

**NATIONAL IDENTITY
AND DISCOURSE.
THEORY AND METHODOLOGY**

1.1. NATIONAL IDENTITY AND DISCOURSE

1.1.1. NATIONAL IDENTITY AS A CONSTRUCT

The concept of identity is present in all spheres of human life, both private and public. We cannot imagine our society without asking the question, “Who are you?” Identity has become not only an ontological issue but an epistemological one as well.

The very concept of identity derives from the philosophical study of self-determination. All traditions of philosophical thought took a deep interest in this phenomenon. Indeed, researchers believe that without referring to philosophy, no comprehensive definition of this notion would be possible.¹

Philosopher Charles Taylor discovered the origins of modern human identity, which cannot exist without an understanding

¹ Paweł Ścigaj, *Tożsamość narodowa. Zarys problematyki*, Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2012, 13.

1. . NATIONAL IDENTITY AND DISCOURSE...

of “self” or “subjectivity,” in the works of Plato. In Plato’s thought, the ideal of self-mastery as self-control is seen as the Intellect that is able to realise the Good. This implies the presence of a vision of the subject and its separateness from its environment.² Taylor presented the development of the perception of the “self” from the philosophical tradition of antiquity to modernity. Later research on self-identity in philosophy was connected with the cognition of “me, myself” and the understanding of the “other” and “stranger,” the search for the nature of the self and the specific understanding of “selfness.” According to Polish philosopher Barbara Skarga, the latter issue was addressed in the works of Immanuel Kant, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger.³ Polish researcher Paweł Ścigaj writes that the source of “selfness” is the interiority of the subject. Selfness reveals itself most visibly when it encounters the “other” or “stranger” because the question then arises, “Who am I?” It is a perpetual search without a defined plan or route. This can be seen in the ideas of Heidegger, Henri Bergson and others.⁴

Nowadays, identity studies are concerned with not only self-identity but also collective identity, changes of identity and identity as perceived by others. It is thus necessary to give an overview of the origins of the concept of identity in the social sciences.

² Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2001, 115–116.

³ Barbara Skarga, *Tożsamość i różnica. Eseje metafizyczne*, Kraków: Znak, 2009, 241.

⁴ Ścigaj, *Tożsamość...*, 39.

1.1. NATIONAL IDENTITY AND DISCOURSE

The typology of identity in the social sciences is based on the dimension of subjectivity, which is created through discourses.⁵ Depending on the form and level of subjectivity, two basic types of identity are distinguished: individual (identity of the entity) and collective.

Following a very convenient classification of identities in the social sciences, Ścigaj divides both individual and collective identities into two groups – the former into personal identity and social identity and the latter into the identity of a real community and identity of social types.⁶ National identity is connected to the question, “What do I belong to?” and is one of the social identities,⁷ although it also refers to the collective type of identity. Moreover, a nation understood as people can be both the subject and object of identity.⁸

The concept of national identity derives from the study of nations and nationalism, i.e. what forms a nation shapes national identity. It is not an innate quality but is constructed by specific characteristics that organise people into communities that make up a nation.⁹ As I have indicated in an earlier article,¹⁰ national identity is viewed in the social sciences as part of an individual’s

⁵ Gary Taylor and Steve Spencer, *Social Identities. Multidisciplinary Approaches*, London: Routledge, 2004, 4.

⁶ Ścigaj, *Tożsamość...*, 103–104.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 135.

⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed., London: Verso, 1991; Erik J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; Ernest A. Gellner, “Nationalism and Modernization,” in *Nationalism*, edited by John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, 55–63.

¹⁰ Olha Tkachenko, “Reinventing Ukraine. Ukrainian National and Supra-National Identity in Contemporary Polish Opinion-Forming Press,” *Colloquia Humanistica* 5 (2016), 143.

1. . NATIONAL IDENTITY AND DISCOURSE...

social identity and as a collective phenomenon that organises people into national groups.¹¹ Therefore, it will be presented at both the collective and individual levels.

Depending on the type of nation, national identity is divided into civic and ethnic; hence, there are ethnic and civic nationalisms.¹² Theoretician of nationalism Anthony Smith identifies five main features of national identity: “1. an historic territory, or homeland; 2. common myths and historical memories; 3. a common, mass public culture; 4. common legal rights and duties for all members; 5. common economy with territorial mobility for members.”¹³ The first three elements define the ethnic type of identity. Common territory, culture and historical memories form the core of the common origin of a given *ethnie* (ethnic community) and its connection with the nation-state. Speaking of *ethnie*, Smith adds three other features: a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population.¹⁴ Hence, ethnic identities are more exclusive and emphasise the uniqueness of their group.¹⁵ They are considered in various aspects, such as exploration, resolution and affirmation of ethnicity.¹⁶

Jean S. Phinney has proposed a three-stage model of ethnic identity development, based on addressing three questions:

¹¹ Karina V. Korostelina, “Mapping National Identity Narratives in Ukraine,” *Nationalities Papers. The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 41 (2) (2013), 293.

