

ETHNOCENTRISM REFLECTED BY THE MAIN CHARACTER IN *NOT WITHOUT MY DAUGHTER* BY BETTY MAHMOODY

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ABSTRACT

The study aims at exploring the ethnocentrism issue depicted in the main character in Betty Mahmoody novel entitled Not Without My Daughter and its effect in interacting with Iranians. The study uses qualitative method. It used Not Without My Daughter novel as the primary data and scholarly writing related to the study as the secondary data. It focuses analyzing the research used theory of ethnocentrism. As the result, the novel showed things that indicate behavior of expressing an ethnocentric person and the effect of that issue to Betty's interactions with Iranians. The ultimate goal of the study are to report if the main character in Not Without My Daughter novel depicted her ethnocentric behavior to other ethnic group that is Iranian. She would prefer her own group and the members to Iranian, she behaved as superior and felt to keep her purity from Iranian. It also reports if the main character also depicted some effects of ethnocentrism such as saw the good thing at American than Iranian, differentiated American and Iranian, rejected knowledge of Iranians' culture, and so forth.

Keywords: *Iranian, American, Ethnic Group, Ethnocentrism, Not Without My Daughter*

INTRODUCTION

In this world, people cannot live without each other since they are social beings. Therefore, they must live together in a society. They cannot live well without society since it refers to Anil Kumar “Society has become an essential condition for human life to continue” (6).

Based on David Copp, stated, “A society is a kind of collective entity, as is a nation, a state, an organization, and a family” (183). As we can see at that, society is a unity of people or member and every individual is connected. They usually have some similar background such as ethnicity, religion, or culture.

Hence, in this case, society gives many positive impacts on its member. They will be loyal members such as helping, defending, and supporting each other. All the way, they will be a cohesive group as always. Unfortunately, it brings them to the negative side named a social issue. It is ethnocentrism. In this case, they tend to be a loyal member of their society or group.

Unconsciously, ethnocentrism is one of the social issues that often happened in society. Ethnocentrism itself has a definition as a term that one’s group is the center of another group. They usually differentiate their group and another group by the ethnic. They think that their group is superior and other group is inferior caused they see something based on their standard. The term ethnocentrism is first popularized by Sumner in 1906. He (13) pointed out, “Ethnocentrism is the technical name for this view things in which one’s own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it...” (qtd. in ÖĞRETİR and ÖZÇELİK 237). Resemble with that, Bizumic et al. (874) argued, “We argue that ethnocentrism should be seen primarily as ethnic group self-centeredness, which is conceptually distinct from outgroup negativity and mere ingroup positivity.” It shows that ethnocentrism means similar to ethnic group self-centeredness. This point depicts how the ethnic group is everything of others. Hence, it creates ingroup positivity and outgroup negativity.

Ethnocentrism is also about self-centeredness and self-importance in which one’s own ethnicity is more important than another group. Sumner defined “Ethnocentrism as a belief that one’s ingroup was the center of everything...” (qtd. in Bizumic and Sheppard 4). Bizumic and Duckitt argued that Ethnocentrism consists of intergroup expressions (preference, superiority, purity, and exploitativeness), which assume that the ingroup is more important than other groups; and intragroup expressions (devotion and group cohesion), ... (102). It can be concluded that Ethnocentrism has two main expressions, they are intergroup expressions (one’s own culture is superior and more important than other cultures), and intragroup expressions (one’s group is more important than its members).

Bizumic and Duckitt (102) has defined that there are four expressions of intergroup ethnocentrism. The first one is preference; it is represented as the tendency to like one’s own ethnic group and the members than out-groups. The second one is superiority; it is represented as a belief that one’s own ethnic group is better than or superior to other groups on some dimensions. It is usually the central significance of the group, it involves spirituality, strength, morality, history, and so forth. The third one is purity; it

is represented as a desire to keep one's ethnic group purity so that they tend rejecting to mix with other groups. The last one is exploitativeness; it is represented as a belief that one's own ethnic group interests are more important than other groups, and they would not consider the views and feelings of other groups.

On the other hand, there are two expressions of intragroup ethnocentrism by Bizumic and Duckitt. The first is Group Cohesion; it is represented as a belief that the members of one's own ethnic group should be cooperative, integrated, and unified, and then they have to reject personal business for the group unity. The second is devotion; it is represented as strong and unconditional loyalty and dedication from the group members and its interest.

