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# Language, Discourse & Society

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# **Language, Discourse & Society**

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Language, Discourse & Society is an international peer reviewed journal published twice annually (June and December) in electronic form. The journal publishes high-quality articles dedicated to all aspects of sociological analyses of language, discourse and representation.

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# Language, Discourse & Society

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**Language & Society  
Research Committee 25 of the  
International Sociological Association**



## Message from the editor

As last year, a specific section of this issue is dedicated to acknowledge all the reviewers who supported *Language, Discourse & Society* for all the reviews realized in 2017. This is important because without the support of reviewers, blind peer-reviews may not be realized, while this is a core element of the life and quality of an academic journal. So, I warmly thank them.

This issue counts two original articles.

Daniel Ochieng Orwenjo focuses on political speeches to analyse the relationship between pronominal selection and the construction of collective identities. The corpus is build with data from Kenya: The Constitution of Kenya Referendum Campaigns (2005) and the General Elections Campaigns (2007). He identifies five collective identities that are targeted by these discourses through pronominal use: political identities, ethnic identities, religious identities, regional identities, and class identities. He also takes into account how they may be mixed.

Jelena Vuksanovic investigate the evaluative adjectives on RateMyProfessors.com in relation to professors' gender. The corpus contains 6002 words, extracted from 120 reviews from the top list website, one half related to male professors and the other half related to female professors. First, she underlines the share of evaluative adjectives among the words used in the reviews. Second, when analyzing these evaluative adjectives, she highlights that such words are more used when evaluating a male professor. She also underlines what is similar among reviews whatever professors' gender.

The June 2018 issue will be dedicated to “‘Migrants’, ‘Refugees’, ‘Boat people’ and the Mediterranean Crisis: People in Words, Language issues”, under the leadership of Frédéric Moulène (Université de Strasbourg & Université de Franche-Comté, France), the guest-editor for this call. Then December 2018 issue will be dedicated to “Power and social exclusion: Insights looking at language” and will be co-edited by Frida Petersson (Göteborgs Universitet, Institutionen för socialt arbete, Sweden) and I. Don't hesitate to condider sumitting an article (see the call for papers in this issue).

**Stéphanie Cassilde, Editor in Chief**  
*Language, Discourse and Society*  
Centre d'Etudes en Habitat Durable  
Belgium  
[journal@language-and-society.org](mailto:journal@language-and-society.org)



## Call for Papers

### **Power and social exclusion: Insights looking at language**

Thematic issue of *Language, Discourse, & Society*, a journal published by the Research Committee 25 “Language and Society” of the International Sociological Association, ISSN: 2239-4192, indexed in ERIH Plus.

Guest Editors: Frida Petersson (Göteborgs Universitet, Institutionen för socialt arbete, Sweden) and Stéphanie Cassilde (Centre d’Etudes en Habitat Durable, Belgium)

Social exclusion may be approached as a more or less concerted action, situated in time and space, and executed by someone towards another part. This thematic issue of *Language, Discourse & Society* focuses on language as a tool for social exclusion, but also for resistance to such discrimination and oppression.

Rather than approaching exclusion as pre-existing condition and action, contributions are encouraged to attend to the language and discourses utilised by specific actors, located in space and time, to control, guard – or challenge – borders against the entry of unwanted individuals or groups. The situations and contexts to be considered may be contemporary institutional practices and activities aiming at responsibility attribution, support, or inclusion of members of allegedly excluded and/or oppressed groups and people. Diverse institutional practices may be considered, across organizations, with a focus on how language use is entangled in exclusionary processes leading up to people being denied access to social, economic, material, cultural and/or political resources.

Submissions may include different methodologies, such as analyses of interaction, discourse, narratives and ethnomethodology. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are welcome. Contributions dealing primarily with theoretical and/or methodological challenges in empirical studies of discourse as situated action will also be appreciated. Articles highlighting contending voices and counter-discourses developed by those categorized as the “Other” are especially welcome.

*Language, Discourse, & Society* is an international peer-reviewed journal, focused on advancing sociological knowledge concerning language, face-to-face interaction, and other language-related social phenomena. The objective is to look at language from a sociological and/or a sociolinguistic perspective. This will be taken into account in the selection of articles for this upcoming issue “Power and social exclusion: Insights looking at language.”

In line with *Language, Discourse, & Society* policy, English, French and Spanish submissions are considered.

Full original articles may be submitted to Frida Petersson (frida.petersson@socwork.gu.se) and Stéphanie Cassilde (stephanie.cassilde@cehd.be) by the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2018. If there is any question, authors are invited to contact the guest-editors.

This thematic issue will be published in December 2018.

Please follow the author guidelines indicated at the following URL, which includes a **template** for formatting: <http://www.language-and-society.org/journal/instructions.html>



## **Call for guest-editors for e- journal *Language, Discourse and Society***

*Language, Discourse & Society* is an international peer reviewed journal published twice annually (June and December) in electronic form. The journal publishes high-quality articles dedicated to all aspects of sociological analyses of language, discourse and representation.

All interested guest-editors are invited to submit a proposal (a call for papers) in order to edit a thematic issue. The editor in chief will consider proposed call for papers based on clear commitment to studies of language. *Language, Discourse & Society* cannot publish proceedings. Guest-editors are free to choose the thematic of their issue proposal. *Language, Discourse & Society* accepts electronic submissions year round. Please send your proposals to: [journal@language-and-society.org](mailto:journal@language-and-society.org)

The role description of *Language, Discourse & Society* guest-editor is as follow:

Each guest-(co-)editor is responsible:

- for writing the call for articles: within the framework of *LD&S* editorial line and tacking into account that *LD&S* cannot publish proceedings, (co-)editors are free to choose the thematic of their issue proposal.
- for all communications with authors
- for the evaluation process of articles, which includes:
- finding additional reviewers so that each article is peer-reviewed.
- taking a decision regarding the final selection of articles in accordance with the editorial line of *LD&S*
- for keeping the deadline to submit the whole issue to the editor in chief of editing. This includes to take care that minimal requirements are met (front, front size, space, margin, accuracy of references)
- for basic editing regarding the form and the style of each article: the (co-)editor should check whether the references within the article are mentioned in the bibliographical part, whether the references listed in the biographical part are all quoted within the article, and whether the template of *LD&S* is respected (letter font , size, etc.)

The guest-(co-)editor cannot publish an article in *LD&S*, neither as principal author, nor as co-author. His/her name is indicated as follow: “this issue of *Language, Discourse and Society* about {here the final title of the thematic issue} is edited by {here the name of the editor(s)}”.

The position of guest-(co-)editor is unpaid.



## **Acknowledgement to peer-reviewers**

*Language, Discourse & Society* expresses its gratitude to the peer-reviewers who accepted to undertake this important and mandatory task upon which rely the academic publishing process, and the quality of the articles offered by *Language, Discourse & Society* to the scientific discussion. The following alphabetical list is related to all the scholars who acted as peer-reviewers for *LD&S* 20 in 2017.

Thank you to:

Mariana Patricia BUSO (CONICET / UNR-CIM)  
CHO Hyesun (University of Kansas, United States)  
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Rita Elaine SILVER (National Institute of Education, Singapore)  
Musa YUSUPOV (Chechen State University, Chechnya)



# **Original Articles**



## ***“We are the People”*: Pronominal Selection and the Construction of Collective Identities in Kenyan Political Discourse**

Daniel Ochieng Orwenjo<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the relationship between pronominal selection and the construction of collective identities in political discourse by Kenyan politicians based on Political speeches from two political campaigns namely, The Constitution of Kenya Referendum Campaigns of 2005 and the General Elections Campaigns 2007. These are analysed to show how Kenyan politicians both in the government and opposition strategically exploited pronominal selection to construct and delimit collective political, ethnic and class identities and to highlight how Political discourse is a privileged mechanism that lets political actors to structure a specific space where they can configure and strengthen their collective identities. Thus, it is argued that, with respect to the 2007 general elections, the intensity and the emotive nature of this process of construction of collective identities, contributed to the post-election violence witnessed in the country during the campaigns and soon after the election.

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### **Keywords**

Pronominal Selection, Collective Identities, Political Discourse

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Language and Communication Studies, The Technical University of Kenya, Haile Selassie Avenue P.O Box 52428-00200 Nairobi, Kenya, orwenjo@daad-alumni.de

## Introduction

This paper investigates how Kenyan politicians strategically manipulated pronominal selection to establish collective identities during the 2005 constitutional referendum campaigns and the general elections campaigns of 2007. Adopting the transactional and the interactional functional dichotomy of language (Brown and Yule, 1983) the paper seeks to establish the extent to which language use during these two campaigns reflects the kinds of social relations that held among Kenyans during this time. The paper also highlights how Political discourse is a privileged mechanism that allows political actors to structure a specific space where they can configure and strengthen their collective identities. Collective identities are understood as cognitive models of the group self, including its attributes, relational behaviour, goals and values, which are both constituted and negotiated by the interactions within a discourse community. The paper allows us a deeper understanding and interpretation of political representations, politics of identities and politics of language in the specific context of highly ethnically, emotionally charged, at times violent political campaigns that do not necessarily correspond to the dynamics of nationalism or ethnic war, but which could have easily lead to one. In terms of pronominal selection, focus is on the first and third person plural personal pronouns *we*, and *they*, and their variants *us* and *them* and how these were strategically used in the discourse of the two political campaigns to construct and structure collective identities.

An inevitable question that arises immediately, and which, therefore needs an immediate response is; why analyse the use of pronouns in Kenya’s political discourse? Put differently, why is the Kenyan case interesting for an analysis? What makes it intriguing for political discourse analysis research? The answers to these quite legitimate questions are both academic and practical: Previous studies on African political discourses have focused on rhetoric and metaphor (Orwenjo, 2009 and 2010; Makamani, 2010; Kangira 2010; Tambulasi, 2010) and how these have been used to achieve a variety of political goals by various African politicians. Yet, this is just but one side of the coin: Bailey (1969) has argued that rhetoric aims to persuade and that one way in which this can be done is through deliberation of ideas, with figures of speech used to highlight an argument. He also points out to an alternative view of rhetoric in political discourse which sees it as the process of seeking devices that inhibit questioning and stifle the consideration of more than the speaker's viewpoint. Commenting on this second view, Parkin (1984: 12) opines that:

“In this kind of hortatory rhetoric, the skilled speaker has his set ideas right from the beginning and is alert only to the different possible techniques by which he can foist them upon an approving audience, such that it acts upon them. He can appeal directly to the emotions or through language that masquerades as reason, or through reasoned argument itself.” (Parkin, 1984 : 12)

This paper represents a departure from earlier related studies by focusing more on the alternative view espoused above. By interrogating how Kenyan politicians exploited pronominal selection to construct collective identities during the 2005 referendum and the 2007 general election campaigns, the present study focuses on how grammatical devices were deliberately manipulated to achieve political ends which had been set in advance. In doing this, it focuses more closely on tangible and direct effects of the linguistic choices we make in our daily discourses. As shall be

made clear later on, one of the objectives of the present study is to chart a link between pronominal choice used in the two political events, the subsequent polarisation of the country, and the post-election violence that ensued thereafter.

We begin by an examination of the role of discourses in reaffirmation of identities and configuration of the first and third person plural personal pronouns *we*, and *they*, and their variants *us*, and *them* as political communities and collective representations. The concept of pronominal selection is then discussed both within the grammatical and the pragmatic contexts. After outlining the methodology for the study, the use of personal pronouns by Kenyan politicians during the two campaigns is then discussed with a view to answering certain fundamental questions: how strategic was this process of pronominal selection in the discourse of these two political campaigns? What collective identities are constructed and structured through this strategic use? Are there any discernible overlaps in the construction and structuring of such collective identities? To what extent can we attribute the violence and ethnic mayhem that followed the general election of 2007 to this process of construction of collective identities? Are there any other discernible discourse functions of these pronouns other than identity construction?

## **1. Background to the 2005 Constitutional Referendum and Kenyan Politics**

The 2005 constitutional referendum campaigns in Kenya, due to the process that created them, the political and historical circumstances that led to them and the socio-political and ethnically inflated atmosphere in which they were conducted, were as historic as they were interesting. The referendum and the political campaign rallies that preceded it were a culmination of over a half a decade of political agitation, initially by the civil society, and human rights lobby groups and later on by registered opposition parties on one hand, and stiff resistance and abysmal obstinacy by the government and the ruling party KANU on the other hand. The 1982 constitutional amendment turned Kenya from a de facto to a de jure one party state, making the then president have a tight and unshakable grip on the political landscape of the country, with KANU being the only political party and the sole platform for legitimate political participation. Combined pressure by local and international pressure groups and western governments made the KANU regime to cave in to the demands for opening up of the democratic space, leading to the repeal of the infamous section 2A of the constitution of the Republic of Kenya, and once more allowing for a multiparty political dispensation in Kenya.

Although Kenya was now a multiparty state, this was so only on paper, as the inherent structures, systems and values of the dictatorial one party regime remained largely intact. The newly registered opposition parties joined forces to fight for the increase of the democratic space, especially the democratisation of electoral laws that by their very nature were lopsided in favour of incumbency. The opposition and the civil society now demanded for a complete overhaul of the constitution that would result in a new and democratic constitutional dispensation. These calls eventually paved way for the creation, through an act of parliament of the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC). The commission collected, collated and synthesised views of Kenyans of all walks of life, giving birth to a draft Constitution of the Republic of Kenya. According to the CKRC act 2002, the draft constitution was to be subjected to a 3 month debate and scrutiny by a constituent assembly representing the fabric of the Kenyan society. But the general elections were just four months away, and fearing that the opposition could use the

constituent assembly to conduct a civilian coup and declare a new Republic, the then president, Daniel Toroitich arap Moi, acting on the behest of his close associates and legal advisors, issued a decree disbanding the constituent assembly, on the eve of the commencement of its deliberations and when all the delegates had gathered!

The ruling party KANU proceeded to a humiliating defeat at the general elections that were held later at end of 2002, the opposition National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), under Mwai Kibaki, having capitalised on the people’s great yearning for a new constitution, promising one within the first one hundred days of its administration. But that was not to be! The new president, having tasted the benefits of incumbency and the massive presidential powers that the draft constitution had sought to drastically trim and devolve started dilly dallying on the issue. Kibaki and his henchmen, former opposition activists and civil rights lobbyists who had spent more than 15 years fighting for the new constitution, now suddenly realised that a new constitution was not that urgent after all! They argued that what was needed most urgently was a new economic dispensation to redress the economic ills of the past regime. This, predictably, led to internal rebellion within the coalition, spearheaded by the coalition partners who had been promised positions such as those of the executive Prime Minister, as proposed in the draft constitution. Thereafter, followed, a series of political schemes, intrigues and court battles, aimed at preventing the immediate enactment of the new constitution. Government operatives, legal advisors and spanner boys questioned everything about the draft constitution ranging from its workability, the implied implementation costs, the composition and impartiality (or otherwise) of the constituent assembly, the legality of the whole process, the intellectual and legal ability of certain sections of the constituent assembly to understand the proposed document, let alone enact laws, and most ridiculously, the nationality of the CKRC chairman, a Kenyan of Asian extraction professor of constitutional law who later resigned in frustration. A constitutional court ruling in June 2005 held that all Kenyans had an inherent right to participate in the process of making a new constitution, and that such a right could only be exercised through a national referendum on the document. This was a landmark decision, given that Kenyans had never participated in any constitution making process, the founding constitution having been written at the Lancaster conference of 1960 composed of the British colonialists and representatives of political parties, except that the ruling was made at the instigation of the government, which had hoped to manipulate the referendum for their own good. The government side selected a few friendly experts who reworked the original draft constitution to reflect its wishes and viewpoint, used its parliamentary majority to adopt the immensely watered down draft, and presented a document, which, now hardly reflected the wishes of the people, to the Kenyans at the referendum:

As is evident from the above background, the opposing camps, those for the new constitution (given the banana symbol), and those against it (given the orange symbol), went into the campaigns with intense emotions creating a charged atmosphere in the campaigns. Nowhere was this charged atmosphere of the campaigns more pronounced than in the language use by the various politicians on the campaign trail, and proverbs which will be analysed here is just one aspect of such language use. The government side, having had its campaign in support of the proposed document spearheaded by none other than the president himself, went ahead to lose the referendum by a 40% to 60% on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2002, marking the end of a long and tedious struggle for a new constitution.

## **2. The Colonial Legacy and Ethnicity in Kenya**

Kenya, like any other postcolonial African state, still suffers from the legacy of the colonial occupation to this day. Nowhere is this legacy manifested than in the deep seated ethnic divisions and rivalries in Kenya. Kenyans view virtually all their aspects of and situations in life from an ethnic prism. Success or failure in such things as education, business, politics and family life easily and readily lends itself to an ethnic interpretation. Such an ethnic view of the world by Kenyans, which more often than not, leads to ethnic strife and conflict can be attributed to the colonial legacy. Scholars have long argued that the colonial period had a profound effect on ethnicity in Africa, for a variety of reasons. In particular the literature suggests that colonialists directly promoted ethnic diversity through ‘divide and rule’ tactics (Berman, 1998; Blanton, Mason and Athow, 2001) and indirectly by providing ‘tribal’ chiefs and missionaries with the incentives to promote ethnic differences (Laitin, 1994). Scholarship on the colonial period has also repeatedly emphasized the way colonies were governed according to cost-saving methods. Indeed, at the time of its colonization Africa was relatively peripheral to European economic interests (Young, 1994: 84-85), and the principle of colonial self-sufficiency meant that colonies had to pay for themselves, no matter how oddly shaped or small they were.

The indirect rule, administered by the British colonialists, and which was essentially a “divide and rule” strategy, served to polarise various ethnic groups in Kenya. This is because the colonial regime created its administrative structures and foundations along ethnic lines such that members of a single or related ethnic group were administratively lumped together, with the names of such administrative units reflecting the ethnic composition. Consequently, when native Kenyans started to rise against the colonial government by forming political associations, these inevitably took a tribal dimension such as Kikuyu Central Association for Kikuyus, and the Akamba Association for the Kamba. These formed the seeds of the ethnization of politics in Kenya, which is the thrust of this paper. As the analysis of the data will show, this ethnic politics is manifested in the construction of collective identities in Kenyan political discourse.

