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## Philosophy of identity as a methodological basis for the analysis of electoral behavior

UDC 141.7:316.344.32:324.7  
DOI <https://doi.org/10.24195/2414-9616.2026-1.2>



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**Introduction.** Philosophical discourse makes it possible to analyze various aspects of human existence, including subjectivity, the search for the meaning of life, and processes of self-determination. One of the central philosophical problems is the analysis of the nature of identity, which not only characterizes the individual but also functions as an ontological and axiological category that determines one's belonging to a particular cultural, moral, and even political community. The philosophy of identity allows us to view identity as a form of self-expression and self-knowledge of the subject, reflecting the deep processes of personal self-determination under conditions of transformational change.

These changes are also evident in the political sphere, where the role of institutions, political practices, and forms of civic participation are being rethought. Recent foreign studies [13], [16], [10] confirm that political identity is becoming a key factor in

**Purpose.** The article is a comprehensive theoretical and methodological analysis of the phenomenon of electoral identity and identification in the context of their interdisciplinary nature. **Theoretical basis.** The study integrates the achievements of philosophy, sociology, political science, psychology, and cultural studies. The analysis is based on classical concepts of social and political identity, constructivist interpretations, and the provisions of discourse theory and field theory [2]. Postmodern perspectives allow us to view identity as a dynamic, multi-level, and contextual construct that is shaped by globalization processes, information flows, and network communication. The analysis is based on the interaction of individual and group dimensions of identity, the concept of discursive community, and the idea of the electoral field as a space of competition between political actors, meanings, and narratives. **Originality.** The scientific novelty of the work lies in viewing electoral identity as a complex and dynamic phenomenon whose content and functions vary depending on theoretical approaches and sociocultural contexts. The study demonstrates that interpretations of "identity" and "identification" are shaped by the researcher's analytical perspective, which influences their semantic and methodological potential. The applicability of discursive analysis and field theory is substantiated, as these approaches enable the examination of electoral identity within a "networked" information society and allow the identification of its levels, types, and functional features. **Conclusions.** Electoral identity is defined as a subtype of political identity that shapes individuals' orientations toward political actors, values, and institutions. It produces distinct forms – polarized, loyal, negative, and apathetic – corresponding to different patterns of political behavior. Electoral identification contributes to social structuring, the integration of group interests, public opinion formation, and mechanisms of political mobilization. In the context of postmodern and networked transformations, it acquires new features linked to the expanding role of information technologies, digital communication, and emerging cultural models. The study affirms the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach to understanding electoral identity as a multifaceted socio-political construct.

**Key words:** electoral identity, political identification, social identity, group dynamics, political socialization, value orientations, discourse community, electoral process.

emotional polarization, group mobilization, and the stability of democratic processes. In psychological terms, it is seen as the integration of emotional attachments, value orientations, and cognitive patterns that shape an individual's political self. Research shows that emotions – in particular, anxiety and anger – significantly influence political self-categorization and determine an individual's readiness for political participation [9], [21], [15], [7]. Sociological studies emphasize the growing role of online communities, algorithmic information flows, and new forms of group solidarity, which significantly influence voters' electoral behavior [18], [20], [6]. In this context, the phenomenon of political and electoral identification acquires special significance, representing a concrete manifestation of the processes of personal self-determination within the sphere of political activity. Philosophical reflection on electoral identification opens the possibility of considering it as an ontological act of self-identi-

cation, through which the individual affirms his or her own position within the world of meanings and values inherent to the political realm. Thus, the problem of electoral identification emerges as a complex philosophical and anthropological category, combining the ontological, axiological, and communicative dimensions of human existence. The philosophy of identity serves not only as a theoretical but also as a methodological foundation for the analysis of electoral behavior, as it enables the comprehension of political processes from the standpoint of a holistic understanding of the human being as a subject who simultaneously embodies consciousness, will, and values. Electoral identity and identification are issues that are regularly raised by researchers of the electoral process, cause concern for candidates seeking election to representative bodies in democratic states, and determine the choice of economic or ideological foundations in policymaking. Identity politics has become a key concept explaining much of what is happening in global affairs [30]. This defines the relevance of the research topic since the theoretical and methodological comprehension of the problem of electoral identification provides a foundation for politicians in building strategies, making well-balanced political decisions, reducing errors in policy development, and strengthening democratic institutions.

