

Title:

The Revolutionary We: Discursive Variation in Castro's "Nosotros"

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In his trademark speeches, Fidel Castro casts himself in a variety of roles: supreme leader, member of government, revolutionary, worker, member of the Cuban populace, and the embodiment of the Cuban nation. Transcripts of Castro's major speeches provide a rich data set that spans five decades (1959-present). Initial readings reveal his prominent use of the first person plural *nosotros* (we), which suggests an intriguing discourse of inclusiveness for this long-time authoritarian leader.

In this poster, we identify Castro's variable discursive referents for *nosotros* verbs in relation to era and topic of speech (i.e., history of the revolution, national goals and progress, or trouble talk). Variable rule analysis shows that in Castro's earlier speeches, use of the "royal we" variant is favored: "Llamábamos al Partido por la noche, y le preguntábamos si había llovido o no" ("We called the Party the other night, and we asked if it had rained or not"). In contrast, the use of what we term the "collective we" is favored most heavily in speeches after the fall of the Soviet Union: "No estamos produciendo para los burgueses, estamos produciendo para el pueblo" ("We're not producing for the bourgeoisie, we're producing for the people"). The variation we encounter reflects Castro's positioning of self relative to the people he is addressing.

Castro, as leader of the perpetual revolutionary state, ostensibly erases the possibility of a public sphere existing apart from the government by constructing "what the public thinks/expresses/wants" as "what the government [naturally] does." This is as we might expect in a Marxist "dictatorship of the proletariat." Castro, however, achieves this conflation of public sphere and public authority in two ways in his speeches: first, he relocates public authority outside of the immediate social context, so that the role played by the Cuban public and the revolutionary government is one and the same when viewed in opposition to Yankee imperialism or memories of the Batista regime, for example. Second, by including himself in *nosotros* talk about workers and revolutionaries while standing over and addressing the Cuban public, Castro projects himself into the crowd. The effect of such talk is to offer an answer to the question, "Who mediates between the private sphere and the government in a socialist society where each one is identified with the other?" Castro proposes *himself* as the answer; he, not any autonomous, Habermasian sphere of rational debate, mediates between people's private lives and the actions of state authority. Thus, what we term a "personal public sphere" provides a context for understanding the pattern of variation we observe in Castro's speeches.