



# Platform Affordances and Political Epistemologies: A Cross-Platform Critical Discourse Analysis of Conservative Communication on Truth Social and Reddit

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إمكانيات المنصات والنظريات المعرفية السياسية: تحليل نقدي للخطاب عبر

المنصات للتواصل المحافظ على منصتي Truth Social وReddit

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyzes conservative political communication within the context of cross-platform critical discourse analysis (CDA) and examines the platforms of Truth Social and Reddit. It is based on a corpus of 480 publicly available posts; 240 were collected on each of the two platforms, and it uses the three-dimensional model of discourse (Fairclough, 1995), the socio-cognitive discourse framework (Van Dijk, 1998), and the populism theory (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017) to identify and compare the dominant rhetorical and linguistic patterns. The results reveal that the posts made on the Truth Social platform have higher rates of affective intensification, framing of grievance, epistemic distrust, and populist othering, while posts made on Reddit demonstrate more policy deliberation, evidence citation, hedged arguments, and reasoned critique. The study is based on the idea that these differences were the result of two different kinds of political epistemologies, not ideology. Discussion about implications for digital discourse studies, applied linguistics and democratic communication.

**Keywords:** critical discourse analysis, conservative discourse, Truth Social, Reddit, grievance politics, populism, platform affordances, digital rhetoric, political epistemology

## 1 .INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms not only transmit political messages, they also help to create the messages. The features of a platform can provide specific conditions and incline certain types of communication over others (Bucher & Helmond, 2018; Gillespie, 2014). In the realm of American conservatives, two platforms have emerged as significant spaces for political expression: Truth Social, Trump's former president's media company, which was founded in February 2022, and Reddit, a site with massive conservative communities in its subreddits like r/Conservative, r/Republican, and r/AskConservatives. These two platforms target a similar ideological audience, but employ different structural principles to their work which makes them an excellent combination to compare them linguistically.



Scholars have documented the growth of what is variously called "populist communication" (Engesser et al., 2017), "grievance politics" (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018), and "identity-expressive political speech" (Settle, 2018) in right-wing digital spaces. However, very little of the research currently undertaken addresses the variation of conservative online discourse produced by the platforms themselves, or a single one of them (Benkler et al., 2018; Munn, 2020). This study aims to fill that gap by systematically comparing the conservative discourse in two structurally different but ideologically aligned platforms, using a corpus-based approach.

The analytical framework is a triangulation of Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model (1995), Van Dijk's (1998) ideological square and Charteris-Black's critical metaphor analysis (2014), as well as Papacharissi's (2015) notion of affective publics. These tools enable the study to shift from a narrow focus on language to a wider sociopolitical perspective. Coding the corpus for eight discourse features, six rhetorical strategies and seven quantitative linguistic variables, six patterns of pronouns and deictics and six conceptual metaphors revealed a multi-layered picture of how context in the platform influences political language.

## 2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The conservative political communities today communicate via various media - of very different technical design and social norm - with each other. When it comes to the general nature of their users, Truth Social was designed as a space for users to be largely Trump supporters and with a low-moderation system, while Reddit has a more diverse user base with users of all ideologies moderating its content, and the up/down vote system also typically makes it easier for people to upvote content they like and down vote content they don't like. Yet, the discourse of conservatives has remained treated as one and the same in scholarly and journalistic accounts of conservative communication, despite these structural differences. This is a substantial analytical issue: it is possible that there is variation in the language of conservatives on different platforms—be it in style or in the way that political claims are formulated and justified (Benkler et al., 2018; Munn, 2020; Ahmed, 2021); existing research has paid little attention to this platform design variable.



This is not only a theoretical, but also a practical issue. Whether grievance-based, emotionally-laden language is the result of ideology, platform architecture, or both is important to understanding the health of democratic discourse online (Brady et al., 2017; Sunstein, 2017). This is also relevant for applied linguistics, because CDA has historically studied discourse in stable, institutional contexts like parliament, or the press (Wodak, 2015; Fairclough, 1995); extending this to algorithmic mediated, platform-based digital contexts calls for methodological and theoretical advance (Georgakopoulou, 2017; Page et al., 2014). Both needs are addressed in this study, which has a comprehensive, purposely sampled corpus and is a rigorous cross-platform linguistic comparison.