## **3. Theoretical issues: Identities in Discourse and Cultural Discourse Studies (CDS)**

The discursive construction of identity has become a central concern amongst researchers across a wide range of disciplines both within the humanities and the social sciences. Inevitably, this has led to a number of different (and sometimes conflicting) approaches, each having a discipline specific influence, to the study of how various identities are reflected from and portrayed in discourses. Three main approaches have emerged: researchers such as De Fina (2007) have either focused on a specific identity category such as gender, sexuality, ethnic identity, or national identity; or have offered broader discussions of how identities in discourse can be theorised by providing an overview of some of the main analytic methods and theoretical perspectives used in the study of identity, including, conversation analysis (CA), membership categorisation analysis (MCA), discursive psychology, critical discourse analysis (CDA) and narrative analysis. The last category, which represents the latest pre-occupation of researchers in this field, such as (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006) has had as its practical focus, a preoccupation with how researchers identify and analyse the processes of identity construction as they occur in different discursive contexts.

This paper adopts this last approach by examining a variety of emergent social identities and how these were constructed and manipulated by politicians and political parties to further their individual and collective agenda during the 2005 Constitutional Referendum Campaigns

Although these campaigns and the political discourses that characterised them can not be conceived of as “narratives” within the strictures of the narrative tradition, the multilevel analysis approach used in the present study borrows heavily from such a tradition. Within the narrative tradition, narratives are seen to “function as the glue that enables human life to transcend the natural incoherence and discontinuity of the unruly everyday...by imposing a point of origin and orientation toward closure, and thereby structuring the otherwise meaningless into a meaningful life” (Bamberg et al., 2007: 5). Riessman (2008) has outlined different ways that researchers might adopt in analysing narratives. Such approaches have been grouped in to three distinct categories: ‘Thematic’ approaches focus on the content of what is said, ignoring other aspects of the narrative such as how it is produced. ‘Structural’ approaches, on the other hand, address how narratives are produced; examining both the linguistic and the structural aspects of narratives. The ‘dialogic’ or ‘performative’ approach combines aspects of the previous two approaches while emerging as a distinct third approach. As Riessman (2008: 105) has observed, “If thematic and structural approaches interrogate ‘what’ is spoken and ‘how’, the ‘dialogic’ or ‘performative’ approach asks ‘who’ an utterance may be directed at, ‘when’ and ‘why’, that is for what purpose”. As has been previously mentioned, the present work is a multiple level analysis of the various social collective identities that emerged during the said campaigns in Kenya. In this respect, the approach used borrows heavily from the ‘dialogic’ narrative tradition by interrogating a multiplicity of collective identities that emerged from the referendum discourses, how they were constructed, by whom, and to what end.

As might be quite obvious, the theoretical paradigms for the construction of collective identities elucidated above are largely Eurocentric and oriented to western scholarship. This lopsided theorising is what Shi-Xu (2009: 38) has called “Westcentrism in scholarship.” He argues that such intellectual bias of universalizing Western norms and knowledge and reproducing them on the global market, is especially visible in the field of discourse and communication and has the effect of “rendering non-Western scholars and students intellectually dependent and deprived of cultural identity and voice” and argues for a paradigm shift to Cultural Discourse Studies (CDS) that can reverse this unfair trend. He goes ahead to observe:

“As kindred set of culturally conscious and critical approaches, CDS shares a holistic view of the object of enquiry and defines “discourse” as situated communicative event or a class thereof called activity in which people accomplish social (inter)action through linguistic and other symbolic means in particular historical and cultural relations (henceforth “discourse” and “communication” will be used interchangeably). In particular, CDS conceptualizes discourse as a configuration of intermeshed communicative constituents and relations: (1) communicators, (2) intents/forms/relationships, (3) mediums of communication (language, channels, media, time, setting, etc.), (4) purposes/consequences, (5) historical relations, and (6) (inter)cultural relations.” (Shi-Xu, 2009: 41)

Accordingly, in analysing and discussing pronominal selection and the subsequent construction of collective identities in Kenya’s political discourse, this study is of the view that apart from using the western theoretical underpinnings already espoused above, CDS is also of paramount

importance in providing an explanatory and theoretical adequacy. This is particularly so, given the fact that all the five conceptualizations of discourse within the CDS paradigm were directly present in the two political events studied here, and are not merely tangential to them. In other words, there were communicators (political class), relationships between the electorate and the elected, and between the various political conflagrations, intents/forms/relationships (the construction of identities and achievement of different political goals), purposes/consequences (volatile political environment and post-election chaos and historical relations, and (inter)cultural relations. As such, CDS complements the western based theoretical models in the analysis of the data for this study. This complementarity of theories and approaches is, in fact at the very heart of the principles of CDS, in the sense that “researchers should incorporate useful elements of Western approaches as well as those of different Eastern approaches” (Shi-Xu, 2009: 38).

#### **4. The Construction of “Us”: Identification of “Them”**

The role of discourses in reaffirmation of identities and configuration of the “Us” as a political community and collective representation has been aptly highlighted by Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1969). He signalled that discourse in “its material reality of pronounced and written thing [...] far from being a neutral or transparent element in which politics is being pacified, it is [instead] one of those places in which are executed some of its more fearsome powers”. Discourse, in this case, therefore, turns (or is turned) into a privileged means and a powerful weapon used by groups to defend a self- image and a tool to create an image of the opponent, of the other. In this sense, political discourse is at the same time a means to structure and propagate a representation of a given community with respect to its opponent, and it allows the community to construct a particular image and conception of the other.

Political discourse is not only a mechanism to strengthen identities but also a battle camp in which adversaries confront each other in symbolic ways in the anticipation of the real battle. In the present case, this anticipated battle was the 2005 constitutional referendum vote and the 2007 general election vote. This conception of political discourse coincides with the Norbert Lechner’s notion of politics as a sphere in which men become political subjects (Lechner, 1986). Politics for Lechner is a permanent conflict, a tension that characterizes the process of identity construction, of subjects’ configurations that is always constant, that never ends. But this confrontation does not search the elimination of the other; on the contrary, confrontation is the political space for the construction of the “Us”, and also for the constitution of the other. The “Us” can only take shape and form by taking the “Other” (in this case “Them”) as a reference point. It is, consequently, only the mutual recognition that can give forms to these two communities and collective identities.

The construction of subjects is a process of self – recognition determined by the recognition or identification of the other. In words of Lechner, “the subject does not constitute positively and towards the inside, but establishes these relations towards outside, in a unique and same process; the subject is constituted by delimitation and differentiation of other. It is then through the conflictive or negotiated establishment of the limits between one and the other that collective contrasting identities emerge. It is through difference that we can articulate our identity; and it is not possible to build a unity without building simultaneously the differences with the “other”. The recognition of the other as enemy thus becomes a fight for establishing and delimitating the

limits of identification. This is a permanent fight in which the “*us*”, the “*others*” and all the subjects affirm their own identity. As Lechner (1986) asserts:

“All subjects are constituted through the others: distinction and recognition from the other. It is not enough the self- recognition of each subject, it is essential to delimit the contrary, the adversary, the “Other”. Just with difference to the other, acquires form what is own. In this sense, he who does not know his adversaries does not known himself.” (Lechner, 1986: 27; Italics mine)

Political discourse as a mechanism for identity construction allows us to recognize and identify two instances: the one that the group takes as their own, its images and representations; and the identities that the same group adjudicates to other community. These two instances are part of the same process, they complement each other, and they need each other to exist. These mechanisms of discursive processes of identity construction through political discourse especially in times of political instability, uncertainty and conflict has been thoroughly interrogated by Negazz (2013) in a study on the role of language in the Syrian revolution. The study reports that language use became a critical battle battleground during the uprising as evidenced by battle of words taking place between the anti-Assad demonstrators and the pro-Assad counterparts as each opposing group sought to construct their own distinct identity, and that of their adversaries. But language use in African political discourse has not been an attractive area of study to linguists only in electioneering times and periods of instability. One notable study on political discourse in times of political calm is Boakye (2014) study of five Ghanaian presidential inaugural address speeches.

As Laclau (2007) has stated that “discourse constitutes the primary field for constituting objectivity [...] [it is] a complex set of elements in which relations have a constitutive role” (Laclau, 2007: 41); it is therefore only in and through interactions that we can establish what is ours and what is not in terms of constitutive identities. His ideas on populism in his book, *On populist Reason*, are also very instrument in theorising about the construction of collective identities and pronominal selection during the two political events discussed in this paper. Laclau talks about the nature of populism in political discourse and the creation of popular political identities such as “the people” or “proletariat” and their role in serving collective political actors and ideologies. His main argument is that communities are bound together not just by reason but also by emotions:

“The complexes which we call ‘discursive or hegemonic formations’, which articulate differential and equivalential logics, would be unintelligible without the affective component. . . We can conclude that any social whole results from an indissociable articulation between signifying and affective dimensions.” (Laclau, 2007)

The notions of populism are essential, according to Laclau, to the discussion of issues of representation and democracy. Although Laclau’s conceptualization of the “people” is a dichotomous “state” versus “people” in nature, it is still applicable to the analysis of the Kenyan political discourse mainly because of the division between “opposition” versus “government” during the 2005 referendum campaigns and the 2008 general elections campaigns.

When viewed within the context of the Kenyan situation, the arguments of Foucault (1969), Wade, Lechner and Laclau point to certain things that the political players were ‘doing with words’ in the two political campaigns that are the subject of the present paper. In broad terms, it can be argued that by adopting a strategic pronominal selection process, the speakers were engaged in a process of identity construction for the collective political community to which they are a part, and in the process, defining and demarcating the collective identity boundaries for the opposing political community. Thus, the campaigns were essentially a process of identity construction and structuring by the two opposing camps: the pro-government and pro-draft constitution politicians on one hand, and the pro-opposition and anti-draft constitution politicians. In doing this, the Kenyan politicians were in essence, constituting their collective identities by contrasting them with those they perceive in, and ascribe to their opponents; they were in effect, in ‘battle camps’, symbolically preparing for the real (metaphorically speaking) electoral battle.

## 5. Pronominal Selection and Pronominal Distancing

Quirk et al (1985: 340) have provided perhaps the most comprehensive analysis of the English personal pronouns to date. They note that unlike nouns, English pronouns are marked for person. Grammatical person, in linguistics, is deictic reference to a participant in an event, such as the speaker, the addressee, or others. Grammatical person typically defines a language's set of personal pronouns. It also frequently affects verbs, sometimes nouns, and possessive relationships as well. English distinguishes three grammatical persons: The personal pronouns *I* (singular) and *we* (plural) are in the first person. The personal pronoun *you*, is in the second person. It refers to the addressee. *You* is used in both the singular and plural; *thou* is the archaic informal second-person singular pronoun. *He*, *she*, *it*, and *they* are in the third person. Any person, place, or thing other than the speaker and the addressee is referred to in the third person.

Based on these functional distinctions of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person English personal pronouns, Rees (1983) has developed a nine point a general scale of pronominal distancing which is, in effect, a representation of the relationship between a speaker’s distancing strategies and the concomitant pronominal selection:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
I	We	You	One	You	It	She	He	They
		(Direct)		(Indefinite)				

—————→  
Distancing from Self

Commenting on this scale, Maitland and Wilson (1987) have argued that it has no normative value and is only useful for representing idiosyncratic variation in pronominal selection and distancing. They further point out:

“We would predict, for example, that individuals who construe the world in similar ways, that is, have the same ideology and belief system, would exhibit similar patterns of pronominal choice.” (Maitland and Wilson, 1987: 504-505)

It is nonetheless important to note that such a scale provides a useful tool in charting out ways in which speakers would normally exploit pronominal selection to indicate the relative social and even spatial distance between the speaker and the addressee. It is in this realisation that Fortanet (2004) has remarked:

“In the negotiation of meaning that is always present between the person issuing a message and the person receiving a message, one of the key elements is the reference of the personal pronouns.” (Fortanet, 2004: 46)

Thus, for Fortanet, pronominal selection has a wider function other than just that of distancing. He sees the personal pronouns as an important tool that speakers can exploit to negotiate the meaning of a message. Such a strategic selection is especially interesting in the case of the first and third person plural pronouns because of their implications for both participants in the speech event.

### **5.1. The Exclusive “We” And the Inclusive “We”**

Quirk et al (1985: 350-351) have distinguished up to eight different uses of “we”:

- a) Generic : it is an “enlarged” inclusive “we” which includes practically the whole human race;
- b) Inclusive authorial: used in serious (mostly academic) writing and seeks to involve the reader in a joint enterprise;
- c) Editorial: used by a single individual in scientific writing in order to avoid egoistical “I”;
- d) Rhetorical: used in the collective sense of “the nation”, “ the party” and may be viewed as a special subtype of the generic “we”;
- e) To refer to the hearer (you): normally used by doctors when talking to patients and teachers when giving instructions to students. It is a form of “inclusive we” used to sound condescending in the case of doctors and non authoritative in the case of teachers;
- f) To refer to a third person (s/he): for example, a secretary might say to another with the reference to their boss: “ We are in a bad mood today”;
- g) Royal: is virtually obsolete and is used by monarchs;
- h) Nonstandard: this is “us” used for the singular “me” e.g. lend us a fiver.

Two other special uses of the first person plural personal pronoun “we” can be identified. These are the “exclusive we”, which excludes the hearer and essentially means “me and my group”, and the “inclusive we”, which includes the hearer and essentially means “I and you”. The “exclusive we” has been cited in literature as being a special and strategic way of distancing, both from the hearer and from what the speaker is saying, and is normally associated with power. Thus Brown and Levinson (1987), remark:

“Thus in addition to the widespread use of V pronouns to singular addressees, there is also the widespread phenomenon of ‘we’ used to indicate ‘I’+ powerful. Apart from the royal ‘we’, which most of us don’t experience, there is the Episcopal ‘we’ and the business ‘we’. There may be two distinct sources here. One is the ‘we’ that

expresses the nature of ‘corporation sole’ or the jural accomplishments of high office- ‘we as office and incumbent and predecessors. Then there is also the ‘we’ of the group, with roots precisely analogous to the second source of ‘you’ (plural) discussed above: a reminder that I do not stand alone. The business ‘we’ perhaps attempts to draw on both sources of connotations of power.” (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 202)

It is perhaps because of this dichotomy that Pennycook (1994: 175), describes this pronoun as a pronoun of “...solidarity and rejection”, and “... commonality and authority”.

It is worth noting at this juncture that this paper remains cognisant of the fact that linguistic expressions such as the pronouns analysed in this study *us/them/we/they* is only a very small fraction of any political situation/activity. The analyst must always keep a broader perspective and be aware of the other interrelated and coordinated dimensions of discourse as well, be it speakers, hearers, mediums/modalities, time and place. Accordingly, in elaborating on the nature of these pronouns and how their selection by Kenyan politicians helped shape the collective identities in Kenya, I do not make any claims to the singularity of causality. Far from it, the main purpose is to demonstrate how pronominal selection, alongside other factors such as the ones mentioned above, and in tandem with other linguistic and non-linguistic dynamics, led to the process of identity construction

## **5.2. Political Pronouns**

Two main defining characteristics of pronouns that makes available to political players as main rhetorical tools, and thus making them be considered as political pronouns: they are always involved in struggles over representation, and, secondly, they are always political in the sense that they always imply relations of power (Pennycook, 1994). It has been long recognised by scholars that pronouns, far from being categorical, have their use hinged on their context of production and, the speaker’s intentions (Wilson, 1990; Zupnick, 1994). They, therefore, usually have a wider scope of reference, depending on the speaker’s purpose. This versatile nature of pronouns in terms of their scope of reference has motivated Zupnick (1994: 340) to argue that the fact that there are several potential referents for these indexical pronouns “...works to the advantage of political speakers as hearers may choose to include themselves as members of the class of referents, potentially bringing about an adoption, or at least, cognisance of the speaker’s perspective”.

The personal pronouns considered in this paper, *we*, and *they*, their variants *us* and *them*, can also be considered as political pronouns in certain contexts of use. Political pronouns are used to signal roles (such as agency) and for self reference and identity (van Dijk and Wodak, 2000; Wilson, 1990). The opposition between “Us” and “Them” may, for instance, symbolise the polarization between in groups and out groups. Like other deictic forms, the referents of these pronouns are determined by the overall context of situation. This position is shared by Obeng (1997) and Van Dijk and Wodak (2000) who have noted that contextual cues such as place, time and participants both within and without a political discourse situation, the nature, content and aims of an ongoing business, and other properties of the political process are crucial determinants in the selection of appropriate pronouns. Wilson (1990) observes that participants in a political discourse are in a position to strategically use personal pronouns to construct and change the

identities and roles of political actors. In this way, it is possible, in political discourse, to use specific personal pronouns to index referents other than those ordinarily associated with such specific forms.

Strategic use of political pronouns such as the ones considered in this paper in political discourse makes it possible for political actors to assume the role of spokespersons for ordinary folks. As Chilton (2004) has argued, placing such political players in the same level as the ordinary folk by use of such political pronouns legitimises their opinions by claiming to anticipate the ordinary people’s needs, hopes, desires and aspirations. The alternate use of inclusive and exclusive personal pronouns in political discourse is a common strategy used by politicians to signal allegiance to their group, and at the same time to convey prejudices about other competing groups. Apart from suggesting solidarity and distancing, these political pronouns position the political actors who use them as being knowledgeable about the subject matter at hand. Semantically, these pronouns help to establish a distinction between a politician’s group and that of his opponent. In this paper we shall demonstrate how Kenyan politicians from both sides of the political divide assumed the role of spokespersons for the ordinary Kenyans, claiming to know what was good for the common man in terms of the proposed draft constitution and the general elections of December 2007. We shall also see how such politicians also used “political pronouns” to clearly distinguish and establish their collective identities and determine the identities of their political opponents. In the next section, we examine the theory of territory of information in relation to personal pronouns. All in all, there is a general agreement that politicians normally exploit the pronominal system to indicate their solidarity-inclusion from specific ideological groups or political parties. Thus Wilson (1990) has remarked:

“With such manipulative possibilities provided by the pronominal system as it operates in context, it is not surprising to find that politicians make use of pronouns to good effect: to indicate, accept, deny or distance themselves from responsibility for political action; to reveal ideological bias; to encourage solidarity; to designate and identify those who are supporters (with us) as well as those who are enemies (against us); and to present specific idiosyncratic aspects of the individual politician’s own personality.” (Wilson, 1990: 76)

In this paper, an attempt will be made to demonstrate how Kenyan politicians put to use the “manipulative possibilities” of personal pronouns during the 2005 constitutional referendum campaigns and the 2007 general election campaigns.

