

The Dynamics of Trends in Identity Building and Achieving Social Cohesion

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Abstract. *One of the most prominent global issues occupying the attention of researchers in the field of sociology is the problem of identity as a global social issue. This is due to its close connection to self-definition and group identity, and its relationship to social cohesion or disintegration amidst the accelerating pace of societal change. The topic of identity is characterized by multiple perspectives, leading to various approaches and the interrelation of several disciplines, including anthropology, psychology, and sociology. This has resulted in differing intellectual backgrounds and definitions of identity, stemming from the importance of the subject and its connection to several other issues related to the individual, the group, and social cohesion. Identity is considered a dynamic phenomenon subject to continuous interaction between several factors, with attitudes–ideas, values, and stances–playing a central role as active and driving forces in the process of identity formation. Attitudes are not merely fixed beliefs but dynamic systems. Adopting certain attitudes can affect social cohesion or disintegration and weaken bonds. Therefore, the relationship between attitudes, identity formation, and social cohesion or disintegration makes this research an effective step towards understanding the contemporary challenges facing modern societies.*

Keywords: *perspectives, identity, social cohesion, identity formation, social cohesion*

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Received: 9 March 2026; Accepted: 11 May 2026; Published online: 28 August 2026

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Şəxsiyyət quruculuğu və sosial birliyə nailolma trendlərinin dinamikası

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Xülasə. *Tədqiqatçıların sosiologiya sahəsində diqqətini cəlb edən ən mühüm global məsələlərdən biri global sosial problem kimi şəxsiyyət (eyniyyət/identiklik) məsələsidir. Bu, onun özünüdərk və qrup mənsubiyyəti ilə sıx əlaqəsi, həmçinin cəmiyyətin sürətlə dəyişən tempi fonunda sosial həmrəylik və ya parçalanma ilə münasibətilə bağlıdır. İdentiklik mövzusu müxtəlif perspektivlərlə səciyyələnir ki, bu da müxtəlif yanaşmaların yaranmasına, eləcə də antropologiya, psixologiya və sosiologiya kimi bir neçə elm sahəsinin bir-biri ilə əlaqələnməsinə səbəb olur. Bu, mövzunun əhəmiyyətindən, onun fərd, qrup və sosial həmrəyliklə əlaqəli digər məsələlərlə bağlılığından irəli gələrək fərqli intellektual əsasların və*

identiklik təriflərinin formalaşması ilə nəticələnmişdir. İdentiklik bir neçə faktor arasında fasiləsiz qarşılıqlı əlaqəyə məruz qalan dinamik fenomen hesab olunur; burada münasibətlər – ideyalar, dəyərlər və mövqelər – identiklik quruculuğu prosesində fəal və hərəkətverici qüvvələr kimi mərkəzi rol oynayır. Münasibətlər sadəcə sabit etiqadlar deyil, dinamik sistemlərdir. Müəyyən mövqelərin mənimsənilməsi sosial həmrəyliyə və ya parçalanmaya təsir göstərə və bağları zəiflədə bilər. Buna görə də, münasibətlər, identiklik quruculuğu və sosial həmrəylik və ya parçalanma arasındakı əlaqə bu tədqiqatı müasir cəmiyyətlərin üzləşdiyi çağırışları dərk etmək istiqamətində səmərəli addıma çevrir.

Açar sözlər: perspektivlər, şəxsiyyət, sosial birlik, şəxsiyyətin formalaşması, sosial birlik

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Daxil oldu: 9 Mart 2026; Qəbul edildi: 11 May 2026; Onlayn dərc edildi: 28 Avqust 2026

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Introduction

The Nature of Attitudes

Attitudes are defined as a state of mental and neurological readiness, organized through a person's experience, and have a guiding or dynamic influence on an individual's response to all subjects and situations related to that response. They are also defined as a positive or negative emotional reaction to a tangible or abstract object, or to a controversial issue. Each person develops a large number of attitudes related to a specific subject, idea, concept, person, or other subject towards which we form attitudes (Wajih Al-Sheikh, 2012, p. 60).

