# Identity and Social Inclusion in Benue State: A Critical Review of Four Related Concepts

Comfort Erima Ugbem

*Benue State University, Markurdi, Nigeria*

*Abstract: -* **Identity is a critical aspect of social existence as it situates individuals and groups in a social setting. Beyond this, it is a tool used to create boundaries in social interaction thereby raising issues of exclusion and inclusion. Related to the subject of identity and exclusion is social solidarity which should characterize each social grouping in the society. The building block of social solidarity is very important as it has implications for cohesion and the survival of the group. Social solidarity also has implications for the strength of social capital which is important for integration, stability and development in society. These four concepts; social identity, social exclusion, social solidarity and social capital are examined in the light of their implications for economic, political and social existence of ethnic groups in Benue state. This paper suggests that a critical understanding of these concepts is needed for understanding social relations and addressing violent and non violent conflict among ethnic groups in Benue state as well as enhancing human and social development and recommends the integration of these concepts in development discourse as this would signify a departure from modernisation which regarded traditional relationships as impediments to development and dependency which defined social relations in relation to the means of production.**

*Key Words:* social identity, social exclusion, social solidarity, social capital, ethnic groups

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most undaunted challenges most African states have had to grapple with in recent times is the surge and resurgence of identity constructions, transformations and conflicts. The "identity movement" has dominated social dominated social discourse and as such created a forum for many nation states to begin to question their nationhood or statehood. Many nations' states in Africa have been involved in violent and non violent conflict which has roots in identity constructions, reconstructions mobilizations and contests. The potential for existence of many nation states like Sudan Central African Republic and even Nigeria is being threatened over issues of identity. Many explanations have been given for the rise in identity, consciousness, transformations, contests and the identity movement in general.

A Group of scholars (Ibeanu 2002, Kahler 2002, Ali 2002) have linked it to the end of the cold war. This group of scholars believe that during the cold war, the basis of contests were ideologies and as such people killed one another for ideological reasons but after cold war there was a shift from war against the perceived enemies to war against ethnic groups who regarded one another as of one social identity. Another group of scholars (Jega 2000, Muzzan and Ibrahim 2000,Ibrahim 2000) link this trend to the introduction of structural adjustment strategies by governments of various African states. This group holds the belief that the structural adjustment Programme created a desire to scramble for access to the centre so as to control resources so identities were seen as viable tools of this process. As such in many nation states the identity movement became a huge project which was threatening the centre and pulling people towards regional, ethnic enclaves at the expense of the centre. Another group of scholars (Alubo 2006, Nnoli 2000, Egwu 2007) link it to the social construction of many African states by the colonialists without recourse to the histories, previous relations, cultures and structure of the social groups within Africa. Colonialism according to these scholars created and buried deep sentiments, hatred, and primordial attachment that have played out in recent times as identity mobilizations, contests and conflicts. As plausible as this explanations are, the fact of the matter is that identity exists, it can be constructed, reconstructed and mobilized depending on the social situation at a particular point in time.

Though identity has various layers of ethnicity, sexuality, rationality and the like, ethnic identity is more salient in many African states. Ethnic identity refers to the sense of belonging that a group has with regards to ethnic origin. Ethnic identity is critical in the definition of individuals especially in pluralist states like Nigeria where access to resources is determined by ones ethnic origin. Emphasis is placed on ethnic identity because it is the only part of the totality of one's identity which has intergenerational mobility unlike occupational, gender and familial identity. In Nigeria, ethnic identity is often mobilised as a tool to contest inclusion/exclusion and many times it is violently derive. According to Wienreich (1998), ethnic identity is that part of the totality of one's self made up these dimensions that express the continuality between one's construal of past ancestry and future aspirations in relation to ethnicity. Ethnic identity is not fixed but becomes modified and redefined down the generations according to current interpretations of the shared historical experiences of past ancestry and evolving cultural tradition. These cultural traditions are continually being updated from one generation to the next in the light of contemporary societal developments and future aspirations for the ethnic group in question. For instance, if a person is a Jew, current interpretations of shared historical experiences include the

Nazi holocaust. If Afro Caribbean, then slavery and plantation; if protestant in British in Ulster, then the battle of the Bryne. These historical events have not been experienced firsthand by contemporary generations but they are recounted and handed down by grandparents and before them by their grandparent, which makes these events as vivid as ever through the oral history. Furthermore the form, content and utility are constantly altered depending on specific historical antecedents and contending social economic problems (Gandu, 2001). The salience of ethnic identity in Nigeria not unrelated to the plural nature the Nigerian state and the fact that the colonialism pitted ethnic groups in against another through their divide and rule strategy, and boundary demarcations. Ethnic groups in Nigeria are still caught up struggles to reclaim an identity which was lost through colonialism. Beyond the existence of various identities which signify plurality, there exists a strong consciousness to protect identities or move into areas of perceived marginalization.