### **5.3. Personal Pronouns and Territory of Information**

Due to the fact that there exists, in political discourse, a plethora of possible meanings of the first person plural personal pronoun “we”, and that the correct interpretation in any instance of use greatly hinges on contextual factors, it has been argued that in most cases, it is the speaker, and only the speaker, who can accurately decide who is included in this pronominal reference (see Biber et al. 1999; and Kamio 1994, 1995, 1997 and 2001). This observation has led to the formulation of the theory of Territory of Information, about which Kamio (1994) has commented:

“Our theory is based on the notion of psychological distance between a given piece of information and the speaker/ hearer (...) the speaker’s territory of information is a

conceptual category which contains information close to the speaker himself/herself.” (Kamio, 1994: 68)

Speakers would accordingly use different linguistic strategies depending on whether he or she considers certain pieces of information to be inside or outside his or her own territory. According to Kamio (1994: 77) the following information types can be considered to fall within the speaker’s territory of information:

- a) Information obtained through the speaker’s direct experience;
- b) Information about persons, facts, and things close to the speaker, including information about the speaker’s plans, actions, and behaviour, and information about places to which the speaker has a geographical relation;
- c) Information embodying detailed knowledge that falls within the speaker’s professional or other expertise.

In the present study, the concept of territory of information was used in the analysis to help in the interpretation of the statements made by the politician; more specifically as to whether they pronominal choices presupposed shared information or not.

## **6. Method**

Data on political campaign speeches by Kenyan politicians during the campaigns of the 2005 constitutional referendum in Kenya and the general election campaigns of December 2007 were collected from secondary sources, mainly newspapers covering a period of six (6) months. Three leading dailies namely *The Daily Nation*, *The East African Standard* and *The People Daily* were used for the study. For each of the two political events, the researcher used purposive sampling technique to select newspaper reports that had news items about the general elections of 2007 and the referendum campaigns of 2005. In total, (211 for the referendum campaigns and 140 for the general elections campaigns) 356 reports were analysed This was three months prior to the official campaign period and then three months after, for each of the two campaigns. It was considered prudent to consider the three months prior to the campaign period since, although the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) had not officially declared, the various political parties and other stakeholders had started campaigning and consolidating support for their respective positions regarding the draft constitution and the general elections long before the official times time. For the two campaigns, that is the constitutional referendum campaign of 2005 and the general elections campaign of 2007, the definition of a campaign event was not restricted only to political rallies, but was extended to include any other fora in which the political players had the opportunity to articulate their respective positions regarding the draft constitution and their policy positions and manifestos in regard to the general election. Such fora included press conferences, television and radio talk shows and interviews, and political luncheons. These were essentially considered to be campaign events since the political players used the opportunity to solicit for votes. The researcher extracted newspaper reports about the referendum campaigns and the general election campaigns from the three leading English medium dailies in Kenya namely the daily nation, east African Standard and the People Daily.

The newspaper reports were complemented with television and radio news for most of the days covered by the newspapers with a view to finding out if there were any aspects or utterances of

the campaign speeches that might have been left out in the newspaper reports. Apart from the newspaper television, and radio report's, the researcher also endeavoured to attend some of the rallies that took place in Nairobi and its environs, Kisumu, Nakuru, Mombasa, and Siaya, where, applying the ethnographic approach (Schiefflen 1979), the researcher recorded in writing, some of the instances where pronominal selection was applied by the political actors in their speeches together with the social and contextual information that accompanied such selection. It is also paramount at this stage to give a note on the language choice and language use by politician during the campaigns. Kenya has forty two ethnic communities or “tribes”, each with its own language, but with varying and significant degrees of mutual intelligibility between related languages and dialects. In urban centres, English and Kiswahili are usually used in many domains including political campaigns. However, public and interpersonal communication in Kenya is characterised by a very high degree of code-switching and code-mixing. This was also the case with the political speeches made during the two campaigns.

It was, however, noted that even where there was code-switching at the point of pronominal referencing such that this was done in Kiswahili and not in English, pronominal choice was not any different from what it could have been in English, with the only difference being in the choice of communicative code. There were hardly any instances where the speeches were delivered entirely in one language except for press conferences which would be delivered entirely in both English and Kiswahili (in turns) Sticking with one language, in this case English was necessitated by the realisation that the language choice also has implications for the range of meanings encompassed by the pronominals. Even outside Nairobi, the capital city, most of the rallies were concentrated in urban areas where the listeners were not ethnically (and therefore linguistically) homogenous. This ensured that either English was the main medium of communication or a mixture of English and Kiswahili. In certain few cases where the rallies were held in rural areas and speakers used local languages, a careful translation was done by the researcher (who is a native speaker of one of the languages). This was counterchecked by a second native speaker with some background on linguistics.

During these selected campaign meetings, the researcher adopted the ethnographic role of a participant –observer, whereby he was just one of the thousands who attended the rallies to listen to the politicians. Pronominal analysis was done by considering the usage of the first and third person plural personal pronouns *we*, and *they*, and their variants and more specifically by examining the scope of reference, whether inclusive or exclusive, or even both. The political characteristics of the politician who used the pronoun was also analysed in terms of political affiliations and ideological leanings with. This was linked then linked to the pronominal selection with a view to finding out whether there was any hint of strategic usage involved in pronominal selection.

## **7. Findings**

In tables 1 and 2, the indexical meanings and the distribution for the first and third person plural pronouns *we* and *they*, and, their variants *us/* and *them* are given. Each entry of the corpus of entire news reports (a total of 356 reports) was analysed one by one before the presence or absence of each pronominal element was attributed Three indexical meanings were identified from the analysis of the speech data related to the two campaigns: namely inclusive, exclusive

and generic. The indexical meanings were analysed in the following contexts: when a pro-government politician, (PGP) is addressing pro-government supporters (PGS), when pro-opposition politicians, (POP) were addressing opposition supporters, (POS) when a pro-government politician is including or excluding pro-opposition politicians or supporters (POPS) in or from pronominal reference and finally when pro-opposition politician is including or excluding pro-government politicians or supporters, (PGPS) in or from pronominal reference. For the 2007 general elections campaign, it was easy to categorise the various politicians as belonging to the opposition or government side depending on the party they were identifying with. This categorisation was not however easy with regard to the constitutional referendum campaign of 2005, partly because as opposed to the general election, Kenyans were campaigning and expected to vote for or against a document, and not a political party or individual(s). The government, through the president Mwai Kibaki, and his ministers, however took an unusual step and openly supported and campaigned for the draft document. This had the effect of making those for the draft constitution to be seen as government supporters (even if they belonged to opposition parties), and vice-versa. In fact, at a certain point in the campaigns, the draft document became known as a “government project” in Kenyan parlance. Due to this government position, the same labels used for the analysis of the 2007 election campaigns were replicated in the analysis of the constitutional referendum campaigns. Table 1 displays the analysis for the 2005 referendum campaigns, while table 2 displays the analysis for the December 2007 general elections.

In Table 1, the discourse functions of “We /Us” are shown. It can be seen that the first person plural personal pronoun “we” and its variant “us” had the exclusive function having the highest percentage (76.01%) followed by the generic function, (12.41%), and finally by the inclusive function at (11.56%). The exclusive “we” was highest in the instances involving pro-opposition politicians excluding pro-government politicians and their supporters from the pronominal reference, (31.83%), and lowest in situations where pro-government politicians were addressing pro-government supporters, (17.04%). This implies that pro-opposition politicians used the exclusive “we” more than the pro-government politicians. The inclusive “we”, on the other hand had the highest occurrence in the environment in which the pro-government politicians were addressing pro-government supporters, (64%) and lowest in the environment in which the pro-government politicians were including pro-opposition politicians and supporters in pronominal reference, and where pro-opposition politicians were including pro-government politicians and supporters in pronominal reference (00% in both case). Finally, 47.41% percent of employed the generic referencing where pro-government politicians were addressing pro-government supporters, and 52.58% in instances where pro-opposition politicians were addressing pro-opposition supporters. In the next table, we see the distribution of the discourse functions of the third person plural pronoun “They”.

**Table 1: Discourse Functions of “We /Us**

Indexical Meaning	“We/ Us”	Distribution	Total (%)
<b>Inclusive</b>	PGP addressing PGS	64 (59.2%)	11.56%
	POP addressing POS	42 (38.8%)	
	PGP including to POPS	00 (00%)	
	POP including to PGPS	00 (00%)	
	TOTAL	108	
<b>Exclusive</b>	PGP addressing PGS	121 (17.04%)	76.01%
	POP addressing POS	179 (25.21%)	
	PGP excluding POPS	184 (25.91%)	
	POP excluding PGPS	226 (31.83%)	
	TOTAL	710	
<b>Generic</b>	PGP addressing PGP	55 (47.41%)	12.41%
	POP addressing POS	61 (52.58%)	
	TOTAL	116	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>934 (100%)</b>	

From the table above, it can be seen that with regard to discourse functions of “We/Us”, this pronoun was mainly used in its exclusive function. This exclusive function was exploited to a large extent by both the government and the opposition politicians alike as indicated by the near equal percentage use by both sides. It is however, still apparent that POP were more exclusive in their pronominal selection at 31.83%. This implies that POP sought to distance themselves from their PGP colleagues during the two campaigns more than the PGP sought to distance themselves from POP. Understood from the context of Kenya’s fluid political milieu, this is hardly surprising given the fact that at every election time, the party in power is usually seen to start at a great disadvantage in terms of popularity, mainly due to perceived misdeeds and misuse of power, corruption, and failure to fulfil pre-election pledges. Over the years, it has therefore become fashionable for any candidate or party to dissociate itself from the ruling clique at the earliest and slightest opportunity so that they endear themselves to the voters. Thus, the POP group went out of their way to construct their unique identity through exclusive pronominal referencing by demarcating the PGP, which as explained above, they had reasons to believe would be unpopular, as having an identity distinct from theirs. It can also be observed that both the POP and the PGP effectively employed the inclusive “We/Us” to establish, consolidate and demarcate their identities as distinct and homogeneous. In table 2 below the various discourse functions of the inclusive and exclusive personal pronouns They/Them are presented.

**Table 2: Discourse Functions of “They/Them/”**

Indexical Meaning	“They/Them”	Distribution	Total (%)
<b>Inclusive</b>	PGP addressing PGP	00 (00%)	00%
	POP addressing POS	00 (00%)	
	PGP including to POPS	00 (00%)	
	POP including to PGPS	00 (00%)	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>00</b>	
<b>Exclusive</b>	PGP addressing PGP	91 (23.39%)	58.67%
	POP addressing POS	83 (21.33%)	
	PGP excluding POPS	101 (25.96%)	
	POP excluding PGPS	114 (29.30%)	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>389</b>	
<b>Generic</b>	PGP addressing PGP	143 (52.18%)	41.32%
	POP addressing POS	131 (57.81%)	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>274</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>663 (100%)</b>		

Table 2 above reports that the inclusive “They/Them” in all the four discourse contexts. This is hardly surprising given that semantically and grammatically, the third person plural personal pronoun excludes the speaker and his or her interlocutors from its reference, only contemplating the third person. The exclusive “They/Them” was the highest occurring at 58.67%, and used more when pro-opposition politicians were excluding pro-government politicians and their supporters. Instances of the generic “They/Them” were fewer at 41.32%. An overall pattern that emerges whereby both the POP and PGP preferred to use these personal pronouns to exclude each other, implying that pronominal selection in this case was done by picking on the exclusive pronouns to construct and demarcate the various identities. This could be attributed to the fact that the exclusive function is usually the unmarked one for these pronouns as opposed to the marked inclusive function.

## **8. Discussion**

Nearly all the Kenyan political players during these two campaigns had claims (legitimate or otherwise) of having the right to, and actually speaking on behalf of other people. For the elected political officials, they claimed that being elected gives them an inherent role as spokespersons for their electorate, despite the fact that very few of them went back to their electorate to ask for their opinions before taking positions on the draft constitution, nor the fact that some of the positions taken by such leaders were clearly at variance with the publicly stated views of their constituents on the referendum, nor the fact that some elected members of parliament had actually “defected”, or abandoned their sponsoring parties, and by extension, their electorate, whose views they bothered not to solicit before such defections. For the unelected civil society activists, this claim was premised on the historical and rather nebulous role of the civil society as the public watchdogs for the people against a deceptive and exploitative political class and intransigent governments.

Whatever the underlying claims or justifications, whenever they exist or are exercised by political speakers, “...there is always this double assumption of authority and communality” (Pennycook, 1994: 176). These claims were also observed to be true in the present study. They manifested themselves in attempts by speakers to construct communal identities via pronominal selection in the course of their political speeches during the two campaigns. In this way, pronominal selection and use was almost always strategic. Various speakers used pronominal selection to establish and construct political, parliamentary, ethnic, religious, gender, regional and class collective identities. It should be noted that the nomenclature used in presenting the various identities is adopted merely for practical purposes of presentation and discussion. Indeed, many of the identities that emerged from this study were overlapping and mixed, to the extent that a clear watertight delineation was practically almost impossible. In the discussion that follows, illustrative excerpts that of how pronominal selection was used to create collective identities are given. Given the fundamental role of context parameters for the interpretation of (political) pronouns, a context-schema is provided to go with each example.

### **8.1. Political Identities**

Political identities were established largely along political party lines in both the general elections campaign of 2007 and the constitutional referendum campaigns of 2005. This was done mainly by employing the exclusive “We” and the exclusive “they”. Speakers used these pronouns to exclude members of competing political parties and those who had opposing positions on the proposed draft constitution which was to be subjected to a referendum vote. In doing this, such speakers were essentially engaged in a process demarcating and constructing collective political identities. By defining, constructing and demarcating “We”, the speakers are simultaneously engaged in a counter process of defining, constructing and demarcating the other, “Them”. The ability of the personal pronouns to be used in this way has been noted by Seidel (1975), Connor-Linton (1998), Zupnik (1994), Fairclough (1989), and Wilson (1990). Zupnik (1994: 340), for instance, remarks that “...first person plural deictic pronouns may fulfil a powerful persuasive function since they have the potential to encode group memberships and identifications: speakers may index different groups as included in the scope of the pronoun ‘we’ while excluding others”

If we begin by looking at some of the examples of the use of the inclusive “We”, the first statement quoted in this paper is a better starting point. When then Hon. Member of Parliament says in example one reproduced below:

*Context: A major political rally called by the opposition coalition (consisting mainly of the Liberal Democratic Party, LDP and the Kenya African National Union, KANU and civil society groups) to campaign against the draft constitution. The venue is at Nairobi’s Uhuru Park (Freedom Park) and the top brass of Kenya’s opposition are present. The speaker is LDP’s Secretary for Legal and Constitutional Affairs, Hon. Otiemo K’ajwang. The crowd is clearly partisan, being supporters of the parties that organised the rally*

- 1) The people of Kenya have unanimously decided to reject this Wako (Kenya’s attorney general) draft because it does not reflect the views of the people. And *we* are the people....*we* are the people!!!!

Apart from using the exclusive “we” to signal power relations (a point we shall be returning to later), he is also establishing a collective political identity. The indexical reference of the exclusive pronoun is here understood to encompass all the opposition politicians and their supporters, and at the same time exclude government politicians and their supporters. Those who are included in the scope of indexical reference are assumed to share certain common ideals and position regarding the issue at hand—the constitutional referendum. The reference to the “the people of Kenya” in connection to the exclusive “We” is not literal, but rather implies a fact that was evident in Kenyan political terrain at the time of constitutional referendum campaigns, and which was acknowledged by many objective political commentators, and would later be confirmed by the outcome of the poll: that most Kenyans were against the then proposed draft constitution and therefore aligned themselves more with the opposition. Yet, one other way of looking at this instance of pronominal selection would be to argue that it represents an instance of blurring between the generic ‘We’ and the exclusive “We”. From this perspective, this example would represent a selectional continuum whereby the first instance would be generic selection to represent all the people of Kenya and the second instance would represent an exclusive usage to contrast the Kenyan people who oppose the proposed document as opposed to its POP.

The strategic use of the exclusive “We” is also demonstrated in the following statement by a cabinet minister during the referendum campaigns:

*Context: A press conference called by the ruling National Rainbow Coalition, NARC to hit out at the tactics employed by those opposing the proposed constitution in furthering their cause. The bone of contention is the fact that the opposition politicians are insulting and disrespecting the president and the government under the guise of campaigning against the proposed constitution. In attendance are cabinet ministers, and the ruling party MPs and operatives. The speaker is the Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Hon. Kiriatu Murungi.*

- 2) *We* will not allow anyone to undermine our president and our government in the name of campaigning for the referendum. *We* have a government in place, under the very capable leadership of His Excellency President Mwai Kibaki, and that must be respected, referendum or no referendum.

In the example above, the speaker, a cabinet minister uses the exclusive “We” in the first instance to constitute a collective identity of those in the cabinet—fellow cabinet ministers—on whose shoulders the burden of running the daily affairs of the government falls. This collective identity excludes those in the opposition, and even those supporting the government and in the ruling coalition, but who are not members of the cabinet. He then uses the second “we”—a generic one whose meaning extends to include all the Kenyan people. The use of the exclusive “We” in the first instance is an exercise of authority and power (more on this later), while the generic signals the solemn obligation of all Kenyans to defend and support the government of the day, irrespective of political affiliations.

