

Sociology -
ethnocentrism
cultural relativism



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SOCIOLOGY - EHTNOCENTRISM / CULTURAL RELATIVISM

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism Ethnocentrism and cultural relativism are two opposing views on how one should judge other group's culture in relation to their own. Ethnocentrism is the view, believe, or notion that one's culture or ethnicity is superior or better than other people's cultural beliefs and values. It can also be define as the tendency to judge or gauge other people's culture by comparing it with one's own culture. On the other hand, cultural relativism can be defined as the tendency to view every culture as different hence evaluating it as a different entity from other cultures.

Cultural relativism requires that every culture be judged using different standards and that one should not compare his or her culture with that of other groups. Ethnocentrism tends to destroy relations between the groups involved while cultural relativism encourages collaboration irrespective of cultural diversity (Practicumonline Web).

Ethnocentrism can be harmful especially when we make assumptions about practices by other people from different culture by using our own culture to judge them. There are numerous example of ethnocentrism. A good example is the tendency by most people to argue that British drivers drive on the wrong side of the road. This is ethnocentric since it involves generalizing by using our driving culture to gauge another group with a different driving culture. Cultural relativism would require us to argue that British drivers drive on the left hand side. This would be non-judgmental (Practicumonline Web).

One time we were reading a machine-operating manual, which was written in different languages. One of the languages used was Hebrews. As we
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flipped through the manual, one of my friends commented that Hebrew is written backward. At that moment, I did not find this awkward but I now consider this statement to have been ethnocentric. This is because it sounded like my friend thought that our writing style, which runs from left to right, is superior to that of Hebrew. In case of cultural relativism, it would have been more appropriate to claim that Hebrew is written from right to left.

Ethnocentrism is a common phenomenon in relation to United States. United States consider its self as superior as compared to other nation thus the tittle supper power. This is in almost all aspects but most evident in political matters. This can be ascertained by the tendency of United States to fiddle with the affairs of other nation, especially in the Middle East. A good example is America's military intervention in Iraq, which was based on the argument that the existing leadership was dictatorial. In addition, there is a tendency of some ethnic groups within United States to view themselves as more superior. This was demonstrated in a television show referred to as " Jersey Shore" in which the Latino Americans were depicted as a lesser group. As I watched this show, I noticed that the character who pretended to be Latino American portrayed promiscuity. Black Americans have also been viewed as a lesser group as compared to the whites especially on aspects regarding their culture.

I came across an example of cultural relativism when I was reading a book on science and religion. Some people argue that the earth is flat while others believe that the earth is spherical. From cultural relativism point of view, none of the two groups is truly correct. The difference in opinion arises only because one group is arguing from a scientific perspective. This is so

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because cultural relativism measures the truthfulness of any argument on bases of cultural beliefs, which differ with different groups.

In conclusion, ethnocentrism entails viewing ones culture as superior to your own. However, cultural relativism require that cultural practiced be judged differently depending on different cultures.

Works Cited

Practicumonline. Cultural relativism and ethnocentrism. 2004. Web. 5 Sep 2012 .