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SHAPING A SENSE OF NATIONAL AND CIVIC IDENTITIES IN THE PROCESS OF INTERCULTURAL TRAINING AT A MODERN UNIVERSITY

Abstract. *The paper deals with the ambiguities and challenges of global changes when cultural/national/ethnic/civic identities have become indispensable elements of a country's influence and its positioning worldwide.*

Keywords: *cultural policy, cultural identity, cultural diplomacy, globalization, soft power.*

Kyiv National Economic University (KNEU) defines its mission as making a significant contribution to the development of Ukraine through research, generation of new knowledge, its dissemination and training of socially responsible, creative individuals and competitive specialists. As a structural unit, the Department of Foreign Languages and Intercultural Communication provides fundamental linguistic and intercultural communication training for doing business in a modern international environment. For many years, the Department has been developing a comprehensive model of the formation of intercultural competence and the development of cultural intelligence of participants in the academic process. The model is aimed at mastering cultural theories and principles; it enhances cultural awareness and contributes to cultivating a sense of cultural, national and civic identities in the turbulent times of the 21st century. The complex model has been implemented in the Intercultural Communication Course. In 2024-2025, the Master's students at KNEU conducted an empirical research of national cultural policies in the context of globalisation, with a special emphasis on the mechanisms for preserving cultural uniqueness and regional identity.

Statement of the problem. Modern societies face a dilemma of sharing a common vision of globalizing processes, on the one hand, and adjusting their own specific identities to uncertain environment, on the other. The issue of national identity in Ukraine was a neglected subject for study before the country gained its independence in 1991, though interest grew significantly after the Revolution of Dignity in 2014. Thus, addressing to the problems of identities in higher education in a democratic society is relevant and acute. In summer 2024, the Government adopted the *State program to support and maintain Ukrainian national and civic identity for the period until 2028*. The Program is aimed at establishing interdisciplinary cooperation in the field of strengthening Ukrainian national and civic identity through national-patriotic, military-patriotic education, civic education of the population of Ukraine; popularisation of

national values of Ukraine and the formation of Ukrainian national and civic identities on their basis.

The aim of this paper is to outline the spectrum of identities that are discussed in the process of educating students as citizens, patriots and leaders who are ready to participate in a full-scale state-building process.

Literature overview. A substantial corpus of scholarship has developed around identity in a number of disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, anthropology, and sociology. The massive research resulted in the theories that shape a clearer understanding of cultural, national, and ethnic identities and their relation to the issues of citizenship, nationalism and patriotism. The huge role of cultural phenomena has been emphasized by: Smith (1993), Huntington (2004), Hart, Richardson, and Wilkenfeld (2011), Knefelkamp (2008), Kelman (1993), Hopkins (2001), Barnett (2004), Baumann (1996), Cohen (1999), Rapoport (2020), Nye, J.S. (2004) etc. Our paper also explores national and international official sources, academic publications, books, and analytical sources.

The Key Findings (*theoretical background*). The origins of national identity as a concept and a unifying human force in society can be traced back to the development of states and the centralization of political power in the pre-industrial era. Anderson describes the concept of a nation as «an imagined (invented) political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign» (Anderson, 1983: 6). National identity refers to the identity of citizens of a country with their own country's historical and cultural traditions, moral values ideals, beliefs, national sovereignty etc. (He & Yan, 2008). The contemporary studies of national identities face numerous challenges. Perhaps the most daunting is that national identities are simultaneously influenced by micro- and macro-social factors. Macro-level influences include (but not limited to): history, culture, language, religion, political institutions, agents and agencies of socialization, etc. The micro-level influences the conceptions of ethnicity (bloodlines), national borders (territoriality), belonging (citizenship) etc. Miller (1995), Hutchison and Smith (Hutchison & Smith, 1994: 8) specify «civic» and «ethnic» as the two competing conceptions of national identity.

The former is supposed to place importance on aspects such as respect for political institutions, possessing national citizenship and speaking national language.

