



What happened to My Body My Choice?: Viewpoint stacking and the construal of picket signs*

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Kang, Lumi and Iksoo Kwon. 2024. *What happened to My Body My Choice?: Viewpoint stacking and the construal of picket signs*. *Linguistic Research* 41(2): 311-344. This paper analyzes meaning constructions in picket signs containing My Body My Choice (MBMC) within Viewpoint Spaces network theory (Dancygier 2012). It is specifically concerned with multilayered conceptual structures where viewpoints are stacked in the construal of this picket sign slogan, which can be interpreted as: as it is about my body, it should be my choice that matters. To fully understand its use, the viewer requires several pieces of pertinent information, including, for instance, that those who use the phrase to protest vaccine mandates are unlikely to be those who would use it to support abortion rights, even though the phrase ostensibly expresses invariable support for every individual's right to bodily autonomy. It provides an elaborate account of how multiple pieces of knowledge of different viewpoints, such as invoked frame knowledge of the abortion-rights movement and presupposed knowledge triggered by linguistic constructs, are stacked and (de-)compressed into the overall construal. (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)

Keywords My Body My Choice, picket signs, Viewpoint spaces, Multilayered meaning construction, conventionalized meaning

1. Introduction: *My Body My Choice*

Picket signs make a good instance of non-compositional meaning construction (Hilpert

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2019[2014]: 16) as their meanings tend to be more than the sum of its parts. With only a few words of pithy slogans or catchphrases in syntactically truncated forms, a picket sign still makes coherent sense to viewers. This paper argues that the meaning construction is possible as multiple viewpoints are implicitly aligned in the configuration of multiple situations evoked by the construal of a picket sign (Kang and Kwon 2023: 3), for example, from the situation depicted by the text (e.g., On Strike) to the situation where a protestor conveys to viewers a message of sympathizing with the maker's intention (e.g., [I support that we have good reasons to be] on strike). While Kang and Kwon (2023) mainly focuses on identifying salient types of picket signs containing the phrase in question, this paper's focus lies on conducting a case study not only to explicate how we construe picket signs containing My Body My Choice (henceforth, MBMC),¹ but further to investigate the conventionalization process of the picket sign phrase. It employs Viewpoint Spaces network theory (Dancygier 2012) to model the construal process, where multilayered conceptual structures with multiple stacked viewpoints are the key to the construal.

The phrase MBMC can be paraphrased as follows: as it is about my body, it should be my choice that matters. It is noted, however, that the phrase was not newly created exclusively for protests against COVID-19 mandates; the phrase dates back several decades to feminist, bodily autonomy, and reproductive rights movements in general, and has long been associated with abortion rights specifically (Kang and Kwon 2023) (see Section 2.2). This invoked history should be taken into consideration if one wishes to properly obtain the intended construal of the more recent anti-COVID-19-mandate use of the phrase. For example, the picket sign phrase in (1) claims that the rationale of bodily autonomy behind the call for the right to abortion should be kept consistent as well for the right to refuse vaccines.

(1) My Body / My Choice / includes / vaccines / too

More conceptual layers are involved in (1) than in a picket sign that says merely MBMC: the situation evoked by the content of the phrase (i.e., MBMC in the abortion-rights movement); the situation where a picket sign maker frames it as a fossilized phrase in a different situation (i.e., MBMC includes vaccines, too); the situation where an

¹ Throughout this paper, the abbreviation MBMC indicates the phrase with a comma (i.e., My Body, My Choice) or without, assuming that the comma does not create a significant meaning difference.

anti-vaccination protestor is showing support for the sign maker's intention by re-narrating the linguistic expression (i.e., [I support that] MBMC includes vaccines, too in an anti-vaccination protest) in the presence of viewers, and so on. Compared to a picket sign merely containing MBMC to generally convey the phrase's conventionalized meaning of supporting individual bodily autonomy, the phrase in (1) comprises multiple, intertextual layers: MBMC does not reside in the same layer as the rest of the text, because it has already been reified into a grammatical subject with a conventional meaning.

This paper argues that MBMC together with adjacent phrases and images in picket signs cues multiple conceptual layers where viewpoints are implicitly (de-)compressed: one cannot fully understand it without, for example, knowing, among other pertinently assumed pieces of information, that those who would use the phrase in an anti-vaccination rally are unlikely to be those who would use it in the abortion-rights movement, even though the phrase suggests invariable support for every individual's complete bodily autonomy. Such usage further illustrates multilayered meaning construction because the phrase is situated in another conventional form of discourse structure, that is, a picket sign, which is designed to publicly express the picket sign maker's ideas with syntactically truncated forms that cue viewpoint stacking. This paper specifically investigates two kinds of multilayered meaning constructions with invoked frames including abortion rights: first, the picket signs containing the construct MBMC as a conventionalized chunk; second, the picket signs that contain the construct but switch in different pronouns, as in *Your Body My Choice*, which also reveals another conceptual pattern of multilayered meaning construal. In these cases, the construal necessarily relies on multiple pieces of knowledge of different viewpoints stacked and (de-)compressed, such as invoked frame knowledge of the abortion-rights movement, presupposed knowledge triggered by linguistic constructs, and more (see Sections 3 and 4).

This paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 provides the theoretical background of the Viewpoint Spaces network framework (Dancygier 2012; Dancygier and Vandelanotte 2016, 2017), and specifically of Ground Viewpoint Space (Kwon and Kim 2021), which this paper's analyses rely on. Sections 3 and 4 provide qualitative analyses of the construal of the MBMC picket signs, focusing on the two aforementioned types, respectively. These sections attempt to transparently model the conceptual structures of the two types within Ground Viewpoint Space networks and to reveal that the degree of intertextuality is correlated with the complexity of multilayeredness in the construals. Based on the conceptual structures in the previous sections, Section 5 proposes a way

of modeling the generalized meaning of the phrase MBMC within a Viewpoint Spaces network. Section 6 concludes.

2. Preliminaries

2.1 Viewpoint Spaces networks

This section introduces the Viewpoint Spaces network framework, which this study employs to transparently model the meaning construal process of the picket signs in question. Dancygier (2012) laid the groundwork for the theory, a branch of Mental Space Theory (Fauconnier 1994), where a mental space is defined as a conceptual packet conjured up in a cognizer's mind as we think and talk. As mental spaces are the layers in the network, they are internally structured by frames and cognitive models, and also they may be externally linked by connectors that relate structures across spaces (Fauconnier 1997: 39; Kang and Kwon 2023: 5).

This particular branch has been employed to represent meaning construals of multilayered meaning constructions in various genres including multimodal artefacts (Dancygier and Vandelanotte 2017a, b; Kwon and Kim 2021; inter alia) as well as (in)direct speech and thought representations (Dancygier 2017; Vandelanotte 2012). The following example, based on Figure 1, illustrates how to explain and model the construal process of multilayered meaning construction within the theory of Viewpoint Spaces networks.



Figure 1. Restaurant sign: “Roses Are Red” (Kwon 2019)

Figure 1 portrays a restaurant’s advertisement sign from the city of Albuquerque, U.S. (Kwon 2019: 35-37). Considering that this advertisement is on around Valentine’s day, these three lines seem to be neither relevant nor coherent: the serving of alcoholic beverages has nothing obvious to do specifically with Valentine’s day, let alone with poems or the color of flowers. However, the sign was kept on, which indicates that it would successfully make pertinent sense to viewers, and that the viewers must be capable of connecting the dots somehow and understand what we intends to say: please come visit our restaurant on Valentine’s day as our restaurant is a good place for lovers to dine.

