

An Ideological Analysis of the Former President Donald Trump's Tweets During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to explore the former US President Donald Trump's representation of "us" and "others" in his tweets related to COVID-19 and how he portrayed the representation of "us" and "others." The sample for this study was made up of tweets issued by former US President Donald Trump between January and May 2020. The ideological framework proposed by Van Dijk (1997) was used to analyze the ideological discourse of former President Donald Trump's tweets during COVID-19 to reveal the underpinning motivations and viewpoints of us-representation and others-representation. According to the results of this study, Donald Trump depicted a favorable us-group and a negative others-group. Furthermore, former President Trump's typical tactics for portraying both groups included argumentation or authority, juxtaposition, recurrence, emphasis, and analogies. It was also discovered that there was inconsistency between the positive attitudes towards the us-group and negative attitudes about the others-group. When the same descriptions were given to both groups, for example, there were adjustments, which may or may not have been consistent with the groups' underlying goals or interests. The research findings may help analyze former President Donald Trump's Twitter discourse, a comparatively new source of political information.

1. Introduction

Twitter has evolved into a strong tool for political communication and interaction, quickly displacing traditional forms of mass media (Tasente 2020). For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, state leaders' usage of Twitter considerably impacted the public. About 64.8% of the United Nations state leaders reacted to COVID-19 on Twitter (Haman 2020). According to Shafer (2017), Twitter has become an essential platform in political campaigns because of increased freedom of expression and interaction, resulting in a significant presence of political parties, aspirants, and reporters on Twitter to air their views and ideas about politics.

Former US President Donald Trump is one of the most active users, with the so-called "Trump Effect" of his tweets impacting on society, the economy, and international relations (Bustan & Alakrash 2020). According to a study, Trump's tweets also significantly affected European stocks (Klaus & Koser 2021). As a result, there is much interest in delving into his tweets to see how he employs linguistic elements and what his ideology is. Piksar (2018), for example,

used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine Donald Trump's political discourse on Twitter and found that by employing nomination, argumentation and intensification strategies, Trump positively depicted himself and made himself the victim by criticizing media organizations for providing "fake news" to the audience. This was done to seek sympathy from the public. Furthermore, Bustan and Alakrash (2020) discovered that Donald Trump used a variety of linguistic tactics to portray a positive "Us" and a negative "Others." Other researchers discovered positive self-representation and negative others-representation (Kerbleski 2019; Ott 2017; Rohmah 2018). In particular, sexist ideology was implied in some of his tweets (Darweesh & Abdullah 2016) and anti-Muslim-Islam ideology (Khan *et al.* 2019).

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a worldwide pandemic in March 2020; it was a subject that Donald Trump frequently addressed on Twitter. He played a huge role in social media in terms of the degree of neutrality and information presented in tweets. More crucially, he significantly impacted global news surrounding COVID-19 (Yum 2020). A study conducted by Budhwani and Sun (2020) postulated that there was a considerable increase in the frequency and prevalence of similar words after Donald Trump referred to COVID-19 as a "Chinese virus" and a "China virus." Previous research, such as those by Mena García (2018) and Tasente (2020), has found that Donald Trump's tweets contained ideological messages. However, no studies on the particular ideology expressed in his tweets about COVID-19 have been published. In this light, and because of the enormous number of reported COVID-19 cases, it is vital to look at how the US leadership depicted the problem. Therefore, the present research tries to explore the representation of the 'Us' and 'Others' groups on Twitter by Donald Trump and how both groups are portrayed. The study also investigates how both groups are depicted. More perspectives are integrated through pragmatic studies to uncover the underlying meanings beneath the texts.

