

Ethnocentrism and stereotypes assignment

Sociology



These mannerisms lead to seeing other ways of life through a slanted perspective which can lead to unhealthy feelings of haughtiness and self-righteousness. A variety of cultures can appear differently, depending on our perspective. In many ways we are like the blind men in the fable written by the Persian poet Gal. ʾl al-Din R; mi, The Blind Men and the Elephant. “ A beast of mystery appeared in the land of the blind. The raja sent his advisors out to Investigate. Waiting until the mysterious beast was sleeping, they touched it.

When the blind men had felt the creature, the Ajax went to each of them and said to each, ‘ Well, blind man, have you seen this beast? Tell me, what sort of thing is the creature? There upon the men who were presented with the body answered, ‘ Sire, this beast is like a wall. ‘ While the men who had observed the ear replied, ‘ No, this animal is like a fan. ‘ Those who had touched the tusk said, The beast is like a spear. ‘ Those who knew only the trunk said it was a snake; others said the leg was a tree; the tail, a rope.

All of these blind men described parts of the same thing a sleeping elephant. As you can see, the blind men had only a partial view of the elephant. There moral here is that if you put together your partial views in proper order, you will get an idea of what an elephant looks like. As Americans we seem to be limited by our own perspectives of given cultures and groups of people and fail to see the variety of viewpoints present. Assumptions can also reflect false positive attitudes about others’ ways.

For example, we in an urban industrial society frequently think of other cultures as being “ free of the stresses of modern society. Unfortunately this

view fails to recognize that many stresses are present in their way of life, including the threat of disease, risk of starvation, and lack of transportation to name a few. False positive assumptions are just as misleading as false negative assumptions. Ethnocentrism leads to misunderstanding others and the generalization regarding a person or group of persons, stereotyping.

We falsely distort what is meaningful and functional to other peoples through our own point of view. We see their ways in terms of our life experience, not their context. We do not understand that their ways have their own meanings and functions In life, Just as our ways have for us. We develop stereotypes when we are unable or unwilling to obtain all of the Information we would need to make fair judgments about people or situations.

In the absence of the “ total picture,” stereotypes in many cases allow us to “ fill in the blanks. ” Our often lead to unfair discrimination and persecution when the stereotype is unfavorable. For example, if you were walking downtown late at night and come upon three senior tizzies walking with canes and wearing fur coats, you may not feel as intimidated as if you encountered three college-aged boys wearing leather Jackets. Why is this so?

In each case we have made a generalization. These generalizations have been formed based on experiences we have had ourselves, read about in books and magazines, seen in movies or television, or have had related to us by friends and family. In many cases, these stereotypical generalizations are reasonably accurate. Yet, in virtually every case, we are resorting to prejudice by ascribing characteristics bout a person based on a stereotype, without knowledge of the total facts.

By stereotyping, we assume that a person or group has certain characteristics. Quite often, we have stereotypes about individuals who are members of groups with which we have not had firsthand contact. So here we have a paradox: we falsely assume because we are not even aware we are assuming... And furthermore it is the normal thing to do. We cannot not be ethnocentric, and we cannot will it away or make ourselves have a completely open attitude. Is it ever possible not to be ethnocentric?