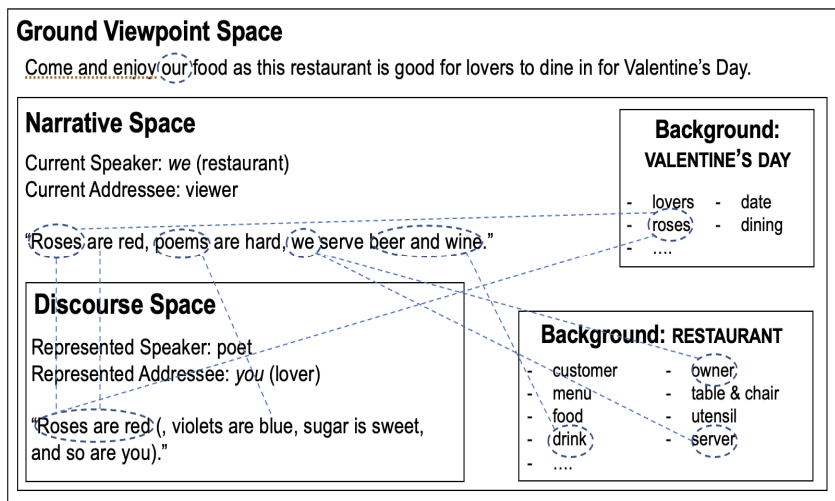


Figure 2. GVS representation of the construal of Figure 1

One would not get the intended construal until they meet several independent pieces of information culturally invoked: lovers (especially in western cultures) tend to exchange nice things including red roses, which now clearly secure high cue validity enough to evoke the whole frame of Valentine’s day, and to dine in a decent restaurant; The first line roses are red hence, metonymically (via part for whole) evokes a well-known poem, written by Edmund Spenser in 1590, for lovers, which reads as Roses are red / violets are blue / sugar is sweet / and so are you; The local restaurant in question is well-known for good brunches, which, along with the knowledge that alcoholic drinks are more commonly had with dinner, leads viewers felicitously to infer that they also serve good dinners. Compressing at least these three pieces of information into a single multimodal

artefact, the viewers incorporate the seemingly independent pieces of information originating from different viewpoints in the sign only to obtain the intended meaning construal. The construal process of Figure 1 can be accounted for as shown in Figure 2 (Kwon 2019: 36).

To begin with, the Narrative Space refers to the conceptual ground where the three seemingly independent pieces of input information are blended from the advertisement maker's viewpoint. Considering that the sign is an advertisement for a restaurant, the current speaker (we) is the restaurant owner, and the current addressee is whoever views the sign. The first line, roses are red, metonymically evokes the viewer's experience regarding the love poem: it could evoke the whole form of the poem and/or the viewer's (in)direct experience of hearing it, of using it, and so on, but in any case, the represented speaker is the original poet, and the represented addressee is the one who is referred as "you" by the poet, presumably the poet's lover. Now, the lexical item poems in the second line cues that the speaker of the second line is not the same speaker of the first line; the second line adds a commentary to the first line, saying "what has just been mentioned is in fact part of a poem." We now understand that the current speaker is representing the original speaker's words. In this vein, one sees that the Discourse Space accommodates the situation of the love poem (i.e., the conversation between the poet [represented speaker] and you [represented addressee]) and that the Discourse Space belongs to the Narrative Space because the current speaker of the Narrative Space has access to the Discourse Space situation, whereas the represented speaker of the Discourse Space does not have access to the Narrative Space situation. Next, given that, culturally speaking, people exchange gifts including red roses and dine in good restaurants together on Valentine's day, the poem is an optimal vehicle to evoke Valentine's day as it contains the salient frame element rose. This is indicated in the representation: the Background Space of valentine's day accommodates the evoked frame knowledge that is required for the construal, and the associations evoked by the lexical item roses in roses are red are indicated by the blue dotted lines.

Regardless of starting with a well-known line of poetry, the intention behind the sign is not clear until the viewer's eye meets the third line, we serve beer and wine: "You can skip the recital of a love poem to your lover, and move right on to dining, with beer or wine, in our restaurant." Here, the current speaker reveals who she is (i.e., the owner of the restaurant) by specifying our role of serving beer and wine. Serving beer and wine has a high cue validity to evoke the frame restaurant: a place where people

can have a meal and a drink prepared and served to them. In the figure, this frame knowledge is indicated as another piece of background information regarding restaurant, and the frame elements that are profiled for the construal are marked by the blue dotted lines. The emergent meaning can be more elaborate if one takes into consideration the additional pieces of implied information in the context, such as that the restaurant Range Café is locally well-known for serving good breakfasts and brunches. Given that one would not normally have beer and wine in the morning, viewers can pick up the implied meaning that the restaurant serves good dinners as well as breakfast/brunch. Based on the aforementioned pieces of information, which are systematically accommodated in a hierarchical network, one can obtain the intended meaning of the sign at the topmost space of the Ground Viewpoint Space, where construers have a bird's-eye view that lets them access all the local spaces simultaneously: come and enjoy our food as this restaurant is good for lovers to dine in for Valentine's day.

A similar kind of meaning construction based on the stacking of multiple viewpoints in multiple conceptual layers is also found in the construal of picket signs: the picket sign maker conveys his or her own message about an issue, and in the portrayed issue, there are interlocutors whose viewpoints may be aligned with that of the picket sign maker. Switching to Viewpoint Spaces terminology, it is the picket sign maker who designs a narrative to efficiently express their opinion and thoughts on an issue. When the picket sign maker narrates his or her message, he or she always presumes the presence of the addressee (i.e., the picket sign viewer). In the narrative, there are protagonists/interlocutors whose situation may be sympathized by the picket sign maker. In this vein, the construal of a picket sign makes another outstanding example of multilayered viewpoint constructions.

Note, however, that this paper employs the notion of Ground Viewpoint Space (GVS) in lieu of Discourse Viewpoint Space (Dancygier and Vandelanotte 2016, 2017), as proposed by Kwon and Kim (2021). Even though the functions of the two notions are equivalent, the term "Ground Viewpoint Space" has some particular merits:

[t]he term broadens the scope of the theory, so that it is able to account not only for types of speech and thought representations or stories, but also for any linguistic/multimodal signs prompting conceptual constructs and accumulating as the discourse progresses (Dancygier 2012: 36). Instead of using an instantiation of the Viewpoint Spaces network such as ... Discourse Viewpoint Space, it is

more efficient to include the concept of ground to indicate a conceptual base where multiple viewpoints at different levels coherently interact and hence construct optimal meanings in the given context. (Kwon and Kim 2021: 10)

The term GVS is employed in this study as it is more efficient to analyze the meaning construal in any genre, including picket signs, where the emergent construal is also obtained from the interactions of viewpoints and invoked frame knowledge at different conceptual layers in the network.

2.2 Phenomenon in focus: Viewpoint Spaces analyses of MBMC picket signs

This study is concerned with a focal set of MBMC picket signs that illustrate intertextuality relying on the multilayered structures in a Viewpoint Spaces network. In general, as Kang and Kwon's (2023) study exemplified, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the picket sign My Body My Choice, as shown in Figure 3, is used in protests against COVID-19 mandates.



Figure 3. Picket sign: "my body my choice" (Kang and Kwon 2023)²

The detailed situation is as follows: beginning in 2020, to halt the spread of COVID-19 and to protect people from getting infected, some states in the United States announced restrictions on behavior, such as lockdowns and the closing of businesses, and mandates that attempted to enforce specific actions, such as mask-wearing, social distancing, and vaccination.³ People who disagreed with these mandates and restrictions protested them

² WFTV, "Protestors take to Orange County following major's decision to mandate vaccines for county employees"

in various ways, including street protests. The slogan My Body My Choice gained currency during these protests. The intended message behind the picket sign can be paraphrased as follows: as it is about my body, it should be my choice that matters; no one should intervene in my decision. Thus, the slogan is about bodily autonomy, and it asserts that exercising one's right to control one's own body should not be overridden by any external coercion. As mentioned, however, the phrase itself was not created specifically for the protests against COVID-19 mandates, but, crucially, has previous long-standing associations with struggles for bodily autonomy rights in general and abortion rights specifically. In this context, the phrase is employed to support and value a woman's right to make decisions about her own body, especially pregnancy (i.e., "pro-choice," meaning pro-abortion rights, as opposed to "pro-life," meaning anti-abortion rights; see Lakoff 1996). The belief that terminating a pregnancy is a matter of personal decision implies that it is inappropriate for any authority, such as a government or religion, to intervene. The rationale behind this slogan for the abortion-rights movement works the same for the anti-vaccination movement. In brief, the same slogan is used in both situations, but the construal differs depending on whose viewpoint is involved.

Given the semantic affordances of the phrase, Kang and Kwon (2023) conducted a case study of meaning constructions of the MBMC picket sign in protests against COVID-19 mandates within the theory of Viewpoint Spaces networks. The study explored the MBMC picket signs as an instance of multilayered meaning construction, as the intended meaning construal relies entirely on the systematic interaction among multiple viewpoints of the understood participants at different conceptual levels. It further taxonomized the relevant MBMC picket sign data into two major types (those with the covid frame and those with the abortion frame) and discussed what frame knowledge is required in the construal. Extending Kang and Kwon's observations, the current study focuses on two specific types of MBMC picket signs whose construal involves intertextually complex layers and viewpoint stacking: those containing MBMC as a conventionalized chunk (Section 3) and those with shifted pronouns (Section 4).

