

Evaluative Language and the Construction of Social Division: A Hypothetical Model Based on Appraisal Theory

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengusulkan sebuah model hipotetis untuk menjelaskan bagaimana fragmentasi sosial dikonstruksi secara diskursif melalui elemen evaluatif dalam bahasa. Berlandaskan teori konflik sosial dan konsep common enemy effect yang bersifat interdisipliner, usulan ini mengintegrasikan perspektif tersebut dengan Teori Appraisal dalam Linguistik Sistemik Fungsional. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif konseptual dengan penekanan pada sintesis teoretis, bukan pengumpulan data empiris, melalui pemetaan konsep fragmentasi sosial ke dalam subsistem Attitude, Graduation, dan Engagement. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa fragmentasi sosial muncul melalui konfigurasi unsur evaluatif yang berpola, meliputi penilaian moral terhadap kelompok luar, intensifikasi daya evaluatif, serta kontraksi dialogis yang membatasi perspektif alternatif. Mekanisme konfigurasi unsur evaluatif tersebut secara simultan membangun solidaritas kelompok dalam dan melegitimasi antagonisme terhadap pihak yang diposisikan sebagai musuh. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa Teori Appraisal menyediakan kerangka linguistik yang sistematis untuk menjelaskan fenomena common enemy effect serta menjadi landasan konseptual bagi penelitian empiris selanjutnya mengenai wacana, ideologi, dan kohesi sosial dalam konteks sosial kontemporer dan pendidikan global.

Kata Kunci :

Bahasa Evaluatif, Fragmentasi Sosial, Efek Musuh Bersama, Teori Appraisal, Analisis Wacana

ABSTRACT

This article proposes a hypothetical model to account for the discursive construction of social division through evaluative language. Integrating theories of social conflict and the common enemy effect with Appraisal Theory from Systemic Functional Linguistics, the study adopts a qualitative conceptual approach that emphasizes theoretical synthesis over empirical data collection. Social division is mapped onto the Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement subsystems, revealing that it emerges from patterned configurations such as moral judgment of out-groups, intensification of evaluative force, and restriction of alternative perspectives. The model elucidates mechanisms underlying polarization in political, social, and educational contexts, and demonstrates how Appraisal Theory provides a systematic linguistic framework for future research linking macro-level social theories with micro-level language analysis.

Keywords:

Evaluative Language, Social Division, Common Enemy Effect, Appraisal Theory, Discourse Analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

Social division has become increasingly prevalent in contemporary societies, particularly during periods of political conflict, crisis, or external threat. Empirical research indicates that collective unity often arises in response to a shared adversary, a phenomenon termed the common enemy effect. This effect demonstrates that external threats can foster in-group cohesion while intensifying hostility toward out-groups. Although various disciplines have examined the causes of social division, comparatively less attention has been paid to the linguistic mechanisms through which social division is constructed and sustained. Consequently, existing scholarship offers greater insight into the causes of social division than into the discursive processes by which it is realized.

Classical sociological theory conceptualizes conflict not merely as a destructive force, but as a functional mechanism that reinforces group boundaries and internal solidarity. Coser (2001) argues that external conflict plays a stabilizing role within social systems by clarifying collective identity and

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strengthening internal cohesion. Similarly, Simmel's relational view of social organization emphasizes that groups define themselves through opposition, with the identification of an enemy functioning as a key mechanism in the structuring of social affiliations (Macrae & Simmel, 1955). These perspectives establish social division as a structurally embedded outcome of group formation rather than an incidental by-product of conflict.

Social psychological research further substantiates this view by demonstrating how perceived threats activate evaluative processes that intensify in-group favoritism and out-group differentiation. Empirical studies, such as the Robbers Cave experiment, show that intergroup hostility increases under competitive conditions, whereas cooperation emerges when groups confront a shared external threat (Sherif et al., 1961). Social identity theory explains this process as a function of evaluative categorization, whereby positive self-representation is achieved by negatively evaluating the out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). These accounts foreground evaluation as a central mechanism in social division, yet they do not explicitly address the linguistic resources through which such evaluations are expressed and circulated.