The exclusive “They” was also used by various speakers to construct collective political identities. Speakers used this third person personal plural pronoun to demarcate, distance and distinguish their collective identities and what they stood for regarding the two campaigns. In doing this, they were essentially doing the same for their opponents. Deictically the pronoun had

the distancing function. This, in effect, means that this pronoun, apart from constructing the collective political identities, also established distance between conflicting identities. The following example illustrates the use exclusive of the exclusive “They”:

*Context: A major political rally called by the opposition coalition to campaign for their party in the general elections. The venue is the western city of Kisumu which is the bedrock of opposition politics in the country. The crowd in attendance is therefore largely. In attendance are opposition politicians and civil society groups. The speaker is LDP’s Secretary General, Prof. Peter Anyang Nyongo.*

- 3) *They* promised us a clean government and zero-tolerance to corruption, but instead *they* gave us a government of the corrupt, by the corrupt and for the corrupt. Now *we* must tell *them* through the ballot that this country belongs to all of *us* and not just *them*.

In the example above, the speaker makes use of the exclusive “They” as a distancing strategy. This statement was made by an opposition member of the former ruling party KANU during the 2007 general election campaigns. The aim here is to distance himself and his colleagues in the opposition from the corruption and the rot that came to be associated with the “*them*”-those in government, and to portray them as unreliable and untrustworthy, and thus, not suitable for re-election. At the same time, all these are contrasted with the inclusive “*we*” in “now *we* must tell *them*”. The use of the first person plural personal pronoun is considered to be inclusive since in its indexical reference, the speaker does not merely wish to include his fellow opposition legislators in parliament but all their supporters (including the ones he is addressing) and every other Kenyan who share in the disaffection with the ruling elite. It may be argued that the use of “*we*” in this example should be considered as exclusive since the intended hearer-them-is not included in the pronominal referencing, yet as per our earlier definition, for this pronominal selection to be considered inclusive, the hearer must be included. In this case, however, it is clear that there are two sets of hearers: the immediate audience who the LDP Secretary General is addressing and a more remote audience who must be told that the country belongs to everyone. It is the former that makes this a case of inclusive pronominal referencing. The latter can only be considered as exclusive since they are not immediately being addressed. Indeed, the speakers in this occasion are still merely expressing their intention of addressing the remote audience (probably at some later date and venue). The example also has a generic “*we*” in its variant form “*us*”. This generic reference has an unrestricted reference and includes all the people of Kenya. Another way of looking at this instance of “*us*” would be to advance the argument that far from being generic; it is indeed a case of inclusive pronominal referencing. From this perspective, it can be postulated that pronominal selection is used to convey the fact that the country not only belongs to those in the government (which means it also belongs to them!), but to everyone. The above example therefore illustrates the construction the three different collective political identities: for the ruling government elite, the opposition politicians, and for all the people of Kenya.

One observation is worth making with regard to how the various speakers constructed collective identities by use of first person personal pronouns. Comparatively, both the first and third person plural personal pronouns were used more for exclusive reference than inclusive reference. This

suggests that the political players in the two campaigns were too eager to distance themselves from each other and did not wish to be identified with common ground. This can be attributed to the highly polarised political situation that prevailed in Kenya during the two campaigns, coupled with the strong conviction among the rank and file of the opposition that the draft constitution and the government of the day was abysmally unpopular and that both the general election and the referendum were for the opposition to lose. As a result, they did not want anything that would make them to be associated with the government of the day and preferred to maintain the widest distance between them as was possible. Indeed, the highest use of the exclusive pronouns is recorded in the opposition campaign speeches as compared to those on the government. The government side, on their part remained defiant and did not hesitate to demonstrate the fact that they were in control of the instruments of state, power and control.

## **8.2. Ethnic Identities**

Like everything else, politics in Kenya is highly ethnicised. This ethnic polarisation was more evident in the political sphere, and more so in the two campaigns. Before discussing how collective ethnic identities were constructed by Kenyan politicians in the political discourses of the two campaigns, certain conceptual issues need to be addressed: what are ethnic identities and how are they constructed in political discourse? Chandra (2006) has provided a characterisation of ethnic identities:

“By “identity,” I mean any social category in which an individual is eligible to be a member. Ethnic identity categories, I propose, are a subset of identity categories in which eligibility for membership is determined by descent-based attributes. By attributes that “determine” eligibility for membership I mean either those that qualify an individual for membership in a category or those that signal such membership. By descent-based attributes, I mean attributes associated with, or believed to be associated with descent. By attributes “associated with descent” I mean attributes that are acquired genetically (e.g. skin colour, gender, hair type, eye colour, height, and physical features), or through cultural and historical inheritance (e.g. the names, languages, places of birth and origin of one’s parents and ancestors), or acquired in the course of one’s lifetime as markers of such an inheritance (e.g. last name, or tribal markings). By attributes “believed to be associated with descent,” I mean attributes around which a credible myth of association with descent has been woven, whether or not such an association exists in fact.” (Chandra, 2006: 399)

Chandra’s characterisation, in as far as it conceives of gender as exclusively belonging to those set of “attributes associated with descent” falls short in one fundamental perspective: gender, as far as it is usually defined, is hardly “genetic”, but a social construct. Nonetheless, Chandra provides a fairly comprehensive delimitation of ethnic identities which enables us to gain useful insights into the processes of creating ethnic identities by Kenyan politicians during the two political plebiscites.

Chandra also explains that ethnic identities are a subset of identity categories in which membership is determined by descent-based categories, and are defined by such restrictions as being impersonal, constituting a section of a country’s population rather than the whole, and in which the qualifying attributes for membership are restricted only to one’s own genetically transmitted features or to the language, religion, place of origin, tribe, region, caste, clan, nationality, or race of one’s parents and ancestors. In Kenya membership to an ethnic group, is

determined largely on the basis of tribe and language. The two always go hand in hand because the situation in Kenya is that each tribe shares a common language or a set of mutually intelligible dialects. These, therefore, are the two main factors that determine ethnic identity in Kenya.

On the issue of how ethnic identities may be collectively constructed, we are of the opinion that collective identities are constructed on the basis of the similarity of a group’s members. In political discourse, this is done when political players deliberately highlight common interest, aspirations, fears and hopes of a people who share an ethnic identity, and when such hopes, fears, aspirations and interests are used in the political discourse to rally members of such a community towards a common cause, perceived to be beneficial to the ethnic group. Of course, in identifying the group’s collective identity, its differences from other groups are considered as well. It is this contrast that demarcates one collective ethnic identity from another one in political discourse. In this paper, focus is on how politicians across the Kenyan political divide highlighted ethnic differences in their campaign speeches during both the general election campaign of 2007, and the constitutional referendum campaign of 2005. The aim is to demonstrate how such a highlighting of ethnic differences was, in effect, a process of constructing collective ethnic identities. The following extract illustrates such a construction of ethnic identities:

*Context: A major political rally called by the opposition coalition to campaign against the draft constitution. The venue is Suswa grounds in the heart of Maasai country. Suswa Grounds is traditionally sacred site for the Maasai community where they have always made historical decisions on matters affecting their community since the colonial times. The crowd is largely made of Maasai tribesmen and opposition politicians and civil society groups opposed to the proposed constitution. The topic of discussion is on the provisions of the draft constitution relating to land issues. Land issues have been very sensitive especially to the Maasai community due to their pastoralist nature and the way they perceive to be past injustices by successive Kenyan regimes which alienated their land. The speaker is the Member of Parliament for Narok North, Hon. William Ole Ntimama, the spokesman and leader of Maasai community*

- 4) *We were marginalised by the colonial government, we were marginalised by the Kenyatta and Moi governments, and now we are being marginalised by the Kibaki administration. As the Maasai community, the “majimbo” (federal) system which has been removed from the proposed draft constitution would have been our only salvation. As a community, we are therefore left with no option than to say a big ‘no’ to the draft constitution.*

The above statement was made by Hon. William Ole Ntimama Mp, for Narok North constituency at a political rally dubbed the “Suswa Declaration” at Suswa Grounds in the Rift Valley province at the height of the constitutional referendum campaigns. In this statement, the speaker has used the exclusive “We” to restrict his reference to members of the Maasai ethnic community only, and to no else, not even other ethnic communities that were also prepared to reject the draft constitution. In the entire three instances where the first person plural personal pronoun has been used, its indexical reference is confined to the Maasai only and excludes anyone else. This exclusive reference can be understood when we consider the nature of the particular discourse event. The “Suswa Declaration” was made by Maasai leaders, elders, and other members of the

community at a meeting that was called purposely for the Maasai community to deliberate and take a common stand on the draft constitution, to enable them speak with one voice during the referendum.

In doing this, the Maasai community were, in effect, constructing their collective identity as an ethnic group distinct from other Kenyan ethnic groups, and juxtaposing this identity with other ethnic identities of other Kenyan communities. This juxtaposition is what ultimately sets the community apart from the other communities, even the ones that they shared the same position with regarding the referendum. This comes out clearly when they point to their own marginalisation by successive Kenyan regimes, without making reference to the fact that they were not alone in that marginalisation. In short, they wanted to consider issues purely and exclusively as the Maasai community without dragging in other communities. One of such issues was the land question which an earlier draft of the proposed had proposed that be dealt with by the various Jimbos (counties), but, a provision which was later was reversed in the draft constitution which was presented for the referendum; hence the opposition to the draft constitution.

Another example of the use of the exclusive “We” is seen in the following extract from a speech by a then powerful cabinet minister from the Kikuyu ethnic community, as he addressed thousands of the ruling party and government supporters in one of the constituencies in Central Kenya province, an area predominantly inhabited by the Kikuyu ethnic tribe:

- 5) When *we* were agitating for the position of an executive Prime-Minister in the new constitution, *we* thought that Moi (the former president) would not be defeated and would not hand over power, so *we* wanted one of *our* own to be there and share power with him. But now Moi is gone, KANU (the former ruling party) is gone, so why do *we* still need an executive Prime-Minister?

The above statement drew instant condemnation and outrage across the country from opposition supporters and politicians, and from some government politicians and supporters of non Kikuyu ethnic origin. The bone of contention was the referent of the first person plural personal pronoun “we”. While the opposition and their supporters interpreted it to be referring to members of the ethnic Kikuyu tribe, the government side and the cabinet minister vehemently denied this and argued that it referred to the then opposition. Many Kenyans, however, did not buy this argument and continued to be appalled at what they considered to be a thinly veiled and shameless demonstration of negative ethnicity in the political process of the referendum on the then proposed constitution. This draft constitution had proposed a tremendous whittling of the imperial presidency and the powers that go with, and devolution of such powers to the new office of an executive prime-minister and regional governments. The position of a prime-minister had a lot of controversy surrounding it since it had been part of a pre-election pact between President Mwai Kibaki (a Kikuyu) and Raila Odinga (a Luo). The pact involved Odinga shelving his own presidential ambitions and throwing his weight behind Kibaki. This pact was never honoured by Kibaki when he assumed the presidency.<sup>2</sup> So when a Kikuyu cabinet minister made the above

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<sup>2</sup> Odinga would later be named a quasi-executive Prime-Minister in March 2008 in a deal brokered by the African Union and supported by the USA and the EU in a bid to end weeks of ethnic violence and bloodshed occasioned by

statement in an address to a predominantly Kikuyu and pro Kibaki crowd, the reactions were very predictable. We can say that the exclusive “we” has been used here to construct a collective ethnic identity, namely the Kikuyu ethnic tribe; and at the same time, other opposing collective identities have been constructed by contrast. These collective identities have been constructed by outlining the changing interests of the kikuyu community vis a vis the other communities.

It is worth noting that the exclusive “we” was the form mostly used to construct collective ethnic identities as opposed to its inclusive or generic counterparts. This could be attributable to the ethnic dimension of Kenyan politics whereby any political process always adopts an ethnic dimension and provides an opportunity for political players to advance and highlight ethnic interests. Ethnicity in Kenyan politics has become a divisive element and has promoted politics of exclusion. It does therefore not come as a surprise that in the construction of collective ethnic identities, pronominal referencing was dominated by the exclusive first person plural personal pronoun. One instance in which the inclusive “we” was used to construct collective ethnic identities, was, however, noted:

- 6) Kenya has more than 42 tribes and *we* cannot allow one tribe to be always dominating *us*.

The pronominal reference in the statement above is inclusive in the sense that its scope encompasses all the other 41 tribes in Kenya except the Kikuyu; who, allegedly, has been dominating the others. Yet, it is also has an exclusive dimension because its reference excludes the Kikuyu. If we consider it to be exclusive, then collective ethnic identity constructed in this case slightly varies from the previous ones in how “collective” is defined. In the previous examples we have seen individuals from one ethnic group constructing their own collective identity, while in this case, we see various ethnic tribes, say, A, B, and C constructing a collective identity on the basis of what they consider to be a common predicament-the alleged domination by the Kikuyu tribe, and excluding the Kikuyu ethnic group or D, from this identity. An inclusive referencing reading would mean that the speaker from one specific ethnic community, say A, was addressing members of this community and using pronominal referencing to construct a collective identity for community A, but also including in this construction other ethnic communities, say B, C, and D, which are assumed to share in their plight. All in all, it is clear that collective ethnic identities were constructed nearly exclusively by use of the exclusive personal pronoun. Even in a single instance where we have seen the inclusive pronoun being used, we have seen that it is possible to still argue for an interpretation that also focuses on exclusion. It has been noted that the reason behind this phenomenon is grounded on the exclusive nature of ethnicity and ethnic politics in Kenyan society in general. Such exclusivity that binds together ethnicity as has been observed elsewhere in this paper has its root deep into the colonial history of Kenya when the British colonialists started turning ethnic awareness into a divide and rule tool for efficient administration of their colony.

### **8.3. Religious Identities**

The process of constructing religious identities was also taking place during the 2005 campaigns for the constitutional referendum and the 2007 general elections campaigns. The constitutional review process in Kenya which ultimately resulted in a constitutional referendum on the draft constitution provided a rich battleground for the country's two dominant religious groups: Christians and Muslims. Each group saw in the review process an opportunity to assert themselves and gain prominence over each other. For the Muslims, they had felt for a long time that theirs had been a marginalised religion on account of their minority, and were more specifically agitating for the introduction of the Islamic law (sharia) in predominantly Muslim areas of the country like the North Eastern Province and the Coast Province. While the Christians felt that being a predominantly Christian country, no any other religion should be given prominence in the constitution and that the separation of state and religion as envisioned in the secular constitution ought to have been upheld. The construction of collective religious identities during the constitutional referendum campaigns therefore evolved along these contentious lines. As with ethnic identities, collective religious identities were constructed mainly by the use of exclusive referencing of personal pronouns. This is seen in the following examples:

- 7) *We* want to be under the Islamic Kadhi courts and *we* will insist that this should be provided for in the new constitution. *We* will no longer allow Islam to be treated as a marginalised religion

In all the three instances in the above extract, the exclusive first person plural personal pronoun “we” refers exclusively to the Muslim community in Kenya. In the above example, an Islamic cleric cum politician was addressing a workshop for the Muslim scholars on the proposed constitution. They were constructing a collective religious identity as an oppressed minority religion in Kenya, yet at the same time constructing the identity of the “other”, the Christians who were the dominant religion.

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The Christians on the other hand, were also constructing their collective religious identity, portraying themselves as harmless, accommodative, but nonetheless not taking any provocations or alterations of the status quo lightly. This is what the catholic Archbishop of Nairobi had to say in one of the many forums on the new constitution:

- 8) *We* cannot allow one religion to be given prominence by being mentioned in the constitution, the Islamic Kadhi courts have been functioning without being explicitly provided for in the constitution and *we* see no problem with that. What *we* are against is the inclusion of religious issues in the constitution. *We* must maintain the separation between state and religion as has been the case before.

There are three instances of the exclusive “we” and one instance of inclusive “we”. When the Archbishop says “we cannot allow...” he is excluding all Kenyan Muslims in the pronominal reference, and restricting his reference to Christians only not just Catholics, and by doing this, he is contrasting this Christian identity with the “other”-the Muslims who want the Islamic courts to be recognised in the new constitution. This exclusive reference is also evident in the two cases where he says “we have no problem with that” just like when he says that “what we are

against...” When he says that “*we* must maintain the separation between state and religion as has been the case before” however, the pronominal reference shifts to the inclusive “*we*” since even the Muslims are included in this reference. This statement was in effect sort of a plea to Muslims and Christians alike on the need to uphold the status quo.

Collective religious identities were also constructed during the 2007 general elections campaigns. The draft constitution having been defeated at the referendum, the religious groups especially the Muslims turned their attention to the general elections with a view to ensuring that parties which would take care of their interests won the election. They started intense lobbying with political parties to take into account their sectarian interests should they assume power<sup>3</sup>. The chairman of the Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims (SUPKEM) made the following statement at a press conference in the coastal town of Mombasa.

- 9) *We* will only give out our votes to a candidate and a party that cares about the interests of the Muslim community. This time round *we* have decided to speak with one voice in the forthcoming general elections and all the Muslim vote will go to the presidential candidate who respects our religion and means well for the well being of all Kenyan Muslims

The pronominal reference in the example above is exclusive in the sense that the speaker does not include other Kenyans of other religions within its scope of reference. He is, in effect, articulating the position of the Muslim community in Kenya, the “*we*” without any reference to the other, the “*them*”, or Kenyans of other religious persuasions. This leads to the construction of a collective identity for the Kenyan Muslims that excludes other religions. As mentioned earlier, it is worth noting that just like with collective ethnic identities, collective religious identities were established by use of the exclusive pronominal referencing.

#### **8.4. Gender Identities**

Quite different from other kinds of identities such as ethnic identities, gender identities, as far as they are usually defined, are hardly “genetic”, but social constructs. Thus, in discussing gender identities, we can not help but take recourse to social, rather than genetic or biological constructs. It is this reality that makes Ostergaard (1992) to observe:

“Gender relations are constructed in terms of the relations of power and dominance that structure the life chances of men and women. In other words, gender divisions are not fixed in biology, but constitute the wider social divisions of labour, which in turn are rooted in the conditions of production and reproduction and reinforced by the cultural, religious, and ideological systems prevailing in a society.” (Ostergaard, 1992: 6)

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<sup>3</sup> The Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims (SUPKEM) in fact ended up signing a controversial Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Raila Odinga, the leader and presidential candidate of the opposition Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), whose contents remained a secret to the public and drew public outcry and condemnation. When the contents of the said MoU were later revealed to the public at a press conference, there were already many other ‘version’ being circulated in public making it difficult to know which of the many versions was the original document

It is, perhaps, out of such a realisation, that early back in 1989, Simone de Beauvoir, remarked that “*One is not born, but rather, becomes a woman*”.