The latter is associated with a greater emphasis on bloodlines, ancestry and cultural assimilation (Werther, 2008:160).

Tajfel proposes a group of social identities (Tajfel, 1982) which can include cultural or ethnic membership identity, gender identity, disability identity, professional identity.

Ting-Toomey develops the identity negotiating theory by emphasizes the linkage between cultural values and self-conception. She specifies eight identity domains influencing our everyday interactions and proposes to use the term «identity» as a reflective self-conception. As S. Ting-Toomey puts it, *Cultural Identity is a sense of self within one's own culture*. All individuals are socialized within a larger cultural membership group.

No individual person develops a sense of self in a vacuum. The scholars emphasize eight identity domains in influencing our everyday interactions. See Fig. 1.

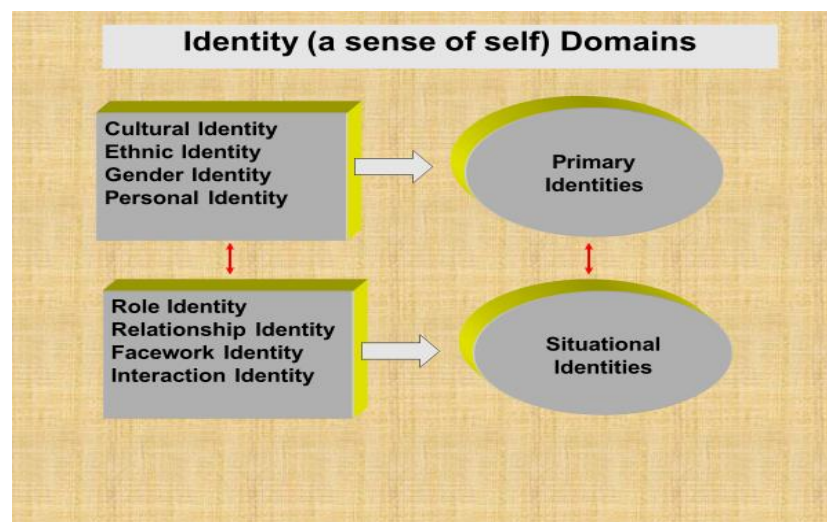


Fig. 1. Ting-Toomey S. (1994) *Communication across Cultures*

Countries and regions differ in more than their cultures. Hofstede distinguishes three kinds of differences between countries: identity, values, and institutions, all three rooted in history. Identity answers the question «To which group do I belong»? It is often rooted in language and/or religious affiliation, and it is visible and felt both by the holders of the identity and by the environment that does not share it. Fig. 2.

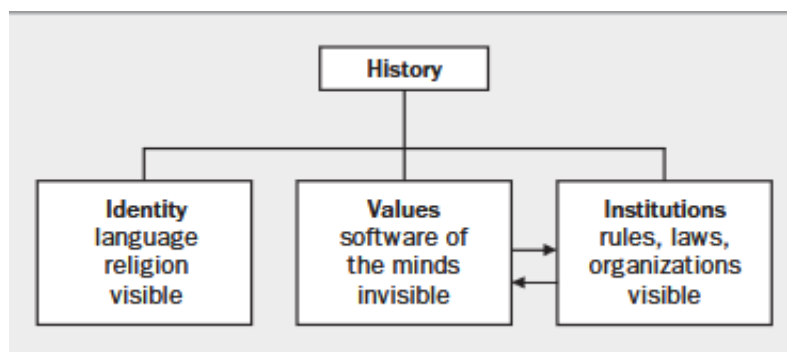


Fig. 2. Sources of differences between countries and groups. G. Hofstede, M. Minkov. *Cultures and Organizations Software of the mind*, 2010, p. 22.

We live in the time when globalizing processes are being implemented in all areas of human activity: economy, politics, science, personal contacts, and culture. *Cultural convergence* is visible, particularly in music, fashion, food, entertainment, software, transport, and architecture. International markets are gradually pushing all the world's nations to embrace the value systems of the established economies that are richer, stronger, and more attractive.

