

# CIVIC IDENTITY AND VALUES: SYSTEMIC VIEW

## IDENTIDADE E VALORES CÍVICOS: VISÃO SISTÊMICA

**LYUDMILA FOKINA**

Russian Biotechnological University  
11, Volokolamskoe Sh, Moscow,  
125080, Russia

[fokinalv@mgup.ru](mailto:fokinalv@mgup.ru)

**NINA LOGUNOVA**

Russian Biotechnological University  
11, Volokolamskoe Sh, Moscow,  
125080, Russia

[logunova@mgup.ru](mailto:logunova@mgup.ru)

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**Corresponding author:**

[fokinalv@mgup.ru](mailto:fokinalv@mgup.ru)



**Abstract:** This article systematically analyzes the phenomenon of civic identity as a form of group identity. The nature of civic identity is considered within E. Erikson's psychosocial approach. The terms and conclusions about the systemic nature of civic identity are based on the concepts of complex self-developing systems introduced by Academician V.S. Stepin. In such social systems, the basic and universal worldviews (values and meanings) act as the core program of self-regulation and reproduction. The content analysis of regulatory legal acts and policy documents has demonstrated that civic identity consists of universal and cultural values that are included in society's cultural-genetic (civilizational) code. Based on the analysis of student essays on the topic "Values in my life", the authors assess the role of the family in the formation of values and propose to include interaction with students' families in the university educational process to form civic identity.

**Keywords:** Identity. Civic identity. Values. All-Russian civic identity. Moral and spiritual values. Educational work.

**Resumo:** Este artigo analisa sistematicamente o fenômeno da identidade cívica como uma forma de identidade de grupo. A natureza da identidade cívica é considerada dentro da abordagem psicossocial de E. Erikson. Os termos e conclusões sobre a natureza sistêmica da identidade cívica são baseados nos conceitos de sistemas complexos de autodesenvolvimento introduzidos pelo Acadêmico V.S. Stepin. Em tais sistemas sociais, as visões de mundo básicas e universais (valores e significados) atuam como o programa central de auto-regulamentação e reprodução. A análise do conteúdo dos atos legais reguladores e dos documentos de política tem demonstrado que a identidade cívica consiste em valores universais e culturais que estão incluídos no código cultural-genético (civilizacional) da sociedade. Com base na análise dos ensaios estudantis sobre o tema "Valores na minha vida", os autores avaliam o papel da família na formação de valores e propõem incluir a interação com as famílias dos estudantes no processo educacional universitário para formar a identidade cívica.

**Palavras-chave:** Identidade. Identidade cívica. Valores. Identidade cívica todo-russa. Valores morais e espirituais. Trabalho educativo.

## Introduction

The conflict between values-based systems, their meanings, and interpretations determines the focus of modern axiological studies, which are interdisciplinary.

The global crises of technogenic civilization have given rise to the problem of meaning formation and search for one's identity in the context of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) (directions of modern transformations of all social institutions) (Warren, 1985). The acronym was introduced by W. Bennis and B. Nanus in the 1980s.

Identity is formed in a complex process of socialization and is conditioned by life situations in which a person develops self-identification conceived as a unity of personal (individual) and general (group) features.

Being the founder of the identity theory, E. Erikson (1996, p. 41) claimed that the balance of personal and group is based on common values and semantic attitudes, assimilated by a person through different socio-cultural contexts.

Along with personal identity, there are also gender, age, ethnic, religious, professional, political, and other group identities.

Social transformations that affect the values-based system also influence dynamic characteristics of the personal and social in an individual, which can lead to the loss (distortion) of group identification and an imbalance of values and semantic attitudes. Such a process entails the loss of a positive identity and contributes to the destruction of social ties.

As one of the significant group identities, the German philosopher J. Habermas called the identity formed by society at the level of state organization (Habermas, 1999, p. 34). This position is supported by Academician V.A. Tishkov (2013): "States are the most powerful and all-pervading form of social coalitions. Throughout human evolution, there is no better form of organizing large human collectives" (p. 21).