In line with such observations, suffice it to add that the concept of gender identity often conveys gender relations into individual self concepts and self-experiences. It is helpful to differentiate gender identity into three components namely:

- a) *A stable self-categorization* as female or male. This is usually the sex that was ascribed at birth;
- b) *Gender role identity* or, identification with historical-cultural images of femininity and masculinity;
- c) *Sexual preference*, thought as stable, that means heterosexual, homosexual or transsexual orientations or desire.

In this paper, the second component is the subject of focus, whereby the construction of collective gender identities as reflected in roles in Kenya’s political landscape during the two campaigns is examined. The campaigns provided an opportunity for Kenyans of both gender, that is, males and females to assert themselves by lobbying for policies or political parties and politicians that would advance their interests in the new political dispensation. One interesting observation, however, is the fact that in the constitutional referendum and the general elections campaigns, this lobbying and assertion for gender recognition was mainly dominated by women and women organizations. While there were many lobby groups and organisations that were either advocating for election of more women into Kenya’s parliament or the recognition of women rights and issue in the new constitution, there were non doing the same for men. Indeed, each of the major political parties had a women’s wing whose main task was to campaign and bring to the fore the issues they felt affected Kenyan women, while none had any such lobby group for men. This could be explained by the general belief in Kenya and Africa, (and indeed in many parts of the world) that societal and governance structures favour men at the expense of women. However, in a rapidly changing world where women have steadily become economically and socially empowered as a result of education and professional occupations, such a long held belief should invite closer scrutiny and Kenyan men also have issues which could be advanced by way of special lobby groups.<sup>4</sup>

This lobbying by women organisations and individual took the form of advocating for women’s issue to be included in the proposed new constitution, in the case of the constitutional referendum campaigns as shown in the following statement by an official of the Kenyan chapter of the Federation of Kenya Women Lawyers (FIDA):

- 10) The current constitution allows female spouses of Kenyan men to apply for and obtain Kenyan citizenship, while the same is not possible in a situation where a Kenyan woman

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<sup>4</sup> Soon after, a few months after the referendum campaigns, a lobby group for men, Manedeleo ya Wanaume, (*advancement for men*) was formed a response to a similar organization for men, Manedeleo ya Wanawake (*advancement for women*) which has been in existence since the eighties

is married to a foreign national. On the land issue, *we* insist that *we* be given rights to inherit land just like men have. *We* want the new constitution to correct these anomalies so that *we* enjoy equal rights and privileges like *them*. Is that too much to ask for?

The exclusive “we” has been used in the above statement a collective identity of Kenyan women as those who are being subjected to an unfair treatment by discriminatory laws. This collective identity is contrasted with that of men by use of in the second last sentence of the statement. This variant of the third person plural personal pronoun also has an exclusive reference, emphasising the fact that the collective identities they have been used to construct are mutually exclusive-the oppressing males versus the oppressed females. The use of the exclusive “we” is also meant to build and consolidate a sense of solidarity among the womenfolk, as a means of fortifying the already constructed collective identity.

In the 2007 general election campaigns, the construction of collective gender identities took the form of a struggle to win more electoral seats in the country’s parliament. Despite forming about 60% of Kenya’s population, women continue to be underrepresented in the political landscape of the country, for instance, constituting less than 10% of the members of the legislative assembly. It is against this background that women organisations and lobby groups teamed up to campaign for increased representation and to sensitise fellow women on the need to vote for their fellow women in the elections. This sensitisation campaign inevitably led to construction and fortification of collective gender identities as seen the following example:

- 11) *They* have dominated parliament for a long time, and yet *we* form the majority of the country’s population. This is the time for *us* to show them that *we* can also elect our own to parliament.

The above statement is an example of the competing collective female and male identities in the general elections campaigns. The speaker above endeavours to constantly contrast their collective feminine identity as the oppressed and underrepresented with that of their male counterparts as their oppressors. This is achieved by a constant, intentional and careful juxtaposition of the exclusive first person plural personal pronoun “we” and the exclusive third person personal pronoun “they” and its variant “they”. The idea in this case is to clearly demarcate the two competing identities so that the women, who, as has been pointed out previously, constituted the majority of the population, can take advantage of their numerical strength to elect fellow women to parliament.

### **8.5. Parliamentary Identities**

Parliamentary identities were constructed in and outside parliament but were based exclusively on the discussions that took place on the floor of the house. Parliamentary identities were also the most blurred of all the collective identities constructed in the course of the two political campaigns. This blurring was caused by a series of overlaps in the collective identities constructed,

due to the fluid nature of Kenya's politics. This was partly due to defections<sup>5</sup> and the fact that the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) wing of the ruling NARC coalition had for a long time ceased consider itself as part of the government, with its members sitting on opposition benches and voting with the opposition against government sponsored motions and bills<sup>6</sup>. The parliamentary identities therefore became less and less demarcated as it was difficult to link individual members of parliament to specific political parties and concomitant ideologies and policies. Nevertheless there are still many politicians and members of parliament who have remained loyal to their sponsoring parties and have thus helped in maintaining distinct party identities.

Both exclusive and inclusive pronominal referencing was used in the construction of collective parliamentary identities in the course of transacting parliamentary business. There is, however, a marked difference in instances where either exclusive or inclusive referencing was used. Inclusive referencing was mainly used when talking about decision and actions that transcended party lines as seen in the example below:

- 12) *We* discussed, debated and agreed on this draft constitution in parliament and then it was taken to the cabinet for approval. For *them* to now turn around and reject the draft is the height of mischief and dishonesty. *They* should not expect to be taken seriously.

There is an instance the use of inclusive "we" in the above statement when the speaker says "we discussed..." All the members of parliament from the ruling coalition and the opposition side are included in this reference. It is used to construct their identity as a parliamentary community of legislators, totally distinct from other Kenyans who never had a chance to discuss and debate the draft constitution on the floor of the house. The speaker, however, assumes that though the draft was debated in parliament, there might not have been any unanimity, and therefore some parliamentarians were still opposing the draft in the public fora. There is then a switch to the exclusive third person plural personal pronoun "they/them" which is used to further construct a collective identity for a sub-group of the collective parliamentary identity-those who are going against the decisions taken by parliament in spite of their membership to it. This, therefore, creates a second sub- group of the collective parliamentary identity, by implication, since mentioning they/them simultaneously implies we/us. We eventually end up with one large collective parliamentary identity, which in itself has two contrasting sub-identities.

As mentioned earlier, collective parliamentary identities were not very clearly demarcated due to the reasons that have already been mentioned. There were, however, certain distinct groupings that constantly emerged in parliament each time crucial bills were put forward for consideration by the members of parliament. The opposition members of parliament were seen to be constantly teaming up with disaffected members of parliament on the government side, especially those from the LDP wing of the ruling coalition. On the other hand, there also emerged the government

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<sup>5</sup> A practice in Kenya's political landscape, in which members of parliament elected to parliament on opposition party tickets, would abandon their sponsoring parties in parliament and support the government side without actually making the move official by notifying the speaker, and thereby, having to face an election. In return, such MPs were normally rewarded financially and with cabinet positions.

<sup>6</sup> An amorphous group of parliamentarians drawn from almost all the parliamentary political parties, and always was supporting the government's legislative agenda, regardless of party affiliations.

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friendly MPs<sup>7</sup> who were always voting alongside the government side on crucial bills. It is along these two groupings that collective parliamentary identities were moulded as seen in the following example from a statement by an opposition MP:

- 13) Let *them* have as many retreats as they like and buy many members (of parliament) but *we* assure them that *we* are ready to defeat them on the floor of the house when the bill comes up for debate.

The speaker in the above example has used both the exclusive “them/they” and the exclusive “we” to construct two distinct collective parliamentary identities: the opposition friendly MPs and the government friendly MPs. As observed these identities transcended established party lines within the legislative assembly.

## 8.6. Regional Identities

Regional identities were collectively created in the political discourses of the two campaigns were created on the basis of Kenya’s eight provinces. These are administrative units inherited from the British colonial administrative structure which divided the country into eight units. Although these eight provinces were not established on ethnic basis, each of them can however be considered to be predominantly inhabited by a single ethnic group or tribe. Indeed, the whole of Central Province and Western Province, for instance, have the Kikuyu and the Luhya as the original inhabitants respectively; while the Luo inhabit more than 90% of Nyanza province. The construction of collective regional identities was, therefore, in, most cases, patterned along ethnic lines since most of the eight provinces identify with one dominant ethnic tribe. In terms of issues, the construction of collective regional identities took the form of various regions trying to assert themselves economically by campaigning for legislations that they believed would lead them to economic empowerment in case of the constitutional referendum as shown in the following example:

- 14) *We* want the new constitution to ensure our economic development by enabling *us* to utilise our resources here at the coast and not that our resources are used to develop other regions just because *we* don’t have political power. That is why *we*, as the coastal people have resolved to support a majimbo (federal) constitution.

The speaker in the statement above, a member of parliament (MP) from the coastal province of Kenya was addressing a referendum rally in the coastal city of Mombasa. He uses the exclusive “we” three times and its variant “us” once in the statement. The exclusive pronominal reference in all the four instances is limited in scope to only people who are inhabitants of the coastal region. This use contrasts them with other Kenyans from the upcountry and establishes their collective identity as a people in need of economic independence and emancipation. Such a collective identity was established because the coastal region despite being well endowed in natural resources is still among the least developed in the country, a fact that has been blamed on successive political leaderships.

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<sup>7</sup> This was mainly to protest the breaching of the pre-election MoU between Raila Odinga and Mwai Kibaki.

On the 2007 general election campaigns, the construction of collective regional identities took the form of each region laying stakes on political leadership of the country, and the power that comes with it. Each region wanted to produce either a presidential candidate or a running mate, or to align themselves with presidential candidates who they perceived to be friendly with their regions. This, inevitably, led to extreme ethnic and regional balkanisation of the country and did little to ease the already simmering inter-ethnic tensions. This regional clamour for the presidency and the power that comes with it was inextricably linked with hopes of economic empowerment. Collective regional identities were thus constructed to reflect the wishes and aspirations of various regions to ascend to political power and achieve economic empowerment. These were then contrasted with the competing wishes of other communities, as seen in the example below:

- 15) Our province has never produced even a vice-president let alone the president, and that is why *we* have remained poor and *they* have continued to neglect *us*. That is why *we* must support a region that will take care of our interests. Our brothers from Nyanza province cannot let *us* down because *they* have been marginalised just like *us*. That is why *we* must support their son in the coming election.

The speaker in the extract above, an opposition politician from the North-Eastern Province of Kenya, uses both the exclusive “we” and the inclusive “we”, and the inclusive and the exclusive “they”. The inclusive “we” establishes collective regional identity for the North-Eastern Province, as a province that has been neglected by successive regimes and has not been able to produce national leaders. The pronominal reference in “...we have remained poor...” is restricted to the people of the province in its scope of reference. The same case applies to the exclusive “we” in “...we must support”. This is then contrasted with the exclusive “they” in “...they have continued to neglect us...” and by this the two identities are constructed and demarcated such that we have “the neglected” and the “neglecters”. The inclusive “we” is then used together with the inclusive they “they” to expand the scope of reference which now also includes their “brothers from Nyanza” in the last two lines of the statement. This reference can also be considered to exclusive when we consider the rest of the six Kenyan provinces that have not been included in the inclusive reference. Regional identities tend to overlap with ethnic identities in the construction of collective identities in Kenyan political discourse. As mentioned elsewhere in this paper the British colonial administration balkanised Kenya into divisions, districts and provinces, each occupied by more or less one dominant ethnic group. For instances, Nyanza province was inhabited mainly by the Luo community, with the Kisii community occupying only Kisii district of the province. Accordingly, it would be right to conclude that just like ethnic identities, regional identities also largely had their roots in the British colonial system in Kenya.

### **8.7. Class Identities**

Collective class identities were also constructed during both the referendum and the 2007 general elections. The two political plebiscites were viewed as titanic battles between the rich—those who have amassed the country’s resources for their personal gain over the years, and the poor—those who have been adversely affected by this exploitation. Various political players across the political divide positioned themselves as defenders of the poor and used pronominal selection to construct collective identities reflective of this position. It is worth noting that these politicians

who identified themselves with the so called poor and purported to speak for the poor were hardly poor even by Kenyan standards. The following statement by a candidate in the 2007 elections illustrates this:

- 16) *We* as poor people must elect one of our own who knows and understands what it means to be poor; someone who will not forget about *us* once he goes to parliament. That is why I am asking for your votes. Let the rich vote for their fellow rich, but *we* must be united in our poverty.

The speaker in the above case was not as poor as the people he was addressing and identifying with, but he could be considered poor in comparison to other Kenyan politicians who were running for political office alongside him. He uses the inclusive “we/us” to identify with the audience (common folk) and establish solidarity.

### **8.8. Mixed and Overlapping Identities**

The analysis of the political speeches during the 2005 referendum campaigns in Kenya did not reveal neatly and seamlessly demarcated collective identities. Instead, there were cases of a complex mix of overlapping collective identities. These are the one that are briefly considered and discussed in this final section. These cases were many and represented cases where speakers could possibly ascribe to two or more identities at the same time such that pronominal usage for (instance the use of “we”) could have more than one identity group as its referent. The other scenario involved situations where pronominal selection and referencing by a speaker would encompass more than one group identity, such as, for instance, using the third person plural pronoun “them” to refer to more than one identity group. The overlapping took certain patterns which are reflective of the diversity of the Kenyan social fabric. There were, for instance, cases when a Muslim cleric cum nominated opposition politician who hails from the north eastern part of the country would use the collective “we”, and in such a single instance of usage, espouse multiple identities of region, religion and politics:

- 17) *We* will only accept a constitution that also cater for *our* rights...which have been violated by the British colonialists, the Kenyatta regime, the Moi regime...and are now being violated by the Kibaki regime

In the above example it would be extremely difficult, in fact, almost impossible to delineate the particular identity or identities expressed by the personal pronouns “we” and “our”. Since Muslims, pastoralists who hail from the arid and semi arid north eastern parts of the country, and the opposition in general felt that their rights had been trampled upon by successive governments, the pronominal choice in this case could refer either to religious, regional, or political identities, any combination of the three, or all the three at once.

### **8.9. Power and Distance**

As mentioned earlier, apart from constructing collective identities, the first person plural personal pronoun “we” also performs other discourse functions, carrying with it connotations about power and solidarity in regard to the person who uses them. In the data of the present study, we see that

the pro-government politicians used the inclusive “we” more than the pro-opposition politicians (59.2%) to (38.8%). This is intriguing since it is expected that since they are either in government or are associated with it, and therefore wielding the instruments of power either directly or indirectly, they would want to demonstrate this fact and demarcate their identity from that of the “powerless” opposition by using the exclusive “we”. Yet, in our data, the exclusive “we” is used more by pro-opposition politicians and their supporters than the pro-government politicians (31.83%) to (25.91%). An understanding of the political climate prevailing in the country during these two campaign periods is essential to an understanding of how power and distance was expressed by the use of the exclusive and inclusive personal pronouns. The government was at its lowest point in popularity for a variety of reasons during these two periods, and indeed, it was seen to have lost the legitimacy to govern. This could explain why they were not keen to demonstrate power and establish distance from the opposition, but instead, the opposition which claimed a moral high ground and a legitimacy drawn from their popularity with the masses, is the one doing this. Lakoff (1990) has underscored this relationship between language and politics in regard to power relations between various interlocutors:

“Language drives politics and determines the success of political machinations. Language is the initiator and interpreter of power relations. Politics is language.”  
(Lakoff, 1990: 13)

In our case, it can be argued that pronominal choice by both the pro-government and pro-opposition politicians interpreted the prevailing power relations in Kenya’s political landscape at that time. Here are examples of these usages first by the government side and then by the opposition side.

- 18) *We* will not and can not accept to have two centres of power. There is no way a popularly elected president can then be expected to cede his powers to an executive prime-minister who does not have a direct mandate from the people.<sup>8</sup> 45

That statement by the then minister for justice and constitutional affairs demonstrates how the government side asserted their claim to political power on account of incumbency, and how they were unwilling to let their opponents access this power. This statement was in response to the opposition’s clamour for the inclusion of a position of an executive prime minister in the new constitution, which, if passed in the referendum, would be enacted during the president’s term in office. The speaker uses the exclusive “we” to clearly demonstrate that they are the ones with the power and no one else. In doing this he constructs a collective identity of those in power which is then contrasted with the “other”-those without, and seeking the power.

Here is how Hon Otieno Kajwang, the MP for Mbita and secretary for legal and constitutional affairs for the opposition ODM party responded the following day in a press conference:

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<sup>8</sup> This, indeed, is what ended up happening in March 2008 in the AU mediated settlement to end the post election violence and bloodshed that engulfed the country.

Daniel Ochieng Orwenjo ““We are the People”: Pronominal Selection and the Construction of Collective Identities in Kenyan Political Discourse”

19) Who told *them* that *we* want only two centres of power? In fact *we* want more. *We* want to devolve power, *we* want to disperse power, *we* want to distribute power, and *we* want to decongest power!

The MP in the statement above uses the exclusive “we” six times directly linking it to power. This shows their determination to let some of the power trickle down to them. He constructs by this statement, a collective identity of those determined to get to power and contrasts this identity with that of “them”-those who are determined to continue withholding the power from them. These two statements reveal the intricacies of the power relations that were present in Kenya during the referendum campaigns and how such relations are reflected by pronominal selection.

