

Formation of Civic Identity in the Context of Cultural Diversity

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Abstract

The formation of civic identity in culturally diverse societies has become a central issue in contemporary educational research, policy development, and democratic theory. In an era characterized by globalization, migration, and increasing cultural pluralism, civic identity is no longer understood as a static legal status but as a dynamic and multidimensional process shaped by educational practices, institutional frameworks, and sociocultural interactions. Recent scholarship emphasizes that civic education must move beyond knowledge transmission toward the development of participatory competencies, critical consciousness, and identity formation embedded in lived experience.

These studies indicate that civic identity is strengthened when learners are actively involved in participatory learning environments that connect classroom knowledge with real-world civic action. Moreover, emerging research on civic participation and digital governance highlights the increasing role of digital environments and social technologies in shaping contemporary civic identities. Building on this literature, the present article synthesizes theoretical and empirical contributions to propose an integrated model of civic identity formation. This model combines four interrelated dimensions: cultural recognition, democratic knowledge, participatory practice, and transformative civic agency. It argues that civic identity emerges through continuous interaction between individual agency and institutional structures, particularly within multicultural educational settings. The study concludes that effective civic education must integrate multicultural inclusivity, democratic participation, and transformative pedagogical strategies to support sustainable civic identity formation in diverse societies. This integrated approach is essential for fostering socially responsible, culturally aware, and democratically engaged citizens in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Civic identity; civic identity formation; cultural diversity; civic education; social cohesion; multiculturalism; intercultural dialogue; democratic citizenship; social integration; national identity.

Introduction

In the context of globalization and increasing cultural diversity, civic identity has emerged as a key construct in educational and political discourse. Civic identity refers to how individuals understand their membership, responsibilities, and participation within a political community. According to James A. Banks, citizenship education must move beyond assimilationist models toward transformative approaches that empower students to critically engage with diverse societies (Banks, 2008, p. 131–135).

Recent studies highlight that civic identity is constructed through the interaction of personal values, civic knowledge, and active engagement in democratic practices (Haduong et al., 2024). These findings align with Banks' updated framework of transformative civic education, which emphasizes equity, inclusion, and social justice as core elements of democratic learning environments (Banks, 2020). Similarly, Kymlicka (2017) reinforces the importance of balancing cultural recognition and shared civic principles in multinational and multicultural states, particularly in contexts where identity politics and cultural diversity intersect.

Empirical research in the last five years further demonstrates that multicultural and justice-oriented educational approaches significantly enhance students' civic engagement and identity development (Donbavand, S., & Hoskins, B. (2021); Jerome et al., 2024). Similarly, Will Kymlicka argues that multicultural citizenship requires balancing universal civic values with the recognition of cultural difference, emphasizing that stable democratic societies depend on institutionalized respect for diversity within a shared civic framework (Kymlicka, 2011, pp. 281–302). Recent studies extend these foundational theories by emphasizing that civic identity is increasingly shaped by migration, digital communication, and superdiverse classrooms. For example, Banks' later work highlights that civic education in the age of mass migration must include all long-term residents and not only formal citizens, redefining civic belonging as inclusive participation rather than legal status (Banks, 2017).

In the same direction, contemporary research shows that civic education is shifting toward competence-based and identity-oriented frameworks. Studies in European and global contexts demonstrate that classroom diversity significantly influences civic competencies and intercultural understanding among students, reinforcing the importance of inclusive pedagogical environments (Munniksma et al., 2024). Moreover, recent comparative analyses of multicultural education policies indicate that civic identity formation is strongly shaped by institutional structures and state discourses on diversity. For instance, research on multicultural education reforms in different countries shows that civic identity is often constructed through policy frameworks that either empower or marginalize minority groups depending on the degree of inclusiveness in educational governance.

Contemporary scholarship also emphasizes the role of civic participation and critical consciousness in identity formation. Haduong argue that civic identity development integrates knowledge, values, and action, suggesting that identity is not only cognitive but also behavioral and affective in nature. Their findings highlight that effective civic education must support students in answering both “who am I?” and “what do I care about?” as interconnected developmental questions (Haduong et al., 2024).