Benue state in North Central Nigeria is one of those states in Nigeria that has several identities. Benue state was originally part of the Northern Region. Agitations based on perceived/real marginalizations led to the creation of an umbrella body known as the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC). The UMBC was led by Mr. Joseph Tarka and it aligned with the Action Group in order to get the Mid Western Region created (Ajene 2006). In 1967, the Regions in Nigeria were dissolved and in their place, twelve states were created. Benue plateau state was one of the twelve states that were created. Agitations for more states led to the creation of Benue state in 1976. Benue state at its creation comprised of Tiv, Idoma, Igala, Igede, Etulo, Jukun, and the Bassa ethnic groups. In 1991, Kogi state was created leading to the exit of the Igala and the Bassa from Benue State.

The State comprises of twenty-three local government areas. Fourteen of these local governments correspond with the ethnic territory of the Tiv though the jukuns occupy a settlement in one local government and the Etulo are scattered in two local government areas (Ajene 2006). The Idomas occupy seven local government areas while the Igedes occupy two local government areas. The local governments are divided into districts. The state has two traditional councils – the Tiv and the Idoma traditional councils. The Tiv traditional council is headed by the Tor Tiv who is the king of the Tiv. The Idoma traditional council is headed by the Ochi Idoma- the king of the Idoma. The Etulo and the Jukuns fall under the jurisdiction of the Tiv traditional council while the Igede are under the Idoma traditional council. Benue state until recently (because of the crisis in Jos) has acquired the status of being a hot bed for violent communal and ethnic conflict (Ajene 2006). The plurality of Benue state spans ethnic, occupational, gender, age and religion though the ethnicity has been most mobilized for mass action leading to violent conflict. One of the challenges of the pluralism is the tendency for some individuals and groups to be excluded or to perceive themselves as excluded from certain opportunities rights and rewards. These exclusions though seen in political appointments, educational placements, employment, access to credit, housing etc are located in the social relationships within and between groups in the society. Social exclusion describes a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live. Discrimination occurs in public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household (DFID 2005).

Related to social exclusion is the concept of social solidarity which should characterize each social grouping in the society. The building block of social solidarity is very important as it has implications for cohesion and the survival of the group. The basis of solidarity also has implications for the character and strength of social capital in each ethnic group. Social capital refers to the degree of social cohesion which exists in communities. It refers to the processes through which established networks, norms and social trust, and facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit. Social capital is important for integration, stability and development in society. This paper examined these four related concepts and drew out the implications they have for the economic political and social existence of ethnic groups as well as development in Benue state.

## II. SOCIAL IDENTITY, SOCIAL SOLIDARITY, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION RELATIONS

Identity is about meanings in relation to social existence. It refers to socio-cultural characteristics that individuals share or presumed to share on the basis of which they may be distinguished from others in the society (Alubo 2009). Identity is part of the objectifications of daily life which is constructed in the course of the exchange of subjectivities by individuals and groups but later acts back on the group as though they were not involved in its creation (Berger and Luckmann 1966). The constructed nature of identity is a pointer to the fact that Identity is only meaningful in interaction with "significant others" (Itenkel 2005, Kalu 2004, Nagel 1994). Significant others may vary depending on the kind of group. In the case of ethnic groups, significant others may include other ethnic groups within the same social and physical environment of the ethnic group, state definitions, state policies and the territory of the ethnic group. For instance the construction of the identity of an ethnic group can only be meaningful in relation to the way the identity of the other ethnic groups are constructed and not in isolation. For instance the construction of a Hausa Fulani identity can only takes on a more important meaning as it relates in a more competitive socio-political environment with the Yoruba, Igbo or other minority ethnic groups like Nupe, Tiv, Idoma, Igala etc. Identity could be imposed by a ruling power or a larger ethnicity in the same social environment. For instance in the US, it is the white's definition of "whiteness" and "blackness" that is accepted (Storr 2009). In essence people view African