**Purpose.** The study aims to clarify the essential characteristics of the concepts of electoral identity and identification, determine their place in the structure of political identity, and analyze the philosophical, social, psychological, and cultural factors that influence the formation of electoral orientations in modern society. Particular attention is paid to the role of electoral identification as a form of self-determination of the individual in the political field.

**Statement of basic materials.**

*Identity and identification as an interdisciplinary problem*

Identity and the process of identification are the subjects of study in many sciences and have a relatively long history of investigation. This concept can be interpreted as having a synergetic meaning in methodological terms. The phenomenon of identity can be explained by the fact that it is not a static category. It is shaped by internal and external factors and may change throughout an individual's life. A person may possess several identities: gender, economic, political, professional, and so on. Citizens' identities are formed under the influence of diverse, often contradictory and ambiguous social interactions in today's turbulent world: "People identify themselves with others based on various social markers" [23, p. 546]. The phenomenon of identity arises because people seek a sense of closeness with those similar to themselves. Such similarity evokes specific emotions [5, pp. 211–229]. Political identity is a form of social identity that denotes membership in a group engaged

in the struggle for a certain form of power [28, p. 38]. In a democratic society, political identities are pluralistic and changeable. They depend on the ideological stance of the ruling party, the personalities of political leaders who define the country's course, their ability to persuade, the balance of political decisions, and the socio-economic situation, among other factors. Political identities are not fixed – political leadership can foster the development of several complementary, or, conversely, polar and conflicting, political identities [17, pp. 123–139].

Depending on the perspective from which the concepts of "identity" and "identification" are examined, their semantic content and role for the individual and society will differ. Researchers [4], [24] note that the concept of "identity" is polysemantic and distinguish several aspects of its understanding. Firstly, identity serves as the basis of social or political action, being the opposite of *interest*. Secondly, identity is understood as a specific collective phenomenon that determines "the fundamental and consistent similarity of members of a certain group or social category" [24, p. 165] and manifests itself, in particular, through solidarity. The third meaning of the concept is "a fundamental aspect of (individual or collective) personality ... a stable condition of social existence" [24, p. 166], which must be maintained and cultivated [4]. The fourth meaning defines identity as "the product of social or political action" [24, p. 166] – the foundation for further group activity [4]. The fifth meaning, characteristic of postmodern interpretations, describes identity as "a dynamic product of numerous and competing discourses" [24, p. 166] that exist in relations of rivalry with one another [4].

The psychological discourse views identity as an integral part of personality, formed in the process of social interaction. It functions as a tool of socialization, satisfying social needs – particularly the need for belonging to a group, community, or shared experience. "Personal identity" determines an individual's uniqueness and self-consistency [22, p. 7]. E. Erikson defined identity as a dynamic formation – a sense of one's authenticity, integrity, and awareness of belonging to the world of others. Identification, in turn, is the process based on emotionally and cognitively mediated connections with a significant other, a group, or an image, as well as the internalization and acceptance of the norms, rules, and values of those significant others [8]. Social psychology alongside "individual" or "personal" identity, also explores "group" and "social" identity. Group identity refers to real, existing groups situated in space and time. Social identity relates to the broader social context with which a person identifies, often referring to symbolic or conditional groups defined by certain criteria [22, pp. 7–8].

The cultural approach to understanding identity can be illustrated by M. Herskovits, who, using the term

*“enculturation,”* defined culture as “the sum of behavior and habitual ways of thinking of people who form a particular society” [12, p. 351]. In other words, identity can be described as *“cognitive, emotional, and behavioral similarity with members of one’s culture and difference from members of other cultures.”* Identification, accordingly, represents cultural adaptation – the individual’s adjustment to the stereotypes and behavioral patterns accepted by members of society.

