose choice, our choice. The First Amendment allows freedom of expression. By mandating a mask with the citation for non-compliance the government violates free expression and the mandate is for the sick only, you'd be okay, but since it includes healthy people it becomes a violation of **our** rights. There are attorneys lining up to sue. You know I need to bring up another topic. This is, this is my, this is my Trump character. There's an elephant in the room, great big elephant, giant. I don't know why there's an elephant, but there's an elephant, but no one seems to talk about this elephant, yet it grows larger every day. It's not in the news, but it's real. It is what these mandates are doing to people's livelihoods. Businesses are closing, families are being torn apart since I began this protest. People are contacting me and asking me what are they going to do. You can't open your business but rioters and looters are allowed to just ransack them. You can't go to church, like you can't go to funerals. You can't go to your child's birth, but it's okay in a protest in the streets. You have to be locked in your home for weeks, unless you're going to Walmart or Home Depot and now we all have to wear masks where we face fines and even jail time.

53:23 [Music]

You don't, uh, start retching to me, to hear how someone for your business is all but gone. And I get these emails and messages and texts and posts from people every day, and it just tears me apart, from people with piles of debt families ending up homeless, I know the gentleman that called me from Cave Creek he said "Sir, I know you're not in my jurisdiction, but I don't know what to do." He said "because of this mandate I had to call my parents and tell them the children had to wear a mask in the daycare. The parents cancelled their contracts." They didn't know this guy is out of business. What kind of a mandate mandates people to go out of business? You know we can't go on like this. You know it could be a cover, it could be a tornado, it could be a volcanic eruption. We need to go on the idea that this could last another year or two till they get a vaccine, you know the Pima County Supervisors are saying that this could go for two years, nope, nobody being been this fine at all. I'll be homeless. It's just ridiculous. You know whoever said life is easy, from the day you're born to the day you die, life is hard. Life is a challenge. We have to be individuals, we have to be strong, that's what America is all about. It's all about individualism, it's not about the collective as for me, I refuse to bow down to the heavy hand of government. He's out there planning to put everybody out of business out of work and rely on our big brother to save us. You know they're talking about giving Americans 2,000 a month for that. Two years, do you want a two thousand month executive to pay your bills? Doesn't pay my bills. Doesn't even come near it. And then what do you do after two years? And when he stops and then you're crying to the government cuz I've been out of work now I need your money? Now, I need to depend on you. We cannot rely on government, we must rely on ourselves, that is not being selfish, that is what makes this country great. We are at a crossroads. Are we going to stand tall or come to a socialist system? What's it going to be? I say stand tall..

56:01 [Music]

Stand tall.

56:05 [Applause]

Okay, so let's be responsible, let's stand tall, and be responsible. We don't need the government to tell us COVID is real. We know it is most people are okay some get real sick, sadly, sometimes. What the government giving out tickets isn't going to help education, I say education not subjugation. You heard Dr. Steinmetz you stole my Mass thing by the way, we could put a mask on our pocket or purse, we can wear it a circle k and then take it off when we get back in the car for short moments, hygiene sanitizer, simple things that will get us back to work, and restore our economy in our country. In the next few weeks and even months, if need be, my focus will be working with the city to educate the public and our business community, so we can be responsible for one another not because we are forced to, but because we care for each other. I've already talked to our city manager and we got funding from the CARES act, three and a half million dollars. That we're going to use to push and help educate our business our, restaurants, our bars, our nightclubs in proper use of these ion control devices .. whatever you would call it. We do this because we care not because we are forced to. You know I had a lady email me in every email she said, "Councilman Phillips you're the most reckless person. I know you don't care about people, you only care about yourself? Why don't you care about.." and get this, "Why don't you care about the common good?" Where did you read that? Yeah, communist manifesto. we c... we can be careful here for other people because we want to not because we have to, so I asked the mayor today, mayor, drop the mandate.

58:19[Applause]

Analyzing Guy Phillips' rhetoric on mask mandates is interesting. It's observed that this speech event produced contrasting ideological complexes. His speech exhibited the centered sentiments

dealing with political authority. This protest publicly displays a rebellious attitude towards the governances that were a direct implementation in regards to community health concerns surrounding the global pandemic, COVID-19. Guy Phillips references the First Amendment in hopes of inciting a sense of patriotic solidarity. He uses the term “our” to allude to that of the general voice ideology that is anthropologically distinguished in public spaces. At the time of this speech event, Guy Phillips was a sitting Councilman. He represented, ideally, the Everyman, which is all about using a common, unmarked standard public language. In that standard, the Everyman representative is not supposed to hear the interests and experiences of a historically specific social group (Woolard 2005). The allusion of speaking on behalf of the public space insinuates the assumed stance of linguistic authority through linguistic anonymity.

2.1.2 Shauna Kinville. St. George, Utah. 08/21/2020.

A local news channel in St. George, Utah covered an anti-mask rally on August 21, 2020, just 3 months shy of George Floyd’s death. The video clip includes anti-mask rally participants whose voices depict their view of local mask mandates that are being upheld by the public school systems. The corpus cited is the audio transcript^[7] of which YouTube provides as an accessibility service to its users. Attendee, Shauna Kinville, is the person of examination. She expresses specific feelings with a very poignant attitude.