3 AARP, <https://www.aarp.org/politics-society/government-elections/info-2020/coronavirus-state-restrictions.html> (accessed on September 17, 2022)

3. The picket signs containing MBMC as a conventionalized chunk

The first group refers to the kind of picket sign where the phrase MBMC would not necessarily function as a shorthand way of saying “As it is about my body, it should be my choice that matters,” but rather as a catchphrase representing the whole class of people who might be subject to coercion by any form of authority, including governments, religions, traditions, and more. In other words, the original meaning of the slogan, which consists of two grammatically truncated clauses, is no longer transparent, as the phrase has become conventionalized into a symbolic expression urging the protection of bodily autonomy. This conventionalization facilitates the phrase’s extension to new contexts. As a conventionalized construct, the entire phrase is now reified into a form with a single function – a “chunk” of meaning – which can be analyzed within the theory of Viewpoint Spaces networks.

To begin with, this paper analyzes the picket sign “My body my choice” includes vaccines too, as shown in Figure 4. In its original context, the slogan is used to advocate for women’s bodily autonomy; here, however, it is used as a conventionalized chunk in the protests against COVID-19 vaccination. The picket sign can be paraphrased: as it is about my body, it should be my choice that matters; therefore, if those who are “pro-choice” regard bodily autonomy so important and claim to support abortion rights, then they should support the individual’s right not to be vaccinated.



Figure 4. Picket sign: “My Body My Choice Includes Vaccines Too”⁴

4 Los Angeles Times, "Letters to the Editor: I almost died from measles as a kid. Refusing COVID vaccination is unforgivable"

Notice that the phrase MBMC conspicuously occupies the grammatical subject slot of the statement (i.e., “My Body My Choice” includes vaccines too), highlighting the fact that bodily autonomy is the topic at hand. One understands that the phrase itself does not reside in the same conceptual layer as the rest of the slogan: the verb includes with the third-person singular verb ending indicates that what is being referred to is rather a proposition conveyed by MBMC. It is noteworthy that semantics of the pronoun *my* is opaque as it no longer refers to the speaker of the phrase, but to the whole class of people who might be subject to bodily coercion, i.e., vaccine mandates as part of a conventionalized chunk.

Let us delve into the constructional properties of MBMC in the picket sign further. A statement that A includes B would indicate that B is a member of category A. Analogously, the proposition that MBMC includes vaccines, too would mean that what is referred to by vaccines is a member of the category that includes anything called MBMC. In this vein, one obtains the interpretation that autonomy regarding the choice to be vaccinated or not is essentially the same issue as the individual’s bodily autonomy.⁵ Integrating all the aforementioned pieces of information into the scenario depicted by the picket sign, the viewers get to understand that it is meant to oppose COVID-19 vaccine mandates and also that the essence of the phrase (i.e., bodily autonomy) is supposed to uphold consistently. The use of the lexical item *too* conspires to maximize the desirability of such consistency: there are other members included in the category MBMC and they are supposed to be consistent as they belong to the identical category. Accessing the preemptive frame in which the slogan MBMC is already frequently employed in the abortion-rights movement, viewers realize that what is already included in the category MBMC is abortion rights. With the aforementioned pieces of information, the viewers eventually get to understand that the rationale behind bodily autonomy should hold consistently for other issues, most importantly vaccination rights.⁶ This line of reasoning behind the construal can be modeled

5 It is noteworthy that the lexical item *vaccine* in this context refers to COVID-19 vaccines without explicit mention of COVID-19, because the situational knowledge of COVID-19 is shared among the participants of the protest (i.e., picket sign makers, holders, and viewers); moreover, *vaccine* had high cue validity to evoke the pandemic in the year 2021, when the picture in Figure 4 was taken.

6 It is noted, however, that the viewers sensibly understand that bodily autonomy regarding the abortion issue is not the focus here. Considering that many of those who protested the vaccine mandates also expressed their opposition to the abortion-rights movement in general, the picket sign in Figure 4 may well not entail that the picket sign maker prioritizes every individual’s bodily autonomy over other values (e.g., the life of a fetus). Rather, the intention is to undermine their opponents’ arguments or rationales by pointing out their inconsistency.

in terms of a Viewpoint Spaces network as shown in Figure 5.

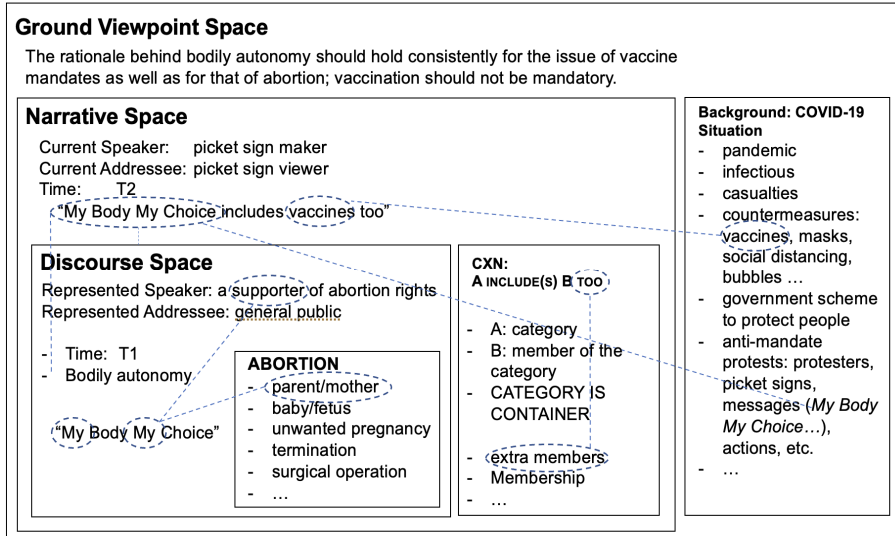


Figure 5. GVS representation of the construal of Figure 4

First, the Discourse Space (henceforth, DS) accommodates the situation where the phrase MBMC is concerned with the abortion-rights movement. That is, before the pandemic (T1), MBMC had already been employed as a slogan for supporting the right to decide not to continue an unwanted pregnancy (via the frame knowledge of abortion). At this level, the pronoun *my* refers to the represented speaker of this utterance (those who support abortion rights), which is marked with the dotted line in the figure.

Next, in the Narrative Space (henceforth, NS), the same phrase is reframed by the narrator, i.e., the picket sign maker. The NS represents a narrative situation where the local mental spaces coherently contribute to the emergent construal from the perspective of the current speaker (narrator) for the purpose of conveying his or her intended message to the picket sign viewer. As shown in Figure 5, MBMC now (T2) conveys, as a fossilized phrase, the general sense of supporting bodily autonomy, not limited to the domain of the abortion-rights movement. That is, the frame knowledge of abortion is not profiled any more, and the value that has been paired with the phrase (i.e., the individual's bodily autonomy in general) is retrieved from the Background Space. MBMC as a conventionalized meaning carrier is cued in the Background Space of the COVID-19

situation, where MBMC itself is incorporated as a frame element for the picket sign messages used in the anti-mandate protests. In addition, the pronoun *my* of the conventionalized MBMC does not refer to a specific referent who utters the phrase, as the phrase now conveys the general sense of support for bodily autonomy. Thus, the picket sign maker of Figure 4 employs the conventionalized MBMC as the grammatical subject of the construction *A includes B too*, which is marked with a dotted line connecting the MBMC in the NS and the MBMC in the Background Space.

Another mental space is embedded in the NS, which accommodates the information of the construction *A includes B too*. The conventionalized MBMC is the construction's grammatical subject, and vaccines is its object. The intended message here is that vaccination should also be considered one of the members of the category MBMC. The lexical item *too* coherently indicates that at least one other member was already included in the MBMC category before the inclusion of the current focus, vaccination. At the level of the Ground Viewpoint Space (henceforth, GVS), the cognizer can access the lower-level spaces simultaneously, and connect the dots based on the invoked frame knowledge of abortion, where the phrase MBMC was originally employed. Now the final construal is obtained: to be consistent, the rationale behind the phrase that conveys support for one's bodily autonomy should be applied to the issue of vaccine mandates. Thus, if the law supports bodily autonomy in the case of abortion (regardless of the sign maker's personal stance toward abortion), then it should do so in the case of COVID-19 vaccination; if the former is legally allowed, then the latter should not be legally mandatory.

Another instance whose construal relies on the conventionalized understanding of the phrase MBMC is shown in Figure 6.