### **8.10. Pronominal Selection and Post Election Violence**

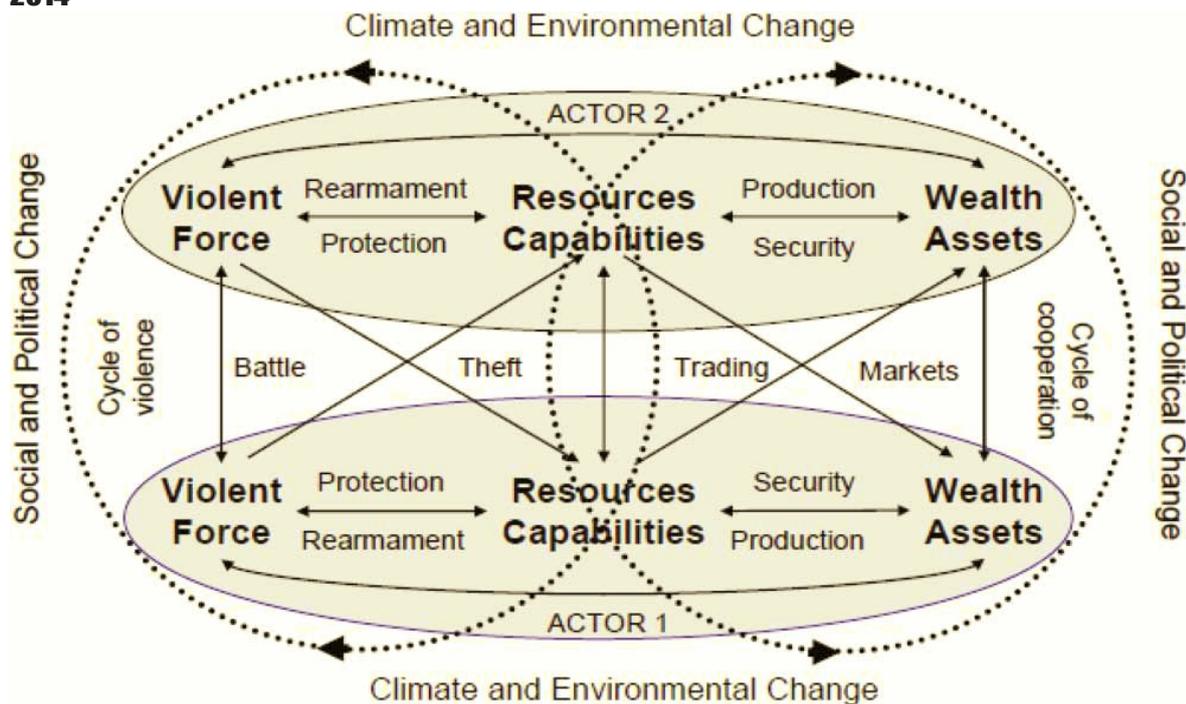
Finally and briefly, I want to examine hypothetically whether language use and pronominal choice as has been discussed in this paper could have led to the massive bloodshed and killings that characterised the protests against election results that were declared by the Electoral Commission of Kenya, in which Mwai Kibaki was declared duly elected for a second term as the president of the Republic of Kenya. As has been demonstrated, the politicians established almost mutually exclusive political identities by using the exclusive first person and third person plural personal pronouns to construct and demarcate collective identities, and the inclusive personal pronouns to strengthen such identities. This had the effect of polarising the country along such collective identities constructed, especially, the dominant pro-government and pro-opposition identities.

#### ***Conditions and dynamics of violent action***

The link between language use in political discourse and the resultant political instability and violence in Africa cannot be belaboured. Tunde, Orwenjo and Ogutu (2016) in their study of pragma-semantic silences in the Nigerian 2011 Presidential election news reports point to the critical role of language in the construction of ideologies. They argue that lexical choices made by politicians and the media as they report political events are usually non neutral because they reveal hidden ideological standpoints of key political players. Reviewing election and campaign related political discourse from Kenya, Nigeria, and Egypt, they point out to a relationship between such discourses and political violence and instability and conclude that “...countries on the African continent have witnessed different political issues in the 21st century and those issues have resulted into tribal conflicts, and in some cases, disunity and secession.” (Orwenjo and Ogutu, 2016: 66).

In charting out the causal link between pronominal selection in by Kenyan politicians in the two political events and the flare up of post-election violence in 2008, I will adopt the conceptual framework for the use of force and violence (Scheffran, Ide & Schilling (2014). This framework conceptualises violence in terms of three factors that are of basic relevance for human action: motivation, capability and the natural and societal context. It elaborates and examines the conditions and dynamics that are a precursor to any violent action like the one that was witnessed in Kenya in 2008. This framework is illustrated in the figure 1 below.

**Figure 1. Framework of interaction between two actors, with key variables and pathways indicating cycles of violence and cycles of cooperation (source: Scheffran, Ide and Schilling, 2014)**



The above framework was developed for interrogating the relationship between climate and environmental change and violence. I adopt it here to explain the relationship between a tense and polarised political environment occasioned in part by the carving of antagonistic collective identities through pronominal selection by the Kenyan politicians. They explain that their framework adopts a structural-systemic approach, being aware that each of the mechanisms is affected by subjective perspectives and societal discourses and embedded into power relations as elucidated below:

- a) Acts of behavioural violence require the capability to cause damage and destruction reliant on particular tools, such as arms or soldiers. The impacts of force also depend on the vulnerability of those affected, which is a function of defence capabilities and the ability to recover after the use of violence. However, some insecurity always remains, for instance, from unexpected surprise attacks such as suicide bombings that can overwhelm even powerful defences.
- b) Motivation is represented by the reasons and incentives why actors use violence to pursue particular goals or prevent certain acts of others, which depends both on expected gains,

costs and potential losses/risks (e.g. by individual or collective violence) and on prevalent concepts of enemies.

- c) The natural and societal context provides the environment that supports, contains or transforms the use of individual or collective violence. In an environment of insecurity and violence, people feel threatened and pressed to acquire and use force to protect themselves and their property from the threat of others, possibly leading to a self-stabilising collective ‘climate of violence’. Whether such an environment is supportive of cooperative, confrontative or even violent behaviour depends on the political-economic conditions, dominant identity configurations, class and power structures and ethnic make ups of the respective societies and how these filter environmental stresses, affect vulnerabilities, restrain human capacities and drive political responses.(p.8)

Although all the three ingredients were present to varying extents in the Kenyan case, the third ingredient that focuses on natural and societal context is the one quite critical to the present study. It is my argument that the use of highly polarising language such as the pronominal selection that has been discussed in this paper created a conducive natural and societal context that was supportive of the violence that was witnessed in 2008. It is worth noting that in their model, Scheffran, Ide and Schilling (2014) specifically single out “dominant identity configurations, class and power structures”, as the key ingredients of a natural and societal context supportive of violence. These are the issues that have arisen in this study as being in an intricate interplay with pronominal selection in the political discourses analysed. My contention, therefore, is that the collective identities constructed through pronominal selection led the Kenyan society to operate on the left circle of the model which is characterised by circle of violence, battle and theft (looting).

We can also see a clear connection between the use of the first person personal pronoun for exclusive to construct collective identities, the discourse function of this pronoun of signalling power and distance, and the post-election mayhem that gripped the country after the 2007 general elections. Collective ethnic identities, like other identities, were constructed either to consolidate power, or to gain access to power. Since the president is from the Kikuyu ethnic tribe, exclusive pronominal referencing by politicians from this ethnic group meant a call to members of the tribe to consolidate their hold on power and not to let it slip away, while at the same time, it signalled a distancing from the other ethnic groups without this political power. The 2007 general elections being necessarily a struggle to retain or access power, violence was almost, therefore, inevitable given the exclusive pronominal referencing in the language that had characterised the discourse of the campaigns and the ethnic balkanisation that resulted from such language. This violence pitted mainly the president's Kikuyu tribe on one hand, and a conglomeration of other tribes that united behind Raila Odinga, the ODM leader. While the former viewed the latter as intent on grabbing power from them, the latter saw the former as denying them what they had rightfully earned in the elections which they believed (and were supported by numerous election observers including the EU observer mission) that were flawed in favour of the incumbent, thus making it difficult for them to accept the narrow margin of win (about 230,000 votes). The use of exclusive language and the strong belief by both the government side and the opposition might, therefore, have served to prepare the country for the final showdown witnessed in the post election violence, and the close outcome of the general election only served as a catalyst in the process.

## **Conclusion**

If identity is defined as an awareness of self, national identity would appear to imply the awareness of self within a defined national context. It could also mean the use for political purposes -for example, mobilization for votes- of groups of people who identify themselves in a particular way. As has been shown, this process of self-identification and identity construction is contingent on a number of factors, colonial history being one of them. This has been seen in the present paper whereby it has emerged that various groups which identified themselves in certain unique ways used their collective identities to mobilize for votes as collective groups within the larger country and although not within a national context, seeking to gain political power at the national level in both the constitutional referendum campaigns of 2005 and the general election campaigns of 2007. It has also been seen that the construction of such collective identities and the subsequent mobilization for votes by the political players was done by a deliberate and strategic manipulation of pronominal choice with regard to the first and third person plural personal pronouns, hence such identities can be said to have been strategically constructed. There were clear and discernible overlaps in the construction and structuring of such collective identities as has been shown by the data presented and discussed in this paper.

It is also paramount to point out as a way of conclusion that the nexus between language and politics as has been presented in in this paper may seem to point at a unidirectional relationship. Nothing could be farther from the truth. It might be true that language drives politics but equally politics drives language. This is due to the fact that language, in itself is almost always political in nature. As Fiske (1994) puts it, “our words are never neutral”. This paper should therefore be seen as consciously approaching an acknowledged symbiotic relationship from one end of the continuum without any pretences as to the directional nature of the relationship.

As to the question of to what extent the violence and ethnic mayhem that followed the general election of 2007 can be attributed to this process of construction of collective identities, what is clearly undeniable is the fact that the use of emotional and exclusive language during the two campaigns as epitomised by the process of pronominal selection and the construction of selective identities that has been discussed in this papered clearly laid a fertile ground for the chaos and mayhem that ensued after the December 2007 general elections in Kenya. Such chaos and mayhem were in form of the violent clashes between the Kenyan police forces and opposition supporters as well as strong ethnic rhetoric by all major political players which dramatically underlined the high salience of ethnicity in Kenyan politics. Whether such rhetoric alone would have caused the violence to the scale witnessed should be a subject of another study.

Identity, however, is not merely an internal awareness of self; it also has to do with an assertion of this self to those who are perceived as being outside this self. One aspect of this assertion is obviously to gather to oneself those whom one sees as being part of the corporate identity. The perception of belonging to the same can relate to any common factor; caste, class, religion, ethnicity and gender. We have seen that when this process of assertion of a collective identity of a particular group to other perceived opposing or competing identities is heightened, the results can be violence both verbal and physical as was observed in Kenya after the 2007 general elections. This was particularly true about the strategic use exclusive “we” and the construction of collective ethnic and religious identities in the two campaigns where various ethnic and

religious groups were pitted against each other during the campaigns and in the post-election violence of 2008. A final question to consider relates to how the various social identities discussed relate to the overarching collective identities of the ‘pro-government’ and ‘pro-opposition’ groups and whether the pronominal selection, had other discourse functions apart from the construction of collective identities. Regarding the former, both all the categories of the social identities discussed in this paper were located both within the pro-government and the pro-opposition camps. This implies that collective political identities overrode the social identities and that these two camps were merely acting as unifying “global” identities within which were numerous and at time conflicting individual identities. In the case of the latter, the possibility of pronominal selection having other discourse functions apart from the construction of collective identities can not be ruled out. The answer to such a question, however, is clearly beyond the scope of this paper.

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## **Evaluative adjectives on RateMyProfessors.com: Attributes valued in male and female professors**

Jelena Vuksanovic<sup>9</sup>

### **Abstract**

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In this study, I investigate evaluative adjectives as used to describe the professors on RateMyProfessor.com. A sample of 120 reviews on male and female professors from the website's 'top list' was selected for data analysis. Dataset consisted of 60 male and 60 female reviews. A concordance program was used to identify concordances of evaluative adjectives in the data, which was further analyzed using the Appraisal framework, which includes a focus on affect, judgement, and appreciation. Out of the 6,002 words in total, only 3.93% were evaluative adjectives. The results show that there is a difference in frequency of adjectives used in male and female reviews. There were more evaluative adjectives used in male reviews, which also showed a wider range of adjectives. The most frequently used adjectives fell into the judgment category of the framework, which describe human behavior are the most frequently used adjectives, and the least frequently used evaluative adjectives reference emotion (affect). However, that difference is subtle when referencing human behavior and emotion, and significant when referencing non-human behavior. The results show that the most frequent adjective in both male and female reviews is *best*. The study also concluded that students evaluate the professor's behavior much more often than the class itself.

### **Keywords**

Evaluative adjectives, RateMyProfessor.com, evaluation, gender

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<sup>9</sup> University of South Florida, World Languages department, jvuksano@mail.usf.edu

## Introduction

Evaluation, which has been widely studied in the past decade, can be achieved by a variety of linguistic devices; however, the majority of educational research has focused on stance and identity (Thompson & Hunston, 2000). The present study seeks to shed light on a more microlinguistic perspective of evaluative language, and that is evaluative adjectives. Specifically, this study focuses on evaluative adjectives in the computer-mediated communication (CMC) genre of online reviews and their significance in terms of the attributes evaluated in male and female professors.

Evaluation is a complex phenomena in which writers and readers construct and maintain relationships. While evaluation is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon, the identification of evaluative adjectives is a more straightforward process than identifying other evaluative devices (Luzon, 2012). Evaluation is defined as the “expression of the speaker or writer’s attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the attributes or propositions that he or she is talking about” (Thompson & Hunston, 2000: 5).

### 1. Review of Literature

It has been stated that evaluation is a tool that “pervades human behavior” and is used to perceive, categorize, and evaluate (Bednarek, 2006: 4). Many studies have looked at the language of evaluation, as evaluative language is essential in a person’s identity because it allows one to express him/herself, either positively or negatively, and engage the reader or listener as they get a glimpse of the world as it is perceived by the writer/speaker. There are many aspects of evaluation (i.e. subjectivity, affect, and modality) making it difficult to analyze linguistic expressions (Bednarek, 2006). Difficulty in analyzing or categorizing evaluation also lies in its nature of context-dependency and implicitness (Pounds, 2011). “Individual words carry evaluative content, and that evaluative content of individual words needs to be established in context” (Taboada, 2011: 259). Evaluative language “serves to directly engage the listener in a way that a relatively neutral presentation of facts does not” (Armstrong & Ulatowks, 2007: 764). It has been argued that evaluation is best analyzed via “local grammar” (Hunston & Sinclair, 1999: 74). One of the most important and frequent means to achieve evaluation is by using evaluative adjectives (Hewings, 2004). The reason for the significant use of adjectives in research is that there is a great semantic variety among them, and they can be used explicitly to express different community values, and for this reason, they are easy to identify and quantify.

#### 1.1. Evaluative Adjectives

Adjectives play an integral part of discourse, especially evaluation, as they can tell us a lot about the person giving the evaluation and the person receiving the evaluation. In a study by Taboada (2011) out of 2, 015 total evaluative words on online movie reviews, 1,062 were adjectives. Qualitative and classifying adjectives are the two most frequently identified semantic groups of adjectives (Hewings, 2004). While the qualitative adjectives identify the quality of an entity, the classifying adjectives identify the class to which an entity belongs.

One important focus of research on adjectives and evaluation is the central topic of a professor’s valued attributes and their effect on evaluations. Studies on evaluation have differed according to the attributes being evaluated (e.g. Hewings, 2004; Luzon, 2012). A study by Swales and Burke (2003) categorized adjectives across academic registers according to one

of the seven categories: acuity, aesthetic appeal, assessment, deviance, relevance, size, and strength. It was found that the most frequently occurring evaluative adjective in the relevance category was *important*, followed by *major*. In addition to finding that 22.3% of the total evaluative adjectives expressed interest/novelty, Luzon (2011) also found that the ten most frequently used evaluative adjectives in academic weblogs were *new, interesting, good, important, great, right, clear, sure, wrong, recent, true, better, interested, and likely*. While Luzon (2012) focused on evaluative adjectives in the study of academic weblogs, Swales and Burke (2003) focused on evaluative adjectives gathered from MICASE corpus and the corpus of academic writing.

## **1.2. Negative and Positive Adjectives**

Among the studies that focus on evaluation, several researchers have distinguished between positive and negative adjectives used in evaluation (e.g. Hewings, 2004; Luzon, 2011; Pounds, 2011). Most adjectives can naturally be labeled as positive or negative out of context; however, some evaluative adjectives can only be evaluated as positive or negative in context (Hewings, 2004).

In evaluating the language of peer reviews in a corpus of 228 reviews submitted to the journal *English for Specific Purposes*, Hewings (2004) examined the entities which are evaluated, and the qualities used to judge such entities. Hewings identified nine classes of entities, and among those, the paper entity (i.e. manuscript, article) was the most evaluated entity in which over 75% of adjectival evaluations were positive. It was found that the most common evaluative adjectives used in the paper entity were *interesting* and *relevant*. On the other hand, the second most evaluated entity was expression (i.e. use of language, specific wordings), and 80% of those evaluations were negative. Overall, Hewings found six of the eight identified categories of evaluative adjectives made up 90% of the total number of evaluative adjectives used. However, there was a relative proportion of positive and negative adjectives used in these categories suggesting that there was no evident pattern of the distribution. Pounds (2011) who examined expression of evaluation of discourse in online property descriptions using the Appraisal framework, which is grounded in the systemic functional linguistics approach to discourse analysis, and specifically the *appreciation choice*, in identifying positive evaluation also found differences and similarities in the distribution of evaluations across different values. Luzon (2011) also distinguished between positive and negative adjectives in examining the types and frequency of evaluative adjectives in academic blogs in two corpora: blog entries and blog comments. However, in her study, she found that over 79% of blog entries were consisted of positive evaluative adjectives, and approximately 69% of comments provided by readers also consisted of positive adjectives across different categories of evaluative adjectives including interest, quality, accuracy, importance, certainty, sufficiency, comprehensibility, judgment and emotion.