From a cognitive perspective, theories of balance and threat further illuminate the evaluative foundations of social division. Heider's balance theory proposes that individuals strive for cognitive consistency in their social evaluations, resulting in stable configurations of friendship and enmity (Heider, 1946). Terror management theory similarly suggests that existential threat heightens the need for moral certainty and group affirmation, often leading to intensified negative evaluations of perceived out-groups (Greenberg et al., 1986; Becker, 1973). Together, these approaches suggest that social division is sustained through patterned evaluative processes rather than isolated attitudes.

More recent interdisciplinary work has formalized the common enemy effect through economic and game-theoretical models. De Jaegher and Hoyer (2016) demonstrate that external threats can alter coordination dynamics, increasing collective action under certain conditions. Subsequent syntheses highlight the robustness of the common enemy effect across diverse contexts, including harsh environments, network disruption, and collective adversity (De Jaegher, 2019a, 2019b, 2021; Haller & Hoyer, 2019; Hoyer & De Jaegher, 2023). However, these models largely abstract away from discourse, treating cooperation and division as outcomes of incentives and strategic interaction rather than communicative alignment.

While social theory explains the structural and psychological conditions under which social division emerges, discourse-oriented studies reveal how these dynamics are enacted linguistically, particularly in political communication. A growing body of research demonstrates that political leaders routinely employ discursive strategies to construct positive self-representation and negative other-representation, especially during periods of crisis or conflict (Abbadi et al., 2024; Awawdeh & Al-Abbas, 2023; Kakisina et al., 2022; Maani et al., 2022; Ross & Caldwell, 2020). These studies show that polarization is achieved through evaluative contrast, moral judgment, and strategic framing. However, much of this research relies on broad critical discourse analysis frameworks that identify ideological patterns but do not provide a systematic model of evaluative meaning.

This limitation points to the need for a finer-grained linguistic framework capable of explaining how evaluation, alignment, and intensification operate together in discourse. Appraisal Theory, developed within Systemic Functional Linguistics, offers such a framework by conceptualizing evaluative meaning through the subsystems of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation (Martin & White, 2005). By modeling how speakers encode moral judgment, manage dialogic space, and scale evaluative force, Appraisal Theory provides a principled basis for analyzing the linguistic construction of social division. Previous applications of Appraisal Theory to political and social discourse demonstrate its effectiveness in revealing ideological alignment and evaluative positioning (Macken-Horarik & Isaac, 2014; Martin & Rose, 2007).

In contemporary societies, the construction of social division through discourse has become increasingly salient due to the expansion of mass media, digital communication, and transnational political narratives. Evaluative language circulates rapidly across platforms, shaping public perception and influencing how social actors, institutions, and groups are morally assessed. In such contexts, polarization is not merely the result of conflicting interests, but is actively produced and reinforced through repeated evaluative framings that normalize antagonistic positions and marginalize alternative interpretations. As a consequence, discourse plays a central role in sustaining social division by continuously rearticulating boundaries between "us" and "them."

From an educational and societal perspective, this phenomenon raises important concerns about critical literacy and civic engagement. When evaluative discourse frames social conflict as morally absolute and closed to dialogue, audiences may be discouraged from reflective or critical interpretation. Understanding how evaluative meanings are constructed, intensified, and presented as unquestionable is essential for fostering critical awareness, especially in educational contexts where discourse transmits social values and ideologies. A clear linguistic account of evaluative mechanisms can support the development of analytical tools that help learners and citizens recognize how language shapes social alignment and division.

Despite growing attention to polarization and ideological conflict in discourse studies, much existing research continues to focus on identifying rhetorical strategies or ideological themes without fully explicating the evaluative architecture that underpins them. This limitation underscores the need for a systematic linguistic framework capable of explaining how social division is produced at the level of meaning rather than merely observed at the level of content. Addressing this need, the present study advances a hypothetical model grounded in Appraisal Theory to conceptualize social division as a discursive outcome of patterned evaluative choices. By foregrounding evaluative language as a central mechanism in the construction of social division, the study situates linguistic analysis as a key contributor to broader discussions of discourse, society, and education.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative conceptual research design to develop a hypothetical model of social division constructed through evaluative language. Instead of generating empirical data or testing hypotheses statistically, the study focuses on theoretical synthesis and analytical modeling, integrating insights from social conflict theory, discourse studies, and Appraisal Theory. This design aligns with interpretive qualitative inquiry, which prioritizes meaning, theoretical coherence, and analytical depth over measurement and generalization (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Santosa, 2021).