### **3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **3.1 Overarching Aim**

This study aims to identify, describe, and explain the discursive and linguistic differences between conservative political communication on Truth Social and Reddit, focusing on how platform-specific affordances and community norms produce divergent rhetorical and epistemic styles within the same ideological community.

#### **3.2 Specific Objectives**

The study pursues the following five objectives:

1. To identify the main discourse features, rhetorical strategies, and linguistic variables in conservative posts on each platform using a CDA-informed coding scheme based on Van Dijk (1998), Fairclough (1995), and Wodak (2015).
2. To compare the frequency and function of grievance-centred versus policy-centred discourse across both platforms using both quantitative frequency counts and qualitative close reading.
3. To explain observed differences by connecting them to the specific platform affordances of each site, drawing on platform studies theory (Bucher & Helmond, 2018; Gillespie, 2014; Papacharissi, 2015).
4. To analyse pronoun patterns and conceptual metaphors as indicators of how political identity and ideological framing differ across platforms.
5. To contribute to the methodological development of digital CDA by demonstrating the value of cross-platform corpus comparison in applied linguistics research (Baker, 2006; Mautner, 2009).

#### **3.3 Research Questions**

The study is guided by three research questions:

- RQ1: What are the main rhetorical and linguistic features of conservative discourse on Truth Social and Reddit, and how do they differ?



- RQ2: To what extent does grievance-centred language dominate on Truth Social compared to Reddit, and what platform features explain this?
- RQ3: What do these cross-platform differences reveal about the relationship between platform design, political language, and democratic deliberation?

## 4. METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is a mixed research method, which is a combination of corpus assisted discourse analysis (Baker, 2006) and close text analysis based on CDA. This method, recommended for digital discourse research (Mautner, 2009; Partington, 2006), enables the study to detect statistically significant patterns in the whole text as well as the linguistic mechanisms that govern the patterns in each individual posts. The three-dimensional model developed by Fairclough (1995) is the central analytical framework that takes into account three factors: text, discursive practice and socio-cultural context. In the sub-analyses reported in Sections 5.6 and 5.7 the ideological square model of Van Dijk (1998) and the critical metaphor analysis of Charteris-Black (2014) are used.

### 4.2 Data Collection and Sampling

This corpus consisted of public posts on Truth Social and Reddit from January to December 2023. Truth Social data were obtained using the public API, Reddit data were obtained from the r/Conservative, r/Republican, and r/AskConservatives subreddits using PushShift (Baumgartner et al., 2020) and the official Reddit API. To ensure coverage of a spectrum of topics (immigration, economic policy, criticism of the media, and cultural politics), user experience levels, and engagement levels, 240 posts were selected from each platform using maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2015). Posts with less than 20 words or in which it was not clear whether the text carried political content were excluded. The final collection is made up of 480 main posts and 1,920 comment threads, an approximate total of 186,000 words. All user names were anonymised according to the ethical guidelines of the Association of Internet Researchers (AIR) (Franzke et al., 2020), and only public posts were considered.

### 4.3 Coding and Analysis Procedure



There were three stages of analysis. Two trained annotators, each, independently coded each post on eight discourse features (Table 1) that were inductively determined from a pilot reading of 50 posts per platform, and then modified based on a comparison with existing CDA taxonomies. Inter-rater reliability was high (Cohen's kappa  $\kappa = .81$ ; Landis & Koch, 1977). For Stage 2, the differences in frequency between platforms were tested for statistical significance with chi-square tests, and the effect size was quantified with Cramér's V. Selected posts were analysed in depth for lexical choice, the use of modals, pronouns, rhetorical questions and conceptual metaphor in Stage 3. Throughout, keyword searches and frequency lists were conducted using the corpus analysis tool AntConc 4.2 by Anthony (2022) and concordance analysis was used for the same purpose.

## 5. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### 5.1 Overview of Discourse Features by Platform

Table 1: Summary of the eight discourse features that were found in both platforms. The greatest differences are in affective intensifiers (85% of Truth Social users vs. 39% of Reddit users), grievance framing (78% vs. 41%), and epistemic distrust (72% vs. 55%). Reddit shows much higher rates of policy critique (74% vs. 44%), evidence citation (68% vs. 31%), and hedging (46% vs. 12%). All of these differences are statistically significant ( $p < .01$  or lower) and represent two very different approaches to conservative political communication.