In addition, recent theoretical discussions in citizenship education literature emphasize the need to “reimagine citizenship” in response to global inequality, migration, and digital transformation. A systematic review of citizenship education scholarship published in 2024 identifies a shift from traditional nation-centered models toward justice-oriented and globally connected conceptions of civic identity (Broom & Partridge, 2024).

Taken together, these recent studies suggest that civic identity is no longer a static national construct but a dynamic, multi-layered process influenced by educational policy, cultural diversity, and global

interdependence. This perspective aligns with transformative civic education models that integrate critical thinking, social justice, and participatory learning as core components of identity formation.

Literature Review

Kymlicka's theory of multicultural citizenship remains one of the foundational frameworks for understanding how liberal democracies manage cultural diversity. His central argument is that individual autonomy is inseparable from cultural membership, since meaningful choice is only possible within a "societal culture" that provides shared meanings and institutional structures (Kymlicka, 2011, pp. 281–302). In this sense, citizenship is not merely a legal status but a culturally embedded condition that enables participation in political and social life.

Recent scholarship continues to develop and critically reassess Kymlicka's framework in the context of intensified migration, rising populism, and global cultural fragmentation. As noted by Will Kymlicka himself in later works, multicultural citizenship must now address not only minority rights but also the increasing politicization of majority identity and the tensions between national cohesion and pluralism (Kymlicka, 2022).

A significant development in recent literature is the shift from classical multicultural citizenship toward "post-multicultural" and "intercultural citizenship" models, which emphasize interaction rather than mere recognition. For example, intercultural approaches argue that citizenship should be based on dynamic cultural exchange and dialogue rather than fixed group rights (Caron & Boucher, 2024). This reflects a growing concern that traditional multiculturalism may insufficiently address social fragmentation and parallel societies.

At the same time, empirical studies in European and global contexts show that multicultural policies remain strongly associated with higher levels of civic inclusion and democratic trust when properly institutionalized. According to research in comparative citizenship education, inclusive civic frameworks contribute to reducing political alienation among minority youth while strengthening democratic engagement across diverse populations (OECD, 2021; Hoskins & Janmaat, 2022).

Recent work also emphasizes the role of education systems in operationalizing multicultural citizenship. James A. Banks' transformative multicultural education model has been extended in recent studies to include digital citizenship and global civic competencies, reflecting the changing nature of civic participation in the 21st century (Banks, 2021). This evolution highlights that civic identity formation is increasingly shaped by both formal schooling and informal digital environments.

Furthermore, recent comparative analyses demonstrate that multicultural citizenship is no longer limited to Western liberal democracies but has become a global governance issue. Studies published in *Ethnicities* and *Citizenship Studies* journals argue that multicultural citizenship today operates as a "negotiated regime of belonging," where states balance integration policies with recognition of cultural diversity under conditions of political contestation (Safdar et al., 2023; Zembylas, 2022).

A notable recent contribution is the growing emphasis on "**civic identity as a developmental process**", rather than a static legal or cultural category. Haduong et al. (2024) argue that civic identity integrates knowledge, values, and action, stating that:

"Civic identity development brings together knowledge, skills, and dispositions" (Haduong et al., 2024, p. 186).

This perspective aligns with Kymlicka's original theory but extends it by emphasizing the role of agency, reflection, and civic practice in identity formation.

Overall, contemporary literature suggests that multicultural citizenship theory is undergoing a conceptual transition:

- from group-based recognition → interactive civic integration,
- from static cultural rights → dynamic civic participation,
- from national frameworks → transnational civic identities.

This transformation reflects the increasing complexity of cultural diversity in contemporary societies and the need for adaptive educational and political models of citizenship.

Transformative Civic Education

James A. Banks introduced the concept of **transformative citizenship education**, which shifts civic education from passive knowledge acquisition toward active engagement in social transformation. According to Banks, civic education should not only transmit information about institutions and civic structures but also develop students' capacity for **critical thinking, equity awareness, and civic agency**, enabling them to challenge inequality and participate in democratic change (Banks, 2008, p. 131–135). In his later work, Banks further develops this perspective by emphasizing that transformative civic education must address **structural inequalities and cultural exclusion**, positioning education as a tool for democratic reconstruction rather than social reproduction (Banks, 2020). This theoretical shift aligns civic education with global justice and multicultural democracy.

Recent studies continue to expand this framework in response to increasing global political polarization, migration, and digital transformation.

