

Book Review

Race Differences in Ethnocentrism

Edward Dutton

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Certain sections of the Western intellectual elite have made it clear that the basis of the ills that currently plague Western democratic states, such as mass shootings and support for limiting immigration, is “white European racism”, in contrast to those of lesser sophistication who attribute these same ills to excess immigration. The implication of this is that only Europeans display such a trait and, furthermore, the solution to all social problems is to eradicate white European racism. While red-flagging the “epidemic” of European racism, opinion leaders have at the same time offered various remedies to eradicate white European racism, including mass migration of non-Europeans who, we are told, are entirely incapable of racism. Changing the racial and cultural composition of Western democracies, it is sometimes claimed, will finally lead to just and equal societies. How exactly a multiracial and multicultural state is to seamlessly aggregate into a functional, democratic state is a minor detail that is never fully explained. If racism is essentially the modern-day expression of survival strategies that evolved in the context of tribal warfare, as is proposed in the current book, perhaps a more likely outcome of bringing people from all corners of the world together is a sharp increase in “racist behavior” and conflict among the numerous races as each tries to establish, defend and expand its own sociopolitical and economic turfs.

Freelance writer and researcher Edward Dutton describes the origin of what has been described elsewhere as “intragroup loyalty” and “intergroup prejudice”.¹ Dutton eschews the use of politically charged words such as “racism” in his book. In pointing out the intellectual barrenness of social scientists’ theories of the origin of ethnocentrism, however, he does cite their own politically charged words. Dutton uses the definition of ethnocentrism by early 20th century economist William Sumner as the operational definition for the current book: “the view of things in which one’s own group is the center of everything and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it...” While the definition goes on to state that each group “boasts itself superior,” superiority or inferiority would be relative to

¹ McGregor, A. (1986). *Race, Evolution, Creative Intelligence and Inter-group Competition*. Washington, DC: Scott-Townsend Publishers.

each group's standards. Dutton's book delves into how and why a group's "view of things" evolved.

Others elsewhere have described ethnocentrism as in-group cooperation and out-group hostility and Dutton follows suit, carving up ethnocentrism as "positive" and "negative", respectively. He describes "positive ethnocentrism" as "taking pride in your ethnic group or nation and being prepared to make sacrifices for the good of it" and "negative ethnocentrism" as "being prejudiced against and hostile to members of other ethnic groups." Dutton argues and demonstrates that both individuals and groups can be high in, for example, positive ethnocentrism and low in negative ethnocentrism. Dutton suggests that the two traits are not necessarily correlated, as many in the past have assumed, and thus possibly mediated by separate mechanisms.

One should note that it is possible to distinguish between "negative" and "positive" ethnocentrism without connotations of good or evil — nature makes no judgments with respect to the morality of traits. The ultimate test of whether a trait is "positive" or not at the group level is if the trait ensures the continuation of the group against those without the trait. One could instead describe the two components of ethnocentrism in terms of group evolutionary strategy: out-group competition (Dutton's "negative" ethnocentrism) vs. in-group cooperation (Dutton's "positive" ethnocentrism). Ethnocentrism is precisely an evolved behavior that ensures the survival and continuity of one group over others within a defined niche with a limited carrying capacity: think of the rush to fill a limited number of lifeboats with one's kin and near-kin before allowing in any strangers.² While this may seem unduly cruel, one should remember that strangers are putting *their* kin and associates into their lifeboats at the expense of *your* kin and associates. Such behavior, obviously, provides the greatest advantage to your genes when members of your group are genetically related to yourself — which is one reason why ethnocentrism evolved in the first place. Genetic relatedness was almost certainly high in the small bands and tribes that prevailed during most of human evolution, but raises the question of ethnocentrism's biological adaptedness when applied to modern nation states — especially those that are multi-ethnic either from the outset or through immigration.

² Genetic Similarity Theory, proposed by J.P. Rushton and discussed at length in the current book, suggests that humans have evolved an innate preference for those who are similar to oneself and most likely to carry copies of one's own genes, with the ultimate purpose of propagating these genes. Genetic Similarity Theory suggests that an innate mechanism mediates how we choose our mates and allies, who tend to be similar to us in terms of personality as well as physically, and how we share our own limited resources.

Dutton raises a concrete example of racial differences in ethnocentrism — the 2015 Arab refugee migration into Europe. While Western Europe initially embraced the surge of racial and cultural aliens, Eastern Europe locked its borders. Dutton suggests that even within the European racial group, one finds a range of ethnocentrism, from low in both positive and negative ethnocentrism in Western Europeans, to high for both in Eastern Europeans based on national surveys of social attitudes. Dutton also suggests that the clannish Arabs already firmly ensconced within Western Europe have a higher degree of positive ethnocentrism compared to Western Europeans. Indeed, Dutton further demonstrates via proxies for ethnocentrism obtained from surveys that Europeans in general are low in both positive and negative ethnocentrism, whereas Arabs and East Asians are higher in both types of ethnocentrism. Interestingly, again based on national surveys, Africans, the “oldest” and the most genetically diverse race, tend to have low levels of ethnocentrism similar to Europeans.