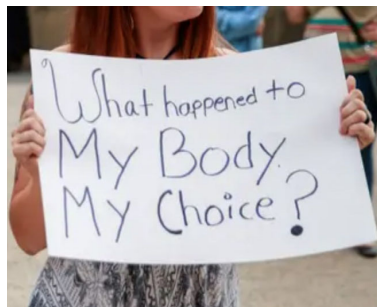


Figure 6. Picket sign: "What Happened to My Body My Choice?"⁷

In form, the linguistic expression “what happened to my body my choice?” is ostensibly a question. In its use here, the interrogative phrase insinuates that the original intent of the phrase MBMC has been distorted, and eventually leads to the construal that the original intent is support for bodily autonomy, and that this meaning, as the essence of the phrase, should be preserved and can be extended to COVID-19 restrictions and mandates.

How could one retrieve such implicitly rich information from the seemingly simple question? To start with, the interrogative clause functions as a rhetorical question indicating that something has happened to the purpose of using the phrase MBMC. In other words, the essence of the phrase (i.e., support for bodily autonomy) has been distorted, which is undesirable on the grounds that, as a declaration of a moral value, it should be maintained and preserved from distortion or weakening. Moreover, the predicate happen in past-tense form entails that the change in question has already taken place from the speaker’s perspective. As in the previous example, this MBMC is again a conventionalized construct, and as such takes the grammatical complement position of the preposition to (i.e., What happened to “my body my choice”?). That is, the referent of my in Figure 6 is no longer either transparent or specific, and the phrase as a whole works as a chunk heuristically paired up with the meaning one’s bodily autonomy. Thus, the question indicates that, to the speaker’s belief, in the current situation of the pandemic, individuals’ right to make decisions over their own bodies has been overridden by the authorities; this is what “happened.” In this vein, the eventual construal of the picket sign would be as follows: for consistency, the value asserted by the slogan MBMC, which is the value of the right to bodily autonomy, should be the same in any situation. If it applies to the decision to have an abortion or not, it must apply to the decision to get vaccinated or not; hence, the government that supports abortion rights has no right to force people to obey COVID-19 mandates that affect their bodies. Similar to the case shown in Figure 4, the current picket sign maker intends to undermine their rationale by pointing out the inconsistency of the opposite view. Figure 7 models the construal process of Figure 6, which depends on the aforementioned components of meaning.

7 Getty Images, "A protester holds a placard that says 'What happened to My Body, My Choice?' during the We Will Not Comply anti mask rally."

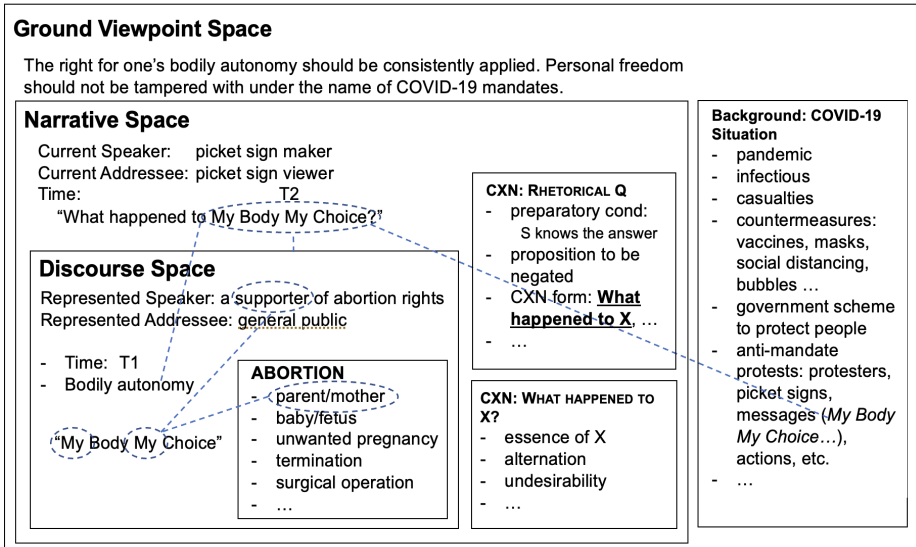


Figure 7. GVS representation of the construal of Figure 6

The meaning construction can be modeled similarly to that of the previous example. The original situation where the phrase MBMC has been used (in the abortion-rights movement at the time of T1) is accommodated in the DS. The innermost space accommodates the frame knowledge of abortion, which provides the necessary contextual information such as unwanted pregnancy. Among the multiple frame elements (FEs), parent/mother fills in the role of my in the higher space, as the pronominal use is transparently bound to the value of parent/mother.

The NS is a higher space where the picket sign maker (i.e., the current speaker at this stage) weaves a narrative to convey his or her intended message to others (i.e., the picket sign viewers) by reframing the long-used phrase at the lower-level space. In this current surrounding situation (T2), the pronouns of MBMC do not have specific referents any more, as the phrase has been so frequently used that the invoked frame of abortion is backgrounded. Now, MBMC functions as a conventionalized meaning carrier for the right of bodily autonomy. That is, the phrase, which was once predominately associated with the domain of abortion, is now fossilized and can be extended beyond its original use to generally support bodily autonomy in a generalized situation of individuals intending to defend their own rights to make decisions that affect their own bodies. This conventionalization is represented by the dotted lines connecting MBMC in the NS with

the FE in the Background Space of covid-19 situation, where the conventionalized phrase MBMC is employed in a picket sign to oppose the government's COVID-19 mandates.

Meanwhile, another meaning component is salient at the level of the NS, which is concerned with the use of the construction what happened to MBMC? by the current speaker (i.e., the picket sign maker). It indicates the following information: although its form is an interrogative clause construction, it would not read as a prototypical question where the speaker pursues an answer providing information that he or she does not know; it rather instantiates a rhetorical question construction, where the speaker already has an answer for the ostensible question. Inherited from the rhetorical question construction, the construction what happened to X bears the following information: from the speaker's perspective, it is certain that something has taken place, and because of that, X has been altered from what it used to be; this alteration (or even distortion) is undesirable because it altered the essence of X.

Having accessed all the aforementioned local spaces, one can obtain the overall construal of the picket sign at the highest level of the network, GVS: assuming that the right to bodily autonomy should be consistently applied no matter what the issue may be at hand, the current government's restrictions and mandates are wrong, and the government should not tamper with personal freedom. Thus, the picket sign maker conveys the intended message by reframing the long-used and well-known slogan of the abortion-rights movement.

Another instance of the picket signs that contain MBMC as a conventionalized shorthand indicating support for one's own bodily autonomy is shown in Figure 8.

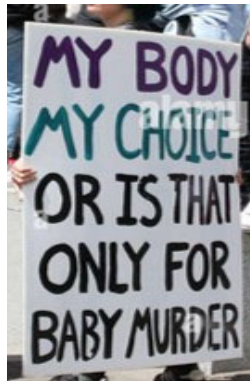


Figure 8. Picket sign: "MBMC or Is That Only for Baby Murder"⁸

The sign reads, “My body My Choice, or is that only for baby murder,” meaning that the idea purported by the phrase MBMC, that is, support for the individual’s bodily autonomy, should be maintained consistently for all issues of intervention including support for bodily autonomy regarding vaccination. This message is particularly noteworthy in that the viewer would immediately see that the understood speaker does not support abortion rights. This negative stance is cued by the phrase baby murder, which not only frames abortion as murder (thus criminal/sinful), but as a particularly cruel type of murder: of babies. It would not have the same construal if baby were replaced with fetus, which is associated less with living children, and more with medicine, science, and, possibly, a woman’s health and well-being. Furthermore, the negativity is fortified by the use of the distal demonstrative *that*, as it indicates a conceptual distance of the speaker from the original use of the phrase MBMC to express support for abortion rights.

