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War Language in Tweets of Politicians, Reporters, and Medical Experts: A Focus on Covid-19

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Abstract

Metaphors can both shape and reflect how we think about complex issues. Here, we explore the prevalence of WAR language in a large corpus ($N = 1.63$ million) of Tweets. We compare how different groups of people use the language of WAR to talk about different topics. In Study 1, we find that about 5% of Tweets about Covid-19 from the general public include WAR language, replicating prior work (Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020). In Studies 2 and 3, we find that politicians use WAR language much more often, while Reporters and Medical Experts use WAR language less often. The findings are relevant to current debates about the role of language in democracy, and to theories of metaphor in communication.