**Table 1** *Discourse Features: Frequency Comparison Across Platforms*

Discourse Feature	Definition	TS Sample	Reddit Sample	Freq. TS (%)	Freq. Reddit (%)	Pragmatic Function
Grievance Framing	Positioning self/group as victim of systemic injustice	"They are coming for our rights"	"System rigged against working people"	78%	41%	Identity solidarity; mobilisation
Enemy Naming	Direct labelling of outgroup as malevolent agents	"Marxist media"	"corporate Democrats"	69%	38%	Threat construction; us/them divide
Nostalgia	Invoking	"What we	"Before	61%	27%	Temporal



Appeals	an idealised past as normative standard	lost"	woke policies ruined everything "			legitimation; affective bonding
Epistemic Distrust	Casting doubt on mainstream knowledge institutions	"Fake news lying again"	"MSM won't cover this"	72%	55%	Counter-narrative construction
Policy Critique	Evaluating legislative or executive action	"Biden's bill will bankrupt us"	"This tax policy redistributes wealth upward"	44%	74%	Reasoned opposition; deliberation
Evidence Citation	Reference to data, statistics, or named sources	"Inflation up 9.1%"	"According to the BLS report..."	31%	68%	Epistemic credibility building
Hedging	Markers of tentativeness or qualification	"Maybe, but elites won't admit it"	"I could be wrong, but the data suggests..."	12%	46%	Intellectual modesty; face-saving
Affective Intensifiers	Lexical items amplifying emotional charge	"DISGUSTING TRAITORS!!!"	"honestly infuriating "	85%	39%	Emotional contagion; crowd solidarity

*Note.* Frequencies represent percentage of posts exhibiting each feature (N = 240 per platform). TS = Truth Social.

### 5.2 Grievance Framing and Victimhood Narration on Truth Social

Truth Social posts consistently combined multiple grievance-related features in a single post. Two representative samples illustrate this pattern.

#### Sample 1 (Truth Social, immigration thread, March 2023):



*They let millions of ILLEGALS pour across our border, give them hotels, give them phones, and then tell US hard-working Americans that we need to tighten our belts. This is NOT accidental. This is REPLACEMENT. Wake up.*

This post illustrates the "positive self-presentation / negative other-presentation" structure Van Dijk (1998) highlights as fundamental to the creation of ideology. The words ILLEGALS and REPLACEMENT are capitalized, characteristic of affective intensifiers (Zappavigna, 2012), and to the reference of conspiratorial narratives. The binary of the populist they versus the suffering people (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017) is demonstrated in the contrast between they and US. The call to action "Wake up" indeed invites readers as fooled participants, something that can be classified as audience design as described by Atkinson (1984). The answer is the word "REPLACEMENT", which is not asserted, but can allow insinuation (Grice, 1975).

### **Sample 2 (Truth Social, media criticism thread, July 2023):**

*CNN LIES again!!! They covered the protests wall to wall but ignored HUNTER BIDEN for 3 years. TOTAL BLACKOUT. The fake news industrial complex is the enemy of the people and must be treated as such. No more Mr Nice Guy.*

This post merges three features of Table 1: epistemic distrust ('CNN LIES' and 'fake news industrial complex'), enemy naming ('enemy of the people'), and affective intensification (capitalisation and exclamation marks). An "enemy of the people" evokes a quasi-legal menace that grants an excuse for confrontational action. The phrase "must be treated as such" is open-ended as to what it means and calls for such treatment (Grice, 1975). The 'for 3 years' 'establishes a contended claim as a shared knowledge, a process characteristic of ideological naturalisation' (van Dijk, 1998; Fairclough, 1995).

### **5.3 Policy Deliberation and Evidential Reasoning on Reddit**

Reddit threads in the corpus showed a markedly different rhetorical profile. Even when clearly partisan, posts tended to include evidence, acknowledge complexity, and hedge claims.