However, while findings derived from the World Values Survey are interesting, as Dutton points out, more fine-grained data are needed to fully capture ethnocentrism itself. Indeed, items in the World Values Survey may not entirely reflect the current book’s definition of ethnocentrism. Responses in the survey could reflect popular culture and politically correct responding (favoring expressions of ethnocentrism in some countries and suppressing them in others), rather than innate preferences. For example, while Dutton suggests that West Europeans tend to be less ethnocentric than East Europeans, well before and after the 2015 Arab migration, center-right Western European states enacted restrictionist immigration policies supported by “ethnocentrists” after 2015.³ Whether economic liberalism, IQ or a history of communist government can explain East European ethnocentrism remains to be determined.

Dutton points out that during the Arab migration of 2015, most Middle Eastern countries shut their borders to the Arab refugees, despite their genetic and cultural closeness to these countries, in contrast to Europe. While somewhat alluded to in the book, it is possible that most of these countries closed their borders for security reasons rather than knee-jerk ethnocentrism.

Also, while it is intriguing that Sub-Saharan Africans are suggested to be lower in negative ethnocentrism than Europeans, again based on findings from the World Values Survey, the numerous inter-tribal African conflicts, just within the 21st century, appear to belie this observation. Dutton does point out that other

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/07/03/what-you-need-to-know-about-germanys-immigration-crisis/>

traits, such as low intelligence and high religiousness, are associated with negative ethnocentrism.

One could ask why the study of a biological basis of ethnocentrism is worthwhile. Dutton's hypothesis on ethnocentrism could be used to understand, from a biological perspective, the diverse responses of ethnic groups to the migrant crisis of 2015. Similarly, American readers will note the diversity of immigration policies espoused among American ethnics, including those that place the interests of other ethnics before those of their own. If valid, one could apply Dutton's ethnocentrism hypothesis to further explore why, for example, Europeans are more likely than other races to give away their own limited resources to those who are genetically and culturally distant from them.⁴ Without acknowledging a biological basis of ethnocentrism or other behavioral traits, one-size-fits-all welfare policies designed to accommodate aliens as well as the natives are doomed to fail for lack of popular acceptance. This raises the specter of a stark choice between fighting ethnocentrism and fighting foreigners. Disagreement on this choice has the potential of tearing postmodern societies apart. This is why the study of a biological basis of ethnocentrism is worthwhile.

The current book suggests a plausible, biologically based hypothesis of ethnocentrism. It pursues numerous strands of thought, from defining race based on genetic differentiation, human evolution through natural selection, kinship, slow-fast life history strategy, and personality theory. While ethnocentrism is the main trait under consideration, one could apply Dutton's thinking to understanding other psychological traits such as intelligence which, in fact, Dutton explores in the same manner as ethnocentrism. As an example of covering numerous strands, Dutton suggests a number of arrows of causality between intelligence and ethnocentrism. Indeed, the hypothesis of intelligence influencing ethnocentrism lends itself to empirical testing, no less than purely sociopolitical hypotheses. The usefulness of the current book is that it encourages readers to apply Dutton's evolution-based thinking to other behavioral domains and also suggests intriguing avenues for further study.

In addition to ethnocentrism, there are other traits, such as temperament, cognitive ability and physical characteristics that likely have important roles in mediating the survival of a species within an ecosystem that is replete with

⁴ Satoshi Kanazawa's definition of liberalism comes to mind: "Genuine concern for welfare of genetically unrelated others and the willingness to contribute larger proportions of private resources for the welfare of such others." Kanazawa, S. (2012). *The Intelligence Paradox: Why the Intelligent Choice Isn't Always the Smart One*. NY, NY: Wiley.

competitors. These traits, similar to ethnocentrism, are also differentially distributed among the human races. For example, Africans tend to be more prone to violence compared to either Europeans or Asians.⁵ In the US, black Americans are significantly more involved in violent criminality than either European or Asian Americans. By contrast, Asian Americans are overrepresented in the physical sciences and engineering relative to their numbers.⁶ At the same time, one cannot deny that male West and East Africans monopolize the top rankings in sports such as sprinting and long distance running, respectively.⁷ While non-biological factors, such as socioeconomic status, have been proposed as mediating racial differences in behavior and physical ability, they do not explain all or even a significant fraction of the difference. Moralistic hand wringing and finger pointing have no weight in scientific discourse. A serious discussion of racial differences, particularly in psychological traits, certainly includes examination of potential biological underpinnings. Dutton is one of the few who have boldly ventured into a part of the biological sciences that has turned into a “political” minefield.

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⁵ Rushton, J.-P. (1995). Race and crime: international data for 1989-1990. *Psychological Reports* 76:307-312. Rushton, J.-P. & Whitney, G. (2002). Cross-national variation in violent crime rates: Race, r-K Theory, and income. *Population and Environment* 23: 501-511. Rushton, J.P. & Templer, D.I. (2012). Do pigmentation and the melanocortin system modulate aggression and sexuality in humans as they do in other animals? *Personality and Individual Differences* 53: 4-8. The racial differences in tendency to criminal behavior and other anti-social behavior have also been ascribed to racial differences in psychopathic personality: Lynn, R. (2002). Racial and ethnic differences in psychopathic personality. *Personality and Individual Differences* 32: 273-316.

⁶ “Asian-Americans dominating tech?” December 21, 2012, https://www.eetimes.com/author.asp?section_id=36&doc_id=1286886#

⁷ Lynn, R. & Dutton, E. (2016). *Race and Sport: Evolution and Racial Differences in Sporting Ability*. London: Ulster Institute for Social Research.