2. Literature Review

2.1. A Framework for Critical Discourse Analysis

A critical discourse analysis (CDA) looks at how discourses can be used to create, sustain, and justify social inequities (Wodak 2001). Ideologies can be decoded by a methodical and repeatable examination of written, oral, or visual material (Wodak & Meyer 2009). Whether aware of it or not, CDA believes that our use of language is intentional (Mullet 2018). According to Tegua (2019), politics is the most appropriate field for CDA to engage in regarding social issues. In parliaments and political debates, politicians and presidential candidates struggle over ideologies. Alongside identity studies (such as Kang & Dykema 2017; Leung 2016; Sarani & Kord 2018; Rahimpour *et al.* 2018; Davari & Moini 2016), critical discourse analysis has been integral in several studies about social media discourse (Zahra 2019; Tegua 2019; Ott 2017; Rohma 2018). Farrelly (2019) suggested that analyzing how policymakers and legislators depicted social actors in writings might provide crucial insights into their understanding of the purposes of governance. According to Martin (2013), politicians applied linguistic techniques to express their thoughts and ideas to deliver their ideology implicitly, which significantly impacted their audience. As a result, the goal of CDA in political discourse is to figure out what politicians mean

when they say they are using language techniques to look at underlying ideologies. This study is based on the framework proposed by Van Dijk (1997).

According to Van Dijk (1997), ideologies are the fundamental principles of the socially shared portrayals of groups about themselves and their relationships with other groups, including membership requirements, activities, objectives, values, and critical group resources (p. 43). Furthermore, the ongoing social battle is depicted as Us Vs Them or Us Vs Others, resulting in polarization. In particular, there is a favorable self-presentation and a negative other-presentation. Van Dijk (1997) has offered a framework for analyzing ideologies to determine what lies beneath them. The analysis of ideologies involved several steps. The first step taken in the present study was the examination of the circumstances of the conversations. Secondly, the study looked at both positive and negative groups, such as *us* and *others*, who were involved in power struggles. Thirdly, both groups' assumptions and implications were examined. The final phase was to investigate all formal structures that either exacerbated or reduced divided group beliefs.

2.2. Analysis of Trump's Tweets

Donald Trump, one of the most active Twitter users, piqued the interest of certain scholars due to his unique take on tweets. Previous research has looked into his tweets in general (Piksar 2018; Tasente 2020) and in specificity (Bustan & Alakrash 2020; Yaqub *et al.* 2017), as well as the ideologies inherent in his Twitter posts (Darweesh & Abdullah 2016; Lockhart 2019; Zahra 2019). Many academics have looked into common expressions, discourse methods, and Trump's and others' representations in Trump's tweets. Tasente (2020) found the most common expressions in his tweets to determine communication orientation, laying the groundwork for future research. Piksar (2018) went on to look at Trump's discourse methods and how he and others are represented in his tweets. According to the findings, Trump aimed to depict himself positively by criticizing others or portraying them negatively through argumentation, nomination, and intensification. Mena García (2018) also noted Trump's use of metaphors to explain his ideas and his unfavorable portrayals of immigrants and bureaucrats. This work also revealed the primary features of Trump's tweets, such as brevity, recurrence, parataxis, and unreliable evidence. Similarly, Rohmah (2018) stated that Trump used repetitions, sarcasm, and pronouns to portray other groups in a negative light purposely and to portray himself positively.

There have been numerous studies on Trump's tweets in relation to specific events. Yaqub *et al.* (2017) analyzed the attitude and impact of Trump's and Hillary Clinton's tweets during the 2016 US presidential election and found that Trump gave out a more upbeat campaign message. Similarly, Schertzer and Woods (2021) looked at 5,515 tweets sent by Trump throughout the 2016 presidential campaign and discovered that most of them included populist and ethnic-nationalist themes. In addition, a study conducted by Tegua (2019) analyzed forty of Trump's tweets about the border wall and found that Trumpism incentivized individuals because of his animosity and discrimination against Mexicans in his tweets. This was done to establish the ideology that constructing the border wall was a "must." In addition, Trump's tweets were littered with prejudices. Trump's tweets about the California wildfires (Kerbleski, 2019) were also looked at. His tweets, characterized by numerous words, ambiguous agency, and capitalization, reflected a

national identity and authenticity philosophy. Bustan and Alakrash (2020) studied Trump's tweets about Middle Eastern countries and found that he preferred analogies, repetition, exaggeration, and modality in his Twitter posts. Also, the study found that he frequently used "us" to represent the United States' unity.