## **2. Evaluation on RateMyProfessors.com**

### **2.1. Genre of CMC Online Reviews**

Genre refers to “the organization of any speech activity in stages, determined by the overall purpose of the genre and by social conventions” (Taboada, 2011: 1). Online reviews fall under the genre of electronic word of mouth or eWOM, which is a form of word of mouth (WOM) (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004). WOM communication is defined as “all informal

communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage or characteristics of particular goods or their sellers” (Westbrook, 1987). eWOM, which is a relatively new genre, has enabled users to post reviews on just about anything or anyone, including their college and university professors. This type of professor evaluations is significantly different than the pen and paper evaluations used in formal academic setting. Furthermore, the flipped student/professor power relationship is evident on RMP as it is in other online review platforms. For example, Luzon (2012) found that the flipped power relationship was evident in online blogs in which bloggers constructed authority on blogs by showing their competence in evaluating research according to specific values

## **2.2. RateMyProfessors.com**

RateMyProfessors.com is an online review site which allows university and college students to rate their professors. Students can go on the website at any time and rate their professors. According to the website, to date, there are over 17 million reviews posted anonymously on 1.6 million professors in 7,000 schools (<http://RateMyProfessors.com>). Online review sites, such as this, allow users to freely rate and evaluate their professors, usually restricting the number of characters. Among the many advantages of RateMyProfessors.com, one is that it allows the researchers access to many different schools and disciplines within those schools. RateMyProfessors.com has become an important and pervasive tool for students, as it guides them in choosing their professors based on the reviews of previous students (Otto et al., 2008).

Much of the current research has used RateMyProfessors.com to collect data and answer research questions regarding student evaluations of professors (e.g. Bowling, 2008; Otto et al., 2008; Reid, 2010; Timmerman, 2008). One of the recent studies conducted using data from RateMyProfessors.com focused on race and gender in evaluation, and it was concluded that there are a few effects of gender in student evaluations (Reid, 2010). This leads us to the following topic investigated in this study, and that is the role of gender and the use of evaluative adjectives by the students in the professor evaluations.

## **3. Gender Differences in Evaluation**

Given the importance of student evaluations on the career of a professor, it is pertinent for institutions and researchers to be able to identify any conscious or unconscious biases that may affect these evaluations. One of these biases could be gender. According to Reid (2010) gender has been the center of research when it comes to student evaluations of professor’s teaching effectiveness. Although gender has been the focus of student evaluations of teaching, differing views exist in terms of whether male or female professors receive more positive evaluations, and which attributes are desirable in male and female professors. Some researchers state that gender imposes a different set of standards on student evaluations of teaching or SETs. For example, in order for male professors to be evaluated positively, they only need to be perceived as helpful, whereas female professors must be helpful (Reid, 2010). Furthermore, demonstrating competence for women, who are considered lower status individuals, is more difficult than for men due to the status differential (Basow et al., 2006).

With regard to the best and worst professors, research has indicated that best professors exhibit certain traits, and among those are two that are said to be possessed by all best professors: active-instrumental and expressive-nurturing traits (Basow, 2000; Basow et al., 2006; Freeman, 1994). However, it is evident that such traits are a part of a culture’s stereotypes of masculinity

and femininity, respectively. In examining students' choice for best and worst professors, Basow et al. (2006) surveyed 175 undergraduate students, and their results showed that gender factors play a complex role in students' evaluations of their best and worst professors, and that 71% of the nominated best professors are male. Additionally, their study found that each gender gave highest ratings to same-gender professors. For example, male students chose a female professor as the 'best' less often than female students did. Similar results were found by Hecker et al. (2006) who investigated the relationship of course, instructor, and student characteristics to student ratings of teaching effectiveness. In their study, the female professors received less favorable evaluations by students than their male counterparts. In another more recent study, Basow et al. (2013) examined effects of professor's gender and student's gender on student ratings of teaching effectiveness among 329 undergraduate students in the U.S. using an adapted version of Hildebrand and Wilson's (1970) teacher evaluation form, which evaluated professors in five categories: scholarship, organization/clarity, instructor-group interactions, instructor-individual interaction, and dynamism/enthusiasm. The results showed that male students are less likely than female students to name a female professor as their 'best' professor. This result supports previous research that shows male students to be more likely than female students to use gender stereotypes when rating female professionals (e.g. Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Although research exists on the gender differences in evaluating a professor, there is very little research on whether the different qualities or attributes of male and female professors are important in teacher evaluations. Previous research has shown that the best professors show qualities such as enthusiasm, dedication, openness, and clarity, among others (e.g. Halonen, 2002; Mowrer et al., 2004). Furthermore, best professors are most often described by their students in terms of dynamism and enthusiasm, whereas the worst professors are evaluated as extremely low in expressive nurturant traits (Basow et al., 2006). One such study to examine the qualities of best and worst professors was carried out by Sprague and Massoni (2005) who found that a professor's gender influences students' evaluations of best and worst professors. For example, best male professors were more likely to be described as funny while best female professors were more likely to be described as nurturing and caring. Even though their study showed some overlap in how students described their professors, they also found that this group of university students do hold professors accountable to certain gendered expectations, and that while such expectations can place a burden on all professors, "burdens on women are more labor-intensive" (Sprague & Massoni, 2005: 1). The expectation of women to be nurturing and caring causes the rater to view the interpersonal skills of a female professor more critically than that of a male professor (Basow, 2013), ultimately causing the same behavior in males and females to be evaluated differently. Furthermore, it has been stated that female professors are significantly more likely to be described more approachable/accessible than their male counterparts (Basow et al., 2006). Downs and Downs (1993) have also found that students value the attributes in male professors which coincide with professionalism and control, while students value female professors who are nurturing, understanding, and warm. Research has also shown that empathy was an important factor in the evaluations of female professors, meaning that female professors are rated more positively when they are perceived to be more empathetic and supportive (e.g. Bachen et al., 1999; Bennett, 1982; Downs & Downs, 1993). Furthermore, it has been argued that traits such as warmth and charisma are more strongly linked with positive evaluations for females than males (Bachen et al., 1999; Bennett, 1982). Further exploring the interaction between student gender and professor gender in evaluating the professors' characteristics, Bachen et al. (1999), in examining over 500 university students' perceptions of the two factors, found significant interactions. Not only that, they also found that such characteristics were consistent with stereotypically feminine and

masculine traits, but that this assessment of both male and female faculty was influenced by strength of students' gender schema.

## 4. Research Gap

Although evaluative adjectives have been the focus of research in the past, and there have been numerous empirical studies conducted on evaluative adjectives and their attributes, there have been very few studies comparing gender and evaluative language. There have been even fewer studies that focus on evaluative language and gender in professor evaluation. Furthermore, while the CMC genre of online reviews has received much attention among researchers, no studies have been conducted on RateMyProfessors.com on evaluative adjectives with respect to gender differences among the professors, and the attributes being evaluated. Because evaluative adjectives play an integral role in the evaluative process and because the evaluative process plays an integral role in a professor's career, it is important to further explore this topic in an online evaluation platform, RateMyProfessors.com, because the implications are great. The present study, therefore, in an attempt to fill the identified gap in the literature, investigates the most frequent evaluative adjectives and the attributes evaluated in male and female professor evaluations on RateMyProfessors.com. Evaluative adjectives in this study will be identified and categorized according to the analytical framework described below, and patterns will be identified in terms of frequencies and attributes, and their significance in evaluation on RateMyProfessors.com.

### 4.1. The Theoretical Framework

This study adapts the Appraisal Theoretical Framework (Martin & White, 2005), emerging over the past 15 years, to analyze and classify the evaluative adjectives from the data collected on RateMyProfessors.com. The Appraisal Framework, focusing on evaluative uses of languages, performs the functions of attitudinal, dialogistics, and intertextual positioning (White, 2004). The framework consists of three sub-systems or parameters: attitude, engagement, and graduation. The present study specifically gives attention to the attitude parameter which focuses on “values by which speakers pass judgments and associate emotional/affectual responses with participants and processes” (White, 2001: 1). Within this parameter, evaluative adjectives are examined in terms of affect, judgment, and appreciation values.

White (2004: 1) describes affect, judgment, and appreciation within the attitude parameter as following:

- Affect: the characterization of phenomena by reference to emotion
- Judgment: the evaluation of human behavior with respect to social norms
- Appreciation: the evaluation of objects and products (rather than human behavior) by reference to aesthetic principles and other systems of social value.

It is argued that the core attitudinal parameter is affect because it underlies both judgment and appreciation, which can perhaps be labeled as “institutionalized” forms of feelings (Martin & White, 2005: 45). Affect is further differentiated from evaluation in that the main difference between evaluation and affect is that affect is the expression of emotions and feelings, whereas evaluation is the expression of opinion (Bednarek, 2006).

White (2004: 1) provides the following as examples of judgment and affect:

- Well, I've been listening to the two guys who are heroes [value judgment] and I admire [affect] them both.
- I am disappointed [affect] and ashamed [affect] that two of our most admired and respected [affect] sportsmen could behave in such a manner. To play for your country is an honor and a privilege, not a right.
- Those who are chosen to represent Australia should not only be talented [judgment] but they should be above reproach [judgment]. Sport is supposed to teach honor, fair play, teamwork, leadership and social skills [judgment].

In addition to categorizing evaluative adjectives according to the different values, White (2004) further divides them into either a positive or negative status. This is illustrated below:

- Affect positive (happy) and negative (sad)
- Judgment positive (smart) and negative (stupid)
- Appreciation positive (beautiful) and negative (ugly)

Accordingly, to examine the evaluative adjective on RateMyProfessors.com, the present study was guided by the following four research questions:

1. What are the most common evaluative adjectives used to rate male professors?
2. What are the most common evaluative adjectives used to rate female professors?
3. Does the use of positive and negative adjectives differ in male and female reviews?
4. Which attributes are most frequently evaluated in male and female reviews?

## **4.2. Methodology**

Online reviews, specifically those on RateMyProfessors.com, enable students, current and past, to rate their college and university professors anonymously. Furthermore, not only can students rate their professors, they can also view other reviews posted by students on any professor at any university in the United States. According the website, there are over 17 million reviews posted to date. The purpose of the reviews is to evaluate the professor or the specific class.

Accordingly, the focus of this analysis is on the evaluative adjectives used in online reviews on RMP. The data for this study consist of a sample of 120 reviews (60 for male professors and 60 for female professors) collected from RateMyProfessors.com. Gender was determined based solely on the name of each professor and the references to different gender pronouns made by the students.

The professors are rated based on overall quality, helpfulness, clarity, and easiness on a scale 1-5. In addition, the website rates the professors by assigning different colored smiley faces to each professor. A green smiley face indicates a positive review, and yellow and red smiley faces indicate average and poor reviews, respectively. Data were collected from reviews of eight professors; four males and four females. The following were the methods used in collecting data for this study.

Each year, the website creates “Top Lists” of highest rated professors based on student reviews. This study focuses on the reviews of professors given in the 2011-2012 academic

year. From the ‘Top List’ of the highest rated professors, top two male and top two female professors were chosen, totaling to four professors. Then for each of the highest rated professors, one lower rated professor from the same school, same discipline, and same gender was chosen to compare. The total of eight professors come from four different schools: Iona College, University of Denver, Pensacola State College, and Santa Fe College.

From each page of reviews for the professors, the 15 longest reviews were chosen, based on the statistics feature (word count) in Microsoft Word, to be analyzed for this study. For the higher rated professors, only reviews that were positive (green smiley face) were collected for analysis. On the contrary, only poor (red smiley) and average (yellow smiley) reviews were collected for the lower rated professors.

Table 1 provides a summary of the data collected from RateMyProfessors.com. This includes the number of reviews, number of words, and the longest and shortest length of the review.

**Table 1. Online reviews in corpus: numbers and length**

Number of reviews	120 (60 males; 60 females)
Number of words	6,002
Longest rating (words)	73
Shortest rating (words)	10

It is important to note that I am in no way affiliated with RateMyProfessors.com. Although I am currently in the education field, I am not a member of this website, nor is my name listed on there for the students to evaluate.

Accordingly, to analyze the data for this study, the following measures were taken. First, the 120 reviews were manually screened and evaluative adjectives were identified. Then a dictionary was used to verify the definition of the adjective. The reviews were then separated by gender into two different files: male and female. After the two separate word documents were created for each gender using a text file, a web program was used to search for concordances. ANTCONC, a freeware concordance program from Windows provided on Laurence Anthony’s web (<http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/software.html>), was used to identify concordances of evaluative adjectives in the male text file and the female text file separately. The identified evaluative adjectives in the 120 reviews were used as key search terms in ANTCONC in each of the two files. Next, concordances were written down, along with the attributes they identified in the text. The three main attributes that were evaluated in these data were coded as either professor, class (this includes discussions, materials, tests), and students (this includes evaluating self and other students). Evaluation of other attributes was noted and labeled in the charts accordingly. The evaluative adjectives were coded under either judgment, affect, or appreciation. Results and a discussion are provided below.

## 5. Results and Discussion

As mentioned previously, RateMyProfessors.com is a public website on which the relationship of power and status shifts from teacher to student, and on which the primary mode of communication is written and recorded electronically. It is apparent that the power of relationship is flipped on RateMyProfessors.com since the student is the one who gets to evaluate the professor, and can therefore use any language to do so. In examining student

evaluations of professors on RMP, the aim of this study was threefold. The first goal was to find the most common evaluative adjectives in male and female professors' reviews; the second was to determine if the use of positive and negative adjectives differed in male and female reviews; and third was to determine which attributes are most frequently evaluated in male and female reviews. Accordingly, one chart was created by the researcher of this study to illustrate the frequency of evaluative adjectives in male and female reviews, as well as what they evaluated. See appendix 1 for a list of the total frequencies of all evaluative adjectives for male and female professors. The results of the study are discussed in detail below.

### 5.1. Results Overview

Judging from the preliminary analysis, the following totals illustrate the differences in adjectives used according to gender and the attitude parameter of the Appraisal Framework.

**Table 2. Overview of the total frequencies of evaluative adjectives**

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Affect</i>	7	9	16
<i>Judgment</i>	75	81	156
<i>Appreciation</i>	41	23	64
<i>Total</i>	123	113	236

These data consisted of 6,002 words in total. Out of these, 236 were evaluative adjectives, or 3.93%. From these data, we conclude that there are more evaluative adjectives used in male reviews, and that male reviews show a wider range of adjectives. While there are 58 different kinds of evaluative adjectives used in male reviews, there are only 45 different kinds of adjectives used in female reviews. In addition, we can see that evaluative adjectives that reference emotion (affect) are the least frequently used adjectives in these data. Judgment, or evaluative adjectives that describe human behavior are the most frequently used adjectives. We can see that the students who rated the eight professors evaluate the professors and their behavior more frequently than the class itself.

In total, the professors were evaluated 155 times, the class was evaluated 54 times, and the student was evaluated only 16 times. One possible reason why judgment is the category with the highest frequency of evaluative adjectives is because judgment focuses on evaluating human behavior, in this case the professor's, and appreciation focuses on evaluating objects or products.

In terms of adjective frequencies, the most frequently used evaluative adjective in these data is *best*. It is used 15 times to evaluate the female professors, 10 times to evaluate the male professors, and once to evaluate a class. The second most frequently used adjective in the data is *good*, and it was used a total of seventeen times. Eight of those times it was used to evaluate the professors, three times to evaluate a student, four times to evaluate the class, and twice to evaluate days. The third most frequent adjective is *great*. *Great* is used ten times to evaluate the professors, three times to evaluate the class, and once to evaluate experience. *Easy* and *hard* both take the spot for the fourth most frequent evaluative adjective in these data, occurring 13 times each. *Easy* is used eight times to evaluate the class, four times to evaluate the professor, and once to evaluate another online course. On the other hand, *hard* is used five times to evaluate the professors, and also used eight times to evaluate the class.

In the female reviews, the second most frequently used evaluative adjectives are *worst* and *easy*, both occurring seven times. In all seven instances, *worst* is used to evaluate the professor, while out of the seven instances of *easy*, six were used to evaluate classes, and once to evaluate the professor. The third most frequent adjectives in female reviews were *hard*, *good*, and *great*, all occurring six times each. Overall, these three adjectives were used nine times to evaluate the professor, four times to evaluate the class, three times to evaluate the student, and twice to evaluate days.

In male reviews, the second most frequently used evaluative adjective is *good*, with a frequency of eleven. This adjective was used three times to evaluate the class, seven times to evaluate the professor, and once to evaluate the student. The third most frequent adjectives in male reviews were *great* and *funny*, each occurring eight times. Moreover, each was used six times to evaluate the professor and twice to evaluate the class.

From these results, we conclude that there is not a big difference in the number of evaluative adjectives used in different genders with respect to affect and judgment values. The frequency of adjectives differed greatly between genders in the evaluation of objects and products, or the appreciation value. Students used evaluative adjectives almost twice as often in the male reviews than the female reviews. It is not certain what accounts for this difference in the appreciation value between the two genders.

In terms of positive and negative evaluation, students used more positive evaluative adjectives overall. Male reviews received more positive evaluations, and female reviews received more negative evaluations. Below is a detailed analysis of the differences in positive and negative adjectives in the data as well as gender differences in terms of evaluative adjectives and the attributes they evaluated.

**Table 4. Total negative and positive frequencies of evaluative adjectives from the data**

	POSITIVE ADJECTIVES				NEGATIVE ADJECTIVES			
	Male	% of total for that value	Female	% of total for that value	Male	% of total for that value	Female	% of total for that value
<b>Affect</b>	6 →	86%	5 →	56%	1 →	14%	4 →	44%
<b>Judgment</b>	59 →	79%	49 →	60%	16 →	21%	33 →	40%
<b>Appreciation</b>	23 →	56%	17 →	77%	18 →	44%	5 →	23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>		<b>71</b>		<b>35</b>		<b>42</b>	

Table 2 shows the total frequency of positive and negative evaluative adjectives used in the data according to gender and the three different values of the *attitude* parameter. In addition, the table shows the frequencies in terms of percentages of the total adjectives used in each value for each gender.

The results show that evaluative adjectives used most frequently in the male and female reviews were positive. Out of the 236 total evaluative adjectives used in the review, 159 were positive and 77 were negative. Specifically, the most frequently used positive evaluative adjective is *best*, and the most frequently used negative evaluative adjective is *hard*. It is important to mention again that the data for this study included an equal number of positive

and negative reviews. We can conclude that students tend to use more positive, rather than negative evaluative adjectives when evaluating their professors.

