

Culture:

- ◆ Culture is the language, beliefs, values, norms, behaviors and even material objects that are passed from one generation to the next.
- ◆ Material culture consists of objects such as buildings, cars, clothing, weapons, etc. these objects distinguish a group of people.
- ◆ Non-material culture (i.e. symbolic culture) is a group's way of thinking and their common patterns of behavior, including language and other forms of interaction.
- ◆ An E.g. of the group's way of thinking is; its beliefs, values, and other assumptions about the world.
- ◆ Culture becomes the lens through which we perceive and evaluate what is going on around us.
- ◆ People simply become comfortable with the customs they learn during childhood, and uncomfortable when their basic assumptions about life are changed. There is no right or wrong culture. We simply accept what we have been brought up to believe.
- ◆ Ethnocentrism is a tendency to use our own culture's ways of doing things as an example/norm for judging other individuals cultures.
- ◆ Ethnocentrism can lead to negative and positive consequences. Positive: it creates in-group loyalties. However on the negative side it creates discrimination against people whose ways differ from ours.
- ◆ Instead of using ethnocentrism we can try to practice cultural relativism, which simply means to try and understand their culture on their own terms and not judging them.

Components of symbolic culture:

- ◆ The central component of non material culture is symbols. Symbols are anything, which people use to communicate with others.
- ◆ E.g. Gestures, language, values, norms, sanctions, folkways, etc.
- ◆ Values: To learn a culture is to value their ideas of what is desirable in life. When we try to understand a culture without judging it, we learn a great deal about them, for values are the standards by which people define what is good and bad and beautiful and ugly.
- ◆ Norms: Every group develops their own expectations on rules of behavior that reflect and enforce their values.