The sociological perspective views identity through the concept of *social roles*. Social roles are diverse and make human behavior predictable and expected, thereby reducing internal tension and evoking a sense of security, confidence, and stability in social and economic life. According to Ch. Gordon, role identity is a crucial component of the *self-concept*. Depending on the sphere in which identification occurs, he distinguishes gender, ethnic, professional, political, and membership identities [11, p. 407].

Hence, the process of identification combines two tendencies: the individual identifies themselves with a certain group; simultaneously distinguishes the features in their social environment that enable this identification [26]. When we speak about electoral identification, such features may include ideological orientation, value systems, moral or aesthetic beliefs upheld by a specific political force. All these characteristics are typical of a particular electoral group, distinguishing it from the rest of society. Thus, identification is characterized by a set of an individual’s representations of social reality and their place within it. These representations regulate a person’s activity, determine the patterns and types of their electoral behavior, and guide their political choices. According to V. Komarenko [26, p. 50], an individual’s identification with another person or group may take the form of value, normative, or role identification and may manifest as interidentification, heteroidentification, socioidentification, or self-identification. The author notes that: value identification is determined by the unity of the value orientations of the subject and the object of identification; normative identification is realized through the individual’s acceptance of the group’s norms; role identification consists in mastering a certain social function and merging with it. From the standpoint of the systemic approach, identity should be viewed as a complex socio-psychological phenomenon that represents a system of: individual ideas; a sense of belonging to a certain social community; symbols that help distinguish one community from another; knowledge of traditions, moral norms, and values; behavioral stereotypes; emotional attitudes – solidarity toward one’s own group, and tolerance, alienation, neutrality, or hostility toward others [26, p. 51].

From the standpoint of the discourse approach, when analyzing identification and identity, it is advisable to apply the concept of a “discourse community”

proposed by linguist John Swales [19, pp. 24–27]. According to Swales, a discourse community is a group of individuals who: share common, widely recognized goals; use specific, context-dependent vocabulary that enables information exchange and communication among the members of the community; possess certain genres that serve to achieve communicative purposes. Such an approach is close to the constructivist understanding of identity, which asserts that identity is constructed and shaped under the influence of specific contexts of a changing world, is constantly evolving, and depends on the discourses and narratives offered by the hyperreality of postmodernity.

#### *Identity in the Postmodern World*

The transition of civilization into the phase of postmodernism also explains the transformation of modern identities, as noted by M. Billig [1]. He argues that all established identities have been destroyed, and individuals have gained the freedom to create their own identities in ways that were previously impossible. The discursive nature of identity, according to the researcher, is explained by the processes taking place in the globalized world, particularly by the circulation of information “through cold electronic transmissions” [1, p.131], the inability of the state to impose its own identities [1, p.133], and the capacity of power elites and mass media to transmit specific narratives, thereby encouraging individuals to engage in political participation and creating modern politics. The ways of understanding characteristic of the new hyperreality generate unusual, alternative forms of identity, one of which is the “identity of identities” [1, p. 129]. These processes also extend to electoral identity, since the human need for belonging to a certain group and confidence in one’s own position does not disappear from human nature. Electoral identity, as always, performs the function of satisfying these needs, providing an opportunity to construct one’s own “We” in contrast to a certain “They,” while employing more advanced means and technological possibilities.

The ontological meaning of political identity, as noted by N. Yatsenko [31, p. 133], lies in the fact that it represents the result of an individual’s formation of a political worldview and political socialization, which enables a person to choose the means of expression, forms, content, and approaches to various political phenomena, actors, and processes. According to Yatsenko, “the final stage of identification is achieved” when an individual becomes aware of themselves as a political actor, capable of reflecting on their own reactions to specific events or political institutions, while simultaneously taking into account the needs and requirements of their social group, laws, organizations, the state, and even the global community as a whole [31, p. 133]. In this sense, the citizen positions themselves within the electoral field.

The field theory, whose methodological foundations were laid by Pierre Bourdieu [2], has gradually come to occupy a leading position in political science, standing alongside the systemic and synergic approaches to political analysis. Through the concept of the “political field”, which is understood as a space where, in competitive struggle among representatives of various political forces, *political products* – problems, programs, events, commentaries, concepts, and theories – are generated, political systems and their components can be analyzed. Therefore, from the standpoint of field theory, it is possible to consider the phenomenon of electoral identity and identification, especially given that the term “electoral field” has recently become widely used.