Americans and the whites through the whites' definition despite efforts by the African Americans to reconstruct their identity away from the imposed inferior identity. This further presents the fact that identity persists irrespective of whether the group involved accepts the definition at all. Also it is possible for a group to claim to have a particular identity while the other groups see them differently. A combination of these factors discussed above makes the identity of ethnic groups very salient especially in plural societies where access to resources is based on membership of an ethnic group. Nigeria is one of such societies where identities especially that of ethnic groups are highly mobilized for group action. Historically, the British colonialists in a bid to effectively exploit Nigeria lumped over 250 ethnic groups under three ethnic groups in a regional arrangement (Eastern, Northern and Western regions) using population and / or perceived cultural superiority as a criterion thereby creating a "centre" where access to had to be on the platform of ethnicity (Nwajiaku-Dahou 2009, Saka and Arazeem 2007, Obi 2004). This colonial heritage has made ethnic identity very salient in Nigeria further creating a platform for the recurrence of identity construction as well as the emergence of new ethnicities and identities showing that a constructed identity could be reconstructed.

The concept of identity connotes a principle of inclusion and exclusion. The construction of identity involves a distinction between "us" and "them" signifying a creation of boundaries and the exclusion of "others" from the identity group. The term **social exclusion** was actually coined by the French in 1974 to describe various categories of people ranging from mentally and physically handicapped, single parents, substance users, and other groups unprotected by social insurance (Peace 2001). Later it became used to refer to a whole range of socially disadvantaged groups (Loury 2000). Presently it is used to describe a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live (DFID 2005). This discrimination occurs in public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household. It can further be described as a process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from job, income and education and training opportunities, as well as social and community networks and activities. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and thus often feel powerless and unable to take control over the decisions that affect their day to day lives (WORLD BANK 2007). Social exclusion suggests the existence of a relationship or network of interactions that makes some individuals disadvantaged where others are privileged.. Groups in the society also create boundaries that exclude other groups within the same social

settings. The concept of social exclusion can be linked to Max Weber's social closure which he saw as an attempt of one status group to secure itself a privileged position at the expense of another group through a process of subordination or discrimination. So social exclusion is neither a condition nor outcome but it is a dynamic process in which people can move "in" and "out" depending on the social situation. Social exclusion in many societies is often described in economic terms i.e. in relation to wages, access to credit, access to employment opportunities or in political terms reflected in voting patterns and general political participation. Overtly it is a process that emerges from social interactions between groups in the society.

A significant aspect of group relations in the society is the bond that holds members together. Members of a group in some cases may be willing to suffer and even die to protect the interest of the group or to show their solidarity with the group ideals. The concept of **social solidarity** can be related to Emile Durkheim's collective conscience[1]. Durkheim differentiates between two types of solidarity. There is the mechanical solidarity and the organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity is "solidarity which comes from likeness and is at its maximum when the collective conscience completely envelops our whole conscience and coincides in all points with it." Mechanical solidarity occurs in early societies in which there is not much division of labour. Such societies are relatively homogenous, men and women engage in similar tasks and daily activities, people have similar experiences. In such societies the few distinct institutions express similar values and norms and tend to reinforce one another. The norms, values, and beliefs of the society (or the collective conscience) are so homogenous and confront the individual with such overwhelming and consistent force, that there is little opportunity in such societies for individuality or deviance from this collective conscience. Organic solidarity develops as a by-product of the division of labour. As society becomes more complex, individuals play more specialized roles and become ever more dissimilar in their social experiences, material interests, values, and beliefs. Individuals in such a socio-cultural system have less in common; however, they must become more dependent upon each other for their survival. Solidarity with group ideals depending on the intensity can even influence altruistic behaviour. Solidarity with group ideals is the reason why members of a social group may be will to die for in an effort to achieve the group goals. It essence it reflects the degree of social cohesion within a social group.