The primary analytical framework used in this study is Appraisal Theory, developed within the tradition of Systemic Functional Linguistics. Appraisal Theory is selected because it provides a systematic account of evaluative meaning in discourse, enabling analysis of how speakers encode attitudes, negotiate alignment with audiences, and intensify or soften evaluative positions (Martin & White, 2005). The framework conceptualizes evaluation through three interrelated subsystems: Attitude, which concerns emotional, moral, and aesthetic evaluation; Engagement, which addresses the management of dialogic space and the positioning of alternative voices; and Graduation, which explains how evaluative meanings are scaled in terms of force and focus. These subsystems are particularly relevant for examining discursive processes associated with polarization, in-group solidarity, and out-group construction in social and political discourse (Martin & Rose, 2007; Macken-Horarik & Isaac, 2014).

The analytical procedure adopted in this study involves conceptual mapping and theoretical integration. First, key constructs related to social division and the common enemy effect—such as in-group versus out-group differentiation, collective alignment under threat, and evaluative polarization—are identified from interdisciplinary literature in sociology, social psychology, and economics (Coser, 2001; De Jaegher & Hoyer, 2016; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Second, these constructs are systematically mapped onto the evaluative resources specified by Appraisal Theory, enabling social division as a linguistic phenomenon realized through patterned evaluative choices. Third, the interaction among Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation is examined to identify recurrent evaluative configurations that plausibly contribute to the construction of social division, such as negative moral judgment of out-groups, dialogic contraction that marginalizes alternative perspectives, and intensification strategies that amplify threat and blame.

To support analytical clarity, illustrative examples drawn from prior discourse studies are used selectively. These examples are not treated as empirical data for generalization, but rather as analytical illustrations that demonstrate the applicability of the proposed model to political and social discourse contexts (Spradley, 2016). The emphasis remains on explicating the internal coherence and explanatory potential of the model rather than validating it against a specific corpus.

The outcome of this methodological process is a hypothetical analytical model that explicates how social division may be discursively constructed through evaluative language. By articulating the

evaluative mechanisms underlying the common enemy effect, this study provides a conceptual foundation for future empirical research. Subsequent studies may operationalize and test the proposed model using qualitative discourse analysis or corpus-based approaches in political, media, or educational contexts.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the theoretical model of social division constructed through evaluative language. The findings are derived from conceptual analysis rather than empirical data and illustrate how the subsystems of Appraisal Theory – Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement – interact to produce social division in discourse. The discussion integrates results and analysis to elucidate the interplay of these evaluative elements.

Attitude: Evaluative Positioning and the Moral Construction of Social Division

The first and most fundamental component of the proposed model concerns the Attitude subsystem, which provides the semantic foundation for constructing social divisions. Attitude resources enable speakers to evaluate social actors, actions, and phenomena in terms of emotion, morality, and value, thereby establishing the basic oppositional structure upon which social division is built. Within Appraisal Theory, Attitude encompasses three domains: Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation (Martin & White, 2005). Among these, Judgment plays a particularly salient role in the discursive construction of in-group and out-group identities.

In the context of social division, Judgment functions as a mechanism for moral categorization. Social actors associated with the in-group are evaluated positively based on judgments of propriety, capacity, or tenacity. In contrast, out-group actors are evaluated negatively, portrayed as immoral, incompetent, untrustworthy, or threatening. This evaluative asymmetry contributes to the moral polarization of social space, in which conflict is framed not merely as a difference of interests but as a struggle between morally opposed groups. Such moralization aligns with sociological theories that emphasize the role of external conflict in reinforcing internal cohesion (Coser, 2001) and with social identity theory, which posits that positive self-representation is often achieved through negative evaluation of the out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 2004).