By analogy with the methodology for analyzing the psychological field, proposed by the authors of the monograph edited by P. Hornostay [22, pp. 14–15], it can be assumed that the electoral field encompasses group consciousness, which determines certain electoral preferences inherent to the bearers of electoral identity. This field covers three levels of phenomenology: the first level is defined by the processes of electoral identification, which create group cohesion and solidarity: “... groups with a certain identity provide mutual support and a sense of belonging” [23, pp.545–546]. The second level involves information exchange, both within the group and beyond its boundaries. At this level, one can analyze political communication on vertical and horizontal levels, as well as group perception – that is, how the group perceives itself and other groups. The third level gives rise to phenomena of group psyche and the products of its functioning: group stereotypes, myths, narratives, and secrets emerge; group defense mechanisms are activated. Here operate the elements of political culture, which define norms of political behavior, methods of political struggle, and related practices.

The field theory may thus serve as a methodological principle for studying electoral identity and identification in the information society, which, according to Manuel Castells, is a “network society” that uses information and knowledge in a distinctive way. This leads to social transformation, generates tension, increases conflict, and creates opposition between society and the individual. Such transformation also affects political power, which now spreads through “global networks of wealth, information, and images that circulate and transform within a system whose configuration is constantly evolving” [6].

#### *The Specificity of Electoral Identity*

Given that identity is constructed by each individual personally through processing historical, religious, biological, and geographical materials, the “data” of collective memory, and political myths produced by institutions of power, it can be argued that identity is the awareness, comprehension, and organization of meanings within the social and political context

in which a person exists. Therefore, electoral identity has its own structure, which includes patterns of behavior, traditions, norms and rules, attitudes and values, as well as the moral principles of a particular social group, political party, or public organization. Electoral identity can be a type of group identity or can be formed as a symbolic identity, especially since the development of information technologies facilitates the formation of virtual groups. According to G. Sartori, the formation of electoral identity depends on “party, class, or racial identifiers” [27, p. 492]. Identity may also be determined by “race, gender, workplace, education, kinship, and nation” [30]. Such identities tend to be more stable.

Representatives of behaviorism view political identity as party identity, which is derived from voters’ social experience, their primary socialization in the family, and secondary socialization at a more mature age. The formation of identity goes through several stages: observation of the behavior of a reference group, imitation of certain behavior, awareness of the opportunities and advantages that result from such behavior, and its testing [5, pp. 211–229]. The result is the formation of an identity that includes the general ideological orientations, interests, and attitudes of members of particular social groups, encouraging them to make a certain electoral choice. At the same time, party differences are recognized as significant [5, pp. 211–229].

Thus, electoral identity is a subtype of political identity. It can also be considered a membership identity, given that the electorate is part of a political party that shares its program, ideology, and methods. What becomes central to electoral identity is a shared orientation determined by the voter’s overall worldview, cognitive skills, and affective responses to current events. This shared orientation defines citizens’ electoral choices. Party identity/identification of citizens reflects their value orientations during elections and allows researchers to structure the electorate to better understand their preferences, attitudes toward action, and motivation. This leads to the differentiation of social groups according to political sympathies, which enables the aggregation of political interests. On this basis, Ukrainian researchers [26, pp. 371–372] distinguish polarized, loyal, negative, and apathetic identities. Citizens with polarized identity demonstrate an orientation exclusively toward one political force while simultaneously distancing themselves from all others. The loyal type of identity characterizes citizens with a stable orientation toward the programmatic slogans of a particular political party and moderate rejection of the principles of other parties. Negative identity is typical of citizens who do not support any specific political force and lack stable orientations toward the ideological positions of any one party. Finally, apathetic identity manifests in the absence of clear and conscious

attitudes toward supporting or rejecting the ideology of any political party.