Consequently, there is a risk of losing cultural identities in the local communities that also tend to converge toward global values (Ritzer, G., & Atalay, Z. 2010). Some scholars characterize globalization as an assault of multinational corporations on local cultures, religions, traditions, and identities (Beck, 1992; Berger & Huntington, 2003; Pieterse, 1996, Berger, P.L., & Huntington, S.P., 2003). At the same time globalization leads to the emergence of new forms of culture and intercultural contacts. It does not eliminate the phenomenon of cultural diversity, but rather integrates the new forms with the previous ones. No culture, social group or ethnic community remains aloof from this process. Cultures hardly become standardized because, in a globalized world, people become much more aware of their unique values and take pride in their cultural identities. In a sense, globalization has made people aware of their diverse national cultures and use them as a soft power to maintain and expand the national influence in a rapidly changing world (Tomlinson, 2003; Nye, J.S., 2004). On our part, we add the phenomenon of *civic identity* to the above list of situational identities discussed within the academic process at KNEU.

According to Hart et al., *Civic identity refers to the broader sense of developing and situating oneself and one's beliefs within a group of people, and how one engages with others in the social, political, and economic structures within their society* (Hart et al., 2011).

The importance of civic identity of Ukraine has been highlighted by the Ukrainian authorities not just once. For instance, the tasks of the *State social program for the establishment of Ukrainian national and civic identity for the period until 2028* are:

- improving the competencies, knowledge, skills and abilities of specialists in the field of strengthening Ukrainian national and civic identity through formal and informal education;
- conducting research in the field of strengthening Ukrainian national and civic identity.

These tasks are among the priorities of the state's humanitarian policy regarding the formation and further development of the unity of the Ukrainian people around the socio-state (national and cultural) values of Ukraine.

The National Resilience Plan covers several points, including *cultural sovereignty*, which encompasses Ukraine's cultural heritage, contemporary culture, and cultural diplomacy. This is the element of guaranteeing Ukraine's ties with the global world. There are things that politics, public figures, and the media cannot convey to others, but emotions can – culture can. Culture, in general, is a tool that works universally for humanity across different parts of the world. (<https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/>)

The Key Findings (*empirical background*). The purpose of master's project work *National Cultural Policies in Globalized World: Cultural Uniqueness vs Cultural Unification* was to explore a relationship (a delicate equilibrium between the benefits of a connected world and unique aspects that define one's cultural/national/civic identity in the age of unprecedented interconnectedness) between culture, values, and global citizenship, hoping to provide a foundation for navigating a national community more thoughtfully, critically, and authentically. The analysis of national cultural strategies of 12 countries (Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, Spain, China, New Zealand, Italy, Switzerland, Denmark, Great Britain, France, Belgium and Ukraine) made it possible to conclude that:

- from a cultural point of view, globalization is a dialectical process – *cultural universalization and cultural particularization* are not mutually exclusive but mutually dependent trends of modern cultural and civilizational development;

- there exists a balance/equilibrium between the benefits of a connected world and the unique aspects that define one's cultural/national/civic identities in the age of globalization and digitalization;

- individual countries maintain this balance/equilibrium through cultural (social, humanitarian) policies aimed at maintaining their own cultural/national/civic identities at the institutional level;

- culture has become an integral component of the country's international positioning;

- through the deliberate use of soft power, strategic support for creative industries, and diplomatic engagement via culture, an individual state may seek to maintain and expand its global influence in a rapidly changing world;

- the analysis of a country's cultural identity markers demonstrates their fundamental role in shaping international perceptions and reinforcing national identity through strategic cultural diplomacy;

- in today's global landscape, a country's influence is increasingly shaped by its cultural and ideological appeal. Soft power, an ability to attract and persuade rather than coerce, has become a key tool in international relations

Conclusion. The necessity of maintaining one's national and civic identities has become one of the priorities of a state's humanitarian policy in an increasingly interconnected world. The issue requires a systemic approach, state support, policies and strategies in the spheres of education and science, youth and social policy, culture and art.

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