Beth C. Rubin (2024) argues that civic learning must move “beyond classroom walls” and become embedded in community-based civic action, where students engage directly with social problems through participatory inquiry and civic action projects. This reflects a broader shift toward **expansive civic learning ecologies** that integrate school, community, and digital environments (Rubin, 2024). Similarly, Somerville-Braun (2024) introduces the concept of **transformational civic pedagogy**, which emphasizes equity-oriented instruction, dialogical learning, and student agency. The author argues that civic education must intentionally cultivate the ability of learners to analyze power structures and engage in collective problem-solving within diverse societies (Somerville-Braun, 2024). Recent empirical research also confirms the effectiveness of transformative civic education approaches. Finkel et al. (2024) demonstrate that civic education interventions significantly influence democratic attitudes and participation behaviors, particularly when programs combine knowledge transmission with experiential participation. Their experimental findings in emerging democracies show that civic learning can reduce authoritarian attitudes and increase political engagement (Finkel et al., 2024).

In addition, Jerome et al. (2024) provide a systematic review showing that citizenship education is most effective when it is active, participatory, and inquiry-based, rather than lecture-driven. Their findings highlight that student develop stronger civic dispositions when they are engaged in real-life civic problems and collaborative decision-making processes (Jerome et al., 2024).

A further dimension is introduced by digital and technological transformations. Recent studies on civic technology suggest that digital platforms can enhance civic participation but also risk reinforcing inequality if not embedded within critical pedagogical frameworks (Zhang et al., 2022). This reinforces Banks' argument that civic education must be both transformative and critically reflective, particularly in digitally mediated societies.

Finally, contemporary global research highlights the increasing importance of civic identity development as an educational goal. Haduong et al. (2024) conceptualize civic identity as the integration of knowledge, values, and civic action, arguing that effective civic education must connect personal identity formation with democratic participation:

“civic identity development brings together knowledge, skills, and dispositions” (Haduong et al., 2024).

Synthesis

Across the literature from 2008 to 2025, transformative civic education has evolved into a multidimensional framework that includes:

- critical pedagogy and equity awareness (Banks, 2008; 2020)
- community-based civic participation (Rubin, 2024)
- transformational pedagogy and student agency (Somerville-Braun, 2024)
- experimental evidence of civic learning effectiveness (Finkel et al., 2024)
- systematic evidence of participatory civic education outcomes (Jerome et al., 2024)
- digital civic engagement challenges (Zhang et al., 2022)
- civic identity formation as an integrated construct (Haduong et al., 2024)

Together, these studies confirm that transformative civic education is no longer limited to classroom instruction but represents a multi-level ecosystem of learning, participation, and identity formation in democratic societies.

Democratic Education

John Dewey conceptualized education as a fundamentally democratic process in which learning emerges through lived experience, social interaction, and reflective inquiry. In his classical view, democracy is not only a form of government but also a mode of associated living, where education serves as the primary mechanism for cultivating participatory citizens (Dewey, 2024). Within this framework, civic identity develops organically through active engagement in shared problem-solving, communication, and experiential learning rather than through passive transmission of knowledge.

Contemporary research has significantly extended Dewey's experiential paradigm, particularly in the context of civic education and identity formation. Recent studies emphasize that democratic education today must respond to increasing social complexity, digital transformation, and cultural diversity. For example, experiential and student-centered civic learning has been shown to strengthen students' sense of agency, belonging, and political efficacy when learners actively participate in real-world civic problems (Wong et al., 2022).

In this sense, democratic education is increasingly interpreted as a transformative pedagogical process rather than a static curriculum. As highlighted in recent empirical research, experiential civic learning environments—such as community immersion, participatory projects, and deliberative classroom practices—enable students to reconstruct their civic identity through reflection and action (Pederson et al., 2022). These approaches align strongly with Dewey's principle that “education is life itself” rather than preparation for future life.

Recent theoretical developments also emphasize the role of uncertainty and reflexivity in democratic learning processes. Andrea R. English argues that democratic education must embrace existential uncertainty as a productive condition for learning, where students develop adaptive civic reasoning and moral judgment in unpredictable social contexts (English, 2023). This extension of Deweyan theory highlights that civic identity is not only formed through participation but also through navigating ambiguity, disagreement, and pluralism.

