

How has your understanding of ethnocentrism shaped your understanding of the field...



Ethnocentrism & the Field of Sociology A culture form an important part of today's diversified society. Still, the understanding about culture, its elements and forces affecting it are hidden from the view of people. People tend to believe their way of living as a concept that they have adopted from their forefathers and follow it without giving any second thought to the ideas underlying their culture. Culture is a collective manner of living in a particular group or region which comprises everything from their food, dressing, art and architecture and so on. Their values, morals and customs are also distinct from other cultures. This understanding about the culture provides the basis of understanding one's traditions and practices. The concept of ethnocentrism arises from the deepest thoughts and understanding of people belonging to one culture about the culture of other people. The distinct ideas, living standards, traditions, moral values and norms of other cultures seem unacceptable and inferior to them. The basic reason of this irrational judgment about other's culture lies in the fact that people tend to measure and observe cultures from their preset standards of their own. They tend to measure and evaluate every custom and practice of other cultures from their own perspectives about the issues as they learned from their own culture. Hence, observing other's from the viewpoint of one's own cultural perspective may define the concept of ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism does not let a person view things and the world around them from other's point of view. It, hence, acts as a hurdle in the way of understanding others. In today's globalized environment, ethnocentrism may pose a threat to the peace and collaborative struggles of people working, living or studying together. Ethnocentric approach provides a one-sided view of everything and hence, the judgments made using this approach are

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narrow-minded and have limited scope. In contrast to this approach, cultural relativism is a concept which provides deep understanding about the cultural context in which a practice, norm or tradition is followed. The concept of cultural relativism, hence, gives a broader and two-sided view of the picture and the judgments made using this perspective are more independent and objective. Sociology is founded on the principle of cultural relativism.

Ethnocentrism helps in understanding the behaviors which are unacceptable or odd for one group of people but form the basis of the culture of others.

This concept answers many of the sociological and religious disputes by explaining how one-sided and biased point of views increases the likelihood of conflicts. The field of sociology rejects the ethnocentric approach for its limitations and forms a relatively new concept whereby every individual is encouraged to view the values of others. Understanding ethnocentrism brings about a change in the understanding of the society and the field of sociology as it gives a concept of using different perspective to look at the social and cultural differences of people. It provides an in-depth analysis of how and what problems occur due to misconceptions or one-sided view of cultures. Sociological studies, hence, provide a detailed and different view of people's lives.