Affect further reinforces social division by encoding emotional responses to perceived threats. Expressions of fear, anger, anxiety, or indignation associated with the out-group contribute to the construction of an affective climate in which antagonism appears justified and necessary. From a cognitive perspective, threat-related affect intensifies the need for group affiliation and moral certainty, a dynamic that has been widely documented in terror management theory (Becker, 1973; Greenberg et al., 1986). Although Affect may appear less overtly ideological than Judgment, its cumulative effect strengthens evaluative polarization by framing the out-group as a source of emotional disturbance or existential danger.

Appreciation, while less directly involved in interpersonal evaluation, contributes to social division by evaluating institutions, actions, or outcomes associated with either the in-group or the out-group. Through appreciation, discourse can legitimize in-group actions as necessary, effective, or admirable, while framing out-group initiatives as harmful, illegitimate, or destabilizing. Together, the three domains of Attitude establish the evaluative groundwork for social division by encoding moral, emotional, and value-laden distinctions between social groups.

These evaluative patterns are consistent with findings from political discourse studies, which demonstrate that leaders frequently construct positive self-representation and negative other-representation through moral and affective evaluation (Abadi et al., 2024; Maani et al., 2022; Ross & Caldwell, 2020). However, while previous studies have documented these patterns descriptively, the present model explicates Attitude as a systematic evaluative mechanism that underpins the linguistic realization of social division.

Graduation: Intensification and the Amplification of Evaluative Polarity

While Attitude establishes evaluative directionality, Graduation provides the mechanism by which social division is intensified. Graduation concerns the scaling of evaluative meanings in terms of force and focus, allowing speakers to strengthen or soften evaluations and to sharpen or blur category

boundaries (Martin & White, 2005). In discourses characterized by social division, graduation resources are frequently mobilized to heighten evaluative contrast and to escalate perceptions of threat, urgency, or moral outrage.

Force is commonly realized through intensifiers, quantifiers, repetition, and metaphorical amplification. Negative judgments of the out-group are often intensified to portray adversaries as exceptionally dangerous, corrupt, or destructive, thereby transforming political or social disagreement into an existential confrontation. Such intensification aligns with interdisciplinary research on the common enemy effect, which demonstrates that perceived external threats increase cooperation and alignment within groups by elevating the salience of danger (De Jaegher & Hoyer, 2016; De Jaegher, 2021). From a linguistic perspective, graduation enables this elevation to be realized discursively by magnifying evaluative force.

Focus, by contrast, operates by sharpening categorical boundaries. Through focus sharpening, discourse presents social actors as prototypical representatives of broader groups, thereby reducing complexity and reinforcing stereotyping. Individual actions are generalized to entire collectives, and rigid oppositions replace nuanced distinctions. This process resonates with theories of cognitive balance, which suggest that individuals seek stable evaluative configurations in social perception (Heider, 1946), and with network-based models of social balance that demonstrate how friend-enemy relations stabilize through polarized configurations (Antal et al., 2006).

The interaction between Graduation and Attitude is particularly significant in the construction of social division. Negative moral judgments, when intensified through force, acquire greater persuasive power and emotional resonance, while sharpened focus amplifies the perceived homogeneity of the out-group. Conversely, intensified positive evaluation of the in-group enhances collective self-esteem and reinforces solidarity. This evaluative extremity supports the consolidation of group identity under conditions of adversity, a pattern widely observed in studies of conflict and cooperation (Sherif et al., 1961; De Jaegher, 2019a).

In political discourse, the strategic use of graduation has been shown to play a central role in the escalation of ideological polarization. Studies of crisis rhetoric and war discourse reveal that intensification is frequently employed to legitimize exceptional measures and to marginalize dissenting perspectives (Awawdeh & Al-Abbas, 2023; Kakisina et al., 2022). The present model accounts for these observations by positioning graduation as a core evaluative mechanism that amplifies social division rather than merely reflecting it.

Engagement: Dialogic Alignment and the Management of Social Consensus

The third component of the proposed model concerns Engagement, which governs how evaluative positions are negotiated in relation to alternative voices. Engagement resources manage dialogic space by either opening it to multiple perspectives or contracting it to present evaluations as authoritative and uncontested (Martin & White, 2005). In the construction of social division, engagement plays a crucial role in aligning audiences with in-group positions while marginalizing or excluding alternative viewpoints.