The existence of states is conditioned by the targeted efforts of generations who recognize the state as their own: "a collective everyday referendum on loyalty to this state" (Tishkov, 2013, p. 21).

Among the factors that ensure the legitimacy and sovereignty of the state, Tishkov highlighted the historical and cultural values shared by citizens that determine the identity and a sense of belonging to their homeland (Tishkov, 2019, p. 408).

This position is shared by Russian scholars who conducted a comprehensive study of civic identity with the support of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (project leaders L.M. Drobizheva and E.M. Arutyunova, the Russian Academy of Sciences) (Drobizheva et al., 2021). When referring to regulations, the authors emphasize that the basis of civic identity is adherence to the basic values of Russian society, responsibility for the country, observance of civil rights and obligations, and belonging to the state, people, and society (Drobizheva et al., 2021, p. 50). This interpretation represents civic identity as a resource for maintaining the integrity of society (Drobizheva et al., 2021, p. 46).

In this regard, civic identity is a key resource of cultural integration and a factor that ensures the stable development of an individual and society.

The hypothesis of this study is to consider the nature of civic identity as the basis of the cultural-genetic (civilizational) code of society. Under traditional spiritual and moral values, we understand universal (humanism, human rights and freedoms, equality, etc.) and general cultural (patriotism, love for the motherland, mercy, etc.) values.

The majority of young men and women name family as the main value in their lives; therefore, we consider it important to involve families in the university educational process. This practice allows for achieving the goals set more effectively, i.e. raising the level of civic identity through the development of traditional spiritual and moral values of the Russian society.

## **Methods and materials**

This study contributes to understanding the nature and content of civic identity and the role of values in the functioning and development of society. Based on the analysis of student essays, we concluded that spiritual values have a traditional priority in the hierarchy of young people.

To comprehend the nature of civic identity, we used Erikson's stages of psychosocial development.

The analysis of civic identity as the basis of the cultural-genetic (civilizational) code of society was conducted within the systemic approach developed by Academician V.S. Stepin.

To comprehend the values of civic identity, we referred to the studies of Tishkov (2013, 2019) and Drobizheva et al. (2021). The content analysis of regulatory legal acts and policy documents allowed us to conclude the nature of values, whose meaning is determined in the context of national interests.

To better understand the values-based position of students, we analyzed essays on the topic "Values in my life" written by first-year bachelor students, specializing in veterinary medicine, veterinary and sanitary expertise, and biology. In total, we considered 59 essays.

## Results

### *Nature of civic identity*

According to Erikson's psychosocial approach, the concept of identity is interpreted as an intense feeling of activity and vitality. This activity is realized in social experience and finding one's true self in the stream of life. As communication expands, the differentiation of identity becomes more and more meaningful. However, regardless of what roles a person takes on, the feeling of one's identity and integrity must remain stable and continuous (Erikson, 1996, pp. 28-32).

The harmonious development of identity is ensured by cultural unity, as well as the continuity of socio-cultural norms and practices. A sense of solidarity forms an identity and inspires further action (Erikson, 1996, p. 41).

To reduce the influence of negative factors, it is important to find a resource to form a positive identity based on the acceptance of common values.

Such a resource is understood as civic identity, which is the basis for the integration and cohesion of society, where the basis of spiritual and moral values is the idea of a single and integral national state (Mironov et al., 2019, p. 17).

In this understanding, civic identity can be regarded as the ideological basis of the future world order and a factor in ensuring the moral leadership of the state on a global scale. This ambitious task is formulated in Presidential Decree No. 400

of July 2, 2021 "On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation" (President of the Russian Federation, 2021).

*Values within civic identity*

Being the basis of group self-consciousness, civic identity helps consider society in its dynamic interaction based on common values, which are the core of civilization.