Individuals and group life in the society are embedded in a network of social relations which influence their identity and can either exclude them or include them in societal processes. The term **social capital** is used to describe these networks of interactions. Social capital is actually a social construct or metaphor used to describe the level of civic

---

[1] a common social bond or tie expressed by the ideas, values, norms, beliefs, and ideologies of a culture

engagement in the society and to explain how these interactions contribute to trust and democracy (Jarley and Nissen). It has been described variously by scholars. Das (2006) describes it as norms of trust, reciprocity, networks association and organizations that constitute social resources for individuals which facilitate collective action for mutual benefit. An individual's social capital is a product of the resources flowing through a person's web of contact. A group's social capital is as a result of its members developing many ties among members of the group. The larger an individual's social capital, the larger the social capital of the group and the easier it is for members to draw on these interconnections to get necessary resources. Social capital is has various layers namely bonding, bridging and linking. Colletta and Cullen (2000) in their research on social capital and violent conflict in Guatemala further elaborate on the dimensions of social capital where they make reference to bonding, bridging and horizontal. Bonding social capital refers to the relationship among members of families and ethnic groups. Bridging social capital refers to those relationships we have with people who are not like us. Bridging or horizontal social capital refers to the relationships people have with those in power. Bridging social capital enables individuals and community groups to leverage resources, ideas and information from formal institutions beyond the immediate community radius.

## III. THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF THE FOUR RELATED CONCEPTS

Having examined the four concepts of social identity, social solidarity, social exclusion and social capital, some issues of salience that have implications for the social, economic and political stability for Benue state and other plural societies can be drawn. These issues raise both theoretical and practical interrelated issues bothering on social identity, social exclusion, social solidarity and social capital and violent conflict. A theory of social exclusion that will be relevant has to focus on the social cultural, historical and political dimensions of social exclusion and not just the economic analysis. Economic analysis based on wage disparity, access to credit, employment and consumption and production of goods and services without examining the issues that have led to these disparities cannot fully explain social exclusion. These might give a picture that exclusion exists in the society but are not enough to show the factors that have led to that exclusion. If economic analysis is the basis of any intervention to address social exclusion, that intervention will only address the symptoms of the exclusion, or provide a palliative measure to cope with exclusion but the real issues that have translated to exclusion will remain unaddressed. Issues of social exclusion go beyond providing equal opportunity based on race, ethnicity religion, gender, occupation and aged. It encompasses examining the conditions that have led to the exclusion in the first place. Also that one has strong economic power does not mean the person is not socially excluded. He might not be allowed to contest election to a particular position because he belongs to a minority ethnic group.

Social exclusion is socially constructed. When individuals form groups in the society, an in-group and an out-group is automatically created. The in group and out-group translates to exclusion and inclusion. Related to this is the problem of identities. Social exclusion is usually based on identities. Individuals are excluded or included based on the groups they belong to either at the level of gender, ethnicity or religion. In most states in Nigeria, ethnic identity occupies a position of salience. This is because the Nigerian citizenship has little or no material benefits but ethnic identity provides a platform for ones access to material as well as non material benefits as far as the Nigerian state is concerned. Though issues of exclusion cover all other areas of identity ethnic identity in Nigeria is most mobilized for collective action that can lead to conflict. Most violent conflict, issues of perceived marginalizations, self determination and attempts at secession can be explained using the concept of social exclusion. Related to the concept of social exclusion is social capital. Social exclusion means that some form of vertical or horizontal social capital has been destroyed or transformed. It also relates to the issue of social solidarity. Solidarity far as social groups are concerned goes far beyond individuals' commitment to group goals. The motive or commitment determines the strength of commitment. If the motive or the solidarity is not achieved it can translate to regrouping or reconstruction of identities to achieve ones goals. Most times these identities are mobilised for group action leading to violent conflict in most cased. The four articles stress the interrelatedness of the issues of social identities, social exclusion, social solidarity, social capital and violent conflict.

Social exclusion is based on identities. It is both a process and a result of identity construction and reconstruction In Rwanda the Tutsi and the Hutus experienced exclusion at different times. The Hutus experienced this before colonialism though it was not rigid. The Hutus were the cultivators while the Tutsi were the pastoralists and they belonged to the ruling and warrior class. Group membership was not static. But the experience of colonialism created group disparities and a distinct ethnic identity which became a basis for mobilizations that finally culminated in the genocide. In Benue state, various identities spanning ethnic, religion, gender, age, and occupation exists and are mobilized for collective action These identities form the basis of exclusion. Individuals and groups are excluded based on this. The one which has been most mobilized for collective action is ethnic identity. This is because ethnic identity has an intergenerational mobility that the other identities do not have.