Dialogic contraction is particularly salient in discourses that construct a common enemy. Through monoglossic assertions, categorical statements, and dismissals of alternative interpretations, speakers present evaluative judgments as facts rather than opinions. This reduction of dialogic space encourages Audience alignment by discouraging critical reflection and by framing dissent as illegitimate or disloyal. Such strategies contribute to the stabilization of polarized evaluative configurations, consistent with economic and network-based models that emphasize coordination and alignment under threat (Haller & Hoyer, 2019; Hoyer & De Jaegher, 2023).

Heteroglossic resources, while ostensibly allowing alternative voices, may also contribute to social division when used strategically. Concessive formulations that acknowledge opposing views only to refute or delegitimize them create an appearance of openness while reinforcing evaluative dominance. This selective engagement enables speakers to control the boundaries of acceptable discourse, thereby maintaining ideological authority. From a discourse-analytic perspective, engagement thus functions not simply as a mechanism of inclusion or exclusion, but as a strategic resource for managing social consensus.

The role of engagement in social division is particularly evident in political and media discourse, where the management of dialogic space shapes public perception and collective alignment.

Research in critical discourse analysis has shown that leaders frequently suppress alternative narratives during crises to consolidate support and frame opposition as a threat to collective security (Sirin, 2011; Filipi & Wittig, 2022). The present model extends these findings by explicating the evaluative mechanisms through which such suppression is linguistically realized.

Conceptual Boundaries and Analytical Scope of the Proposed Model

While the proposed model accounts for the discursive construction of social division through evaluative language, its limitations must be acknowledged. The model is conceptual in nature and does not predict individual behavior or quantify the real-world effects of language on social actors. Its primary aim is to elucidate how language shapes meaning, group alignment, and opposition at the level of discourse. It is therefore essential to distinguish between the linguistic mechanisms identified by the model and actual social outcomes, as evaluative patterns in language do not directly determine group actions or responses.

The model is positioned at the level of discourse semantics, emphasizing meaning-making processes rather than psychological motivation or strategic calculation. Unlike economic or game-theoretical models of the common enemy effect, which prioritize incentives, payoffs, and coordination equilibria (De Jaegher & Hoyer, 2016; De Jaegher, 2021), the present framework concentrates on how alignment and antagonism are linguistically encoded and made socially intelligible. In this sense, the model complements rather than replaces existing explanations by addressing the communicative layer through which social division is publicly articulated and legitimized.

It is also important to distinguish the proposed framework from broader Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approaches. While CDA has been highly influential in identifying ideological patterns such as othering, legitimation, and manipulation in political discourse, it often operates with broad analytical categories that foreground power relations without fully specifying the evaluative mechanisms involved. The Appraisal-based model proposed in this study seeks to refine this analytical focus by explicating how moral judgment, affective positioning, dialogic alignment, and intensification interact within discourse. By doing so, the model offers greater analytical precision while remaining compatible with critical interpretations of discourse and ideology.

Another conceptual boundary concerns the role of context. The model does not assume that evaluative configurations operate uniformly across all discursive settings. Instead, it recognizes that the deployment of Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement is sensitive to genre, Audience, and sociopolitical conditions. In relatively stable contexts, evaluative language may exhibit greater dialogic openness and a more moderate intensity. In contrast, contexts characterized by crisis, conflict, or perceived threat are more likely to produce convergent evaluative patterns that intensify polarization. This contextual sensitivity aligns with interdisciplinary findings on the conditional nature of the common enemy effect (Cosser, 2001; Sherif et al., 1961).

Finally, the model deliberately avoids normative judgments regarding the legitimacy or ethical value of social division. While evaluative language can be mobilized to foster exclusion and antagonism, it can also serve protective or unifying functions in contexts of genuine collective threat. The purpose of the model is not to moralize discourse practices, but to render visible the linguistic mechanisms through which social boundaries are constructed. This analytical neutrality enhances the model's applicability across diverse sociopolitical and educational contexts, allowing it to be used as a diagnostic tool rather than a prescriptive framework.

