Ethnocentrism and Racism

Historical Views
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...and...
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Your comments, criticisms and suggestions are welcome...
Ethnocentrism and Racism

The learning objectives for this presentation are:

– to understand the similarities and differences between ethnocentrism and racism, and;
– to know a few of the most important examples of such beliefs in ancient and recent times.
Ethnocentrism and Racism

Terms you should know at the end of this slideshow are:

– ethnocentrism
– racism
– barbarian
– savage
Ethnocentrism and Racism

Sources:


2. Racism—the Genetic Version of Ethnocentrism and Why Anthropologists Reject It

Ethnocentrism and Racism

Sources:

3. Psychological Component of Ethnocentrism and Racism -- Prejudice

Ethnocentrism

1. The belief that one's own culture is good, beautiful, or important and that

– to the extent they are different –
2. Other cultures are inhuman, disgusting, irrational, ugly, savage...
Ethnocentrism

...can be present in any culture, but it is probably most important to identify and question it in one’s own –
European Ethnocentrism: 1400 AD

By CE (AD) 1400 the European upper classes had developed a complex and sophisticated system of ethnocentrism —including the categories of

– 1. Barbarians: (Greek: “strangers”)

Treacherous, cruel, illiterate, uncultured foreigners with different languages and customs.

European Ethnocentrism: 1400 AD

2. Pagans (Latin: “civilian”)
   – Rural people who remained non Christian even after Christianity had been adopted in the major cities

3. Heathens (Anglo-Saxon from “heath,” a wasteland)
   – Polytheists: not Christian, Muslim, or Jew.
European Ethnocentrism: 1400 AD

4. Infidels (Latin: “unfaithful”)
   – People following religions thought to be opposed to Christianity; usually a reference to Muslims

...and...
European Ethnocentrism: 1400 AD

5. Savages (also called “wild men”) (Latin: “silva,” forest)
   - Wild, fierce, cruel, ungovernable, people without good behavior, hairy, lacking the ability to speak and lacking the ability to conceive of a God
   - Savages were thought to have fallen from an original human status to live in the wilderness like other animals and to survive only by strength and aggressiveness
Racism

...is the biological version of ethnocentrism. In place of cultures, physical types are used...
Racism Is...

...the belief in superior or inferior races
Racism As a Set of Beliefs

Main psychological component is:

stereotyping
In 1954 Harvard psychologist Gordon Allport wrote the classic work on prejudice. He defined a stereotype as...
“...an exaggerated belief associated with a category [of people].”

Stereotypes are usually the basis of “prejudice,” which Allport defined (p.8) as:

“An avertive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group”
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Stereotypes and prejudice can occur in many ways and among any groups but in the history of the United States probably the strongest prejudices have been based on racial stereotypes.
What’s Wrong With Racism?

Racism is based on degrading and insulting stereotypes of individuals and groups.
What’s Wrong With Racism?

Beliefs about racial inferiority or superiority have helped justify oppression, exploitation, slavery, discrimination and genocide; wherever it still exists, racism continues to interfere with efforts to build a just and peaceful world.
Racism: Some Historical Views

“Do not obtain your slaves from Britain because they are so stupid and so utterly incapable of being taught that they are not fit to form a part of the household of Athens.”

Cicero to Atticus, 1st Century BC

Racism: Some Historical Views

“The White [here meaning “Nordic”] race originally possessed the monopoly of beauty, intelligence and strength. By its union with other varieties [here referring to Alpines or Mediterraneans], hybrids were created, which were beautiful without strength, strong without intelligence, or if intelligent, both weak and ugly.”

Racism: Some Historical Views

“Judgment, truthfulness and energy always distinguish the Nordic man. He feels a strong urge toward truth and justice....Passion in the usual meaning of the rousing of the senses or the heightening of the sexual life has little meaning for him....He is never without a certain knightliness.”

Racism: Some Historical Views

The Negroes Character

Cowardly and cruel are those Blacks Innate,
Prone to Revenge, Imp of inveterate hate.
He that exasperates them, soon espies
Mischief and Murder in their very eyes.
Libidinous, Deceitful, False and Rude,
The Spume Issue of Ingratitude

John Saffin. 1701. *A Brief and Candid Answer to a Late Printed Sheet, Entitled The Selling of Joseph* [the first New England antislavery pamphlet].
Racism: Some Historical Views

“Comparing them [blacks] by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous.”

Racism: Some Historical Views

“The innate love to act as body servant or lacquey is too strongly developed in the negro race to be concealed...the primordial cell germ of the Nigritians has no more potency than what is sufficient to form a being with physical power...with the mental organization too imperfect to enable him to extricate himself from barbarism.”


Racism: Stereotyping an “Enemy”

“There is no difference between Jew and Jew. Every Jew is a sworn enemy of the German people. If he fails to display his hostility against us, it is merely out of cowardice and slyness but not because his heart is free of it.”

Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Propaganda Minister, 1941

Racism: Identifying an “Enemy”

“The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second-and third generation Japanese, born on United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship have become “Americanized,” the racial strains are undiluted.... It, therefore, follows, that along the vital Pacific Coast over 112,000 potential enemies, of Japanese extraction, are at large today.”

Lieutenant-General John L. DeWitt, Commanding General, Western Defense Command, February, 1942

Racism: Identifying an “Enemy”

“I suppose I should be ashamed to say that I take the Western view of the Indian. I don’t go so far as to think that the only good Indians are the dead Indians, but I believe nine out of every ten are, and I shouldn’t inquire too closely into the case of the tenth. The most vicious cowboy has more moral principle than the average Indian.”


Racism and/or Ethnocentrism: Identifying an “Enemy”

“Ellison’s [...taking the oath on a Koran] will embolden Islamic extremists and make new ones, as Islamists, rightly or wrongly, see the first sign of the realization of their greatest goal – the Islamicization of America.”

Dennis Prager, conservative radio host
December 2006
Racism: Some Historical Views

Ethnocentrism?

“If you’re incapable of taking the oath on [the Bible], don’t serve in Congress.”

Dennis Prager, conservative radio host, after the first Muslim was elected to the US Congress, Keith Ellison of Minnesota
Racism: Some Historical Views

“Keith Ellison...does not have to answer to you, to me or anyone else in regards to questions about his faith.”

Bill Pascrell, Democratic representative from the 8th District in New Jersey that includes MSU’s campus.
Racism: Identifying an “Enemy”

In a private ceremony (after being sworn in publicly without any religious paraphernalia) as an elected member of the US House of Representatives in Jan 2007, Keith Ellison of Minnesota used Thomas Jefferson’s Koran…
End of Slides on Ethnocentrism and Racism