Ethnic groups in Benue state have been excluded from some particular positions. Access to opportunities like education, scholarship, political positions and even employment are based on ethnicity. This means that on the surface individuals and groups are excluded based on these identities. For instance the Tiv, by virtue of their position as

the majority ethnic group has monopolized the governorship of the state, headship of the state owned university, the position of the speaker and the headship of other major parastatals in the state. By virtue of numbers they have been able to exclude the other ethnic groups from occupying this position.  Another basis for exclusion is membership of political party. The dominant party in Benue state is the Peoples Democratic Party. All those that belong to other parties are excluded from political positions in the state. Individuals that are interested in contesting for these positions have to either decamp to this party or remain as perpetual enemies to the government in power. Another basis for social exclusion which is related to identity is gender. Many females are excluded from positions of authority on the basis of their status as females.  Once upon a time in Benue a female speaker emerged but did not even occupy the position for up to a year before resigning  based on pressures from the other members of the house.  This can also be linked to ethnic identity as there are more females among the Tiv in positions of leadership than the other ethnic groups.  Their status of the Tiv as the majority ethnic group can be used to explain this. Issues of exclusion in society are very important as neglect has led to violent and non violent conflict in the state. For instance the exclusion of the Idomas from the governorship of the state has created a cold war between the Idoma and the Tiv. Over the years there have been agitations for a separate state for the Idomas and the Igede – they belong to one senatorial zone. All these above are examples of exclusion. But using the above to explain exclusion will amount to explaining exclusion using what Loury calls an" impoverished framework". It will also lead to devising interventions that will only address the symptoms not the exclusion.

To critically address exclusion in the society, social, political geographical and historical factors that have excluded groups have to be examined. To be able to understand the issues of exclusion in Benue it is important to look beyond the mere figures of political office holders, employment, enrolment trend in schools, scholarships given to individuals across the five ethnic groups.  The Tiv and Idoma are the "majority" ethnic groups while Igede, Etulo, and Jukun are seen as the "minority" ethnic groups. To be able to understand the issues of exclusion in Benue it is important to look beyond the mere figures of political office holders, employment, enrolment trend in schools, scholarships given to individuals across the five ethnic groups. In Benue for instance the state has twenty three local governments out of which fourteen are predominantly owned by the Tiv. The Tiv are larger in number so judging exclusion by their large number in terms of the variables mentioned above will not give a true picture of exclusion. Issues that come to mind are: what has informed the larger number of the Tiv as compared to other ethnic groups? Is it possible that the Tiv had more access to education than other ethnic groups? What has informed that access to education? Also the social realities of other ethnic groups have to be looked at: do the other ethnic groups attach value to education? Do they have the economic power and the

motivation to work hard? What are the values of these ethnic groups?  Are these values" valuable" as far as access to opportunities is concerned? What is the history of each ethnic group in the society? Are there issues in their individual and collective histories that have placed them in their current situation?  This is in line with Loury  assertion  that "Individuals are embedded in complex networks of affiliations: they are members of nuclear and extended families, they belong to religious and linguistic groupings, they have ethnic and racial identities, and they are attached to particular localities. Each individual is socially situated, and one's location within the network of social affiliations substantially affects one's access to various resources" (Loury 1999:233).

The Tiv have values of hard work and expanding beyond their territory. They also have a history of large scale farming. Their expansionist nature might have influenced their large number. Their hard work coupled with the economic power they have through farming could have an influence in their power and ability to be educated en mass. The Etulo do not have a local government of theirs. They occupy some villages within two local governments that are owned by the Tiv.  This in itself is a factor that can lead to exclusion.  Their small number and geographical location is a factor that can keep them excluded. Among the Igede when education was introduced people felt it was for lazy people and not many were willing to send their children to school. Though this has changed, the repercussions of not involving going to school early enough might be a factor that can lead to exclusion. The Jukuns occupy a settlement in tarka local government. They are predominantly fishermen and few in number. This may be a factor that can exclude them because their lives revolve around the river Benue. All these point to the fact that exclusion cannot be explained without examining the conditions that have kept the particular groups excluded. Locating issues of social exclusion in the social implies two things. One is that individuals and groups also have to take responsibility for exclusion. It cannot be blamed on the state alone. It also implies that interventions at addressing social exclusion will involve not just giving ethnic groups more access to opportunities to participate in their social life but addressing the issues in their social realities that can keep them "excluded" even in the light of these interventions.