As noted above, the state as the basic historically formed idea of national existence is a condition for the integrity of Russian society (Mironov et al., 2019, p. 17). This idea is based on generally understood and accepted meanings that stimulate and organize the creative activity of an individual and society. When put together, these meanings represent the values of a particular civilization (Mironov et al., 2019, p. 17).

Thus, the basis for the functioning and development of multi-national Russian society is traditional spiritual, moral, cultural, and historical values reflected in the current legislation (President of the Russian Federation, 2021; State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2012).

Normative and program documents treat the all-Russian civic identity as the basis for protecting national interests and values, universal principles, and socially significant guidelines for social development (Ofitsialnyi portal gosudarstvennykh programm RF, n.d.; President of the Russian Federation, 2021).

In the state program "Implementation of the State National Policy" (approved by Government Decree No. 1532 of December 29, 2016), common principles and values based on centuries-old cultural diversity and interaction of different peoples are defined as a unique cultural (civilizational) code of the Russian society (Ofitsialnyi portal gosudarstvennykh programm RF, n.d.).

Thus, it is important to consider the all-Russian civic identity in different contexts: cultural-historical, political, religious, and ethnic, which implies the variability of values and meanings.

Scholars highlight the following types of values: 1) values of the immediate social environment; 2) model values of this type of culture; 3) universal humanistic values (Suprun, 1987, p. 168).

Universal humanistic values are universal human values perceived by modern civilization as human rights and freedoms in a democratic society.

Model values of this type of culture are general cultural values that are part of the socio-cultural code (genome) of a particular civilization.

Along with universal values, regulatory acts contain general cultural values that are typical of Russian society: patriotism, citizenship, service to the fatherland and responsibility for its destiny, the priority of the spiritual over the material, mercy, justice, collectivism, historical memory and the continuity of generations, the unity of the peoples of Russia, and others (President of the Russian Federation, 2021; State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2012).

To substantiate our perception of the role of general cultural values in civilizational development, we need to refer to Stepin's ideas. His concept states that the functioning and development of social systems determine the cultural and genetic code, whose basis is worldview universals, including the basic life meanings and values of civilization. These values underlie the reproduction of the social system; in case of their destruction, civilization either ceases to exist or renews its value matrix, and the system is reproduced with a more complex level of organization (Stepin, 2017, pp. 7-9).

In this regard, civic identity can be regarded as a component of the cultural-genetic (civilizational) code, whose content is universal human and cultural values.

At present, global technogenic and geopolitical crises have given rise to the problem of finding new strategies for the development of civilization. The identification of growth points of new values will allow coordinating resources for their purposeful formation and protection (Stepin, 2017, pp. 9-10).

*Resources for the formation of civic identity, i.e. growth points of values and value priorities for students*

The value dimension of civic identity determines the direction and content of activities for the preservation and development of culture, as well as the protection of national interests. The mutual responsibility of society and the state for the fate of human civilization is determined by the development of civil self-awareness based on universal human and cultural values.

To understand the values of young people, first-year bachelor students were asked to write an essay on the topic "Values in my life". The majority (over 70%) indicated family, love, and care of loved ones as the main values.

Boys and girls say that family is the main value. Many students include friends in their inner circle, emphasizing the importance of their support and mutual trust. For young people, family is "close people who support and trust", "a stronghold in life", "people who you love, who care about you and you take care of them", "family gives strength, support, and attention", "support and connection of generations", and "dynasty, ancestral memory, and future in descendants".

Such values as "career growth", "material well-being", "prestigious job", etc. are either not listed among the main ones by most students or their importance is noted in connection with the need to maintain the well-being of their loved ones.

Along with family, the hierarchy of values includes "motherland", "patriotism", "education", and "self-development". Young people determine the importance of spiritual values in a person's life, including "a kind heart", "caring for others", "helping people around", "clear-eyed view", "spiritual self-improvement", "unconditional help and love", "the importance of participating in social activities", "helping those in need", "relationships between people (friendship, love, family)", "spirituality", and "love for people inspiring good deeds".