00:01 Possibility of hail, heavy rain, frequent lightning and heavy rain temperatures

Emily

00:08 After more than one week since schools have reopened in Washington county, the Liberty Action Coalition hosted a rally in front of the school district building this morning. Up to a thousand people showed up saying children being forced to wear masks in classrooms is illegal and unconstitutional.

00:24 ABC4's southern Utah correspondent Katie Karalis reports.

00:28 Now hundreds have gathered here in front of the Washington county administration building calling for the end of a mask mandate saying they are tired of not living their normal lives.

00:42 "Not on the backs of my kids are. You're gonna get more federal funding, that's how I feel about that!"

00:47 A passionate call for action Friday morning in St. George
 00:50 Several police officers on standby as many locals called concerns about coronavirus spikes 'overblown.'
 00:57 [child] "The flu kills more than coronavirus."
 00:59 Others calling the virus a hoax or stating that asymptomatic carriers simply do not exist and they cannot be forced to wear masks anywhere as citizens of the United States.
 01:06 Stephen Millet, Veyo resident: "If we want to wear a mask, that's fine. We can take care of ourselves."
 01:11 Some rally attendees say they shouldn't ever wear masks if they have any medical issues or mental health concerns or if they feel they simply can't breathe.
 01:17 Shauna Kinville, St. George resident: "When George Floyd was saying, 'I can't breathe,' and then he died and now we're wearing a mask and we're saying 'I can't breathe' but we're being forced to wear them."
 01:27 But many stated that their research shows that in all cases masks jeopardize kids' health. Parents are demanding they have the right to decide what to do with their children.
 01:35 Betty Jake, Washington county resident: "I'll tell you another reason I hate masks, most child molesters love 'em."
 01:40 School administrators responding that they don't understand why crowds are protesting them based on a mandate given by the governor.
 01:44 Steven Dunham, Washington county school district: "They blocked off the front entrance to the school building and we went out to ask them to move and they attempted to storm the school building."
 01:51 The school board is implementing the governor's recent order that face shields alone are not enough.
 01:55 If a parent is adamant that their child cannot wear a mask or a shield they must fill out a form including a doctor's note.

We recognize the point of this rally as participants protesting perceived constitutional infringements. The anti-mask rhetoric is observed capitalising on the public school systems' mask mandates. The person of examination presents us with an interesting ideological complex. Shauna Kinville explicitly states her understanding of the meaning, "I can't breathe", but yet continues to compare her politically driven anti-mask desires to a man who was forcefully restrained and died of asphyxiation. She exhibited the capability of having varying degrees of ideological awareness of that particular phrase, but yet misrecognized the authentic identity and authentic meaning from which that phrase came. This ideological erasure is what allows dominance to become hegemony (Woolard 2005). This scenario evokes the White public spaces' privileged ability to pull linguistic identity from its authenticity and render it anonymous.

2.2 Analysis of the Anti-Mask Rhetoric

The way in which these sentiments are displayed are observed as being in a very public format. The presentation of this anti-mask ideology intrinsically caters to Jane Hill's analysis explaining that "indirect indexicality [of certain language use] constructs 'White public space', an arena in which linguistic disorder on the part of Whites is rendered invisible and normative, while the linguistic behavior of members of historically [marginalized] populations are highly visible and object of constant monitoring," (Hill 1998). The prominent anti-mask ideology is observed utilizing the phrase "I can't breathe" as part of their movement mantra. The continued use of this phrase in White public spaces can be anthropologically ascertained as indirectly indexical of mock language. The premise of this suggestion relies on the defined aspect of indirect indexicality, which is that, unlike the positive direct indexes, they are never acknowledged by speakers (Ochs 1990). Through indirect indexicality, "covert racist discourse" (Hill 1998) is exemplified because of the implication of marginalization on the identity from which the message, "I can't breathe", was taken.

3. Conclusionary Analysis

The words *chosen* to be used by the anti-mask rhetoric were uttered by oppressed persons who *didn't have a choice*, but to try to articulate their specific ideology of their death events through explicit communication in hopes it would be received as a form of truth. The presented evidence has shown us that ideological negligence ultimately led to their autonomous expiration. The anti-mask rhetoric is attempting a linguistic and cultural shift. This phenomenon is sustaining itself by the removal of authentic identity and authentic meaning, from which the phrase is local to. The shift is occurring by then soliciting the phrase, "I can't breathe," as a purported

expression that's authentic within White public space. However, to be used as a phrase of authenticity goes against the observed standards of the public space. The hegemony that exists in public spaces is ideologically founded in the capacity of political authority. Pierre Bordieu's illustration of 'misrecognition' (Woolard 2005) as being ideologically pertinent to the linguistic authority of anonymity supports this analysis. Under misrecognition, listeners recognize the authority of a dominant language, but fail to recognize the historical developments; such misrecognition is the result of the deracination of language (Woolard 2005). The hegemonic ideology of public spaces allows their superiority to be "naturalized, taken for granted, and placed beyond question" (Woolard 2005). Thus, the observed linguistic authoritative shifts of the anti-mask rhetoric is superimposing linguistic anonymity on the Movement for Black Lives.

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