LANGUAGE IDENTITY AS A MEANS OF SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

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Abstract

The paper undertakes an ordinary language analysis of the term "identity," a complicated and unclear concept that nonetheless plays a crucial role in ongoing political science debates (debates about national, ethnic, gender, and national identities). Language seems to have two principal functions: it is an instrument of communication, but it can also constitute a means of asserting one's identity or one distinctness form others. A common language may be the ideal vehicle to express the uniq character of a social group, and to encourage common social ties on the basis of a common identity. Language can be a robust marker of social identity, capable of binding and dividing groups and that its salience may displace other (e.g.ethnic or religious) identities. Whenever we speak, we provide those who hear us, chosen interlocutors or mere bystanders, with a wealth of data, linguistic clues others use to position us within a specific social strata. Our particular uses of language mark us geographically, ethnically, by age or sex, and, especially in stratified societies, according to class or caste. In recent years, scholars working in a remarkable array of social science and humanities disciplines have taken an intense interest in questions concerning identity. Within political science, for example, we find the concept of "identity" at the center of lively debates in every major subfield.

"Identity", as we know, has more dictionary definitions which have not caught up, failing to capture the word's current meanings in everyday and social science contexts. We find a symbiosis of influences which has attracted the attention of the researchers in that there exists a close relationship among our native language, culture and identity. Social factors also influence the construction of social identity of the speakers. The analysis includes, more or less, the following uses of the term 'identity': (a) a social category, defined by membership rules and (alleged) characteristic attributes or expected behaviors, or (b) socially distinguishing features that a person takes pride in or views them as unchangeable but socially consequential.

Keywords: *language analysis, identity, meaning, social identity, social category.*

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