

# Ethnocentrism: culture and social integration assignment

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Ethnocentrism Ethnocentrism is the tendency to look at the world primarily from the perspective of one's own culture. Ethnocentrism often bring about the belief that one's own race or ethnic group is the most important and/or are superior to those of other groups. Ethnocentrism can have both a positive and negative effect in one's personal life. " On the positive side, it creates in-group loyalties. On the negative side, ethnocentrism can lead to discrimination against people whose ways differ from ours"(Henslin 2006: 33).

The positive definition defines ethnocentrism as " the point of view that one's own way of life is to be preferred to all others" (Herskovits 1973: 21). There is nothing wrong with such feelings, because " it characterizes the way most individuals feel about their own cultures, whether or not they verbalize their feelings" (Herskovits 1973: 21). It is this point of view that gives people their sense of people-hood, group identity, and place in history. Another positive thing birthed from ethnocentrism is patriotism.

While extreme nationalism can lead to wars, having a sense of pride in one's country is always good for the society. Since Americans think they have the best culture, they tend to strut it around. With strutting around also comes a better lifestyle. Even though Americans do not have the best way of living, the belief of being the best has lead us to living a comfortable lifestyle. Being a little bit ethnocentric develops a strong unity in different people groups. It also helps social integration among groups.

Social integration is a positive action according to Emile Durkheim. Durkheim even called social integration the " protection from suicide". So in a sense,

ethnocentrism can be considered as a protection from suicide.

Ethnocentrism can lead to a group thinking they are self-righteous and better than another group. It also gives lead way to judge another culture's way of life. Ethnocentrism is wrong for obvious reasons; it puts down a certain group or culture. I think the biggest case of ethnocentrism that America has experienced is the time of the second civil war.

Ethnocentrism was what came between the white and black people for centuries. Even today, in 2007, white and black people are both suffering the consequences of the past ethnocentrism. Another example of this is when Adolph Hitler and his Nazi followers thought they were better then the Jewish people and even judged the Jewish people to be lower than dirt. This case of ethnocentrism lead to the horrifying deaths of about six million Jewish people. Hitler's ethnocentric mindset eventually led to World War 2.

Ethnocentrism becomes negative when " one's own group becomes the center of everything, and all other are scaled and rated with reference to it"(Herskovits 1973: 21). It reaches extreme negative form when " a more powerful group not only imposes its rule on another, but actively depreciates the things they hold to be of value" (Herskovits 1973: 103). In conclusion, ethnocentrism can be both a bad and good thing. It is good to be proud of one's heritage, country, and culture. Ethnocentrism can lead to social integration and strong personal, patriotism, and group ties.

Extreme ethnocentrism can breed racism, hate crimes, and even wars. The worse cases of ethnocentrism can be seen in World War 2 and Civil War 2. Instead of people getting mad when others are being a little bit ethnocentric,

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they should first see the ethnocentrism in themselves. Then they should learn that a person's ethnocentrism is what their biases are. It is only clear that a negative attitude towards other culture or groups arise out of ethnocentrism, while positive attitude is the result of a cultural relativist approach. One must never feel that not understanding another culture is problematic.

It is always a disadvantage to view culture in an ethnic way. To understand culture one must endure and encounter the culture from the inside. It would be mere arrogance for us to try to judge the conduct of other cultures. We should perhaps keep an open mind and a genuine insight that different cultures do have different moral codes. . REFERENCE Herkovits, Meville J. " Cultural Relativism": Perspectives in Cultural Pluralism. New York: Vintage Books, 1973. Henslin, James M. " Essentials of Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach". Boston, MA: The Book Company, 2006