Furthermore, several of Trump's tweets have shown some distinct ideas. According to Darweesh and Abdullah (2016), he possessed a patriarchal perspective and indirectly exhibited male supremacy over females. Zahra (2019) adds that his tweets were also based on racism, Islamophobic, anti-immigrant, and anti-refugee sentiments. Furthermore, his tweets contained an anti-Muslim sentiment (Khan *et al.* 2019).

Overall, from the studies analyzed above, it is evident that some discourse tactics and numerous ideological perspectives were evidenced in Trump's Twitter posts (Mena García 2018; Tasente 2020; Tegua 2019; Zahra 2019). Trump's statements were usually accompanied by precise goals, which significantly impacted readers. According to Ross and Caldwell (2020), Trump employed negativity as a rhetorical political strategy. He did, however, use an evaluation system to attack and ridicule opponents. COVID-19 became a global pandemic in 2020 and was regularly mentioned on his personal Twitter account. However, few studies show what beliefs were encoded in COVID-19-related tweets. Surprisingly, there was a tenfold spike in the use of specific phrases on Twitter after his tweets referred to COVID-19 as the "Chinese virus" or "China virus" (Budhwani & Sun 2020).

On this foundation, the current study attempts to incorporate CDA into Trump's COVID-19-related tweets and respond to the following two **research questions**:

1. In his tweets about COVID-19, how does Donald Trump depict "we" and "others"?
2. What does Donald Trump's portrayal of "we" and "them" look like?

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

The data for this study related to the novel coronavirus COVID-19 was collected from Donald Trump's Twitter posts. In particular, a "Trump Twitter Archive" is located at <http://www.trumpTwitterarchive.com/>. This archive contains all of Donald Trump's tweets on his personal Twitter account @realDonaldTrump (permanently suspended on January 9, 2021). The study focused on data from January 2020 to May 2020. These dates were deemed appropriate as China reported the outbreak of the first case of COVID-19 around the beginning of this period. After first collecting all of the tweets posted on Trump's Twitter account during this period, I then collated the 128 COVID-19-related tweets for the present study. The tweets were numbered in the correct order from T001 to T128. Alongside this, a logbook for every tweet was created, including the number of likes, retweets, words, and comments. This was done to have a clear picture of the impact Donald Trump's tweets had on public opinion.

3.2. Data Analysis

After collecting all the data, a thematic analysis was undertaken using Van Dijk's proposed ideological framework (1997). The context and backdrop of the tweets were collected from the literature to answer the first study question. After that, all the groups, regions, and personalities

engaged, also known as actors, were determined, and all of the content about them was extracted. All of the involved actors were divided into two groups (*us-group* and *others-group*) after reading all of the references. Recurrent themes were discovered within each group, and the relevant contents were grouped to investigate the positive and negative depictions of *Us* and *Others*. To respond to the second research question, the study analyzed all the contents with specific meanings and implied ideologies. This was explicitly done to reveal the specific intentions and aims of the *us*-representation and *others*-representation. As such, the study succeeded in interpreting the different illustrations and ultimately comparing the study findings with previous similar studies.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Portrayal of “Us” and “Others”

The study collected and analyzed all the tweets. After the analysis, the descriptive statistics indicated that the average number of words in each Twitter post was about 38, while the average number of retweets was about 28,700. In addition, the average number of likes for the tweets was 41,900, while the average number of comments on each tweet was about 89,700. From the insights obtained from these descriptive statistics, it is clear that Donald Trump significantly influenced COVID-19 news (Yum 2020). This is because his tweets impacted the public interest and shaped people’s perceptions of COVID-19.