On top of this retrievable information regarding the negative stance toward abortion, the picket sign maker employs multiple linguistic constructions, such as *or*, *only*, and a rhetorical question, to construct the intended meaning. The construal of the coordinator *or* relies on the alternativity of two (or more) given options of the clauses or nominals it connects (e.g., Stop or I’ll shoot you; We can go home or somewhere else). In the sign in Figure 8, the construal is concerned with the alternativity of the clausal information. In fact, the linguistic content of the two conjuncts – “My body my choice and Is that only for baby murder” – would not appear to syntactically qualify as a canonical or coordinate structure: the first conjunct would make a compound noun phrase at best and the latter an interrogative utterance. Rather, the two shorthand conjuncts conjure up richer clausal meanings. The first conjunct is, as we have already seen, a conventionalized phrase or chunk used to support bodily autonomy (e.g., As it is about my body, it should be my choice that matters), which has been frequently used in the domain of the abortion-rights movement. The second conjunct is an interrogative clause, although its purpose is not to ask a question but to present a counterargument to vaccine mandates by arguing that if the bodily autonomy argument holds in the abortion-rights domain then it should be maintained in the vaccination-rights domain. In addition, the meaning of exclusivity conveyed by *only* fortifies this purported meaning as it is

8 Alamy, "A anti-vax, anti-abortion protestor with a banner co-opting the 'My Body My Choice' slogan after marching to Parliament organised by The Freedoms and Rights Coalition to call for an end to vaccine mandates and Covid-19 lockdown restrictions in Wellington, New Zealand."

employed in a rhetorical question: the expression of disbelief in the validity of the exclusive application of the rationale behind bodily autonomy to the abortion issue is maximized with the kind of question whose purpose is not to seek an answer, but to insist on the reversed proposition (i.e., “that” is NOT only for baby murder). The semantics of disbelief is aligned with the negative framing of baby murder instead of a more neutral expression (e.g., abortion or even the removal of the fetus). All in all, the slogan on this sign can be paraphrased as follows: it is the case that people should decide what to do with their own bodies; in particular, it is wrong to apply the bodily autonomy argument only to cases when people want to kill their unborn babies, but not to any other cases, such as the choice not to get a vaccine. Therefore, if bodily autonomy is valued in the domain of abortion rights, it must be valued in the domain of vaccination rights too.

As we can see, then, the construal of the picket sign slogan in Figure 8 requires cognizers’ access to the multilayered conceptual structures it evokes. Within a GVS network, the construal process can be modeled as shown in Figure 9. The syntactically truncated form MBMC cannot be construed without the frame knowledge of abortion, which is represented by the innermost space. There are salient frame elements (FEs) such as parent/mother, fetus/unborn baby, unwanted pregnancy, termination by surgical operation, and so forth. It is noteworthy that, depending on how one judges the given situation, one might obtain different, but consistently coherent, understandings of the FEs. For example, if you believe that abortion should not be allowed, then FEs such as unborn baby are more salient in your understanding of the semantic frame, wherein abortion is a cruel crime. In contrast, if you believe otherwise, the same FE would be understood to describe a fetus, an early postconception stage, which could be subject to a surgical operation for its removal if necessary. In the DS, where the original use of MBMC is accommodated, a supporter of the abortion-rights movement plays the role of speaker. This is a represented speaker, because the expression is narrated or reframed from the perspective of the anti-vaccination protester (i.e., the current speaker). The represented speaker is aligned with the FE parent in the frame abortion, which fills the role of my in the phrase (these alignments are represented by means of the dotted lines in Figure 9).

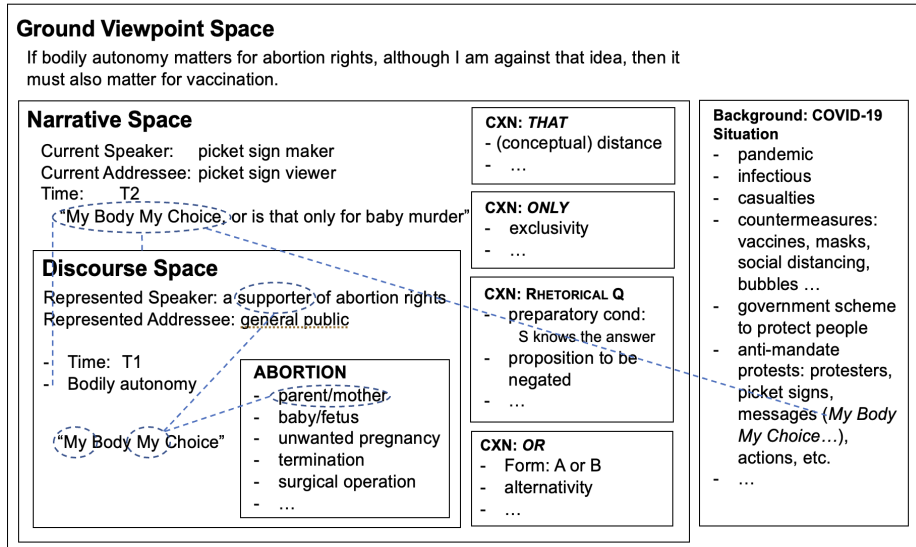


Figure 9. GVS representation of the construal of Figure 8

Now, the use of the phrase MBMC is conventionalized enough to be incorporated into part of the background knowledge of the COVID-19 situation, which is represented by the rightmost mental space in Figure 9. In the Background Space, relevant FEs are illustrated, such as the pandemic, its characteristics and consequences, countermeasures, governmental mandates, people’s reaction to them, and so on. Among these FEs, MBMC plays a role in the picket sign message, where it is employed as a way of expressing the protestors’ thoughts regarding vaccine mandates. Taking advantage of the construal of the conventionalized phrase, the picket sign maker narrates the purpose of MBMC in the current context of the anti-mandates protest. This reframing is modeled in the NS in Figure 9. In the NS, the current speaker adds to the conventionalized phrase another clause: or is that only for baby murder. Thanks to the linguistic constructions explained above (i.e., the or conjunction construction, the rhetorical question construction, and the only construction), the original meaning of bodily autonomy, which is construed fully in the context of the abortion-rights movement, now makes sense in another context, that of the anti-vaccine-mandates protest: support for the individual’s bodily autonomy should be maintained in the domain of COVID-19 mandates as well. In addition, the use of the distal demonstrative that reinforces the speaker’s distanced stance toward the use of the phrase MBMC in the context of the abortion-rights movement. The use of the distal

demonstrative entails that the current speaker's (i.e., the picket sign maker) belief is far from the represented speaker's (i.e., the proponent of the abortion-rights movement) intention in the use of MBMC, and implies that the message of bodily autonomy fits the rationale of the anti-vaccine-mandates protest better than it fits the rationale of the abortion-rights movement. It is noteworthy that, compared to the picket signs discussed above (Figures 4 and 6), where the activated information of the specific event structure for the abortion-rights movement fades away as the construal process goes on, the meaning of the frame abortion remains active in the construal of the picket sign in Figure 8. As indicated by baby murder, which conveys the picket sign maker's negative view of abortion, the knowledge of the abortion frame must be active and must be incorporated into the overall construal. The viewers of the picket sign will eventually construe its intended message at the GVS, where they can simultaneously access its subordinate spaces and frame knowledge. With the background knowledge of the COVID-19 situation and of the purpose of the protest, the viewers understand the picket sign maker's message based on the conventionalized phrase MBMC: one's own bodily autonomy matters, not only for abortion rights, although the picket sign maker is against that idea, but also for vaccination; basically, people should not be coerced to get a vaccination against their will.

4. The picket signs switching the pronouns of MBMC

The second group comprises MBMC picket signs whose construal requires access to an additional viewpoint, as their construal necessarily involves reframing the conventional meaning of MBMC. For example, your body my choice (henceforth, YBMC) in a picket sign, instead of MBMC, requires the viewer to figure out its meaning based on the original phrase and to understand that the original meaning has been reframed.

The constructional pattern generalized over variants such as MBMC, YBMC, and others can be schematized as X body Y choice (henceforth, XBYC), where X refers to the person the body belongs to, and Y refers to the person the choice belongs to. Its schematic meaning is as follows: since this body belongs to X, Y should be the one who makes decisions about it. The pattern that this study has explored so far is MBMC, where identical pronouns are used in the construction to represent each individual's own bodily autonomy. However, when there is a discrepancy between the body-owner and the

decision-maker (i.e., $X \neq Y$), the construction represents a situation where X surrenders his/her right to govern his/her body to Y. Such a pattern (i.e., XBYC and $X \neq Y$) can nevertheless be used to express support for bodily autonomy, as exemplified in the picket signs in Figure 10 and Figure 12, which illustrate how the phrase YBMC is employed in the protests against COVID-19 vaccine mandates and in the abortion-rights movement to argue for bodily autonomy.