Methods

Attitudes comprise three basic components:

- The affective component: This includes feelings, emotions, and states of love, acceptance, and rejection.
- The behavioral component: This includes reactions and actions (Baghoura & Zouaoui, 2010, p. 23).
- The cognitive component: This includes ideas, beliefs, and perceptions. Therefore, we can say that attitudes are acquired psychological and mental predispositions that drive an individual's behavior toward any subject of thought (whether concrete or abstract). They are manifested in degrees of acceptance or rejection of that subject and can be measured and expressed verbally or through actions (Wajih Al-Sheikh, 2012, p. 61).

Characteristics of Attitudes: The most important characteristics of socio-psychological attitudes can be summarized in the following elements:

- Attitudes are acquired, not inherited.
- Attitudes are not based on established facts but are always justified around subjects that are subject to disagreement, debate, or discussion, whether political, social, etc. (Wajih Al-Sheikh, 2012, p. 61).
- Attitudes do not form in a vacuum but always involve a relationship between the individual and a subject within the political, economic, social, or other environment.
- Attitudes are characterized by their dynamism and susceptibility to change, linked to several factors, including their strength and weakness, and social integration (Sen, Amartya, 2008, p. 45).
- Attitudes are linked to reactions to events and groups that motivate individuals to act.

Functions of Attitudes:

An individual's adoption of specific attitudes toward different subjects indicates the functions that attitudes perform for that individual.

The most important of these functions can be summarized as follows:

- Attitudes facilitate an individual's adaptation to their surrounding environment, enabling them to appreciate and evaluate stimuli in light of their goals and interests.
- Attitudes enable individuals to understand others and help them develop the ability to anticipate their behavior, thus making them feel more competent when interacting with them.
- Attitudes generate material and moral benefits through expression to others (Wajih Al-Sheikh, 2012, p. 63).
- Declared attitudes reflect an individual's conformity to the prevailing standards, values, and beliefs of their society (Francis & Fukuyama, 2018, p. 43).
- Attitudes help individuals behave and make decisions in various psychological situations with a degree of consistency and uniformity, without the need for hesitation or overthinking each time the situation recurs (Wajih Al-Sheikh, 2012, p. 64).

The Formation of Attitudes and How They Are Acquired:

Individuals acquire their attitudes as a result of the situations and experiences they encounter during the socialization process. Influential cultural and civilizational factors play a fundamental role in determining an individual's attitudes toward various subjects, whether related to the individual, groups, religion, work, or different principles. Therefore, attitudes are acquired, learned by the individual starting in childhood and continuing through successive stages of life via multiple learning processes: conditioning, responsiveness, cognitive, and social, and through methods of social interaction such as persuasion, imitation, identification, suggestion, and others.

Understanding the formation of attitudes is also linked to a dynamic interaction between:

- Functional factors such as the individual's needs, motivations, and emotions.
- Social factors and the individual's socialization (social roles, family, etc.).
- Cultural and civilizational factors (Wajih Al-Sheikh, 2012, p. 68).

Results

The Nature of Identity:

Erikson believes that human development progresses through several successive stages. Each stage develops according to a fundamental plan, and each part develops accordingly, with its own specific timeframe for growth. The development of all parts is completed, forming a single functional whole. Each stage is characterized by a specific type of need not present in the preceding stage. Each stage carries potential for both strength and weakness, and involves a socio-psychological crisis arising from the development of individual predispositions (physiological maturation) and societal pressures (Hani Al-Jazzar, 2009, p. 19). Facing a crisis does not necessarily mean failure in the face of future crises, as life is fundamentally characterized by continuous change (Hani Al-Jazzar, 2009, p. 20).

The identity crisis arises in the fifth stage of psychosocial development. Erikson considered the identity crisis the most serious developmental crisis facing the individual, as it carries within it a conflict that may give rise to a new and authentic identity. The need for identity is equivalent to the desire for physical survival; achieving identity is vital and essential for human existence. The realization of personal identity is the central concept in Erikson's theory, to the point that he viewed human development as a pursuit of a sense of identity (Hani Al-Jazzar, 2009, p. 21).

The formation of identity occurs through crises and stages subject to dynamics, influenced by both internal and external factors. Therefore, it is a complex and controversial topic because it encompasses the essence of humanity and its connection to the social environment. We find differing perspectives and conceptions regarding identity, given its multiplicity in terms of its defining references, interpretive epistemological approaches, and the sources and elements that constitute it. It is a point of convergence for many disciplines. Identity is a set of characteristics that distinguish the self from others, while simultaneously relating to others through belonging to specific groups, starting with the family, school, environment, and work groups. Therefore, representations and conceptions of its various forms differ, ranging from subjective to objective, individual to collective, or personal (Katiba Belghami & Maryam Shrit, 2022, p. 409).