Integrating Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement: A Hypothetical Model of Social Division

The principal outcome of this study is a model that integrates the subsystems of Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement to account for the construction of social division. These components operate in concert to generate linguistic patterns that foster in-group cohesion, intensify hostility, and delineate group boundaries. Within this framework, social division is produced and sustained through the recurrent deployment of evaluative language configurations in discourse.

Specifically, the model proposes that social division is most strongly realized when negative moral judgments of the out-group (Attitude) are intensified through force and sharpened focus (Graduation), and presented as uncontested truths through dialogic contraction (Engagement). This evaluative configuration constructs the out-group as a morally deficient and existentially threatening entity, while simultaneously affirming the moral legitimacy and cohesion of the in-group. Such

configurations provide a linguistic account of the common enemy effect, complementing structural and psychological explanations offered in prior research (De Jaegher, 2021; Coser, 2001).

The model also allows for variation across contexts, recognizing that not all discourses deploy evaluative resources in the same way or to the same extent. However, in situations characterized by crisis, conflict, or perceived threat, the convergence of Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement becomes more pronounced, resulting in heightened polarization. In this sense, evaluative language does not merely reflect social division, but actively produces and sustains it.

Implications for Social, Political, and Educational Contexts

This model provides a framework for understanding how language shapes social, political, and educational discourse. By conceptualizing social division as a product of recurrent evaluative language, the model foregrounds linguistic processes rather than attributing polarization solely to ideological or psychological factors. Rather than viewing polarization as inevitable, the model demonstrates how language actively constructs and perpetuates social boundaries.

In political contexts, the model offers a systematic tool for analyzing how leaders mobilize evaluative language to construct enemies, legitimize policy decisions, and consolidate collective support. Political discourse frequently relies on moral judgment, affective positioning, and intensified evaluation to frame conflicts as existential struggles between morally opposed groups. Through the coordinated deployment of Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement, political actors can present antagonistic positions as ethically justified and dialogically uncontested, thereby narrowing the space for dissent and alternative interpretation. The proposed model enables analysts to move beyond descriptive accounts of rhetoric by explicating the evaluative architecture that underpins such discursive strategies. In doing so, it complements existing studies of political communication by providing a fine-grained linguistic account of how alignment and antagonism are constructed at the level of meaning.

Beyond formal political discourse, the model has broader relevance for social communication, particularly in media and digital environments. Contemporary public discourse is increasingly shaped by platforms that privilege speed, emotional resonance, and intensified expression. In such environments, evaluative language often circulates in condensed and amplified forms, reinforcing polarized representations of social groups and events. The model highlights how repeated evaluative configurations—especially those involving intensified moral judgment and dialogic contraction—can stabilize social divisions over time by naturalizing antagonistic framings. From this perspective, polarization is not merely reflected in media discourse but is actively sustained through evaluative patterns that shape public perception and social alignment.

The implications of the model are especially salient in educational contexts, where discourse plays a central role in transmitting social values, norms, and ideological orientations. Educational texts, curricula, and classroom interaction often present evaluative interpretations of history, social relations, and collective identity. When such evaluations are framed in absolutist or dialogically closed terms, they may contribute to the reproduction of polarized worldviews rather than fostering critical engagement. Understanding how evaluative meanings are constructed and intensified is therefore essential for promoting critical language awareness and media literacy. As argued by Education for a Christian Nation, educational discourse is a powerful site for the negotiation of ideology and national identity, underscoring the need for analytical tools that reveal how evaluative positioning operates within institutional texts.

Educators may employ this model to facilitate students' critical examination of evaluative language in public discourse. By elucidating the linguistic construction of social division, the model enables learners to identify moral judgments, intensified language, and dialogic closure in media, political, and everyday contexts. Such analytical skills are particularly valuable in polarized societies, where language can constrain open dialogue. The model thus promotes critical language awareness without endorsing any particular ideological stance.

Taken together, these implications highlight the interdisciplinary relevance of the proposed evaluative model. By bridging linguistic analysis with concerns central to social cohesion, political communication, and education, the study demonstrates that evaluative language constitutes a key mechanism through which social division is discursively enacted. Recognizing this mechanism enables

more nuanced analysis of polarized discourse. It provides a foundation for future research and educational practice aimed at fostering more reflective and dialogically open forms of communication.

