**Ethnocentrism** is the tendency to think of one’s own culture as being at the center of the world; in other words, to assume that your own culture’s way of thinking and acting is more natural, normal, and correct than the way people from other cultures think and act.

People are almost always ethnocentric to some degree. However, once a person is ethnocentric to the extreme, it will result in critical consequences. Reviewing our history, disasters caused by ethnocentrism are not in the minority. Among them, what the Nazi party did is so inhumane that all the human beings are supposed to be humiliated by their behavior. Hitler’s extreme ethnocentrism used to make six million innocent Jews lose their precious life and even more people were forced to be homeless and leave their motherland. Looking at our country, ethnocentrism also exists. For example, the ancient emperors thought their territory was the center of the world and exaggerated the Hans’ advantages. Whenever foreigners paid a visit to them, they tended to show their pride and scorn.

**Causes**

Ethnocentrism is believed to be a learned behavior embedded into a variety of beliefs and values of an individual or group.

Due to enculturation, individuals in in-groups have a deeper sense of loyalty and are more likely to following the norms and develop relationships with associated members. Within relation to enculturation, ethnocentrism is said to be a transgenerational problem since stereotypes and similar perspectives can be enforced and encouraged as time progresses. Although loyalty can increase better in-group approval, limited interactions with other cultures can prevent individuals to have an understanding and appreciation towards cultural differences resulting in greater ethnocentrism.

The social identity approach suggests that ethnocentric beliefs are caused by a strong identification with one's own culture that directly creates a positive view of that culture. It is theorized that, people make social comparisons that cast competing cultural groups in an unfavorable light.

Alternative or opposite perspectives could cause individuals to develop naïve realism and be subject to limitations in understandings. These characteristics can also lead to individuals to become subject to ethnocentrism, when referencing out-groups, and black sheep effect, where personal perspectives contradict those from fellow in-groupers.

Realistic conflict theory assumes that ethnocentrism happens due to "real or perceived conflict" between groups. This also happens when a dominant group may perceive the new members as a threat.

Although the causes of ethnocentric beliefs and actions can have varying roots of context and reason, the effects of ethnocentrism has had both negative and positive effects throughout history. The most detrimental effects of ethnocentrism resulting into genocide, apartheid, slavery, and many violent conflicts. Historical examples of these negative effects of ethnocentrism are The Holocaust, the Crusades, the Trail of Tears, and the internment of Japanese Americans. These events were a result of cultural differences reinforced inhumanely by a superior, majority group.

The positive examples of ethnocentrism throughout history have aimed to prohibit the callousness of ethnocentrism and reverse the perspectives of living in a single culture. These organizations can include the formation of the United Nations; aimed to maintain international relations, and the Olympic Games; a celebration of sports and friendly competition between cultures.

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Effects

A study in New Zealand was used to compare how individuals associate with in-groups and out-groupers and has a connotation to discrimination. Strong in-group favoritism benefits the dominant groups and is different from out-group hostility or punishment. A suggested solution is to limit the perceived threat from the out-group that also decreases the likeliness for those supporting the in-groups to negatively react.

Ethnocentrism also influences consumer preference over which goods they purchase. A study showed a correlation between national identity, consumer cosmopolitanism, consumer ethnocentrism, and the methods consumer choose their products, whether imported or domestic.

Ethnocentrism and Racism

Ethnocentrism is usually associated with racism. However, as mentioned before, ethnocentrism does not necessarily implicate a negative connotation. In European research the term racism is not linked to ethnocentrism because Europeans avoid applying the concept of race to humans; meanwhile, using this term is not a problem for American researchers. Since ethnocentrism implicated a strong identification with one's in-group, it mostly automatically leads to negative feelings and stereotyping to the members of the outgroup, which can be confused with racism.[31] Finally, scholars agree that avoiding stereotypes is an indispensable prerequisite to overcome ethnocentrism; and mass media play a key role regarding this issue.

Effects of ethnocentrism in the media

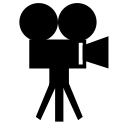
Mass media plays an important role in our current society. We are constantly exposed to media content every day. Researchers had found that ethnocentrism is dysfunctional in communication and similar fields because the lack of acceptance of other cultures leads to the creation of barriers for people of different backgrounds to interact with each other. The presence of ethnocentrism in media content creates an issue in the exchange of messages in the communication process. The media industry is dominated by the Global North, so Western ethnocentrism tends to be exposed in the media. This can be seen in the predominance of Westerner content in TV shows, film, and other forms of mass media. Some Western shows tend to depict foreign cultures as inferior or strange in contrast to their own culture.