The central problem of this study revolves around the sociological conception or representation of social identity. Is it a fixed essence, or merely a feeling of belonging to a group or a specific culture? Is it a product of belonging to a society's culture with historical, religious, and cultural specificities, and is it influenced by the environment to which it belongs? Or is it a construct built through interaction and relational perception? Hence, identity raises the problems of the individual, the collective, the personal, and the relational. Which thesis does the sociological researcher adopt as epistemological and sociological knowledge that appears as variations of identity, or do all these perceptions overlap and cannot be separated and remain linked to the individual, society, the contexts in which they exist, and their social particularity? In this regard, Bourdieu believes that "we cannot grasp the deeper logic of the social world unless we immerse ourselves in the particularity of an empirical reality, specific and historically dated, and unless we construct it as a special case of the possible, in the words of Bachelard, that is, as a case of a face in a finite universe of possible formations and forms" (Katiba Belghami & Maryam Shrit, 2022, p. 410).

Identity is one of the most important distinguishing characteristics of society. It embodies the future aspirations of the community, highlights the developmental milestones in individual behavior and achievements across various fields, and encompasses the principles and values that drive individuals to achieve specific goals, given its importance in shaping individual and societal character.

Hans Peter Martin and Harold Schumann also view identity as everything that defines and distinguishes the self. Identity fundamentally means uniqueness, and it is the essential, general characteristic of a culture. Identity is not a ready-made, final system, but rather an open-ended project, intertwined with reality and history. This functional view of identity allows us to distinguish between two interpretations of its meaning (Bauman et al., 2016, p 18):

A) The static or essentialist view of identity, which sees identity as something completed, finished, and realized in the past, within a specific timeframe or social model, and that the present is merely an attempt to grasp and achieve this ideal (Erikson, Erik. Identity, 2004, p. 88).

B) The Historical and Dynamic Conception of Identity:

This view sees identity as something constantly acquired and modified, never a fixed essence. Identity is subject to transformation and development because the history of any people is a constantly evolving history, full of events and experiences. The original identity is therefore constantly changing and acquiring new characteristics. This means that identity is dynamic, a series of successive processes that transform over time. It is dynamic and linked to the impact of civilization throughout history.

C) The Psychosocial Perspective: According to the psychosocial perspective, the identity crisis arises as a result of rapid physical and emotional changes on the one hand, and increasing social demands on the other. Questions of identity arise related to the formation of a clear identity: Who am I? The

issues arising from this central question—related to the nature of one's future career, values, moral convictions, political and ideological orientations, gender identity, and philosophy of life—all necessitate serious efforts by the individual to find answers that collectively represent the identity they have settled upon. Without this identity, they risk becoming lost in a state of confusion that could lead to a feeling of utter helplessness. Finding these answers is not easy. The individual strives to find them, and support from the immediate social context and the wider society with its various institutions is crucial in achieving this identity (Hani Al-Jazzar, 2009, p. 20).

At this stage, the individual must accept the various changes occurring, such as changes in the body, personality, and emotions, as a fundamental step in identity formation (Belqaziz, Abdelilah, 2002, p 57). Identity consists of constants, shared values, and standards linked to the past and resulting from the interplay of several elements, including language, religion, culture, ethics, and other components that constitute the constants distinguishing the individual or society from others, allowing researchers to understand and interpret that society. In sociology, the problem of identity arises in relation to an individual's social identity, specifically their sense of belonging to the society in which they live and grow. This identity unites members of society and gives them cultural and civilizational characteristics that distinguish them from other societies.

Identity takes several forms, including:

- A) Personal Identity: This pertains to an individual's name, appearance, characteristics, behavior, gender, and affiliation.
- B) Cultural and Civilizational Identity of a Nation: This represents the shared characteristics that distinguish a nation's civilization from others, giving the national or local character a distinctive quality.
- C) Collective Identity:
This encompasses a set of shared features and characteristics among a group of individuals, distinguishing them from other groups.
- D) National or Ethnic Identity:
This type of identity is subject to development and change over time. Some forms arise due to conflicts, events, or historical shifts (Abeer Bisouni Radwan, 2012, p. 86).