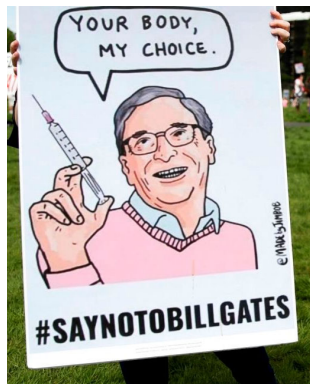


Figure 10. Picket sign: "Say No to Bill Gates"⁹

In Figure 10, the protagonist is Bill Gates, who is depicted as if he were uttering the phrase YBMC, indicated by a speech balloon, with a syringe in one hand. To begin with, even if the sign viewers do not recognize the protagonist, the text along the bottom of the sign should allow them to connect the dots and identify him. Considering that the context is the current pandemic situation, the viewer can also infer that the syringe contains COVID-19 vaccine. Next, the speech balloon is a conventional way of representing a character's utterance in comics; its tail indicates the speaker. As pointed out earlier, the phrase contains two different personal pronouns: your and my. In the represented narrative, the protagonist, Bill Gates, is saying YBMC to the current addressee, you, the referent of which is not specific and thus may refer to anyone who views the picket sign.

Meanwhile, the text #SAYNOTOBILLGATES at the bottom of the picket sign, with the hashtag and no space between the words, cues communication via social media platforms where hash-tagged phrasing without spaces is a typical way of communicatin

⁹ Oregonlive, "Anti-vaccine activists peddle theories that COVID shots are deadly, undermining vaccination."

g.¹⁰ The internal structure of the hash-tagged text is an imperative Say no to Bill Gates. In the imperative form, addressee information is suppressed, which means the addressee is you, referring to anyone who views it. It is vital to construe that the depicted protagonist, Bill Gates, is not the speaker of the imperative. Rather, the viewer can identify the speaker as someone else (i.e., the picket sign maker), although the speaker is not present in the picket sign. It is also important that the viewer understand that the text at the bottom contradicts what the protagonist is saying, in the speech bubble, to the picket sign viewer (i.e., YBMC). Once viewers grasp the incongruity, they eventually understand that the speaker of the text along the bottom intends to refute the message being represented as the utterance of Bill Gates.

To fully grasp the intended meaning of the picket sign in Figure 10 requires noting the details of its context. The protest in which the sign was used was triggered by the Washington state governor's stay-at-home order on May 9, 2020, which announced guidelines for lockdown, distancing, and mask-wearing.¹¹ It is noteworthy that the picket sign depicts the protagonist, Bill Gates, holding a vaccine syringe although the guidelines at the time were not concerned with vaccination. In fact, Gates had been publicly arguing that more attention should be paid to vaccine development in the future,¹² but had neither expressed support for enforced vaccination nor made the utterance shown in the speech balloon on the sign. The image represents the picket sign maker's conceptualization of Gates' belief in vaccination and conveys the picket sign maker's negative stance toward that belief. Given that the fictively reconstructed utterance of Gates is narrated by the picket sign maker, the viewers should align their viewpoints eventually to the viewpoint of the picket sign maker, although there is room for viewers to take Gates' perspective

10 The extended functions of hashtags in offline contexts as well as online include highlighting the gist of a message. For research on the functions of hashtags, see Caleffi 2015.

11 Oregonlive, <https://www.oregonlive.com/coronavirus/2021/01/anti-vaccine-activists-peddle-theories-that-covid-shots-are-easily-undermining-vaccination.html> (accessed on June 21, 2023)

12 The image in Figure 10 is a cropped photo that does not show another picket sign that is being held up nearby, which says, "vaccines can cause injury and death." This second sign supports this study's interpretation of the sign in Figure 10 as intended to criticize vaccination mandates by mocking a pro-vaccine figure. In addition, another piece of information cues the intended construal: the sign depicts Gates wearing a pink sweater similar to the one he wore during his TED talk in 2015, a year after the outbreak of a different global epidemic (i.e., Ebola), when he said that the world was not ready for the next epidemic and urged the strengthening of healthcare systems and more investment in developing vaccines and medicines. For more details, see https://www.ted.com/talks/bill_gates_the_next_outbreak_we_re_not_ready?language=dz (accessed on June 21, 2023).

until they meet the opposite view at the higher space. All in all, one would construe the picket sign with the multiple viewpoints stacked as follows: say no to Bill Gates who wants to force you to get a COVID vaccine; it is you who should decide to be vaccinated or not; it is your body, and it should be done by your choice, not his. The conceptual structure behind the construal of Figure 10 is represented in Figure 11.

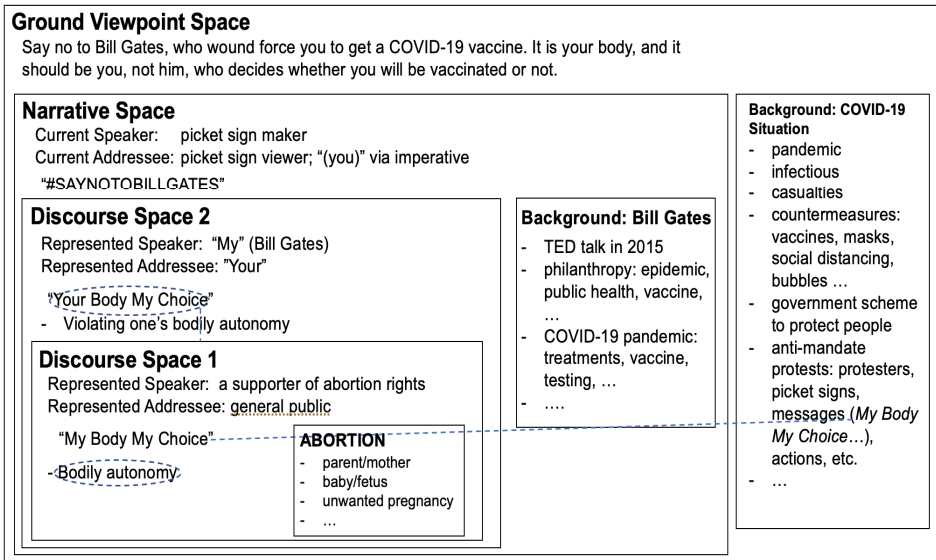


Figure 11. GVS representation of the construal of Figure 10

To begin with, the use of the derivative form YBMC entails that the speaker of YBMC has accessed the conventional use of MBMC; the intended meaning of YBMC is obtained only after the construal of MBMC. Hence, the phrase MBMC is accommodated in the innermost space, the DS1. The DS1 indicates the original situation where MBMC is employed to support bodily autonomy in the abortion-rights movement. Again, due to its recurrent use, MBMC is conventionalized enough to be employed by anyone who wants to argue for bodily autonomy in general. As the conventionalization process goes on, the activated information of the abortion frame becomes inactive and thus, no longer profiled, while the general sense of support for bodily autonomy gets more attention in the construal. The rationale behind the use of the phrase persists, as the first pronoun my indicates the body-owner (i.e., *my* body) and the second my, the decision-maker (i.e.,

my choice). This conventionalized MBMC is now registered as one of the frame elements under picket sign messages in the Background Space of the COVID-19 situation (represented by the dotted lines).

It is at the level of the DS2 that the represented speaker, Bill Gates, is depicted saying YBMC and holding a syringe. As mentioned earlier, the phrase YBMC entails that the speaker has already accessed the meaning construal of MBMC. The switch from *my* to *your* gives rise to a gag in a significant way: radically different from the original phrase, YBMC indicates that the represented speaker has taken over the addressee's right to bodily autonomy.

Then, where does the phrase #SaynoBillGates belong? It does not belong to the DS1 because the speaker of the phrase has the specific purpose of rejecting Gates' claim, thus differing from the general proponent of bodily autonomy rights. It does not belong to the DS2, either, because the represented speaker, Gates, would not urge others to say no to Bill Gates. This observation accounts for another superordinate conceptual layer, where the picket sign maker reframes the local spaces that have been depicted in his or her own narrative: the Narrative Space. At the level of the NS, the picket sign maker reveals his or her view by employing an imperative construction, Say no to Bill Gates, which is represented in the bottom text on the picket sign. Notice that the understood subject of the event in the imperative is not Gates, the represented speaker of YBMC. This pragmatic incongruity signals that the bottom text belongs to a superordinate space other than the DS2 and that the construal of the picket sign necessarily involves multiple viewpoints. Now one comes to understand that the imperative is narrated by the picket sign maker (i.e., the current speaker), and that it is addressed to the viewers of the picket sign.