Social exclusion actually ruptures the bonds between groups in the environment. This rupturing of social bonds has a twofold implication. It can lead to the development of strong social capital within the group like the case of Rwanda. The fact that the Hutus excluded the Tutsi politically, economically and socially led to the development of strong social bonds that eventually translated to the rebel movement. It could also lead to disintegration of particular groups especially if it is a group of heterogeneous people that have no economic, political or social resources to mobilize. Their disconnection from other groups will be to their detriment. In Benue state the fact that the Idomas who are the second largest group have not been able to produce a governor and a

speaker for the state house of assembly has created a cold war between them and the Tiv. The Idoma feel excluded as far as access to that political position is concerned. As a result there have been collective agitations for a state of their own. There has been the development of strong vertical social capital among the Idoma translating in collective agitation for the creation of Apa state. The Tiv have also mobilized their own social capital in terms of numbers and the control of the state apparatus to ensure that the Idomas do not produce any civilian governor. A case in point is the Kwande crisis of 2004 which bothered on the elections. Kwande local government had been in opposition to the ruling party in the state ( Lyam 2006). Local government elections took place but the results were not announced by Benue state independent electoral commission. Also the all Nigerian peoples' party candidate Paul Unongo had won the ticket of the ANPP for the gubernatorial election. A lot of tension was built up and as a result there was a lot of destruction of life and property that people began to call for a state of emergency. Members of the PDP and the ANPP coalesced on each side of the divide as the PDP operated from the headquarters while the ANPP operated from the home of their leader. The exclusion felt by the members of the ANPP led them to mobilize the social capital at their disposal. Unemployed youth were conscripted into militia groups and a lot of arms and ammunition were also bought. The both camps made use of the vertical and horizontal social capital they had at their disposal. The PDP by virtue of their control of the state apparatus used it in their own favour. The ANPP also used the vertical capital of retired military men among them to form militia groups and acquire arms and ammunition. This crisis led to the disruption of economic and educational activities. A lot of lives were lost, women were raped, properties were looted and a lot of people became refugees to neighbouring local government. In terms of education a lot of students could not write WAEC and JAMB. On the whole the violence unleashed a reign of terror on the populace leading to suspicion and bitterness.

The conflict defied all efforts made by the state and federal government to bring peace. The ANPP members refused to attend all the meetings arranged by the government to discuss the crisis. The turning point in the conflict was the formation of a religious group formed by Kwande indigenes known as Concerned Sons of Kwande. This group mediated with the various groups in the conflict without success and then adopted the strategy of appealing to the general members of the society. Social exclusion is usually linked to identity. Ethnic identity in Nigeria occupies a position of salience and can be a potential source of conflict. Once any ethnic group senses discrimination in any form, they are quick to mobilize social capital at their disposal. The exclusion in itself ruptures the bridging capital i.e. that is social capital links the group with other groups in the society and in some cases the state.

The case of Kwande can also be explained as a situation where social capital favours some at the expense of the others. When social capital favours some at the expense of

others the tendency to reconstruct identities, construct and mobilize new social capital for mass action so as to be recognised or fight for what they perceive as their rights. The case of Kwande is a case in point. Within ethnic groups there seems to be the reconstruction of identities which implies the destruction or transformation of the social capital that existed and the creation of new boundaries of exclusion. Ones identities are reconstructed, new in groups and out groups are formed and new politics of inclusion and exclusion begin. New forms of social capital are also created. Among the Tiv for instance new groups have emerged and are becoming points of emphasis over the entire ethnic group agenda. Groups like Kparev, Nanev, Masev, Nongov Ukan, Hyarev and Kunav which are clans among the Tiv are becoming points of emphasis over and above the ethnic group as a whole. Within these groups are clan based organizations seeking to protect one form of identity or the other. Ajene (2006) cites a situation in Makurdi where a flare up arose between the Minda who are from Makurdi and the Kparev who are viewed as non natives to the place where involved in a fierce contestation based on the fact that the non natives were seen to be expanding beyond boundaries into areas that were not originally allocated to them. He also cites a conflict in Tarka local government involving two kindred groups over a perceived breach of agreement and marginalization of one kindred by the other. This translates to the indigene and settler syndrome in Nigeria that has resulted in a lot of bloodshed.