According to M. Castells, there are three types of identity: legitimizing, project, and resistance (or protest) identity [6]. Legitimizing identity is proposed and implemented by the institutions operating within the political system. Using their available resources, these institutions of power seek to expand and rationalize their own domination. To achieve this, various methods of influencing the electorate are used, such as messages in mass media, different types of interactive content, talk shows, and analytical television programs. In modern society, this work is carried out through social networks, chatbots, and other digital tools. In authoritarian societies, propaganda and agitation methods are used to indoctrinate the population. In such contexts, certain ideas, beliefs, attitudes, or doctrines are broadcast without the possibility for individuals to critically comprehend them. In democratic societies, by contrast, this process takes the form of public discussions, educational projects, and citizen participation in political decision-making. Resistance (protest) identity is created and promoted by political actors who oppose the authorities and disagree with pro-government positions, structures, and institutions. Project identity is formed on the basis of new cultural patterns that help reinterpret the position of certain social groups within society – groups that seek to transform the overall social structure. Modern subcultures, such as quadrobbers or digital sculptors, come to the fore in this process. In such cases, electoral identity acquires new, unconventional figures, ideas, and beliefs that are atypical for the traditional political sphere. For example, during elections in Ukraine, candidates such as Darth Vader, Stepan Chewbacca, Super Mario, and Pravdamen appeared. These kinds of characters can embody new subcultures and influence the electoral identification of young people. On the other hand, project identity is characterized by the formation of an individual who is unique, free, and contradictory – capable of organizing their own social and political activity. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that the modern person strives not only to change the world but also to change themselves. According to S. Huntington (Huntington), such a person is “mobile”, adapted to the changing environment. In the globalized world, there is a growing attachment to universalist values as opposed to particularist ones, and the individual increasingly relies on standards associated with personal success and individual achievement rather than on ascriptive standards tied to a specific social or political group. At the same time, globalization, the spread of information culture, and the culture of virtual reality provoke a reaction – a search for a new identity oriented toward the future [6].

Thus, political and electoral identity can manifest itself in three dimensions: as traditional attitudes of cit-

izens who trust the authorities, support their decisions, and have a positive view of social and state institutions; as a value system of particular social groups that do not submit to external influence and resist the existing system, thereby maintaining their own distinctiveness; as the demonstration of one’s social and political activity in various ways, even through provocative or unconventional means. Often, it is the specific situation that determines the direction of an individual’s identification, as evidenced by research conducted by British scholars. They show that electoral behavior, and consequently electoral identity, is influenced primarily by social problems faced by individuals. Such problems may include insufficient social welfare, limited employment opportunities, low salaries, inflation, and similar issues. Against this backdrop, unhealthy competition between parties can also become a factor in shaping electoral identity, which may develop primarily on an emotional basis, without critical evaluation of a party’s political program. In other words, electoral identification can be determined by situational political orientations that arise under the influence of negative events and political processes. The socio-political orientations of Ukrainian citizens are systematically studied by various analytical centers. For example, the Razumkov Center conducts such research. In May 2023, the survey “Socio-Political Orientations of Ukrainian Citizens” [29] clearly confirmed citizens’ alignment with the values of a democratic regime (up to 2021 – 48–56%; 2022 – 68%; 2023 – 73%), which they consider the foundation of a democratic political system that is “rather good” or “very good” for the country (2017 – 86.5%; 2023 – 93%).

Thus, electoral identity performs the following functions: structuring society; integrating group interests; capturing the collective mood of real or symbolic groups; shaping public opinion; and ensuring social control over citizens’ behavior. In addition, it increases the effectiveness of the party itself, reduces anxiety, and provides a sense of participation in achieving socially significant goals [5, pp. 370–385]. Electoral identity plays a leading role in motivating political behavior, transforming needs into concrete actions, navigating the political space, and helping to assess the situation [5, pp. 370–385].

**Originality.** The article proves that different approaches to the concepts of “identity” and “identification” change their meaning and define their role for the individual, society, and social processes in different ways. The study demonstrates that interpretations of “identity” and “identification” are shaped by the analytical perspective of the researcher, which influences their semantic and methodological potential. The applicability of discursive analysis and field theory is justified, as these approaches make it possible to study electoral identity in a “networked” information society and to determine its levels, types, and functional features.