¹² Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, translated by Yael Lotan, London: Verso, 2019, 53.

¹³ Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991, 14.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁵ Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford–Cambridge: Blackwell, 1986, 47.

¹⁶ Adriana J. Umaña-Taylor, “Ethnic Identity,” in *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, edited by Seth J. Schwartz, Koen Luyckx and Vivian L. Vignoles, New York: Springer, 2011, 792.

1.1. NATIONAL IDENTITY AND DISCOURSE

1. The meaning of ethnic identity for the person.
2. The place of one's ethnic identity in their sense of self.
3. The level of positivity or negativity in one's attitude to their ethnic identity.

Overall, ethnic identity puts emphasis on primordial values – the special role of national culture, history and traditions¹⁷ – as well as, according to Holley Hansen and Vicki Hesli, on promoting their sub-group to the exclusion of the other groups.¹⁸

Civic identity, on the contrary, is based not on the ethnic attachment but on group affiliation to a place of residence and tolerance of other ethnic groups living in the state.¹⁹ Daniel Hart, Cameron Richardson and Britt Wilkenfeld argue that civic identity is closely related to such concepts as citizenship and civic participation that ensure civic behaviour:

A sense of civic identity leads people to volunteer to help their neighbours and their neighbours' children, vote in local and national elections, join the military and risk their lives to protect national interests, and pay taxes to provide for fellow citizens who are unable to earn enough to pay for housing, food, and medical care. The sense of oneself as a civic actor empowers political discussion, protest of governmental policies judged unfair or illegal, and participation in many facets of political life. Civic identity infuses meaning in, and provides the motivation for civic behaviour.²⁰

¹⁷ Jean S. Phinney and Anthony D. Ong, "Conceptualization and Measurement of Ethnic Identity. Current Status and Future Directions," *Journal of Counselling Psychology* 54 (3) (2007), 271.

¹⁸ Holley E. Hansen and Vicki L. Hesli, "National Identity. Civic, Ethnic, Hybrid, and Atomised Individuals," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61 (1) (2009), 4.

¹⁹ Stephen Shulman, "The Contours of Civic and Ethnic National Identification in Ukraine," *Europe-Asia Studies* 56 (1) (2004), 37.

²⁰ Daniel Hart, Cameron Richardson and Britt Wilkenfeld, "Civic Identity," in *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, edited by Seth J. Schwartz, Koen Luyckx and Vivian L. Vignoles, New York: Springer, 2011, 771.

1. . NATIONAL IDENTITY AND DISCOURSE...

Civic identity is thus subject to personal choice because, as Liah Greenfeld writes, “membership in the nation in this case ultimately depends on one’s will to be a member, and nationality, similarly to religion, may be both acquired and lost.”²¹

To better understand the dichotomy between ethnic and civic nationalism, Hansen and Hesli suggest turning to social identity theory. It explains the discrepancy between exclusive ethnic identity and inclusive civic identity by the strong in-group favouritism that results in a negative attitude toward out-groups.²²

National identity is tied to many spheres of life, such as political and social life, ethnicity, nation, culture and religion. In order to systematise approaches to identity research, Polish sociologist Zbigniew Bokszański has described different models of understanding national identity:²³

1. The model of objectivity perceives the nation in a cultural and civic way. It uses quantitative empirical methods and analysis of sources and serves mainly historians and historically-oriented sociologists. The main representatives of this approach are Anthony Smith and John Armstrong.

2. The model of discovered identity perceives the nation in a cultural way and considers culture to have a decisive role in the way national identity is conceptualised. Similarly to the first model, it uses quantitative empirical methods and analysis

²¹ Liah Greenfeld, *The Spirit of Capitalism. Nationalism and Economic Growth*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001, 2.

²² Hansen and Hesli, “National Identity...,” 2–3.

²³ Zbigniew Bokszański, *Tożsamości zbiorowe*, Warszawa: PWN, 2008, 114.

of sources. The main representatives of this approach are Samuel Huntington and Antonina Kłoskowska.

3. The model of constructed identity uses the same methods as the previous two, combining history, sociology and cultural studies with political science. The main representatives of this approach are Ernest Gellner, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, Bernhard Giesen, Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson.

4. The model of identity as public opinion uses quantitative methods and serves sociologists and social psychologists. The main representatives of this approach are Zbigniew Bokszański and Mikael Hjerm.

Based on Bokszański's division, Ścigaj, having conducted a thorough analysis of various research theories of national identity, distinguished the following main approaches:²⁴

1. National identity from the perspective of the *longue durée* (perennialism, primordialism, ethnosymbolism, modernism and postmodernism in Smith's concept).