Identity, whatever its form, is linked to several aspects, including historical, cultural, religious, and even social ones. It is subject to change, and its goal is to distinguish oneself from others. In this context, Henry Tajfel is one of the most prominent scholars who studied social identity. His initial interests focused on personal perception, prejudice and racism, and intergroup relations. The study of prejudice, or racism, in intergroup relations indicates the existence of several factors related to an individual's identity. These factors stem from an individual's experience within their group, their attitudes, and their group's relationship with other groups. An individual's self-knowledge is primarily derived from their perception of similarities among members of their group, as well as their tendency to highlight differences between groups through reflection and comparison. One manifestation of prejudice is favoring one's own group over others and ignoring their problems and shortcomings, which in turn affects our self-esteem.

In this context, Turner and his colleagues argue that how we categorize ourselves is a crucial process that leads us to our social identity. Social identity theory is based on how we categorize ourselves as members of different groups in different situations. This process depends on the symbols (ideas, mental images, and attitudes) we retain in our memory about the various groups we know (Fares Helmy, 2016, p. 65).

The result is that the groups we belong to are internal groups for us, as opposed to external groups to which we do not belong. The categorization process is also influenced by the characteristics of our

memory and the organization of these ideas, images, or attitudes. When belonging to a group becomes important and a priority, our behavior becomes more consistent with or compliant with the group's norms and behavioral models. This process is evident in several ways, including our manner of speaking becoming similar to the way the group we belong to speaks. From the above, the role of social processes (interaction, communication, symbols, socialization, groups and relationships, attitudes, etc.) and their importance in forming and shaping self-awareness, individual personality, and the construction of social identity become clear.

Discussion

The social function of identity and its relationship to social cohesion based on individual attitudes: The primary function of identity is to unite a number of people within a distinct and specific community. Other factors also contribute to this outcome, such as blood ties, geographical proximity, shared residence, and the division of labor. Therefore, identity appears as a symbolic, moral, and intellectual world shared by a number of people. Through this world, they can connect with one another, acknowledge the bonds that unite them, recognize shared interests or constraints, and ultimately feel that each individual, as a whole, and all as a group, are members of a single entity that transcends and encompasses them all. This is what is known as a community or society.

Therefore, identity is a connection and interaction between a set of symbols and meanings within a social framework subject to the continuous dynamics of individual trends, which align with ongoing and diverse interactions according to the harmony of shared components. These components constitute an interconnected fabric of relationships that interact with one another. Furthermore, structuralist theory views identity not as individual but as the result of a collective belonging that shares several elements. It is constructed through social and cultural building blocks. Thus, we find that identity has several elements—history, religion, culture, and language—shared by members of a single society in an effort to achieve social cohesion. These can be summarized as follows:

1-History

History represents a temporal state and situations experienced by humankind in the past, and life experiences that shaped individuals. It is a temporal accumulation of phenomena that occurred in societies. History is considered one of the elements that constitute identity, as it records the individual and collective events that humans experienced during different periods. These events form life experiences and paths that can be observed as a form of socialization that contributes to building the paths and identities of individuals and groups, as well as trends and the cohesion of societies. History is an important factor in crystallizing and nourishing human experiences, shaping memory, and developing self-awareness and representations. These later become mental constructs that are revived through collective memory and imagination. Imagination is historically formed in collective memory or in the mind, and it can be exploited politically and ideologically during critical historical moments. It is deeply rooted in the unconscious, having been formed through various historical stages.

History plays a significant role in transmitting the heritage and cultural legacies of peoples. It does this by conveying the most important events, cultures, stories, historical narratives, myths, and religions that solidify collective memory. These are transmitted through the imagination to build collective memory, reproduce behaviors, and reinforce customs. Traditions contribute to building identity (Katiba Belghami & Maryam Shrit, 2022, p. 416).

Therefore, history represents an important source in the formation and cohesion of societies, as it preserves the continuity of heritage and significant events in the history of peoples and transmits their symbols, memories, and unique cultures.