As postulated by Van Dijk’s (2006) critical analysis discourse framework, actors can be perceived as individuals or members of a particular group. After an intensive analysis of all the 128 collected tweets that were labelled from T001 to T128, it is evident that about 27 actors were portrayed as “us” while about 16 other actors were depicted as “others.” Notably, after all the related descriptions of each actor were grouped, this study found five recurrent themes related to the *us-group*. These themes are:

1. The portrayal of America as a monitor;
2. The portrayal of the United States as a winner;
3. The portrayal of the United States as superior;
4. The portrayal of Donald Trump as a hero;
5. The portrayal of Trump as an authority.

On the other hand, four themes were related to the *others-group*. These were:

1. Blaming of China;
2. Condemnation of the WHO;
3. The portrayal of the Democrats as incompetent;
4. The use of fake news media, as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Themes Related to Trump’s Tweets	
Categories with examples	Themes
1. United States as a monitor	Positive <i>us-</i> <i>group</i>

- Engage others	
- To monitor the unfolding events	
- Support others	
2. United States as a winner	
- The pandemic is under control	
- Only 5 people	
- Commendable job	
3. United States as superior	
- US have the best experts	
- US have the best testing of any other nation.	
- US have set a high standard	
4. Trump is a hero	
- Has done a commendable job from the start	
- Has instilled confidence to everyone	
5. Trump as an authority	
- He was right about the pandemic	
- There is fake news to be avoided	
1. China blamed	Negative others-group
- The virus was referred to as China virus or Chinese virus	
- It came from China	
- China is incompetent	
- China is to blame for the mass global killing	
2. WHO blamed	
- WHO ignored the pandemic	
- WHO is either inaccurate or misleading	
3. Democrats are incompetent	
- They do nothing	
- They just waste time	
- They harm others	
4. Fake news media	
- sources of disinformation	
- Fake news is prevalent	
- fake news goes beyond what factual information warrants	

4.1.2. The portrayal of the positive us-group

It is evident from Table 1 that Donald Trump's tweets endowed the *us*-group with positive messages. One of the indicators of positive representation is evidenced through the portrayal of the *us*-group as the **monitor**. For example, a tweet extracted from T002 indicated that the United States was "in very close communication with China" and "strongly on watch." This was a clear indication that the *us*-group was monitoring how China was handling the COVID-19 situation, and that the *us*-group was watching the COVID-19 cases reported in the United States. In addition, the *us*-group was checking the pandemic information and kept track of how others were handling the situation. Also, in tweet T003, it was noted that the "*us*-group continues to monitor the ongoing developments." This also revealed the theme of the *us*-group as the monitor.

Another prevalent theme from Trump's tweets is the portrayal of the United States as a **winner**. Most of his tweets revealed that he had a positive attitude towards the pandemic since he believed that he would be able to contain the spread of COVID-19. For instance, Tweet 4, T004 reads, "The coronavirus is very much under control in the USA," and "only five people" have been reported to have contracted the virus. He tweeted this on 30th January, when the pandemic was still new. This probably means that by this time, only five COVID-19 cases had been reported in the United States, and they were all in a stable condition. It is also worthy of note that from the analysis, it is evident that Trump had full confidence that the United States would win the war against the pandemic, given that it had handled the situation excellently. For instance, to show the commendable job that had been done, Trump tweeted that the United States was "getting great marks for the handling of the pandemic," as seen in tweet 108 (T108). Also, Tweet 95 (T095) indicated that the commitment of the US to helping other countries had "saved many lives with our fast action." This implied that the United States had won the war against the pandemic because of its sheer hard work.

The third theme from the tweets depicts the United States as a **superior nation** compared to other nations when it comes to the handling of COVID-19. In particular, Trump's tweets insinuated that the United States had higher quality experts and testing procedures compared to other countries across the globe. This is evidenced in Tweet 3 (T003), which indicated that the United States had "the best experts in the world," while Tweet 101 (T101) said that "our testing is so much better than any other country." Furthermore, Tweet 107 (T107) said that the White House Corona Virus Task Force "had done a commendable job which will set a high standard for others to follow." This implied that the United States has surpassed all the other countries around the globe in terms of the testing process and experts. This indicated that the United States was superior.

