

ferent dimensions and activities to roles. What may be considered women's work or masculine emotions in one culture may be the reverse in another. Hall (1959) points out that great emotion is expected of men in Iran but of women in North American or northern European cultures. In many African and Native American cultures, heavy farm labor and carrying cumbersome burdens are seen as women's work (see chap. 5). (See **Activity B—Proverbs**)

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is the belief in the intrinsic superiority of one's own culture, language, and/or ethnic group. Because it involves emotions, it is not an intellectual exercise of comparing one culture with another culture. It is a highly subjective, personal, emotional, and (usually) subconscious way of valuing one's own culture above other cultures. The symbols of a cultural group's ethnicity, religion, and the like are objects of pride and veneration. There is the tendency to judge members of other cultures on the basis of one's own personal cultural standards. For example, instead of trying to understand Mexicans within their own cultural milieu, an ethnocentric American attempts to understand them as similar to or different from Americans.

To some extent, everyone is ethnocentric. It is the norm for members of a cultural group to consider their own culture as the standard against which to judge others. In fact, many languages intrinsically convey a sense of ethnocentrism. In Chinese, the word for China means "middle kingdom," as historically the Chinese considered their country to be the center of the world. In the Navajo language, the word for Navajo people, *Diné*, means "the people." By implication, all non-*Diné* are non-people or people of lesser status. People living in the United States refer to themselves as "Americans," ignoring the fact that everyone who lives in North, Central, and South America is also American. In the 18th century, when the Dutch occupied Taiwan, the local inhabitants were surprised to see Westerners, with their very different features, and referred to them as *a-dou-a*, which literally translates as "big nose." The phrase became generalized to mean any foreigner, that is, anyone not exhibiting "normal" Asian features.

Ethnocentrism is also reflected in the maps of the world. The Mercator projection, which has been commonly used in North America and

Europe, distorts the size of the continents and countries of the Northern Hemisphere. Greenland appears to be the same size as Africa, yet Africa is 14 times larger. The Mercator projection also makes Europe appear larger than South America. In reality, however, South America is actually twice the size of Europe. Japanese maps center Asia on the map and place the United States and Europe on the edges. In antique European maps of the world and the known solar system, “man” and Earth were always depicted as the center. At that time, Europeans could not conceive of a universe that did not revolve around the world and the people they believed their god had created in his image. **(See Activity C—Cultural Perceptions: *We and They*)**

Although ethnocentrism is a fact of human makeup, there is the concern that it at some point becomes so extreme that members of a particular culture can find nothing to value in another culture. Extreme ethnocentrism results in policies of “ethnic cleansing” (as in Kosovo, Nazi Germany, or the Sudan), according to which people are relentlessly killed in an effort to rid the world of those perceived of as being “different” and, by extension, inferior.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are overgeneralized, exaggerated, and oversimplified beliefs that people use to categorize a group of people (Allport, 1958). Stereotyping is a psychological process whereby members of one group ascribe characteristics to another group, creating beliefs and expectations about people’s behavior, attitudes, views, and demeanors. Stereotypes may be thought of as the mental pictures we have of different groups of people. In North American school systems, Asian immigrant children and teenagers frequently find that they are expected to excel in math, according to the stereotype that all Asians are good in math. Americans are often stereotyped as overweight.

Stereotypes may reflect actual, observed differences in behavior patterns among groups, and they also entail some type of attitude—often, but not necessarily, negative—toward the culture or language in question. Attitudes, which develop early in the enculturation process, are learned from parents and peers, develop through contact with people who are “different,” and result from various interacting affective factors. We have had the experience of visiting a hair salon and telling our hairdresser about a recent trip to Dublin. After mentioning that a local acquaintance