The pragmatic incongruity not only reveals the implicit presence of the additional viewpoint, but also strengthens the picket sign maker's intention behind the narrative. In the narrative, Gates is a villain who capitalizes on vaccines and seeks to force vaccine shots on others, such as the addressees, without considering their intentions or wishes. Several frame elements conspire to support this narrative, as indicated in the Background Space regarding Gates: the caricature image is a depiction of Gates as he was dressed for his 2015 TED talk; he has a history of supporting philanthropic programs focusing on public health, epidemic prevention, vaccine development, and so on; after the outbreak of the coronavirus, he kept supporting these programs. Once having accessed such information, the viewer of the picket sign understands that what the picket sign conveys

has been framed by the picket sign maker. At the topmost space, one now can access all the local spaces in the network simultaneously and understand the intended construal of the picket sign: say no to Bill Gates who would force you to get a COVID-19 vaccine. It is your body, and it is you who should decide to be vaccinated or not, not him.

The picket sign in Figure 12 illustrates another instance whose construal requires even more complex meaning constructions based on multiple conceptual layers. This sign was used in an abortion-rights rally in Philadelphia on October 2, 2021.¹³ In the picket sign, the phrase MBMC is juxtaposed with the phrase YBMC, each with a different image (i.e., a face mask and a womb, respectively). The speaker of the two phrases is represented as a Republican through the text, Republican logic, that runs across the top of the sign over both slogans, and this represented speaker's position, or logic, is eventually portrayed as undesirable due to the inconsistent stance toward two bodily autonomy issues: COVID-19 masking mandates and abortion rights. The picket sign eventually is construable as expressing support for abortion rights by undermining Republicans' logic and pointing out the seemingly contradictory rationales behind the two bodily autonomy arguments. Let us see how this construal of multiply stacked viewpoints can be modeled by means of a Viewpoint Spaces network.

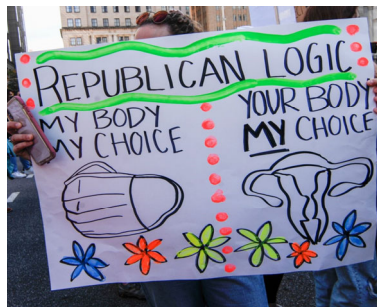


Figure 12. Picket sign: "Republican Logic"¹⁴

To begin with, the images on the picket sign evoke the political issues at stake: COVID-19 mandates and abortion rights. The face mask has a high cue validity to evoke

13 The event was the Bans off our Bodies Rally – Philadelphia, which was sparked by a Texas abortion ban in September 2021. For more details, see <https://act.womensmarch.com/event/oct-2-2021-march/1747/signup/?akid=&zip=> (accessed on June 20, 2023).

14 The NW Local Paper, "Defending Roe"

one of the restrictions (i.e. mask-wearing) during the pandemic period. As an organ in reproductive system, the womb metonymically evokes the issues regarding reproductive rights, specifically individual's right to making decisions about pregnancy. The picket sign can be read as follows: "Republicans believe that when it comes to mask-wearing, 'I' should decide what to do with 'my' body; but when it comes to abortion rights, 'I' get to decide what to do with 'your' body." In other words, given that the conventionalized phrase MBMC is now used for bodily autonomy in general, the narrative here is that the represented speakers (Republicans) claim that they value bodily autonomy in order to argue against COVID-19 mandates, but do not maintain this value in regard to abortion rights. At first glance, the picket sign seems to merely juxtapose Republicans' beliefs on two issues: COVID-19 mandates and abortion rights. However, in its eventual construal, the picket sign intends to reproach Republicans by pointing out their inconsistency when dealing with the two issues of bodily autonomy. What is eventually conveyed by the picket sign is as follows: republicans are inconsistent in their adherence to the value of bodily autonomy; for consistency, if the right to bodily autonomy is an argument against COVID-19 mandates, then it is also an argument for abortion rights.

How can viewers of the picket sign obtain the overall construal of the picket sign? To that end, it is necessary for viewers to align their viewpoints to that of the picket sign maker, who supports abortion rights. As cued by the top text (i.e., Republican logic), to begin with, the viewers recognize that the represented speakers of the phrases in question (i.e., MBMC and YBMC) are Republicans. Hence, one understands that the pronouns *my* in the phrases MBMC and YBMC refer to the speaker (i.e., Republicans), and *your* in YBMC refers to the addressee, who is anyone who views the picket sign. So far, the sign could be seen as merely representing Republicans as speakers of these two phrases. However, the current speaker (i.e., the sign maker) is understood to intend to convey more than that, by conveying his or her negative stance toward the represented speaker's inconsistency or lack of logic. That is, the conventionalized phrase MBMC with the meaning of support for bodily autonomy in general is supposed to hold for both issues; otherwise, it would be inconsistent, and thus undesirable. Once they align their viewpoints with the current speaker's and pick up the inconsistency of the represented speaker's approach, the viewers can eventually grasp that the picket sign does not merely represent something Republicans have said. Rather, the juxtaposition functions as criticism against the represented speaker, such that the picket sign leads to the final

interpretation that the bodily autonomy argument should also hold for abortion rights. A sense of irony may further stem from the incongruity once one realizes that what the picket sign eventually conveys is criticism rather than a simple description of Republicans' mode of thought. The multilayered meaning constructions of the picket sign in Figure 12 are modeled as in Figure 13.

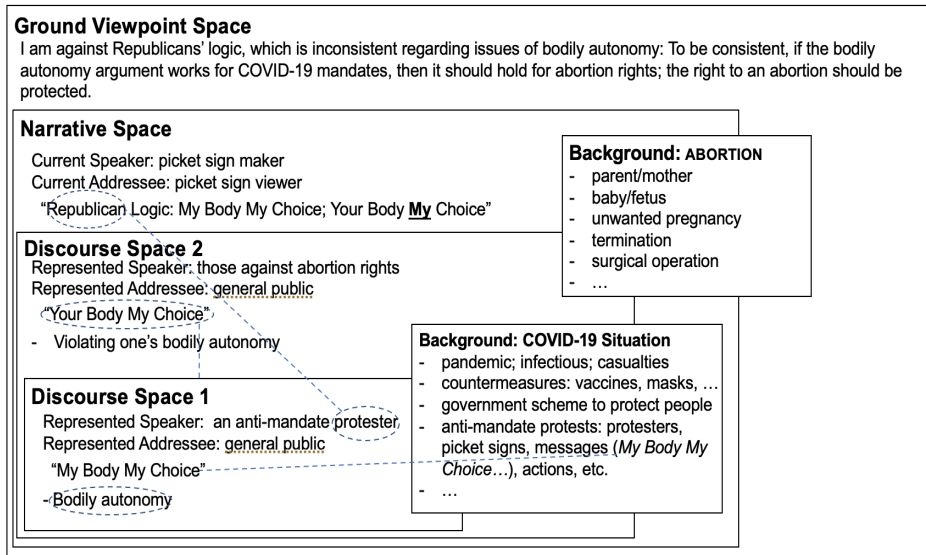


Figure 13. GVS representation of the construal of Figure 12

As mentioned above, the phrases written on the picket sign (i.e., MBMC and YBMC) seem to ostensibly indicate what Republicans say. However, once viewers access the information cued by the phrase Republican logic, where the formal incongruity between the two phrases is found, the viewers will immediately understand that the phrases indicate what the current speaker (i.e., the picket sign maker) wants the current addressee (i.e., the picket sign viewer) to see, which is the inconsistency, not what the represented speaker (i.e., Republicans) actually said. In this vein, one understands that the two mental spaces where the uses of the two phrases reside are subordinate to the space where the viewpoint of the picket sign maker (i.e., the current speaker) resides, as illustrated in Figure 13; the DS1 and the DS2 are embedded in the NS where the phrases MBMC and YBMC are reframed by the current speaker.

The DS1 is structured by a semantic frame related to anti-mandates protests where those who argue for bodily autonomy regarding the issue of COVID-19 mandates could be potential speakers of the phrase MBMC in the picket sign maker's conceptualization. Hence, the first-person pronouns *my* in MBMC both transparently refer to the speaker in the DS1. Now, the DS2 represents another event structure, this one related to the abortion-rights movement where those who are against abortion rights would be the potential speakers of the phrase YBMC. That is, *my* again refers to the potential speakers (i.e., those who are against abortion rights) and *you* refers to the concerned addressees, that is, viewers who have wombs and therefore might become pregnant. It is noteworthy that the DS1 is subordinate to the DS2, as the phrase YBMC can carry the intended meaning only after the meaning of MBMC is construed (whereas the phrase MBMC carries the intended meaning without recourse to the meaning of YBMC). This asymmetric relationship between the DS1 and the DS2 indicates that the DS2 takes a higher position than the DS1 in this viewpoint network.