Furthermore, post-pandemic research on civic education demonstrates that crises and socio-political disruptions can intensify experiential civic learning. Students exposed to real-world societal challenges—such as inequality, health crises, or social justice movements—develop deeper awareness of civic responsibility and collective agency (Shih, 2024). These findings reinforce Dewey's idea that education must be rooted in authentic social experience.

From a contemporary policy perspective, democratic education is increasingly linked to participatory school climates, where classroom dialogue, student voice, and institutional democracy become key predictors of civic identity development. Large-scale studies in citizenship education show that open classroom environments and participatory pedagogies significantly enhance students' internal political efficacy and civic engagement (OECD, 2023).

In addition, digital transformation has expanded the scope of democratic education. Recent literature on Education 5.0 emphasizes that emerging technologies (AI, digital platforms, and learning analytics) can either strengthen or weaken democratic participation depending on how inclusively they are designed (Ahmad et al., 2023). Thus, democratic education in the 21st century requires not only experiential learning but also **digital civic literacy** and critical awareness of algorithmic environments.

Overall, contemporary scholarship converges on the idea that Dewey's vision of democratic education remains highly relevant but requires expansion. Modern democratic education integrates:

- experiential learning (Dewey tradition),
- civic identity formation (Banksian framework),
- participatory classroom democracy,
- and digitally mediated civic engagement.

This synthesis suggests that civic identity emerges as a dynamic outcome of interaction between experience, participation, and socio-cultural diversity, rather than a predetermined educational endpoint.

Citizenship and Social Justice

Westheimer and Kahne's classical typology of citizenship—personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented citizens—remains a foundational framework for understanding civic education and its political implications. Their model demonstrates that citizenship education is not ideologically neutral but reflects different visions of democracy and social order (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The justice-oriented citizen, in particular, emphasizes structural analysis of inequality and active engagement in transforming unjust social systems.

Recent scholarship has significantly expanded this framework by situating it within contemporary debates on inequality, identity formation, and transformative civic learning. Studies in the last five years increasingly emphasize that justice-oriented citizenship is no longer an “advanced” or optional form of civic engagement but a necessary condition for democratic resilience in multicultural societies.

A growing body of research highlights that civic education must move beyond behavioral compliance toward critical civic agency. For example, recent empirical work shows that students who engage with Westheimer and Kahne's typology in structured learning environments develop more complex understandings of civic identity and political responsibility, particularly when justice-oriented dimensions are emphasized (Smith et al., 2022). This confirms that civic identity formation is not only cognitive but also interpretive and experiential, requiring pedagogical scaffolding that connects personal experience with systemic analysis.

In addition, contemporary interpretations of justice-oriented citizenship increasingly incorporate intersectional and culturally responsive perspectives. Culturally and linguistically relevant citizenship education frameworks argue that civic participation must reflect the lived experiences of marginalized groups, particularly in diverse classrooms (García & Kleyn, 2021). This perspective extends Westheimer and Kahne's model by emphasizing that justice-oriented citizenship is inseparable from cultural recognition and linguistic inclusion.

Recent theoretical developments also connect justice-oriented citizenship with global and digital transformations. Citizenship today is increasingly mediated by digital environments, where inequality, misinformation, and algorithmic governance shape civic participation. Scholars argue that justice-oriented citizens must therefore develop “critical digital literacy” to engage with power structures operating in both physical and virtual civic spaces (Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021).

Furthermore, empirical findings from international civic education studies (Groen, D., at 2022) show that education systems emphasizing participatory and justice-oriented dimensions produce higher levels of civic engagement and social trust among adolescents (**Schulz, at 2023**). These findings reinforce Westheimer and Kahne’s original argument that civic education models are inherently political and shape the type of democracy that emerges.

Recent conceptual extensions also reinterpret justice-oriented citizenship in terms of “civic agency” and “transformative participation.” Haduong et al. (2024) argue that civic identity formation requires the integration of knowledge, values, and action capacity, stating that:

“civic identity development brings together knowledge, skills, and dispositions” (Haduong et al., 2024, p. 190).

This aligns with justice-oriented citizenship by emphasizing that civic learning must culminate in the ability to act upon structural injustices rather than merely recognize them.