### **Sample 3 (r/Conservative, economic policy thread, April 2023):**

*The CBO scoring of the IRA showed a net 10-year deficit reduction of around \$300 billion, though that relies heavily on IRS enforcement projections that are historically optimistic. The real problem isn't the headline number it's that*



*the energy credits disproportionately benefit upper-income households with capital to invest. According to the Tax Policy Center analysis, the bottom quintile sees less than 3% of the direct benefits. That's not conservative or liberal, that's just distributive arithmetic.*

This is a good example of a “practical argument”, as Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) put it: a policy position supported by institutional evidence and arguments. The poster refers to a source (Congressional Budget Office), admits there's some uncertainty (“historically optimistic”), and hedges (“around \$300 billion”). The distancing gesture “that's not conservative or liberal” feigns a bipartisan neutrality, but makes an implicitly conservative statement. Technical vocabulary (“distributive arithmetic”) is used as a credibility resource, in the words of Bourdieu (1991), it brings “linguistic capital”.

**Sample 4 (r/AskConservatives, immigration thread, September 2023):**

*I think there's a legitimate case for stricter border enforcement that doesn't rely on xenophobic framing. Legal immigration caps haven't kept pace with labour market demand in specific sectors—agriculture, care work, construction. The empirical literature (e.g., Peri, 2012; Card, 1990) actually suggests minimal wage depression from low-skilled immigration. The stronger conservative argument is about rule of law and orderly processing, not cultural threat.*

This post is an example of what Habermas (1984) calls communicative rationality: the speaker anticipates what it is that he or she might hear the interlocutor objecting to, mentions empirical evidence, and does not resort to inflammatory framing. Concessive moves such as legitimate case... but show that a position is being argued although the position is open to discussion, as with edger phrases such as I think and actually suggests. This is very different from the Truth Social samples in terms of the standards for warranting the argument, rather than ideology.

**5.4 Rhetorical Strategies and Platform Affordances**

Table 2 maps six rhetorical strategies across both platforms, showing how the same basic political positions are expressed through different discursive forms depending on platform context.

**Table 2 Rhetorical Strategy Comparison: Truth Social vs. Reddit**

Rhetorical Strategy	Truth Social Instance	Reddit Instance	Platform Affordance	Discourse Function
Populist Othering	"Deep state puppets don't represent real	"Politicians serve donors, not	Low moderation; repost culture	Ingroup boundary reinforcement



	Americans"	voters"		
Victimhood Narration	"Censored AGAIN by Big Tech prove me wrong"	"Banned from r/news for asking a fair question"	No downvotes; flexible character limit	Martyrdom; counter-censorship protest
Conspiratorial Implicature	"You do the math. Why now? Who benefits?"	"Convenient timing. Just saying."	Anonymous posting; engagement loops	Deniable accusation
Policy Counterproposal	"We need energy independence, not green scams"	"Tariffs protect domestic labour—basic economics"	Long-form threading	Deliberative debate participation
Anecdotal Evidence	"My neighbour lost his job because of these policies"	"My family's premiums doubled since the ACA"	Personalisation features	Experiential legitimation
Coded Language	"Those people know what they're doing to this country"	"The usual suspects pushing this agenda"	Search-algorithm evasion	Deniable stigmatisation

*Note.* Instances are representative examples selected from the corpus. Platform affordance descriptions reflect documented design features of each platform. Row 3 (Conspiratorial Implicature) is especially revealing. On Truth Social, "You do the math. Why now? Who benefits?" deploys rhetorical questions that Levinson (1983) classifies as indirect speech acts they perform accusations rather than seek information. On Reddit, the attenuated form "Convenient timing. Just saying." hedges the same implicature. Both exploit Grice's (1975) maxim of relevance to suggest more than is literally stated, but the Reddit version is moderated by community norms that penalise unsupported claims through downvoting (Squirrell, 2019; Oliver & Rahn, 2016).

### 5.5 Quantitative Linguistic Patterns



Table 3 presents seven measurable linguistic variables that show statistically significant differences between the two platform subcorpora.

**Table 3** *Quantitative Linguistic Variables: Cross-Platform Comparison*

Linguistic Variable	Truth Social Mean	Reddit Mean	Significance (p)	Theoretical Frame
Caps-lock word frequency	3.4 per 100 words	0.6 per 100 words	$p < .001$	Affective intensification (Zappavigna, 2012)
Exclamation mark density	4.1 per post	0.9 per post	$p < .001$	Emotional contagion (Gill et al., 2020)
First-person plural (we/our)	14.2%	8.3%	$p < .001$	Collective identity construction (Wodak, 2015)
Negative emotion lexicon	22.8%	11.4%	$p < .01$	Fear/anger appeals (Ekman, 1999)
Hedging markers	4.1%	16.7%	$p < .001$	Epistemic modality (Hyland, 1996)
Named source citation	6.3%	21.9%	$p < .001$	Evidentiality norms (Biber & Finegan, 1989)
Rhetorical question marks	8.7%	3.2%	$p < .05$	Deniable accusation (Atkinson, 1984)

*Note.* Frequencies based on full corpus (N = 480 posts). Statistical significance computed using chi-square tests with continuity correction.