Among the Idoma groups like Igumale, Apa, Ogbadibo Otukpo, and Utonkon are becoming major areas of emphasis above the one ethnic group agenda. Within each ethnic group, there seems to be a regrouping under smaller sub groups Ajene (2006) cites a situation among the Igumale' where some are regarded as "royal" and others are regarded as" non royal". The royals were allowed positions in the cabinet but not the royal seat. The "non royals" were more educated and wealthier than the royals formed an umbrella organization known as Akpoge Agbilolo to change their perceived injustice. They sponsored a candidate to the royal seat and this led to violent conflict in which lives and properties were destroyed. A recent conflict was averted by the state and this bothered on the identity of a particular group within a clan among Igede. Historically the Anyaboga were regarded as slaves scatted all over the other clans. The ones in Ibilla and Ohuhu clan were more educated than the rest of the members of the clan but they were not allowed to occupy any political seat. They began to make agitations for a clan of their own which almost led to a violent conflict in Ohuhu clan. Beyond the real and perceived marginalizations, an explanation for the reconstruction of these identities can be located in the concept of solidarity and social exchange discussed by Widegren.

Identities may have been constructed or reconstructed based on perceived or expected benefits. Once the benefits are not forth coming the tendency for the group to disintegrate becomes very strong. It also important to note that solidarity as far as groups are concerned cannot be measured

by the level of commitment to the group goals. The motive for the commitment has to be identified and examined. If the motive for commitment to group goals is for political positions, access to economic power and recognition, identities can be reconstructed ones these are not achieved. People's motives for commitment to the entire ethnic agenda could be for expectation of favours from other group members, expectation of recognition and political positions, contacts and the like. It could also be to promote the group goals. The strength of social capital (apart from the family) is also depends on the motive people have for entering into relationships. Once the motives are not met, tendency to form other groups or mobilize for mass action to protest "perceived marginalization" is usually very strong. The new groups because of the nature of their formation have very strong social capital which they mobilize for mass action. This in most cases lead to violent conflict. .The new identities that have emerged within the various ethnic groups can be explained using the concept of solidarity. On the whole the issues of social exclusion, social capital, social solidarity and social exchange are inextricably linked with identity. Understanding identity construction and reconstruction will contribute to the understanding and the application of these concepts to present day realities in the society.

From the foregoing it can be deduced that social capital as an important determinant of one's opportunities in life and also a factor in the development question in most societies. Social capital can determine an individual's access to education, good health care, and access to employment. It is also a factor in the stability and development of societies because it can enhance social solidarity and on the other hand it can also hasten social fragmentation and the unset of violent conflict.

## IV. CONCLUSION

The interrelated concepts of social identity, social exclusion, social capital and social solidarity are critical for stability and sustainable development in any society. Social identity gives a clear view of the world view of individuals and groups in the society. The concept of social exclusion gives a broader view of issues of deprivation, discrimination and inequality in the society. A critical understanding of exclusion beyond economics is important for stability and development in society. The concept of social capital is also critical for understanding of relations in the society that can inhibit or promote integration, stability and development. This is because it can be perverted to undermine social solidarity and fragment the society for group gain. This perversion can lead to violent conflict. It can also be mobilized to mitigate conflict. If vertical social capital is characterized by inequality, and unequal distribution of power and opportunity, conflict can occur. Once there is the absence of cross cutting horizontal relations, hostilities can erupt if one group is seen as monopolizing resources and power to the disadvantage of others. Also if within these groups high level of bonding capital link only particular members, differences in access to resources result in tensions within the groups – between those who control and those who are excluded.

The concept of social solidarity also has a merit as it is an intervening variable between social capital and violent conflict. Social solidarity determines the strength of social capital and also influences the level of vertical and horizontal social capital in the society. Once social solidarity is weak, the reinforcing channels of socialization and social control will also be weak and this will lead to disorganization, fragmentation, exclusion and consequently conflict. It is important for the concepts of social capital, exclusion and social solidarity to be incorporated in development discourses. These concepts point to the fact that social networks are an important factor in the stability and development of societies. Incorporating these concepts into development discourses can lead to a more solid theorizing as it will signify a departure from modernisation which regarded traditional relationships as impediments to development and dependency which defined social relations in relation to the means of production.