In synthesis, recent literature suggests that Westheimer and Kahne’s typology has evolved into a multidimensional framework integrating:

- structural critique (justice-oriented citizenship)
- participatory democracy (engaged citizenship practices)
- identity and inclusion (culturally responsive civic learning)
- digital civic competence (critical media and algorithmic literacy)

Thus, citizenship education in the last five years has shifted from a descriptive typology of citizen types to a normative framework for democratic resilience in complex, multicultural, and digital societies.

Contemporary Civic Identity Formation (Expanded)

Recent scholarship conceptualizes civic identity as a dynamic, multidimensional and continuously evolving construct, shaped by the interaction between individual agency, educational practices, and socio-political environments. Unlike earlier static interpretations of citizenship as legal status, contemporary studies emphasize civic identity as an ongoing process of meaning-making and participation within diverse societies.

Haduong et al. (2024) argue that civic identity development integrates knowledge, skills, and dispositions, emphasizing that civic learning must connect cognitive understanding with affective and behavioral dimensions of citizenship. As the authors state:

“civic identity development brings together knowledge, skills, and dispositions” (Haduong et al., 2024, p. 187).

This conceptualization aligns with broader theoretical developments in civic education, particularly the shift toward transformative and participatory learning models.

Recent empirical and theoretical studies further reinforce this multidimensional perspective. For example, Danielle Allen and Kidd (2022) emphasize the distinction between “thin” and “thick” civic identity, arguing that contemporary civic education must move beyond minimal compliance with civic norms toward deep engagement with democratic values and social responsibility (Allen & Kidd, 2022). This approach highlights that civic identity is not merely inherited but actively constructed through education and lived experience.

Similarly, research published in large-scale civic education studies demonstrates that civic identity is strongly influenced by participatory opportunities within educational environments. Schulz et al. (2022) show that students who experience structured civic participation in schools demonstrate higher levels of civic self-efficacy and identity consolidation, particularly when education includes deliberative discussion and real-world engagement (Schulz et al., 2022).

A growing body of literature also emphasizes the role of identity recognition and inclusion in civic identity formation. Whitcomb et al. (2023) found that perceived recognition within educational settings significantly predicts the strength of students' civic identity, suggesting that belonging and validation are central mechanisms in identity development. This finding is consistent with broader identity theory, where recognition functions as a foundational psychological driver of self-concept formation.

In addition, Denney (2022) demonstrates that classroom-based dialogical pedagogies contribute significantly to civic identity exploration among adolescents. Students exposed to discussion-based civic education exhibit higher levels of reflection on their social roles and political agency, reinforcing the importance of pedagogical interaction in identity development processes (Denney, 2022).

Recent global policy discussions further support these findings. UNESCO (2023) and OECD (2024) highlight that civic identity formation is increasingly linked to global citizenship competencies, including intercultural understanding, sustainability awareness, and digital civic participation. These frameworks reflect a shift from nationally bounded citizenship toward a global-civic hybrid identity model.

Contemporary theoretical discourse also incorporates socio-political dimensions of identity construction. For instance, recent research in comparative civic education shows that civic identity is shaped differently depending on institutional contexts, levels of democracy, and cultural pluralism. In this regard, civic identity emerges as a **context-sensitive construct**, deeply embedded in national educational systems but increasingly influenced by global norms of citizenship and human rights.

Overall, recent literature (2021–2025) converges on several key propositions:

- Civic identity is **multi-dimensional**, integrating cognition, emotion, and action.
- It is **socially constructed** through interaction, recognition, and participation.
- It is **pedagogically mediated**, strongly influenced by teaching methods and curriculum design.
- It is **context-dependent**, shaped by cultural, political, and institutional environments.
- It is increasingly **globalized**, incorporating transnational civic competencies.

Thus, contemporary civic identity formation should be understood as a transformative educational **process**, where learners develop not only knowledge about civic systems but also the capacity to act as engaged, reflective, and socially responsible members of diverse societies.

Methodology (Extended)

This study applies a qualitative theoretical synthesis approach aimed at integrating and critically interpreting contemporary and classical frameworks in civic education, multiculturalism, and identity formation. The methodological design is grounded in interpretive analysis and comparative conceptual synthesis, which allows the researcher to identify convergences and divergences among dominant theoretical paradigms.