The picket sign viewers grasp the intended meaning where the represented speakers of the two subordinate spaces (i.e., DS1 and DS2) are eventually semantically bound to "Republicans." These semantic bindings cannot be obtained until the viewers recognize that the two phrases MBMC and YBMC play a role in elaborating the picket sign maker's major intention: to argue that the following pieces of information constitute Republican logic. Switching to Mental Space terms, the represented speakers' values in the DSs cannot be filled in until the local spaces are narrated from the current speaker's (i.e., the picket sign maker's) viewpoint at the level of the NS. Only after accessing the NS can one understand that the two phrases are not something that was actually uttered by protesters against COVID-19 mandates and/or opponents of abortion rights; they are rather something that, from the sign maker's perspective, could be uttered by Republicans. In fact, YBMC is unlikely to be uttered in any real-world circumstance regardless of whose viewpoint may be in play; even the most ardent opponents of abortion rights would probably not consider the use of the expression to be a way to advance their cause. The phrase YBMC is nevertheless framed to belong to the DS2 because the whole situation accommodated by the DS2 belongs to the NS, and because the purported situation of the DS2 is naturally subject to the current speaker's evaluation, specifically, his or her negative evaluation of Republicans. In this fictive narrative structure, Republicans are conceptualized as speaking in an illogical and authoritarian manner.

This construal of Republicans is further strengthened by the inconsistency of their beliefs that the sign conveys, which is further emphasized with the bolded and underlined word *my*, the second pronoun in YBMC on the picket sign. This stylistic piece of information does not belong to the DS2 because the font manipulation has nothing to do with the event structure of abortion rights. Instead, it belongs to the NS because font manipulation is part of the picket sign making process; it is a stylistic cue that implies that the picket sign maker has a certain intention, and the implied intention converges with the speaker's negative stance toward Republicans, which is retrievable from the way Republicans are framed at the level of the DS2. Finally, one accesses and incorporates all the relevant pieces of information from the local spaces and the frame knowledge, which coherently constitute the intended construal of the picket sign at the GVS: I am against Republicans' logic, which is inconsistent regarding issues of bodily autonomy: for consistency, if the bodily autonomy argument works for COVID-19 mandates, it should hold for abortion rights; the right to have an abortion should be protected.

5. Discussion: Generalization of the meaning of MBMC within the network

This paper has shown that when a slogan or catchphrase is used frequently in one context, its novel meaning may be generalized so that it can be extended to other contexts as well. The phrase MBMC was once employed exclusively to support individuals' bodily autonomy mostly in regard to reproductive rights. In the data analyzed above, however, the more schematic meaning of the phrase (i.e., support for the right not to follow any external mandate) is accounted for. In the two cases, the external authority that intends to intervene in people's bodily autonomy differs: in the context of the abortion issue, those who support the individual's choice have to stand against those who call themselves pro-life; in the context of the vaccine mandate issue, those who support the individual's bodily autonomy have to stand against the government. Regardless of the differences in their situations, the so-called pro-lifers and the government instantiate external pressure against which "I" need to make a choice regarding "my" body.

We have seen how this generalization process takes place in the construal of picket signs, a type of multimodal data. In fact, the process is pervasive in language change, where, over time, linguistic constructs typically shift toward more general meanings as they lose their original specific meanings (Bybee and Pagliuca 1987). This paper argues

that the process of generalization can be accounted for by modeling Viewpoint Spaces networks, which can be illustrated clearly by comparing the two templates of representations in Figures 14a and 14b.

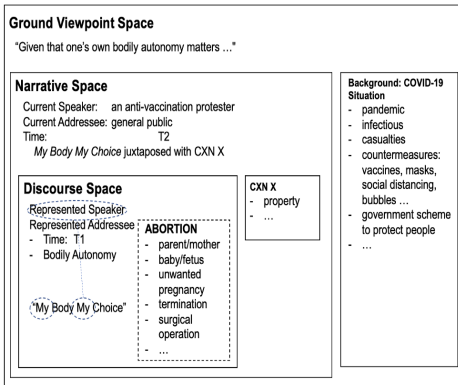


Figure 14a, Modeling the construal of *MBMC*

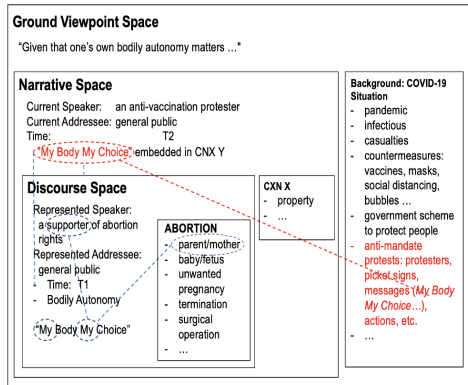


Figure 14b, Modeling the conventionalized construal of *MBMC*

Figure 14a represents a general Viewpoint Space network structure of a picket sign containing MBMC. The innermost DS includes a pair of interlocutors, under the assumption that every utterance is intended to convey a message to an addressee. This schematic space where a conversation would take place accommodates an utterance MBMC, which can be roughly paraphrased, “(since this is about) my body, (it should be) my choice(, no one else’s, that matters).” The schematic meaning of the phrase at this level may or may not be based on the abortion frame knowledge (i.e., the frame of abortion may or may not be profiled during the meaning construal process), where the phrase has been used frequently to support individuals’ right to make decisions regarding their own pregnancies. At the level of the NS, the phrase MBMC is reframed and juxtaposed with a construction (CXN X) employed on the picket sign (e.g., I call the shots, my body my choice, etc.), where the narrator’s (current speaker’s) intention is now clear: he or she intends to stand against the external authority’s vaccine mandates. Finally, at the GVS, one would access the local mental spaces including general background experiences regarding COVID-19, and obtain the overall construal with the given information such as “Given that one’s own bodily autonomy matters, ...”

By instantiating the meaning generalization of the phrase, this study argues that it can be accounted for within the theory of Viewpoint Spaces networks, as shown in Figure 14b. In this representation, the abortion frame necessarily makes one of the bases of the construal (as represented by a solid line). Another crucial difference between the two models is that the schematic meaning of the phrase MBMC is integrated into the background knowledge as given (in red font). It is noteworthy that the phrase MBMC is embedded in, not juxtaposed to, construction X. In this vein, the conventionalized meaning of the phrase can be modeled and distinguished from the general representation.

6. Conclusion

This paper has analyzed meaning constructions in picket signs containing My Body My Choice (MBMC), specifically two types of meaning constructions requiring multilayered conceptual structures where viewpoints are stacked in the construal within a Viewpoint Spaces network (Dancygier 2012; Kwon and Kim 2021). The paper argued that MBMC, together with adjacent phrases and images in the picket signs, cues multiple conceptual layers where viewpoints are implicitly (de-)compressed. It provided an elaborate account of how multiple pieces of knowledge of different viewpoints are stacked and (de-)compressed into the overall construal, such as invoked frame knowledge of the abortion-rights movement, presupposed knowledge triggered by linguistic constructs, and so forth. By presenting basic and transparent models of the conceptual structures of the two types in accord with Ground Viewpoint Space network theory, the study revealed that the degree of intertextuality is correlated with the complexity of multilayeredness in the construal. Based on the conceptual structures discussed in the previous sections, furthermore, this study proposed a way to model the generalized meaning of the phrase MBMC within a Viewpoint Spaces network.

It is noteworthy that most of the examples analyzed allow ironic meanings,¹⁵ an observation that calls for further systematic research in the future to understand the cognitive motivation for irony in these contexts. In any picket sign in the dataset, the sense of irony would be obtained if the cognizer could sense the implicit presence of

¹⁵ The construal of irony here refers to any communicative act and/or artifact that accompanies a cognitive process whereby conceptual contents that are first construed subjectively are reconstrued as an object of conceptualization (Tobin and Israel 2012: 44).

an invoked situational frame and thus access both the mental spaces accommodating what really happened and the mental spaces accommodating what is expected to happen (Kwon and Kim 2021: 27). For example, in the moment of perceiving a picket sign with the phrase Your Body My Choice, if the cognizer is able to recognize the presence of the implicitly invoked frame (i.e., a situation where its original form, My Body My Choice, would be used), he or she would simultaneously access both of the viewpoints, which are incongruous with each other, and obtain the construal of irony. This study of the construal of picket signs would further benefit from an in-depth investigation of the patterns of irony construal from multilayered meaning constructions.

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