In addition, the analysis of Trump's tweets depicts him as a **hero** because of his enormous achievements in handling the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, T059 and T018 are full of praise for the job he had done since the outbreak of the pandemic, including his apt decision to close the borders to China. T105 compared the United States with Mexico and, in particular, argued that California residents were "so lucky" to be ruled by him as their President, which implied that he had done a commendable job compared to the Mexican leadership. Furthermore, Trump showcased his attributes, such as care for others and courage in making decisions. For instance, in T114, Trump praised himself for taking some of the preventive measures despite opposition

from others, and commented that this “made everybody look good” and ultimately saved lives. These findings are consistent with Kerbleski’s (2019) study that found that one of the recurring themes in Trump’s tweets was that he advocated for cultural heroism. According to American culture, heroes are individuals who are appreciated, respected, brave, and respond quickly in times of danger and tragedy.

Lastly, the analysis of the collected tweets reveals that Trump perceived himself as having the **power and authority** to influence the opinions, thoughts, and behaviors of others. For instance, in T008, he wrote that “I was right,” which reveals that he always believed his decision to be correct while his arguments were subjective. Similarly, in T016, Trump’s tweet supported his judgement when he stated that “as I say, they are Fake News!”. As postulated by Van Dijk (2006), in an argument, the majority of the people tend to refer to the authorities to support their arguments. In this case, the authorities refer to people who have high ranks in party politics or generally people who are experts in a particular area or are moral leaders. In this study, Donald Trump referred to himself as an authority, and thus he had the power to make judgements.

4.1.3. *The portrayal of the Negative Others-group*

In his tweets, Trump referred to *others* in a negative light. **China is one of the others-group blamed** for the outbreak of COVID-19. For instance, from the analyzed tweets, “China virus” and “Chinese virus” appeared nine times. The WHO Best Practices for the Naming of New Human Infectious Diseases, provided in May 2015, postulates that when naming a disease, geographic locations such as regions, continents, cities, and countries should not be included. For instance, names such as Rift Valley fever, Japanese encephalitis, Lyme disease, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, and Spanish flu should be excluded from the naming of the diseases. Therefore, Trump’s reference to COVID-19 as a “Chinese virus” or “China virus” was inappropriate. However, according to Van Dijk (2006), propositions may be used since they are assumed to be true or known. However, not all propositions are true. As such, Trump’s naming of COVID-19 reveals racist remarks. This implies that referring to the virus as the “Chinese virus” or the “China virus” presumes that the United States was just a victim of the virus since they had nothing to do with it. Van Dijk (2006) adds that *others*, as used by Trump, tend to be expressed negatively, especially when associated with threats. Therefore, the *us-group* is represented as a victim. Similarly, in Tweet 118, Trump blamed China for being responsible for the global deaths. This was not true. Interestingly, in this tweet, China was represented positively, but it was later represented negatively. One of the underlying reasons for this trend is that the United States had few cases when the pandemic broke initially, but it later turned out to have the largest number of cases across the globe. Therefore, Trump put all the blame on China for the outbreak of COVID-19 and, in this case, insinuated that the United States was the main victim.

Another recurring theme from the tweets towards the negative *others*-groups was **blame for the World Health Organization (WHO)** for the outbreak of the virus. Trump used the “wh”-words such as “why” to blame the WHO for misleading or inaccurate information. For instance, T086 reads, “Why did WHO make several claims about the Corona Virus that are either inaccurate or misleading...?”, and T087 reads “Why did the WHO wait as long as it did to take

decisive action?" Trump used these "wh"-words to question the WHO's credibility and accountability in relation to measures taken to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

It can also be shown that **the Democrats**, as the opposition party to the Republicans, **were described as incompetent**. In the 128 tweets under examination, Trump tweeted "They Do Nothing ..." to describe the Democrats 5 times, while the Democrats in total were mentioned 12 times. He chose the nickname "The Do Nothing Democrats" to show them up as incompetent. T018 also showed the Democrats being blamed by him for wasting time on the Immigration Hoax and making trying to make the Republicans look bad. As was known to all, Trump belonged to the Republican Party, which is the "us-group". So in his tweets he described the Democrats as incompetent.