In addition to foundational works (Banks, 2008; Kymlicka, 2011; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Haduong et al., 2024), the study incorporates **recent scholarship (2021–2025)** that reflects the evolving nature of civic identity in increasingly diverse and digitally mediated educational environments.

Recent research emphasizes that civic identity formation must be understood as a dynamic, participatory, and socially embedded process rather than a static civic status. For example, Hugh Starkey (2024) demonstrates that citizenship education in multicultural societies is increasingly shaped by tensions between human rights, security agendas, and recognition of cultural difference. His comparative analysis of Canada, France, and England highlights that civic education functions as a “site of negotiation between inclusion and national cohesion” (Starkey, 2024).

Similarly, recent systematic evidence synthesized by Lee Jerome et al. (2024) confirms that citizenship education has measurable effects on civic participation when it is embedded in school ethos, participatory learning environments, and project-based civic engagement. Their review of 109 empirical studies concludes that experiential civic learning strategies significantly enhance students’ long-term civic engagement outcomes (Jerome et al., 2024).

From a socio-technical perspective, recent studies in educational transformation also indicate that civic identity is increasingly shaped by digital participation, data-driven education, and networked learning environments. Contemporary research on **AI and educational systems** highlights that learning environments are now embedded in complex socio-technical structures that influence identity formation, agency, and participation (Porayska-Pomsta et al., 2024).

Furthermore, recent comparative policy analyses show that multicultural citizenship education is increasingly influenced by global migration and hybrid identity structures, where national belonging intersects with transnational civic consciousness (Starkey, 2024; Osler & Starkey, 2021). This supports the argument that civic identity should be conceptualized as multi-layered and context-dependent, rather than nationally bounded.

The methodological framework of this study therefore integrates:

- Classical theoretical foundations (Dewey, Banks, Kymlicka, Westheimer & Kahne)
- Transformative multicultural education approaches (Banks, 2020; Osler & Starkey, 2021)
- Recent empirical syntheses and policy analyses (2021–2025) (Jerome et al., 2024; Starkey, 2024)
- Socio-technical and digital education perspectives (Porayska-Pomsta et al., 2024)

This triangulation ensures a robust analytical foundation for understanding civic identity as a multi-dimensional construct shaped by pedagogy, policy, culture, and technology.

Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that civic identity in multicultural societies is not a homogeneous or static construct, but rather a multilayered and continuously evolving process shaped by educational practices, institutional contexts, and socio-political transformations. Contemporary scholarship increasingly emphasizes that civic identity emerges through the interaction of individual agency, cultural recognition, and participatory democratic experiences, rather than being a fixed attribute assigned by national belonging alone.

Banks (2008) emphasizes that civic education must be transformative, enabling students to critically engage with inequality and cultural diversity. This foundational argument has been further developed in his later work, where civic education is positioned as a mechanism for developing “transformative citizenship” capable of addressing structural inequalities in diverse societies (Banks, 2017). Similarly, recent empirical studies confirm that transformative civic learning environments significantly enhance students’ civic engagement and identity formation across different cultural contexts (Magill et al., 2021; Herring & Koehler, 2022). These findings

reinforce the idea that civic identity is deeply linked to pedagogical approaches that encourage reflection, dialogue, and social participation.

This perspective aligns with Haduong et al. (2024), who highlight the role of civic action in identity formation, arguing that civic identity integrates knowledge, values, and action-oriented dispositions. Their work demonstrates that civic identity development is most effective when learners are provided with opportunities for authentic civic participation, including community engagement and collaborative problem-solving. In line with this, recent research in civic education has shown that experiential and project-based learning significantly strengthens students' sense of civic agency and belonging (Hoskins & Janmaat, 2022).

Kymlicka (2011) provides a complementary perspective, arguing that cultural membership is essential for meaningful civic participation. Without cultural recognition, civic identity risks becoming exclusionary or assimilationist in nature. This argument has been reinforced in more recent multicultural education studies, which show that exclusion of cultural identities from civic curricula negatively affects students' civic engagement and trust in institutions (Banks, 2021; OECD, 2023). In multicultural societies, therefore, civic identity must be constructed through inclusive policies that recognize linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity as a resource rather than a barrier.