2-Religion:

Religion constitutes the doctrinal, spiritual, and material aspect of any society. It is a socially embodied entity, crystallized through practice in patterns, traditions, and actions—that is, in terms of its becoming a system of practices and institutions, as well as a system of perceptions. Therefore, religion is one of the elements that constitute the cultural identity of any society (Katiba Belghami & Maryam Shrit, 2022, p. 417).

According to Durkheim, religion strengthens social and moral relations. It represents the symbol of groups and is considered one of the most important collective elements. Religion can be "a complete culture as it expresses a worldview, the nature of existence and humanity. It is a shaping of individual and collective consciousness and direction through principles and rules of thought and behavior. The religious dimension may be strengthened through practice by religious figures speaking on behalf of the group, or the cultural dimension may be reinforced over the religious one. Even if societies become globalized, they always carry the cultural influence of the founding religion. It is that complex structure that shapes individual and collective consciousness, as it is considered sacred by individuals and combines multiple elements, including the material, spiritual, ethical, and cultural. It represents the symbol and values that individuals embody in social reality. Religion is defined by its sociological outcome as being collective and social. It originates in the cultural system of the group and bestows its characteristics upon it, becoming one of the most important factors in building the group's cultural identity (Katiba Belghami & Maryam Shrit, 2022, p. 418).

3- Culture and Language:

Culture is a crucial source in shaping and building social identities, as it represents the entirety of customs, traditions, standards, values, and cultural and social characteristics that distinguish one society from another. It expresses the experiences and ways of life of societies and is considered one of the constituent elements of a person's social identity.

This is because it is a particular way of perceiving existence and life, a style of living, behaving, feeling, perceiving, expressing, and creating, distinguishing a specific human society with its deep-rooted and ancient heritage (Katiba Belghami & Maryam Shreit, 2022, p. 420).

Culture is one of the dynamic forces that build identity and one of its constituent elements, as it includes rule-governed and participatory behavior based on symbols and learned, as well as beliefs transmitted across civilizations (Katiba Belghami & Maryam Shreit, 2022, p. 421).

The transmission of heritage and beliefs that constitute the culture of that society is formed through experience and language, which reproduces the world. Therefore, language is the means of communication between individuals. Groups internalize and solidify symbols, as these symbols form the foundation of any cultural pattern. The capacity for symbolic representation cannot be reduced to an innate biological trait in humans, since it is the product of social interactions that have occurred over a long process, coinciding with the historical development and emergence of humanity in this universe. This capacity is not merely an innate predisposition that distinguishes humans from other animals, but rather something they have acquired. This indicates that symbolic representation is not a biologically inherited trait in humans, but rather a product of social interactions that have occurred concurrently throughout history (Katiba Belghami & Maryam Shrit, 2022, p. 421).

The relationship between identity and culture is based on the nature of each role in the lives of societies. Each influences the other, and culture is the creator of identity, producing and imbuing it with its characteristics and features. Identity develops with the development of culture, meaning that identity is affected by culture both positively and negatively (Katiba Belghami & Maryam Shrit, 2022, p. 422).

The Shared Geographical and Historical Context of the Homeland:

In this context, Plato says, "The identity of beings is what remains the same despite all changes". "This ability to endure despite the barriers of time and the vagaries of place is what gives similarity existential power. The land is a means of communication between individuals and groups to form a society and achieve cooperation and connection. Thus, identity is linked to the state, history, and geographical location (Abeer Bisouni Radwan, 2012, p. 93).

Therefore, it can be said that identity is the product of interaction between several elements that interact and complement each other. Identity is considered part of the social system shared by a group aiming to preserve its shared local distinctiveness. However, the functional dysfunction that Parsons identified as a flaw in values or in the role of a socialization institution (family, school, mosque, etc.) can generate an identity crisis because a flaw in one part of the structural framework creates a crisis in shared identity and disrupts social cohesion.

Conclusion

Identity is characterized by its dynamism, as it is an ongoing social process that develops over time through the dynamic interaction of trends with a range of elements (history, language, religion, culture, geographical location, etc.) within a network of interconnected relationships between individuals. This network distinguishes each individual or group from others and reflects the reality of power and authority within a society and its degree of cohesion. Identity is also influenced by the external world and globalization, within a framework of an ongoing struggle between balancing local particularities and openness to the world and continuous change.

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