2. National identity from the cultural perspective (e.g. Kłoskowska's view on identity in the borderlands).

3. National identity from the constructivist perspective. People are not born with identities but acquire them during socialisation. The process of identity formation is influenced by various factors, such as politics, institutions, culture, environment, events, etc. One of the most important analytical tools of this approach is discourse analysis, focusing on, e.g., press, TV materials, documents, opinion journalism and literature.

²⁴ Ścigaj, *Tożsamość...*, 167.

1. . NATIONAL IDENTITY AND DISCOURSE...

4. National identity from the public opinion perspective, which is based on sociological methods of opinion polling on the topic of identity.

The constructivist approach is the most relevant for this study because I analyse how Ukrainian identity is perceived by external actors (in this case, Polish journalists) and how it is reflected in the discourse of the Polish opinion-forming press. Therefore, it is necessary to describe the general objectives of the constructivist approach in identity research.

44 Counterintuitively, I will start with a critique of the constructivist theory of national identity. In their paper “Beyond ‘Identity,’” Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper argue that constructivists are wrong in their assumptions about identity being unstable, fluid and fragile. The researchers ask why something that is changeable and fluid should be called “identity.” They also reject ideas about institutional factors impacting the construction of identity, claiming that institutional modes of identity formation “cannot serve as indicators of real ‘groups’ and robust ‘identities.’”²⁵

Nevertheless, the constructivist approach occupies a prominent place in the field of identity research and has been widely explored. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Bernhard Giesen were among the first to develop theoretical aspects of collective identity as a construct. In the article “The Construction of Collective Identity,” they often refer to Durkheimian structuralism and Weberian notion of *Gemeinschaftsglauben* (community

²⁵ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29 (1) (2000), 26.

of faith). They propose a general model for the analysis of collective identity and make strong arguments that collective identity is constructed. These include the following:²⁶

1. “Collective identity is not naturally generated but socially constructed.” This process can be both intentional and unintentional.

2. “Collective identity is produced by the social construction of boundaries” that separate “ours” from “others” or “strangers.” It also raises the issue of “crossing boundaries” and reconstructing one’s identity.

3. Establishing the “symbolic codes of distinction” makes it possible to recognise the differences between in-groups and out-groups. These codes are fundamental in the construction of collective identity.

4. “Primordality is the first ideal code of collective identity.” It is also a social construction that requires special rituals and communicative efforts to exist and be maintained.

5. Civic codes of construction of collective identity are very important in the process of socialisation. They construct identity through social practices and institutional arrangements.

6. The cultural code of the construction of collective identity is similar to the primordial and civic ones, but it proposes a supernatural source of identity. Unlike the previous two, the cultural code overcomes the problem of social boundaries and relates the collectivity to a stable and eternal realm of the sacred and the sublime (God, Reason, Progress, Rationality).

²⁶ Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt and Bernhard Giesen, “The Construction of Collective Identity,” *European Journal of Sociology* 36 (1) (1995), 73–84.

1. . NATIONAL IDENTITY AND DISCOURSE...

Researchers who use the constructivist approach in studies of identity formation refer to such theorists of nation and nationalism as Gellner, Anderson and Hobsbawm. For instance, Shlomo Sand, in his book on the construction of the Jewish nation, states that it was Gellner and Anderson who first claimed that the nation was primarily a cultural project.²⁷

When examining the process of identity formation during the postcommunist transformation, scholars emphasise that the period of transition from an authoritarian state to a democracy is deeply related to the construction of the state and the rethinking of fundamental principles of different levels of identity.²⁸ Moreover, every process of change involves situations of conflict, which particularly affect the construction of identity. Herbert Kelman, analysing the role of identity in conflict resolution, argues that national identity is constantly being reconstructed and redefined; therefore, he claims that identities are “potentially changeable and indeed negotiable.”²⁹ This is the basis for conflict resolution because if two identities are to become compatible, they have to be reconstructed. Kelman sees national identity as a social construction that does not arise by itself but is based on certain characteristics inherent in the group of that identity. He agrees with Anderson that national identity

²⁷ Sand, *The Invention...*, 36.

²⁸ Korostelina, “Mapping National Identity...,” 293–315; David Lane, “Identity Formation and Political Elites in the Post-Socialist States,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 63 (6) (2011), 925–934; Ireneusz P. Karolewski, “European Identity Making and Identity Transfer,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 63 (6) (2011), 935–955.

²⁹ Herbert Kelman, “The Role of National Identity in Conflict Resolution. Experiences from Israeli-Palestinian Problem-Solving Workshops,” in *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction*, edited by Richard D. Ashmore, Lee Jussim and David Wilde, Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, 194.