Film

Cinema has been around our society since the beginning of the 20th century, and it is an important tool that allow to entertain and educate the viewer. Western companies are usually the leaders of the film industry. Thus, it is common to be exposed to content based on Westerners' point of view. Examples of ethnocentrism are constantly seen in films whether intentionally or unintentionally. A clear example of this can be seen on the American animated film Aladdin by Disney in 1992; the opening song of the movie is "Arabian Nights," it is mentioned on the lyrics that that land "it's barbaric, hey, but it's home," which had caused debates among the audience because it could lead to thinking that the Arabic culture is barbaric. Examples like this abound on many Hollywood films. Experts on the field propose that a way of overcoming ethnocentrism is to avoid the use of stereotypes in films. Therefore, the presence of ethnocentrism in cinema leads to stereotypical images of cultures that are different to ours.

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Ethnocentrism in Western films



Aladdin from Disney as an example of ethnocentrism



Social Media

Social media plays an essential role in society, and it is considered an important part of human life. Similarly to the film industry, social media platforms are mainly owned by Western companies. For example, in the present, the most popular social media platforms are Facebook and Instagram, which are owned by the American Mark Zuckerberg. In today's world, a considerable amount of people is exposed to social media, whose purpose is to encourage interaction among users. Social media has been associated with increase of access and interaction, and a tool created for information delivery and exchange of information. However, that exchange of information can be blocked by ethnocentrism because it can diminish the interest of interacting with people from other cultures, it also can act as a discouraging factor in pursuing intercultural friendships. In this way, ethnocentrism affects social media not only because the majority of the content came from the West but also because it can decrease the interaction with other users due to their culture.

Ethnocentrism in Pop Culture

Certain movies and TV shows revolve around a certain culture. They either make light of the culture's idiosyncrasies or embrace the wonder of it all. Let's take a look at a few examples.

In the Movies

In the movies, ethnocentrism isn't often presented as a serious problem. It serves more as an entertaining device. The father in My Big Fat Greek Wedding constantly states that he can trace any word back to Greek origins. Furthermore, the entire movie is centered around the thrills and issues of planning a Greek wedding. Ultimately, though, the movie has a happy ending, subtly suggesting that the positives outweigh the negatives.

Another example of ethnocentrism covered with humor occurs in the comedy American Wedding. Upon learning that her grandson isn't marrying a Jewish girl, Jim's grandmother becomes inconsolable. Furthermore, Michelle's father makes the mistake of toasting to his soon-to-be in-laws with hopes that they'll sit many happy shivas together. He's painted as a fool for his statement, and the movie subtly indicates a Jewish ethnocentrism.

In Television

If you have Amazon Prime, you've probably seen ads for The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel. It tells the story of a young Jewish girl living in New York City in the 1950s. She was raised by strict Jewish parents, went off to college, and then married a nice Jewish boy. A few years into their marriage, her husband left her for - Heaven forbid - a Gentile.

We watch the family as they spend their Sabbaths in the temple and clamor to win the rabbi's affection so he'll visit their home on the Sabbath. Mrs. Maisel befriends a Catholic co-worker and mocks the name of her church - Our Lady of Perpetual Sorrow. The show is purely a comedy, but there's no doubt this Jewish family thinks their culture is far superior to any Gentile's way of living.

In Literature

In Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God, the main character, Janie Starks, is a light-skinned black woman. For this, the other black woman in her town are full of contempt for her. She seems to straddle the line between black and white at various points.

This novel indicates that ethnocentrism is an extremely broad topic because even within one's own ethnicity, divisions will be found. The writing illustrates important components of ethnocentrism in history as well because, before the victory of the Civil Rights era, blacks would often try to "pass" for whites, and those who succeeded were often scorned by other blacks.

The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare portrays an intense disagreement between the Jewish character Shylock and the Christian character Antonio. Antonio constantly scorns Shylock for being a Jew, which ultimately culminates in one of the most famous speeches of all time where Shylock asks:

## Conclusion

Ethnocentrism may not, in some circumstances, be avoidable. We all often have instinctual reactions toward another person or culture’s practices or beliefs. But these reactions do not have to result in horrible events such as genocide or war. In order to avoid such awful things like those we must all try to be more culturally relative. Ethnocentrism is one solution to tension between one cultural self and another cultural self. It helps reduce the other way of life to a version of one’s own.