There are a total of 88 positive adjectives in male reviews and 71 positive adjectives in female reviews. In addition, the percentage of positive adjectives used is highest in the affect value. Out of the total evaluative adjectives used in male reviews referencing emotion, 86% were positive. The judgment value holds the highest number of positive adjectives in the male and female reviews. Out of the 159 occurrence of positive adjectives in the data, 108 are used in the judgment value.

With respect to the negative evaluative adjectives, the highest number of adjectives was used in female reviews. Out of a total of 77 negative adjectives, 42 adjectives were used in female reviews and 35 in male reviews. The highest frequency of negative adjectives occurred in the judgment value; a total of 33 adjectives. The highest and total percentage of the negative adjectives in the judgment and affect value is equal to 44%. So 44% of all adjectives in female reviews referencing emotion were negative, and 44% of all adjectives used in the male reviews referencing the evaluation of objects and products were negative.

The following sections discuss the results for each of the three values of the *attitude* parameter. The results of the affect value are discussed first, followed by judgment, and then appreciation, respectively. The discussion for each subsection below is restricted to only the particular sub-category (i.e. affect, judgment, appreciation) of evaluative adjectives. Within each section, results for both male and female reviews are provided and discussed.

## **5.2. Evaluative Adjectives: Affect Value**

This section provides the results and discussion for only the evaluative adjectives belonging to the affect value, which is the characterization of phenomena by reference to emotion (White, 2004). As mentioned earlier, affect is the category that had the lowest number of evaluative adjectives in the present study. The data show that there are seven evaluative adjectives used in the male reviews and nine used in the female reviews. The following were the adjectives used in the online reviews: *thankful*, *excited*, *nervous*, *positive*, *understanding*, *bad*, *understanding*, *caring*, and *terrified*.

Overall, in both male and female reviews there were five negative evaluations and eleven positive evaluations. We conclude that when referencing emotion, students in this study more frequently use positive adjectives to give evaluations. Interestingly, more than half of the total reviews in this value were used to evaluate student's rather than the professor's emotion. One reason for this is that students tend to evaluate how they feel about a class, or they feel about a professor. Out of the seven different kinds of adjectives used, only two (*excited*, *nervous*) were both used in male and female reviews. The following two sections specifically examine the evaluative adjectives found in male and female reviews, respectively.

### ***Affect Attributes in Male Reviews***

The findings in this value are very interesting as there is only one less use of adjectives in male reviews than in female reviews. It is interesting to point out that most frequent adjective in these male reviews is *thankful*, but it is used to reference emotion of a student, rather than the professor. Again, students evaluate how they feel, rather than how the professors feel. Contrary

to the previous research, male professors in this category were evaluated as *caring*, and female professors were not. This result contradicts the findings in a study by Sprague and Massoni (2005) who found that female, rather than the male professors were more likely to be categorized as caring.

### ***Affect Attributes in Female Reviews***

Adjectives referencing emotion in female reviews include *understanding*, *bad*, *excited*, *nervous*, and *terrified*. All instances of *terrified* and *nervous* were used to reference emotions of a student rather than a professor. *Excited* is the most frequent adjective. We can further state that students believe that female professors are excited and understanding. The adjective *understanding* once again shows us that the students value this nurturing side of a female, as is shown by previous research, thus the use of this adjective reflects that. The present study's results confirm previous research by Madera et al., (2009) who concluded that female faculty are more likely than male faculty to be described using communal terms.

### ***Evaluative Adjectives: Judgment Value***

The second category of evaluative adjectives that was examined belongs to the judgment value, and the discussion in the following sections is restricted to the different adjectives belonging to this value. Judgment is the evaluation of human behavior with respect to social norms (White, 2004). The value of judgment included the highest number of evaluative adjectives used to evaluate the professors. Overall, evaluative adjectives referencing human behavior were used more frequently in female reviews than male reviews; however, the difference was not significant: 75 in male reviews and 81 in female reviews. Professors were evaluated 150 times, while students were evaluated six times. From this, we conclude that when evaluating behavior, students not only evaluate the professor's behavior, but also their own, although relatively less frequently.

Overall, when referencing human behavior, more positive than negative evaluative adjectives were in these reviews. There were a total of 109 positive evaluative adjectives and 47 negative adjectives. The following two sections provide a deeper look into the evaluative adjectives found in male and female reviews, respectively.

### ***Judgment Attributes in Male Reviews***

There were 75 instances of evaluative adjectives used in male reviews, and male reviews also had more positive evaluations than female reviews. Besides the most frequent adjectives *best*, *good*, and *great*, which were also used in female reviews, students used the following adjectives only in male reviews. Positive adjectives include *devoted*, *the greatest*, *engaging*, *fabulous*, *dedicated*, *one of a kind*, *a master*, *ok*, *cool*, and *hilarious*, and negative evaluations include *useless*, *difficult*, *odd*, *informal*, and *strange*. In their study, Madera et al. (2009) found that agentic terms were more frequently used to describe male faculty. The results of their study showed that *ambitious*, *dominant*, and *self-confident* were adjectives used to describe male faculty.

The salient adjectives that were found in these male reviews include *funny*, *helpful*, and *amazing*. The results indicate that humor might have a role to play when evaluating male professors, as adjectives referencing humor were used in both male and female reviews. The results of the present study support the findings and conclusions of the study carried out by

Sprague and Masson (2005) who also found that one common attribute of male professors is humor.

### ***Judgment Attributes in Female Reviews***

There were a total of 81 occurrences of evaluative adjectives in the female reviews. The second most frequently used adjective in female reviews referencing behavior is *worst*, and it is used seven times. On the other hand, *worst* is only used five times in the male reviews. As can be seen, overall, female reviews received more negative evaluations. More specifically, there were 33 negative evaluations in the female reviews.

Salient positive adjectives used to evaluate the attributes of female professors include *nice*, *helpful*, *wonderful* and *interesting*, and salient negative adjectives include *horrible*, *not helpful*, and *mean*. The results indicate that students value helpfulness, as should be expected in an attribute of any professor; however, this is one of the most important attributes since adjectives indicating helpfulness are frequent in this study. The present study confirms previous results by Madera et al. (2009) who categorized *helpful* as a communal adjective, which was used to describe male faculty. This adjective was used an equal number of times in male and female reviews. The adjective *nice* indicated the attribute of nurture, and it was more commonly used in female reviews than male reviews.

*Wonderful*, *interesting*, and *mean* did not occur in the male reviews, but were frequent in the female reviews. Again, calling a female professor mean might coincide with the expectations of a woman to be nurturing, and wonderful, indicating feminine characteristics. As Basow (2013) states, the expectation of women to be nurturing and caring can cause the rater to view the interpersonal skills of a female professor more critically than that of a male professor.

### **5.3. Evaluative Adjectives: Appreciation Value**

The final category of evaluative adjectives are grouped in the appreciation value, and this section provides the study's results with that respect. Appreciation is the evaluation of objects and products (rather than human behavior) by reference to aesthetic principles and other systems of social value (White, 2004). There are almost twice as many adjectives in the male reviews than in the female reviews: 41 to 23, respectively. Evaluative adjectives that were used to evaluate the class or anything related to the class were classified in this category. In total, more negative and positive adjectives altogether were used in male reviews than female reviews. As the results show, students used more evaluative adjectives when evaluating male professors, and it is not certain what exactly accounts for this difference. It is possible that since this value only consists of the evaluation of classes/objects, the discipline of the professor's class could be a reason for this variance. Finally, the two sections below provide more detailed results for the evaluative adjectives found in the male and female reviews, respectively.

### ***Appreciation Attributes in Male Reviews***

The most frequently used adjective in the appreciation value in male reviews is *hard*. Out of the 41 occurrences of adjectives in the male reviews, 18 were negative and 23 were positive. The most frequently used positive adjective is *fun*, which occurred five times. Students positively evaluated the classes as *fun*, *ok*, *interesting*, and *best*. These adjectives were not used in the female reviews. The results indicate that the traits or the atmosphere of the class need to

be fun, which is the most salient adjective in male reviews in this value. This is also confirmed by the use of the adjective *boring*, which indicates that students notice when the class is not engaging or interesting.

### ***Appreciation Attributes in Female Reviews***

The most frequently used adjective in the appreciation value in female reviews is *easy*. This is the opposite of the evaluation that was given to the male professors in the same category, in which the adjective *hard* was the most frequently used adjective. Classes were positively evaluated as *cool*, *fine*, and *informative*, all of which were not used in male reviews. From these, we conclude that students value classes that are ‘cool’ and ‘informative.’ These results are similar to those found in the male reviews, stating that the classes should be ‘fun.’ The adjective *cool* in this case could be interpreted as fun and interesting.

## **Conclusion**

The present empirical study intended to shed light on gender differences in terms of evaluative adjectives used on RateMyProfessors.com. In addition, the study particularly focused on frequencies of evaluative adjectives and the attributes that students evaluated, and whether or not the evaluation was negative or positive. While some conclusions in this study can be made by drawing from the data collected, making definite conclusions is limited due to the restricted scope of study.

The genre of online reviews from RMP was examined in detail in this study. Using anonymous, peer-generated evaluations, a corpus of 120 reviews (6,002 words) was collected and analyzed. The results show that there is a difference in frequency of evaluative adjectives used in male and female reviews; however, that difference is subtle in the judgment and affect value, referencing human behavior and emotion, while it is significant in the appreciation value, referencing non-human behavior. The results of this study show that the most frequent adjective in both male and female reviews is *best*. Furthermore, *good* and *great* were the second and third most frequent adjectives in the data, respectively. The study also concluded that students evaluate the professors’ behavior much more often than the class itself.

In the evaluations of male professors, students want the professors to be *funny*, *hilarious*, *caring*, *cool*, *devoted* and *dedicated*. Interestingly enough, *dedicated*, *devoted*, *cool*, and *hilarious* were not used to evaluate female professors. The previous adjectives would fall under the category of agentic terms, which are found to be more commonly used when describing male faculty rather than female faculty (Madera et al., 2009). And in terms of the attributes of a class, students value classes that are *fun*, *funny*, and *interesting*. This speaks to the atmosphere created by the professors in the class, which in terms relates to the characteristics or personality of the professor.

In the female reviews, the students value professors who are *understanding*. As mentioned earlier, students value female professors for their nurturing side, which they present here by using the adjective *understanding* to reference the emotion of the female professors. Furthermore, similar to the attribute of classes in male reviews, students like classes that are *cool* and *informative*. Definitions of *cool* may vary by each student, but one can infer that it relates to creating a fun atmosphere in the classroom.

The implications for this study are that evaluative adjectives can tell us about what attributes students value in male professors versus female professors. In the evaluations of male and

female professors, there were many adjectives that were salient in terms of the attributes that students value in a professor or a class. Furthermore, there are several societal implications for evaluative adjective use on RMP. As has been previously stated, in the United States, student evaluations of their professors play a very significant role in employment decisions such as hiring, promotion, tenure, and salaries (Cashin, 1999). Therefore, the implications of such evaluations lie in their potential to destroy a professor's reputation, and also their potential to influence tenure applications. Therefore, administrators should take great care in interpreting and using such evaluations as evidence of teacher effectiveness because there is an uncertainty with regard to what is being assessed by student ratings and whether or not either conscious or unconscious bias could be reflected (Basow & Martin, 2012; Reid, 2010).

In conclusion, this study minimally touched upon the wide newly emerging research field of evaluation and gender. Further research on evaluative adjectives and gender differences should be conducted in a larger-scale study. A lot of research will be necessary to provide a larger empirical basis for the study of evaluation in online discourse and gender.

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## Appendix 1: Total frequency of evaluative adjectives for male and female professor

<i>Evaluative Adjective</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Attribute Evaluated</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Attribute Evaluated</i>
<b>AFFECT</b>				
<i>Thankful</i>	3	Student	0	X
<i>Excited</i>	1	Student	3	Professor (1), student (2)
<i>Nervous</i>	1	Student	1	Student
<i>Positive</i>	1	Professor	0	X
<i>Understanding</i>	0	X	2	Professor
<i>Bad</i>	0	X	1	Professor's Mood
<i>Caring</i>	1	Professor	0	x
<i>Terrified</i>	0	X	2	students
<b>JUDGMENT</b>				
<i>Hard</i>	1	professor	4	professor
<i>Fair</i>	1	Professor	1	professor
<i>Knowledgeable</i>	1	Professor	1	professor
<i>Devoted</i>	1	Professor	0	X
<i>Difficult</i>	2	Professor	0	X
<i>Easy</i>	3	Professor	1	Professor
<i>Greatest</i>	1	Professor	0	X
<i>Dedicated</i>	1	Student	0	X
<i>Worst</i>	5	Professor	7	Professor
<i>Useless</i>	1	Professor	0	X
<i>Amazing</i>	4	Professor	2	professor
<i>Boring</i>	1	Professor	1	professor
<i>Engaging</i>	1	Professor	0	X
<i>Clear</i>	2	Professors	2	Professor
<i>Good</i>	8	Professor (7), student (1)	3	Student (2), professor (1)
<i>Great</i>	6	Professors	4	Professor
<i>Best</i>	10	Professors	15	Professor
<i>Ok</i>	1	Professor	0	X
<i>Bad</i>	2	Professor	2	professor
<i>Awesome</i>	2	professor	2	Professor
<i>Helpful</i>	4	professor	4	professor
<i>Nice</i>	1	professor	4	professor
<i>Horrible</i>	0	X	4	Professor
<i>Terrible</i>	0	X	2	Student (1), professor (1)
<i>Incomprehensible</i>	0	X	1	Professor
<i>Not helpful</i>	0	X	5	professor
<i>Better</i>	0	X	2	Other professors
<i>Mean</i>	0	X	3	Professor
<i>Awful</i>	0	X	2	Professor
<i>Wonderful</i>	0	X	3	Professor
<i>Interesting</i>	0	X	3	professor
<i>Funny</i>	6	professors	1	professor
<i>Cool</i>	1	professors	0	x
<i>Fabulous</i>	1	Professor	0	x
<i>Friendly</i>	1	professor	1	professor
<i>One of a kind</i>	1	Professor	0	x
<i>Master</i>	1	Professor	0	x
<i>Hilarious</i>	1	Professor	0	x
<i>Odd</i>	1	Professor	0	X
<i>Informal</i>	1	professor	0	x
<i>Lazy</i>	1	Professor	1	student
<i>Strange</i>	1	professor	0	x

<i>Evaluative Adjective</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Attribute Evaluated</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Attribute Evaluated</i>
<b>APPRECIATION</b>				
<i>Good</i>	3	class	3	Days (2), class (1)
<i>Cool</i>	0	X	1	class
<i>Ridiculous</i>	1	Class	0	x
<i>Fun</i>	5	Class	0	x
<i>Great</i>	2	Class	2	Student's experience (1), class (1)
<i>OK</i>	1	Class	0	X
<i>Boring</i>	2	class	0	X
<i>Amazing</i>	1	class	1	class
<i>Useless</i>	1	class	0	X
<i>Horrible</i>	2	Class	0	X
<i>Interesting</i>	3	Class	0	X
<i>Easy</i>	3	Class	6	class (5), another online course (1)
<i>Hard</i>	6	class	2	class
<i>Fair</i>	1	class	1	Class
<i>Difficult</i>	2	class	0	X
<i>Best</i>	1	Class	0	X
<i>Awesome</i>	1	Class	1	class
<i>Incomprehensible</i>	1	class	0	X
<i>Fine</i>	0	X	1	class
<i>Informative</i>	0	X	1	class
<i>Bad</i>	0	X	2	days
<i>Nice</i>	0	X	1	Comments by other students
<i>Impossible</i>	1	Class	1	test
<i>Irrelevant</i>	2	Tests	0	X
<i>Funny</i>	2	Class	0	X





## **RC25 Awards**

Since their creation, RC25 awards are linked to *Language, Discourse & Society*, as all published articles are eligible to be considered by the Awards Committee. Here is a record of the articles granted and the Awards Committee composition.

### **2012, Buenos Aires, Second Forum of Sociology of ISA**

#### **Award Committee**

Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, University of Haifa  
Viviane Resende, University of Brasilia  
Sergei Riazantsev, Institute of Social and Political Research, Moscow  
Chair: Stéphanie Cassilde, CEPS/INSTEAD, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg

#### **Academic Excellence Award**

Anders Persson (2012), "Front- and Backstage in Social Media", *LD&S*, 1(2), 11-31.

#### **Graduate Student Award**

Not granted.

### **2014, Yokohama, XVIII ISA World Congress**

#### **Award Committee**

Nadezhda Georgieva, Trakia University, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria  
Corrine Kirchner, Columbia University, United States  
Anders Persson, Lund University, Sweden  
Chair: Stéphanie Cassilde, Centre d'Études en Habitat Durable, Belgium

#### **Academic Excellence Award**

Raymond Oenbring and William Fielding (2014), "Young Adults' Attitudes to Standard and Nonstandard English in an English-Creole Speaking Country: The Case of The Bahamas", *LD&S*, 3(1), 28-51.

#### **Graduate Student Award**

Nassima Neggaz (2013), "Syria's Arab Spring: Language Enrichment", *LD&S*, 2(2), 11-31.

### **2016, Vienna, Third Forum of Sociology of ISA**

#### **Award Committee**

Erzsebet Barat, Institute of English and American Studies, University of Szeged, CEU, Budapest  
Irina Chudnovskaia, Department of Sociology of Communicative Systems, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia  
Roland Terborg, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico  
Chair: Stéphanie Cassilde, Centre d'Études en Habitat Durable, Belgium

**Academic Excellence Award**

Tiffany A. Dykstra (2016), “Assemblages of Syrian suffering: Rhetorical formations of refugees in Western media”, *LD&S*, 4(1), 31-48.

**Graduate Student Award**

Tomoaki Miyazaki (2016), “The Rhetorical Use of Anecdote in Online Political Discussion”, *LD&S*, 4(1), 49-61.

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