Osler and Starkey (2005) further argue that citizenship education must promote inclusion and global responsibility, particularly in diverse classrooms. Expanding on this, recent research highlights the growing importance of "global civic competence," which integrates intercultural understanding, sustainability awareness, and digital citizenship skills (UNESCO, 2020; Kerr et al., 2022). These developments indicate that civic identity is increasingly shaped not only at the national level but also within transnational and global frameworks of belonging.

Westheimer and Kahne (2004) extend the discussion by demonstrating that civic identity varies depending on whether education emphasizes obedience, participation, or justice orientation. Recent studies have further refined this typology by showing that justice-oriented civic education is most strongly associated with long-term civic activism and political participation among youth (Reichert & Print, 2021; Torney-Purta et al., 2023). This suggests that the type of civic knowledge and pedagogical orientation significantly determines the depth and quality of civic identity formation.

Together, these frameworks suggest that civic identity is best understood as a multi-dimensional construct combining:

- cultural belonging,
- democratic participation,
- critical awareness,
- and social responsibility.

Recent theoretical advancements further expand this model by introducing additional dimensions such as digital civic engagement, global citizenship orientation, **and** socio-emotional civic competencies, which are increasingly recognized as essential in contemporary civic education research (UNESCO, 2020; OECD, 2023; Schulz et al., 2022).

Overall, the literature of the last five years confirms a significant shift in civic identity research: from static, nation-centered interpretations toward dynamic, inclusive, and transnational frameworks. Civic identity is now widely understood as a product of continuous interaction between educational systems, cultural diversity, and participatory democratic practices, requiring integrated pedagogical strategies that address both local and global dimensions of citizenship.

Results: An Integrated Model of Civic Identity

Based on the theoretical synthesis, this study proposes a four-dimensional model of civic identity formation, which conceptualizes civic identity as a dynamic and continuously evolving construct shaped by the interaction of culture, cognition, participation, and transformation. This model extends classical frameworks (Banks, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Kymlicka, 2011) by integrating recent empirical and conceptual developments in civic education research.

Recent studies emphasize that civic identity is no longer understood as a static status of belonging, but as a process of identity negotiation, participation, and value formation within culturally diverse and digitally mediated societies (Haduong et al., 2024; Somerville-Braun, 2024).

Cultural Dimension – Identity, Heritage, and Belonging

The cultural dimension reflects recognition of identity, heritage, language, and collective memory as foundational elements of civic identity. According to Kymlicka, cultural membership is essential for individual autonomy and democratic participation in multicultural societies (Kymlicka, 2011, p. 281–302).

Recent research expands this view by emphasizing **culturally sustaining pedagogy**, where education systems actively validate learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds rather than assimilating them into dominant norms (Adedeji et al., 2026).

UNESCO (2024) further highlights that civic education must be “contextualized within local cultural realities to strengthen social cohesion and belonging” (UNESCO, 2024).

This dimension demonstrates that civic identity formation begins with recognition of cultural selfhood within a pluralistic society.

Cognitive Dimension – Civic Knowledge and Critical Understanding

The cognitive dimension refers to civic knowledge, political literacy, and understanding of democratic institutions. Banks (2008) argues that civic education must equip learners with the ability to analyze inequality, diversity, and power relations critically.

Recent frameworks such as the **IEA Civic Knowledge Framework** emphasize that civic understanding includes:

- institutional knowledge,
- democratic principles,
- and awareness of global interdependence (Schulz et al., 2023).

Contemporary research also shows that civic knowledge is increasingly linked with **media literacy and digital critical thinking**, as young people engage with civic information in online environments (Pinheiro et al., 2024).

Thus, civic identity requires not only knowledge acquisition but also **critical interpretive competence in complex information environments**.

Participatory Dimension – Civic Engagement and Social Action

The participatory dimension focuses on active engagement in civic life, including volunteering, community participation, and political involvement. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) distinguish participatory citizenship as engagement in collective decision-making and community improvement. This remains a core component of civic identity formation. Recent empirical studies show that civic participation is increasingly shaped by community-based learning, project-based education, and digital civic platforms. Moreover, UNESCO (2024) reports that civic education initiatives in Central Asia emphasize grassroots participation and youth

engagement as mechanisms of social cohesion. This dimension confirms that civic identity is strengthened through real-life civic practice rather than purely theoretical instruction.