**Conclusion.** The logic of identity politics lies in the formation of relatively narrow, often self-centered social groups that compete with each other for recognition, resources, and political influence. This trend naturally leads to the fragmentation of society, increased polarization, and the growing role of emotional and symbolic factors in the political process. At the same time, research shows that alongside these fragmented identities, more integrative forms of political affiliation can emerge that are capable of promoting social unity. These include the identification of the people with the state, which ensures recognition of the legitimacy of power and stability of the political system; orientation towards democratic values that form a common value space; and national identity, which can serve as a metanarrative in times of crisis and challenges of the globalized world. Electoral identity, as a type of political identity, plays a key role in structuring mass political behavior, determining group orientations, and mobilizing citizens. It reflects the interaction of individual psychological characteristics, social contexts, informational influences, and value motives, making it a complex multidimensional phenomenon. That is why any attempts to understand the patterns of electoral choice require taking into account the emotional reactions of voters, mechanisms of group affiliation, information environments, and institutional frameworks – that is, what is simultaneously the subject of philosophy, sociology, psychology, political science, and communication studies. In the current conditions of postmodern and “networked” society, electoral identity is undergoing significant transformations. Digital media, algorithmic news feeds, online communities, and new forms of political communication create an environment in which identity becomes dynamic, flexible, and prone to rapid change. This opens up opportunities for manipulation, but also shapes new types of political participation and self-determination, especially among young people.

Thus, further study of electoral identity requires an interdisciplinary approach that combines philosophical interpretations of identity, sociological analysis of group behavior, psychological models of political motivation, and theories of communicative influences. Only the synthesis of such approaches allows us to fully reveal the nature of electoral identification and understand its role in the functioning of modern political systems.

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## Філософія ідентичності як методологічна основа аналізу електоральної поведінки

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**Мета.** Стаття є комплексним теоретико-методологічним осмисленням феномену електоральної ідентичності та ідентифікації в контексті їхньої міждисциплінарної природи. **Теоретична база.** Дослідження інтегрує напрацювання філософії, соціології, політичної науки, психології та культурології. Аналіз спирається на класичні концепції соціальної та політичної ідентичності, конструктивістські інтерпретації, положення теорії дискурсу та теорії поля (П. Бурд'є). Постмодерні перспективи дозволяють розглядати ідентичність як динамічний, багаторівневий і контекстуальний конструкт, що формується під впливом глобалізаційних процесів, інформаційних потоків та мережевої комунікації. В основі аналізу – взаємодія індивідуального і групового вимірів ідентичності, поняття дискурсивної спільноти, а також уявлення про електоральне поле як простір конкуренції політичних акторів, смислів і наративів. **Оригінальність.** Наукова новизна роботи полягає в розгляді виборчої ідентичності як складного і динамічного явища, зміст і функції якого варіюються залежно від теоретичних підходів і соціокультурних контекстів. **Висновки.** Виборча ідентичність визначається як підтип політичної ідентичності, що формує орієнтацію індивідів на політичних акторів, цінності та інституції. Вона набуває різних форм – поляризованої, лояльної, негативної та апатичної – відповідно до різних моделей політичної поведінки. Виборча ідентифікація сприяє соціальному структуруванню, інтеграції групових інтересів, формуванню громадської думки та механізмам політичної мобілізації. У контексті постмодерних та мережевих трансформацій вона набуває нових рис, пов'язаних із розширенням ролі інформаційних технологій,

*цифрової комунікації та нових культурних моделей. Дослідження підтверджує необхідність міждисциплінарного підходу до розуміння виборчої ідентичності як багатогранного соціально-політичного конструкту.*

**Ключові слова:** *електоральна ідентичність, політична ідентифікація, соціальна ідентичність, групова динаміка, політична соціалізація, ціннісні орієнтації, дискурсивна спільнота, електоральне процес.*

Дата першого надходження статті до видання: 21.02.2026

Дата прийняття статті до друку після рецензування: 24.03.2026

Дата публікації (оприлюднення) статті: 27.04.2026