There are five times as many number of posts on a Truth Social that use caps-lock, and four times as many that use exclamation marks as there are on Reddit. These results support Gill et al.'s (2020) conclusion that affective typography serves as a paralinguistic device in digital writing, instead of tone of voice. There are four times as many Reddit posts that contain epistemic modals (might, could), approximators (around, roughly), and attributions (according to) as do other newsgroups. This resonates with Hedging's (1996) argument that hedging is a form of intellectual responsibility in communities where claims are publicly challenged. The lack of hedges on Truth Social is indicative of the fact that there is a community that values certainty and emotional clarity over qualification (Papacharissi, 2015; Engesser et al., 2017).

### 5.6 Pronoun and Deictic Analysis

Table 4 shows how pronoun choice and deictic expressions encode collective identity, enemy construction, and national belonging differently across the two platforms.

**Table 4** *Pronoun and Deictic Analysis: Cross-Platform Comparison*

<b>Pronoun / Deictic Form</b>	<b>TS Freq. (%)</b>	<b>Reddit Freq. (%)</b>	<b>TS Discourse Function</b>	<b>Reddit Discourse Function</b>	<b>Theoretical Basis</b>
1st-person plural (we/our/us)	14.2%	8.3%	Collective victimhood; ingroup solidarity	Deliberative coalition-building	Van Dijk (1998)
2nd-person singular (you/your)	11.8%	4.1%	Audience interpellation; direct recruitment	Instructional engagement; policy explanation	Fairclough (1995)
3rd-person plural (they/them)	18.4%	9.7%	Vague enemy construction; conspiracy licensing	Specific institutional critique	Wodak (2015)
Demonstrative 'these' + noun	9.6%	3.2%	Contemptuous proximal othering	Distancing analytical reference	Charteris-Black (2014)
Deictic 'this country'	7.3%	2.1%	Patriotic claim to national ownership	Occasional civic reference	Laclau (2005)
Generic 'real Americans'	6.1%	1.4%	Populist exclusion; defining the demos	Rare; typically in quotation	Mudde & Kaltwasser (2017)

*Note.* Frequencies represent percentage of posts containing each form (N = 240 per platform). TS = Truth Social.



The third-person plural they/them was used in 18.4% of posts on Truth Social, but in only 9.7% of Reddit posts. On Truth Social, this pronoun always refers to an indeterminate or unspecified “They” that millions of people across” (Sample 1); “They covered the protests” (Sample 2), leaving the referent unspecified for readers to fill in. This imprecision is noted by Van Dijk (1998) as a tool of ideology to allow for conspiratorial reading, but without responsibility. On Reddit, third person plural is usually used to refer to named institutional entities, such as "congressional Democrats" or "the Biden administration," and the critique is based on identifiable entities that can be countered on the basis of evidence.

**Sample 5 (Truth Social, cultural politics thread, November 2023):**

*I remember when you could say Merry Christmas without being called a bigot. When kids learned real history in school. When men were men and women were women. THEY took that from us. We are taking it BACK.*

The reiterated "When" constructs a list of lost cultural norms that Boym (2001) calls "restorative nostalgia" - more than mere remembrance it is a calling back to the past. It's about moving from a passive loss ("THEY took that from us") to active reclamation ("We are taking it BACK"). THEY and BACK are capitalised to give them emotional impact. The ambiguity of THEY is, as Laclau (2005) claims, productive ideologically; each reader can discover his own variant of the antagonistic populist structure. This pattern is systematic across the corpus (not just in the one post) as indicated in the pronoun data in Table 4.

**5.7 Conceptual Metaphor Analysis**

Table 5 presents the six most frequent conceptual metaphors identified through Charteris-Black's (2014) critical metaphor analysis, including representative instances from each platform.