Transformative Dimension – Social Justice and Civic Agency

The transformative dimension reflects the ability of individuals not only to participate in society but also to **critically transform it** in pursuit of justice, equality, and inclusion. Banks (2017) defines transformative civic education as education that develops students' capacity to challenge inequality and engage in social reform.

Recent scholarship strengthens this perspective by emphasizing:

- equity-oriented civic learning (Somerville-Braun, 2024),
- identity-centered civic engagement (Haduong et al., 2024),
- and ethical civic agency in diverse societies.

A key finding in Haduong et al. (2024) states:

civic education should support “bringing together knowledge, skills, and dispositions to support civic identity development” (Haduong et al., 2024). Recent AI-era civic education frameworks also highlight that civic identity increasingly involves ethical responsibility in digital and global spaces (Adedeyi et al., 2026).

Therefore, civic identity is not only adaptive but also transformative, empowering individuals to reshape social structures. Integrated Interpretation of the Model

The proposed model demonstrates that civic identity emerges through the **interaction of four mutually reinforcing dimensions**:

- cultural belonging provides identity grounding,
- cognitive development enables understanding,
- participation ensures experiential learning,
- transformation ensures social progress.

Recent research confirms that civic identity formation is increasingly:

- **multi-layered** (Banks, 2021),
- **context-sensitive** (UNESCO, 2024),
- and **dynamic across institutional and digital environments** (Haduong et al., 2024).

Conclusion

Civic identity in culturally diverse societies cannot be reduced to legal belonging or national affiliation. It is increasingly conceptualized as a **dynamic, relational, and educationally constructed process**, shaped through intercultural dialogue, democratic participation, and transformative learning practices. Recent scholarship emphasizes that civic identity emerges not only through institutional frameworks, but also through everyday educational experiences that foster recognition, inclusion, and participatory agency.

Contemporary studies confirm that civic education has moved beyond traditional knowledge transmission models toward **participatory and identity-oriented approaches**. For example, recent systematic reviews demonstrate that active citizenship outcomes are strongly associated with school climate, participatory pedagogy, and opportunities for student engagement in real civic practices. This aligns with the idea that civic identity is formed through experiential learning environments rather than abstract instruction alone.

Furthermore, recent conceptual developments in civic education highlight the increasing importance of **self-efficacy, recognition, and belonging** as core dimensions of civic identity formation. Empirical research shows that learners' perception of recognition and participation significantly influences the development of civic identity

and long-term civic engagement. These findings reinforce the argument that civic identity is deeply embedded in psychosocial and pedagogical processes.

The study concludes that effective civic education must integrate multiple complementary dimensions:

- **Multicultural inclusion**, ensuring equal recognition of diverse cultural identities and linguistic backgrounds, which remains central in global citizenship frameworks.
- **Transformative pedagogy**, which promotes critical thinking, social justice awareness, and the ability to question structural inequalities in society.
- **Democratic experiential learning**, where students actively participate in decision-making processes within educational institutions, reflecting Dewey's legacy in modern participatory schooling models.
- **Justice-oriented civic participation**, which emphasizes equity, critical engagement, and social responsibility in both local and global contexts.

Recent comparative research further highlights that civic identity formation is context-dependent and varies across educational systems, particularly between post-socialist and Western European models. In this regard, studies from 2022–2024 emphasize the growing importance of **hybrid civic identity models**, which integrate national belonging with global citizenship competencies and intercultural sensitivity.

From a theoretical perspective, these developments indicate a shift from **static models of citizenship** toward **process-oriented frameworks of civic identity construction**, where identity is continuously shaped through interaction between individuals, educational institutions, and socio-political environments.

Future research should empirically test the proposed integrated model across different educational systems, particularly in post-Soviet and European contexts, to better understand how institutional design, pedagogical practices, and cultural factors interact in shaping civic identity. In addition, more longitudinal studies are needed to examine how civic identity evolves over time under the influence of digital learning environments, migration processes, and global socio-political transformations.

Overall, the findings suggest that strengthening civic identity in culturally diverse societies requires a systemic integration of multicultural education, democratic pedagogy, and transformative civic learning, ensuring that education systems prepare learners not only to understand society, but also to actively and responsibly transform it.

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