Commentary

Causes and effects of ethnocentrism in the media

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DESCRIPTION

Ethnocentrism in social science and anthropology, as well as in spoken English discourse, refers to the use of one's own culture or ethnicity as a frame of reference for evaluating other cultures, practices, behaviours, beliefs, and people, rather than using culture-speciic standards . Because this view is often negative, some people also use the term to refer to the belief that one's culture is superior, more correct, or normal than all others, especially in relation to the differences that define the cultural identity of each ethnic group, such as language, behaviour, customs and religion. In common usage, it can also simply mean any culturally biased opinion.

Ethnocentrism is sometimes associated with racism, stereotyping, discrimination or xenophobia. However, the term "ethnocentrism" does not necessarily include a negative view of the race of others or indicate a negative connotation. The opposite of ethnocentrism is cultural relativism, a guiding philosophy that states that the best way to understand another culture is through their perspective, rather than evaluating them from subjective perspectives shaped by one's own cultural standards (Bizumic, 2014).

Causes

Ethnocentrism is believed to be a learned behavior built into the various beliefs and values of an individual (Caligiu -ri et al., 2016). Due to enculturation, people in groups have a deeper sense of loyalty and are more inclined to adhere to norms and develop relationships with associated members. In relation to enculturation, ethnocentrism is considered a generational problem, as stereotypes and similar perspectives can be imposed and encouraged over time. Although loyalty can increase in-group approval, limited exposure to other cultures can prevent people from understanding and appreciating

cultural differences, leading to greater ethnocentrism. The social identity approach suggests that ethnocentric beliefs are caused by a person's strong identification with one's own culture, which directly creates a positive view of that culture (Cashdan, 2001).

Effects of ethnocentrism in the media

Mass media play an important role in our modern society. Every day we are constantly exposed to media content. Researchers have found that ethnocentrism does not work in communication and similar fields because the rejection of other cultures leads to the creation of barriers to the interaction of people of the different backgrounds (Elchardus et al., 2007). Therefore, the presence of ethnocentrism in the media content creates a problem 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 is evident in the predominance of Western content in TV shows, movies and other forms of media. Some shows tend to portray foreign cultures as inferior or strange in contrast to their own culture (Hitchens, 1994).

Film: Film has existed in our society since the beginning of the 20th century and is an important tool to entertain or educate the viewer (Ridzuan et al., 2012). Western companies are usually leaders in the film industry. Therefore, it is common to be exposed to content based on Western perspectives. Examples of ethnocentrism can be seen constantly in films, intentionally or unintentionally. A prime example of this can be seen in Disney's 1992 American cartoon Aladdin; the opening song of the film is "Arabian Nights", the lyrics mention that this land "is barbarism, hey, but it's home", which caused debate among the audience because it could lead to the idea that Arab culture is barbaric. Such examples abound in many Hollywood films. Experts in the field suggest that the way to overcome ethnocentrism is to avoid the use of stereotypes in films. Therefore, the presence of ethnocentrism in cinema leads to stereotypical images of cultures different from ours.

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Another example of a movie is called Crazy Rich Asians, based on a book by Kevin Kwan; the movie was made in 2018. The general premise of the movie is that families in Singapore are superior to all other cultures (Sammut et al., 2015).

Social media: A significant number of people are exposed to social networks, the purpose of which is to stimulate interaction between users. Social networks have become a reliable source to be able to interact with others around the world (Zeugner-Roth et al., 2015). The most common popular social media platforms are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube and Tiktok. Social networks tend to play a positive and constructive role in society in that they educate, guide/entertain the public, and raise awareness of other cultures by illustrating how each one differs from the other. Although social media can produce positive results within ethnocentrism, there are also negative points where it allows other cultures to judge each other and create controversy. An ethnocentric person can hinder the exchange of information, reducing interest in communication with representatives of other cultures.

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