**Table 5** *Conceptual Metaphor Analysis: Cross-Platform Comparison*

Conceptual Metaphor	TS Instance	Reddit Instance	Source Domain	Ideological Entailment
POLITICS IS WAR	"We are at war with the radical left. No quarter."	"This is a political battle we need to win strategically"	Military conflict	Legitimises zero-sum action; delegitimises compromise
NATION IS A BODY	"They are a cancer eating away at our nation"	"These policies are a disease spreading if unchecked"	Medicine / biology	Constructs outgroup as existential threat requiring removal
ELITES ARE PREDATORS	"These wolves in suits are	"Corporate interests feeding	Animal behaviour	Moralises economic



	preying on regular people"	off the middle class"		inequality as deliberate predation
IMMIGRATION IS INVASION	"Millions POURING across our border—an invasion"	"Current migration levels are overwhelming services"	Natural disaster / military	Constructs migrants as threatening force; licenses emergency action
CONSERVATIVES ARE SILENCED	"They are ERASING us from the public square"	"Conservative voices face disproportionate platform restrictions"	Deletion / erasure	Victimhood framing; justifies counter-mobilisation
POLICY IS THEFT	"They stole your tax dollars and gave it to illegals"	"This redistribution transfers wealth from productive sectors"	Property crime	Moralises policy disagreement as criminal act

*Note.* Instances are representative examples from the corpus. Metaphor identification follows Charteris-Black's (2014) critical metaphor analysis procedure.

The POLITICS IS WAR metaphor was the most common across both platforms but took notably different forms. Truth Social used unconditional war language ("No quarter") that forecloses all compromise, while Reddit instances framed the same metaphor strategically ("a battle we need to win strategically"), The idea of a calculated approach, at least, is preserved, in which case. Conceptual metaphors have a strong influence on the programme of action open to both speaker and audience: Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest that war as total annihilation suggests very different political behaviours than does war as strategic contest. In contrast to Samples 3, 4 and 7, NATION IS A BODY, which occurred much more frequently on Truth Social, entails a metaphor in which political opponents are seen as a disease that must be eradicated, and this is fundamentally inconsistent with the concessive argumentation that relies on evidence.

**Sample 6 (Truth Social, immigration thread, August 2023):**

*These globalists don't care about your family or your community. They care about cheap labour and open borders. Follow the money. Always follow the money.*



The term "globalists" is a coded word that has a history in far-right antisemitic rhetoric (Hawley, 2019), but has enough mainstream usage that it can be denied. The post can now count on "follow the money", a phrase that brings conspiratorial elite-finance narratives to mind, and is combined with "calculated ambivalence" (Wodak 2015, p. 74), which involves "activating ideological schemas without explicit endorsement of extremist claims. The direct address is also personalised and singles the reader out for communion with the threat by the second-person possessive "your family" found in the second-person analysis in Table 4 (Fairclough, 1995).

**Sample 7 (r/Conservative, healthcare policy thread, June 2023):**

*Look, I want universal coverage as much as the next person. But single-payer models in Canada and the UK show consistent problems with wait times and rationing. The Commonwealth Fund data suggests mixed outcomes depending on the metric. A market-competition model with targeted subsidies could achieve near-universal coverage without the administrative bloat of a federal system. I'm open to being wrong on the implementation details.*

In this post from Reddit, the author shows the features of the deliberative epistemic mode: a concessive opening that admits the opponent's aim (I want universal coverage), comparative evidence from named institutional sources (mixed outcomes), and a closing hedge (open to being wrong). This last step, an intellectual openness towards revision, is completely missing from the Truth Social subcorpus. Such evidential calibration is a sign of discourses that regard knowledge as provisional and contestable, as Biber and Finegan (1989) note. It is still ideologically conservative, but works within an argumentative way of doing things that allows for engagement without necessarily requiring solidarity.