Analytical Applicability Across Discursive Contexts

Although the proposed model is conceptual, it has broad analytical applicability across a range of discursive contexts. By foregrounding evaluative language as the central mechanism in the construction of social division, the framework can be adapted to analyze texts in which alignment, antagonism, and moral positioning are salient. One such context is political discourse, particularly speeches delivered during periods of crisis or conflict. In these settings, leaders frequently rely on evaluative resources to construct enemies, legitimize policy decisions, and consolidate public support. The model provides a systematic means of identifying how moral judgment, intensification, and dialogic closure contribute to the construction of polarized political narratives.

Media discourse constitutes another important domain of applicability. News reports, opinion pieces, and digital commentary often reproduce and amplify evaluative framings introduced by political actors. Through repetition and intensification, media discourse can normalize particular representations of social groups while marginalizing alternative interpretations. Applying the proposed model to media texts enables analysts to examine how evaluative configurations circulate beyond their original contexts and become embedded in public discourse, thereby reinforcing social division at the societal level.

The framework is also relevant to educational discourse, including textbooks, curricula, and policy documents. Educational texts play a crucial role in shaping collective memory, national identity, and moral orientation. When evaluative language frames historical events, social groups, or ideological positions in absolutist terms, it may contribute to the reproduction of polarized worldviews. The proposed model enables a critical examination of how evaluative meanings are structured in educational materials and how they may influence learners' perceptions of social conflict and difference. This analytical potential aligns with broader educational objectives related to critical literacy and civic education.

Beyond institutional discourse, the model can be applied to everyday communicative practices, including social media interaction and interpersonal communication. Digital platforms facilitate rapid dissemination of evaluative language, often privileging intensified, dialogically closed expressions that attract attention and emotional engagement. In such environments, evaluative polarization may escalate quickly, contributing to the entrenchment of social division. The model offers a conceptual lens through which to examine these dynamics, highlighting how linguistic choices interact with technological affordances to shape public discourse.

Significantly, the model is not restricted to the analysis of explicitly political enemies. As demonstrated in interdisciplinary research on collective adversity, common enemy effects may also arise in response to non-human threats such as natural disasters, pandemics, or environmental crises. In such cases, evaluative language may construct abstract entities—such as viruses, disasters, or systemic risks—as enemies, thereby mobilizing collective action and shaping social alignment. The proposed framework accommodates these variations by focusing on evaluative mechanisms rather than specific content, enabling comparative analysis across diverse forms of social division.

4. CONCLUSION

This study set out to formulate a hypothetical model explaining how social division may be constructed through evaluative language. Drawing on interdisciplinary theories of social conflict and the common enemy effect, and operationalized through Appraisal Theory, the study demonstrates that social division can be understood as a discursive outcome of patterned evaluative choices rather than as a purely structural or psychological phenomenon. By integrating the subsystems of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation, the proposed model explains how moral evaluation, dialogic alignment, and intensification interact to produce in-group solidarity and out-group antagonism in discourse.

The conceptual model advances existing scholarship in two key ways. First, it bridges macro-level social theories of conflict and cooperation with micro-level linguistic analysis, offering a systematic

account of how the common enemy effect is realized through language. Second, it extends discourse-based studies of polarization by providing a unified evaluative framework that explains not only which ideological positions are expressed but also how they are linguistically constructed and legitimized. In doing so, the study positions Appraisal Theory as a particularly effective analytical tool for examining social division in political and social discourse.

Given the theoretical nature of this study, several directions for future research are suggested. Empirical studies may apply the proposed model to specific corpora, such as political speeches, media texts, or educational materials, in order to test and refine its analytical categories. Comparative analyses across languages, sociopolitical contexts, or genres may further illuminate how evaluative configurations vary in the construction of social division. From an educational perspective, future research may explore how awareness of evaluative language can be incorporated into critical literacy and civic education initiatives to foster more reflective engagement with polarized discourse.

Overall, the study contributes to a theoretically grounded framework that enhances understanding of the linguistic mechanisms underlying social division. By foregrounding evaluative language as a central resource in constructing social boundaries, the proposed model provides a foundation for future interdisciplinary research at the intersection of discourse, society, and education.

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