The last theme evident in the negative *others*-group is the presence of **Fake News media**. From the majority of the tweets analyzed, there are several news media that were described as "fake news". According to Trump's view, the fake news exaggerated COVID-19 news and thus made it look worse than it was. For instance, in Tweets 24 and 31, Trump criticized the MSDNC for its poor coverage of the situation; the MSDNC covered "the Corona Virus situation horribly", and this had the ability to "do harm to the incredible and successful efforts being made." In addition, Trump criticized other fake news media for exaggerating the coronavirus situation by arguing that these media organizations provided "far beyond what the facts would warrant." Group-talk is frequently defined by another overall tactic, namely in-group favoring or "positive self-presentation," whether or not it is used in conjunction with out-group denigrations (Chiluwa & Ajiboye 2015; Van Dijk 1997, 2006; Van Holm *et al.* 2020). This may be used to imply that a person is emphasizing the positive attributes of their group, such as their country and party. In the context of Donald Trump's Twitter posts related to COVID-19, his tweets were meant to positively depict himself by emphasizing that he had done credibly well in mitigating the adverse effects of COVID-19. Furthermore, since it is built on the positive self-schema that defines a group's ideology, positive self-portrayal is essentially ideological. As indicated in Van Dijk's (1997) four squares, negative *others*-depiction also serves to accentuate the positive features of the *us*-group. Therefore, from the perception created by Donald Trump in his tweets about the *us*-group and the *others*-group, the negative portrayal of the *others* and positive portrayal of *us* were meant to show his emphasis on the importance of nationalism and, more importantly, cultural heroism, as evidenced in previous research such as Kerbleski (2019).

4.2. Representation Strategies for Us and Others

After collecting and analyzing Donald Trump's tweets related to *us*-groups and *others*-groups after the outbreak of COVID-19, it is evident that he employed different strategies to positively depict the *us*-group and negatively portray the *others*-group. Some of the major strategies employed include comparison, capitalization, analogies, rebuttal, and repetition.

In terms of rebuttals or argumentation, it is important to support the opinions or the ideas brought forward with credible information. According to Van Dijk (2006), opinions should be followed by a series of premises or assertions that make the argument more plausible and credible based on specific rules, attitudes and values. For instance, in Donald Trump's tweets, he used the

Aside from using specific words for evaluation, Trump compared his decisions and actions taken to mitigate the outbreak of COVID-19 with actions taken by the Democrats. For instance, in T018, Trump argued that “The Do Nothing Democrats were busy wasting time on the Immigration Hoax” while he was busy calling for early border and flight closings which were thought to be the right decision. In particular, Trump emphasized that his quick action and appropriate decisions helped “us” (America) to be ahead in the fight against COVID-19. Similarly, Trump compared the measures taken after the outbreak of swine flu in 2009 with the measures taken after the outbreak of COVID-19. He argued that former President Barack Obama “took six months to declare a national emergency and killed about 12,000 Americans” (T042). On the other hand, since he took swift and early actions, the impact of COVID-19 was not severe since it caused fewer deaths. In this context, Trump intended to convince people that he was successful in handling the pandemic compared to President Obama. However, based on the number of reported cases and deaths, death tolls increased daily and unexpectedly.

In another tactic, Trump used capitalization in his tweets to emphasize the quick and successful measures and actions he had taken to mitigate the adverse effects of COVID-19. For instance, from the 128 tweets analyzed, Trump described the *us-group* with the capitalized adjective GREAT five times, and VERY was also used five times. These findings are consistent with previous studies such as Van Dijk (2006) and Kerbleski (2019), which indicate that capitalization is used when emphasizing a particular subject matter. For instance, the word “GREAT” was used to praise and appreciate what the *us-group* had done, while the “VERY” was used to confirm and strengthen the argument that the early and viable actions to contain the virus were successful.

