**Identity**

* **Definition**: Identity refers to the qualities, beliefs, personality, appearance, talents, and expressions that define a person (**self-identity**) or a group (**collective identity**).
* **Psychological Identity**: In psychology, it relates to self-image, self-esteem, and individuality. It answers the question, "Who am I?" and reflects a person's behaviors, preferences, talents, and beliefs.
* **Multiple Identities**: Throughout life, individuals develop many different identities.

**Importance of Identity**

* **Sense of Self**: Identity helps in developing a strong sense of self, personality, and connection to others.
* **Erikson's View**: According to Erikson, identity formation is crucial. Failure to form a clear identity can lead to confusion and a weak sense of self later in life.

**Four Stages of Identity Development**

1. **Identity Diffusion**
   * **Description**: Youth/Adolescents in this stage have not explored or committed to any identity.
   * **Characteristics**: Low exploration and low commitment. They haven't thought about their identity or set any life goals.
2. **Identity Foreclosure**
   * **Description**: This stage involves a low level of exploration but a high level of commitment.
   * **Characteristics**: Youth/Adolescents accept the beliefs and values taught by their family and community without questioning them. They don’t actively seek what is important to them.
3. **Moratorium**
   * **Description**: This stage is characterized by high exploration and low commitment.
   * **Characteristics**: Youth are in an identity "crisis," experimenting with different values, beliefs, and goals. However, they have not yet made final decisions about what is important to them and are keeping their options open.
4. **Identity Achievement**
   * **Description**: This stage represents both high exploration and high commitment.
   * **Characteristics**: Youth have actively explored and committed to a specific set of values, beliefs, and life goals. They have decided what is important to them and have a clear sense of purpose and mission for their lives.

**Culture**

**Culture** is the shared characteristics and knowledge of a group, including language, religion, social habits, music, and arts. It influences what people believe, wear, eat, and how they behave.

* **Examples**: Religion, food, clothing, language, beliefs, and customs.

**Types of Culture**

1. **Material Culture**:
   * **Definition**: Refers to the physical objects and spaces that people use to express their culture.
   * **Examples**: Homes, neighborhoods, cities, schools, churches, mosques, temples, workplaces, tools, and products.
2. **Non-material Culture**:
   * **Definition**: Includes the non-physical ideas and beliefs that shape a culture.
   * **Examples**: Beliefs, values, norms, morals, language, and institutions. For instance, religious beliefs encompass ideas about God, worship, and ethics.

**Aspects of Culture**

1. **Symbols**:
   * A symbol is something that is used to stand for something else. People in a culture attach meaning to objects, gestures, sounds, or images.
   * Example: A cross is a significant symbol for Christians.
2. **Language**:
   * Language is a system of communication using words, symbols, and gestures.
   * This includes spoken languages (like English or Spanish) as well as body language, slang, and unique phrases used by specific groups.
   * Example: The gesture and words of Namaste in Hindu culture and Salam in Muslim culture.
3. **Values**:
   * Values are cultural beliefs about what is good, right, fair, and just.
   * They reflect what people believe is right or wrong and what they think.
4. **Social Norms**:
   * Norms are shared expectations for how people should behave in a group or society.
   * They include different levels of rules for acceptable conduct.

**Types of Norms**

Sociologists speak of at least three types of norms:

1. **Folkways**:
   * These are casual norms that organize everyday interactions, like saying “hello” and "thank you."
   * They are weak norms and usually don't carry harsh consequences if broken.
2. **Mores**:
   * Mores are stronger norms related to moral conduct.
   * They determine what is considered morally acceptable or unacceptable within any culture.
3. **Taboos**:
   * Taboos are actions or practices that are strongly forbidden by a society or religion.
   * Breaking a taboo is considered highly offensive and objectionable. Certain actions might be taboo in one culture but acceptable in another.
   * Example: In **Islamic culture**, eating pork is a taboo due to religious prohibitions, but it is allowed in other cultures around the world.