## REFERENCES

[1]. Abdullahi, A. A., & Saka, L. (2007). Ethno-Religious and Political Conflicts: Threat to Nigeria Nascent Democracy. Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa, 9(3).
[2]. Abubakar, D. (2001). Ethnic identity, democratization and the future of the Nigerian state: Lessons from Nigeria. 21½, 31-36.
[3]. Ajene, O.2006. Benue State University Report on conflicts in the Benue valley. DFID
[4]. Alii, W. 2007. The impact of globalization on conflict in Africa. Best (ed) *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa*. Spectrum Books LTD Ibadan
[5]. Alubo, O .2006.*Ethnic Conflicts and Citizenship Crises in the Central Region,* Spectrum books Ibadan Nigeria
[6]. Alubo, O. 2004. Citizenship and Nation Making in Nigeria: new challenges and contestations. *Identity culture and politics*, CODESRIA Vol 5 no 1 and 2
[7]. Colletta ,J Cullen, M. 2000. Lessons from Cambodia, Rwanda and Guatemala. The World Bank Washington. DC.
[8]. DFID. 2005.Reducing Poverty By Tackling Exclusion. A Policy Paper
[9]. Dustman, C and Preston, I.2001. Attitude to Ethnic Minorities, Ethnic Context And Location Decision. *Economic Journal.*111:470, 353-373
[10]. Egwu, G. 2007. Beyond "revival of old hatreds": the state and conflict in Africa, Best (ed) *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa*. Spectrum Books LTD
[11]. Gandu, K. 2001. Researching social identity: theoretical and epistemological problems. Zaria Historical Research 176-193
[12]. Henkel, M. 2005. Academic identity and autonomy in a changing policy environment. *Higher Education*.vol 49.1&2: 155-176
[13]. Hilary, I. social exclusion and social solidarity: three paradigms.international labour review. 133:5,6 , 531+
[14]. Ibeanu, O. (2000). Ethnicity and transition to democracy in Nigeria: Explaining the passing of authoritarian rule in a multi-ethnic society. *African Journal of Political Science*.
[15]. Ibrahim, J. 2000. The transformation of Ethno-regional Identities in Jega (Ed) *Identity Transformation under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria*. Nordic African institute, Uppsala
[16]. Jega, A.2000. The State And Identity Transformation Under Structural Adjustment in Jega(ed) *Identity Transformation under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria.* Nordic African institute, Uppsala

[17]. Loury , C. 1999. Social Exclusion and Ethnic Groups: A challenge to Economics. Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics. 225 -259.

[18]. Lyam A. 2006. Kwande Crisis: A Community Conflict of Many Interests in Timothy and Ajene(eds) conflicts in the Benue valley, Benue State University Press Makurdi

[19]. Mu'azzam, I, and Ibrahim J. 2000. The transformation of regional identities Jega (Ed) *Identity Transformation under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria.* Nordic African institute, Uppsala

[20]. Nelto, G. (2008). Multicultration in the developed context: Minority ethnic negotiation of identity through engagement in the arts in Scotland. *Sociology*, *42*(1): 47-64.

[21]. Nnoli, O. (2000). Globalisation and democracy in Africa. Globalisation and the Post-Colonial African State, Harare, AAPS Books, 173.

[22]. Nwajiaku-Dahou, K. (2009) "Heroes and Villains: Ijaw Nationalist Narratives of the Nigerian Civil War" Vol. XXXIV No. 1 pp. 47-67.

[23]. Obi, C. 2001. *The Changing Forms Of Identity Politics In Nigeria Under The Economic Adjustment: The Case of The oil Minorities of The Niger Delta*. Nordic African Institute Uppsala

[24]. Olurude, L.2005. Multiple Identities Citizenship Rights and Democratization. *Ethnic Studies Review* 28:2, 97+

[25]. Portes,A. 2000. The Two Meanings of Social Capital. *Sociological Forum.* 15.1, 1-12

[26]. Sanders, J. 2002. Ethnic Boundaries and Identity in plural Societies. *Annual reviews of sociology* ,28 :327 -352

[27]. Sarget, F. & Brettel, B. (2006). Migration identity and citizenship. Anthropological perspectives. *American Behavioural Scientists*, *50*(1): 3-8.

[28]. Stor, J. (2009). Decalge: A thematic interpretation of cultural differences in the African diaspora. *Journal of Black Studies*, *39*(5): 665-668.

[29]. Wienriech, P. 1998. Social Exclusion and Multiple Identities. *Soundings.* 9, 129-144

[30]. Nissen, B., & Jarley, P. (2005). Unions as social capital: Renewal through a return to the logic of mutual aid?. Labor Studies Journal, 29(4), 1-26.

[31]. Das, R. J. (2006). Putting social capital in its place. Capital & Class, 30(3), 65-92.