Many students highlighted patriotism among important values in the formulations that are fixed by normative and program documents and university local acts, which indicates the perception of information transmitted through the education system.

Here are a few statements that have typical motives in their content.

"People have (of course, they can have) different values, but for the most part, they coincide. Firstly, family because these people support me. I can also include my friends here because these are the people whom I can trust as much as my own family. Secondly, Motherland (with a capital letter) because I was born here, and my relatives and family live here. Thirdly, high-quality education because being educated means being able to make the right decisions in life. Fourthly, material well-being also enriches one culturally. The freedom of action as opposed to restrictions that oppress".

"I am 18 years old. It is not much if compared to many other people. However, during this time I learned the values that I follow in life. Family is your stronghold in life, your home that you must cherish and protect. Like A. Pushkin said in 'The Captain's Daughter', 'take care of honor from a young age'. A good heart causes an extremely interesting but very difficult life. Sometimes, even in school, people's hearts go cold. It is necessary not to succumb to this feeling and preserve kindness, which will be needed more than once in life. 'A clear-eyed view'



is the ability to have your own opinion and not succumb to bad influences if such people surround you".

"Each person lives, focusing on their own values (spiritual and material). One of my main values is spiritual self-improvement. Society is a complex system consisting of completely different personalities, and I am interested in understanding them. Spiritual development also helps to understand oneself. Another life value for me is people close to me: family and friends. They help me not to despair and pursue my own goals. Unconditional love helps a person. For me, material well-being is also valuable because it gives you some freedom in choosing your goals".

"The highest value is patriotism because it underlies the integrity of the state, unites the people, and prevents state threats. 2) The preservation of cultural heritage + development of contemporary art (mandatory!) /illegible/ to reflect reality; the basis for educating the future generation; the basis of national culture; the reflection of reality in art (for example, /illegible/, political poems, songs, do their part history. 3) The reconstruction (revival, restoration) of the family institution: cultural education (youth development); family as a structural unit of society raising (improving) the national culture; the state promotes the previous family institution among the people".

The trend of perceiving family as the main value common to this age (18-19 years old) reveals the importance of including family in the educational process of the university. This experience helps to realize the stated goals of raising the level of civic identity as a factor in the preservation of society and culture.

The inclusion of family in the educational process of the university has its own traditions. We can provide examples to which the authors related in their scientific and pedagogical activities. This is the Family Living Room project of the Russian Family National Public Committee (Russian State Social University, 2021). There are also celebrations of the Day of Family, Love, and Fidelity on July 8 (Russian State Social University, 2010).

Today universities, including the Russian Biotechnological University (Rosbiotech), conduct various career guidance events, where a part of the program is interaction with potential applicants and their families to broadcast the values and professional priorities of the university (Russian Biotechnological University, 2023).

While implementing the objectives of university educational activities, it is proposed to develop tools for interaction with students and their families for the organization of scientific and educational, physical culture, sports, cultural events, and leisure activities.



To manage the process of increasing the formation of civic identity, it is necessary to develop fixing methods and criteria for evaluating the results of educational work in this direction.

A focus on the interaction between the university and the family in creating conditions for raising the level of civic identity will help strengthen and protect spiritual and moral values and can be considered a factor in ensuring the continuity of the value foundations of Russian society.

## **Conclusion**

Thus, civic identity consists of universal human and cultural values, which lay the basis of society's cultural-genetic (civilizational) code.

An effective system of strengthening and protecting values is a factor in ensuring the integrity of the state and society.

Being a resource for preserving and developing culture, civic identity can be considered through growth points for values. In the conditions of a crisis, it is important to find ways to promote spiritual and moral values among young people.

One such way is interaction with families in the university environment as part of the educational process. In this case, it is necessary to develop and enshrine the forms, tools, and methods of such work in local documents, as well as methods for fixing them and criteria for evaluating the results.

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