In addition, Donald Trump used metaphors or analogies to showcase his ideologies and represent his strategy. A metaphor is a linguistic device where a phrase or a word is used in an action or a place where it is not usually applied (Elaf & Hussien 2020; Bustan & Alakrash 2020). For instance, in T127, Trump used the terms “bad gift” and “enemy” to arouse the audience’s hatred towards COVID-19 and the *others-group*, which referred to China.

Furthermore, Donald Trump used repetition in his Twitter posts to positively represent the *us-group* and depict the *others-group* negatively. For instance, Trump used positive words to describe the *us-group*. Some of these words include “we” 51 times, “good” 16 times, “great” 38 times, and first-person pronouns 136 times. On the other hand, he used negative words to refer to the *others-group*. Some of these words include “it” 34 times, “Chinese virus” 8 times, “they” 30 times, “their” 17 times, and third-person pronouns 95 times. The use of repetition is consistent with previous studies such as Bustan and Alakrash (2020), Kreis (2017) and Kerbleski (2019), which found that repetition is used to create emphasis. Therefore, repetition was meant to differentiate between the *us-group* and the *others-group*.

Therefore, Trump’s capitalization strategies, analogies, repetition, and argumentation were effective in negatively representing the *others-group* and positively portraying the *us-group* in relation to COVID-19. This supports Van Dijk’s (1997) ideological square: (1) stress “our” good attributes/actions, (2) stress “their” bad properties/actions, (3) reduce “our” negative attributes,

and (4) downplay “their” good attributes. As a result, the concept of in-group liking and out-group rejection is used to alter meanings structurally (Chiluwa & Ajiboye, 2015).

The technique of presenting a positive *us-group* is likewise related to Bhatia’s (2006) three main strategies: (1) to find common ground or understanding between two ideologically opposed ideologies. The words “us” occurs 51 times, and “together” appears 13 times in tweets; for example, it is a positive depiction of “us” compared to “others.” (2) to show gratitude and admiration based on political considerations. For instance, the word “great job” appeared 14 times to praise the *us-group*. (3) to suggest a successful future partnership.

5. Conclusion and Research’s Implication

This study adopted a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methodology to investigate the underlying meaning behind Donald Trump’s tweets during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that Trump positively described the *us-group* while at the same time negatively depicting the *others-group*. He succeeded in portraying the two groups using strategies such as repetition, metaphor, comparison, capitalization, and argumentation. In this context, the *us-group* referred to America while the *others-group* represented China. For example, he initially used positive language to describe and commend China for its hard effort and excellent response to the COVID-19 outbreak, but then he used many negative expressions to characterize and condemn China for its negligence and mass deaths.

The study’s key findings should aid in critical thinking about political discourse. Generally, ideologies are neither correct nor incorrect but more or less effective in advancing a group’s interests. The fundamental social purpose of ideologies is the coordination of the social behavior of a group’s members to effectively accomplish a social group’s goals and protect and advance its interests. This holds for internal groups’ social behaviors and interactions with other groups. As a result, when analyzing political speech, we must identify all the people engaged and group the connected descriptions to uncover concealed ideology. Furthermore, the good and negative portrayals of the people should be considered since they paint a distinct picture of “us” and “them.” The tactics of *us*-portrayal and *others*-portrayal can help one figure out what is being insinuated.

There are several implications for future research. Firstly, the current analysis solely included posts published by Donald Trump, with retweets from his account being eliminated. Further research should collect all of his COVID-19-related retweets to analyze their contents and purposes and determine what is considered legitimate content in his Twitter posts and what ideologies are implied. Secondly, to acquire a more in-depth discourse analysis of the ideologies at hand, it would be preferable to interview several Twitter users on their opinions of Donald Trump’s tweets to explore their ideological effect on the public. Finally, it may be worthwhile to examine the replies to Donald Trump’s retweets, as the language in the comments may reveal a significant relationship with the ideas of the original tweets. Therefore, it is essential to examine the influence of Trump’s tweets about COVID-19 on the perspectives of Twitter users by analyzing their comments.

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