**Sample 8 (Truth Social, economic thread, October 2023):**

*Bidenflation is DESTROYING our economy!! Gas prices UP. Groceries UP. Rent UP. Everything UP except your paycheck!!! These COMMUNISTS want you poor and dependent. That's the plan. ALWAYS HAS BEEN. Share this before they delete it!!*



This post collects almost all the features of the Truth social: capitalisation, multiple exclamation marks, grievance framing (DESTROYING our economy), enemy naming (COMMUNISTS), conspiratorial implicature (That's the plan. ALWAYS HAS BEEN), a call to action (Share this before they delete it!!) that does the censorship victim work and calls user to action to spread the message (Munn, 2023; Stanley, 2018). The serialised enumeration ("Gas prices UP. Groceries UP.") the list-like format of political rallies (Atkinson, 1984) making economic information 'emotional blows'. A lack of any type of hedging, source citation, or concession further shows the pattern quantified in Table 3 and reinforces the epistemic certainty that marks the discursive community of Truth Social (Brady et al., 2017).

## 6. DISCUSSION

### 6.1 What Platform Design Does to Political Language

The biggest discovery of this study is that there are significant differences in conservative political language across Truth Social and Reddit which aren't necessarily due to ideology. Self-identified conservatives with similar policy preferences are found on both platforms, but their rhetoric has very different emotional tones, epistemic styles, and rhetorical strategies. There is no content moderation, there is no downvoting system, and there is a very homogeneous audience on Truth Social, and all of these things reward emotionally charged, certainty-based communication that is "us versus them" (Papacharissi, 2015; Kreiss & McGregor, 2018). The platform does not just reinforce dominant trends—there is a metaphoric argument presented in Table 5 that the platform picks up on the fact that its most extreme versions—total war instead of strategic contest; existential threat instead of policy disagreement—are the ones it is picking up on. Moderation norms, oppositional readers, and a public display of negative comments mean that justification, source citation, and hedging are all encouraged in community settings, such as Reddit (Squirrell, 2019; Massanari, 2017). But this isn't true deliberative, it's just partisan Reddit, but it results in "deliberative partisanship", the ideology of a partisanship performed as reasoned argument. As Norman (1988) and Gibson (1979) first stated, affordances are action possibilities that are provided by an environment, but in this study, so are platform affordances, not only what people say, but how they justify it.

### 6.2 Two Ways of Knowing in Conservative Politics



The data indicates a more basic gap than rhetorical: two different ways of setting out what is supposed to be true and legitimate in political discourse. In truth social discourse, the validity of a claim is more about an emotional connection than evidence, and more about whether or not it aligns with ingroup identity (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018; Oliver & Rahn, 2016). The epistemology of Reddit, however, is a deliberative partisan one that requires a claim to be supported by evidence and reasoning, even as one holds to an ideology. This is no insignificant distinction. Rawls (1993) and Habermas (1996) said that reason-giving and openness to revision is essential for democratic legitimacy, while Mouffe (2005) contended that agonistic conflict is the real foundation of democratic politics. The NATION IS A BODY/DISEASE metaphor and the ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE framing that are present throughout the Truth Social corpus in fact contradict the conditions of Mouffe's agonism, where adversaries must be recognised as legitimate. The findings of this study are preliminary due to several limitations such as a single-year data base, English only focus, and a cross-sectional research design. Future work should expand the corpus over the course of electoral cycles, include multimodal elements (memes, images, embedded video), and consider other platforms like Telegram, Parler and Gab for a more comprehensive understanding of the right-wing digital discourse ecosystem (Georgakopoulou, 2017; Page et al., 2014).

## 7. CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that, according to analysis of 480 posts, five discourse tables, and eight corpus samples (annotated), conservative political discourse is significantly different on both Truth Social and Reddit. The discourse of affective intensity, the use of ambiguous enemy pronouns, war and disease metaphors, framing of grievance, and epistemic certainty dominate the Truth Social posts, creating a discourse of identity-expressive victimhood that helps consolidate in-group solidarity and stir up emotional action. Reddit posts, on the other hand, are also highly partisan, but exhibit greater policy deliberation, evidence citation, hedged claims, and explicit institutional attribution, to create a discourse of deliberative partisanship, albeit imperfectly, that has a relationship to standards of reasoned argument. These are not accidental or cosmetic, but are deliberately created by the design of each platform.



The broader message is that it is not possible to lump conservative online discourse together. Alongside ideology and sociolinguistic factors, platform architecture is a linguistic variable that needs to be taken into account in future studies in applied linguistics, discourse studies, and political communication. The growing number of platforms, each with its own set of affordances, community culture, and epistemic norms, will make it increasingly important to compare and contrast them across platforms, a task which will be facilitated by this comparative analysis by this writer.

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