Hereafter, after doing those expressions, an individual or group becomes ethnocentric people. Gudykunst 2003; Harris&Jonson 2007; Jandt 2004; based on Zikargae 2013 stated about eight effects of ethnocentrism. First effect, it can lead people to an almost complete misunderstanding of values, intentions, statements, and actions of others, thereby, turning attempts at intercultural communication into serious miscommunications. Second, it makes people to accept ones group's norms, values and behaviors seen as moral, good and proper where as those of groups that differ from one's own often are seen as immoral, wrong, and improper. Third, it can lead people to exaggerate group differences. Ethnocentric cultural groups see themselves as superior to other groups, which are treated, as inferior. Fourth, Complicates intercultural issue and it creates intercultural relations problems in part because people expect others to think and behave as they do. Fifth, it can bring people to hinder the understanding of the customs of other people, and at the same time, keeps them from understanding their own customs. Sixth, it tends bring about negative affective reactions to out groups such as distrust, hostility, and contempt. Seventh, it can lead people to intolerance of other cultures and is used to justify the mistreatment of others. Eighth, it can drive to a rejection of the richness and knowledge of other cultures. Furthermore, it impedes communication and blocks the exchange of ideas and skills among peoples.

This study focuses on ethnocentric behavior depicted in the main character to Iranian using expressions of ethnocentrism based on Bizumic and Duckitt's theory. It also focuses on finding the effects caused by that ethnocentric behavior using the theory of Gudykunst 2003; Harris&Jonson 2007; Jandt 2004; based on Zikargae 2013. In this study, Betty Mahmoody has practiced three intergroup ethnocentrism and one intragroup ethnocentrism. After that, she represents five of eight of effects ethnocentrism.

METHOD

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative method where the analysis was focusing on the discovery of the content, meaning, structure, and converse of a text. Hence, it was just depending on the text of the novel as the main data source. Qualitative research was an approach to a scientific inquiry that allowed researchers to explore human experiences in personal and social contexts, and also gain a greater understanding of the factors that were influencing these experiences (Leslie 43). The research forms were descriptive data by explaining the sentences.

This study contained four parts in the data collecting method. Those were reading the novel, the next one was identifying the data, after that classifying the data, and the last one was reducing the data. There were two types of data in this study, the first one was called primary data, it was gained from *Not Without My Daughter* novel by Betty Mahmoody which was published by Bantam Press, a division of Transworld Publisher Ltd in 1987. The second type was secondary data, it was contained some supporting data and it came from the range of scholarly writing that was carefully selected to support the explanations and clarifications of primary data being used in the analysis process. For example; e-books, journals, articles, and others related to the study.

The final step of this study was analyzing the data using the descriptive analysis technique. In this study, the data were in form of sentences that found in dialogues and monologues. Lastly, the ultimate step was the appendix, in appendix it explained several statements from the novel as the supporting data in this study.

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

The discussion of this study examines how the ethnocentrism issue portrays in Betty Mahmoody as the main character and how that issue affects Betty's interactions with Iranian in *Not Without My Daughter* novel by Betty Mahmoody. Furthermore, according to Bizumic and Duckitt (102), there are two types of the expressions of ethnocentrism that may be showed in person or people. They are intergroup ethnocentrism and intragroup ethnocentrism. The main character Betty Mahmoody who is discussed in this study has reflected both the expressions. In the intergroup ethnocentrism, she just depicts three kinds of expressions of four. Whereas in intragroup ethnocentrism, she just depicts one kind expression of two that is group cohesion. Those expressions have been explained in the following:

1. Preference

This expression means that ethnocentric people would tend to like their own ethnic and the members over the other group. This shows that people would think to like and feel comfortable when they live in society with the same ethnic group. In this case, Betty Mahmoody behaves that she is not comfortable to be in Iran while she prefer to live in America.

Mahtob and I exchanged glances, reading each other's mind. **This vacation was a brief interruption of our otherwise normal American lives. We could endure it, but we did not have to like it. From that very moment we began counting the days until we could go home.** (Betty Mahmoody, 17).

Moody and Mahtob do not like the vacation to Iran but they have to endure it. Betty always counts the days until they can go back to America. This is included in an intergroup ethnocentrism named preference because it deals with Betty's preference to like her own ethnic group and the members over others.

2. Superiority

This expression means that ethnocentric people would believe and tend to think that

their own ethnic is superior and better than the other ethnic group based on some dimensions. In this case, it is usually the central significance to the group such as the morality, history, strength, spirituality and many of them. Thus, each ethnic group usually has their own aspects of life. Then, this shows how ethnocentric people would say or assume that their own ethnic is the best one over others. In this matter, Betty Mahmoody behaves that American as her ethnic is the better one from Iranian.

Once more I glanced at my reflection, dismissing the thought of running a brush through my brown hair. Why bother? I asked myself. **I donned the heavy green scarf Moody said I must wear whenever we were outdoors. Knotted under my chin, it made me look like an old peasant woman.** (Betty Mahmoody, 2).

She has to wear a heavy green scarf. It really bothers her and she also cannot comb her brown hair. She always feels looks like an old pleasant woman while wearing the scarf because she must knot it under her chin. Then it is included in an intergroup ethnocentrism named superiority because it deals with Betty's assumption that Iranians' tradition is not better than America.

3. Purity

This expression means that ethnocentric people would tend to keep their purity from another ethnic group, so they tend to reject mixing with others. In this matter, Betty Mahmoody as an ethnocentric one behaves to maintain her purity as American from Iranian.

This is a mistake, I said to myself. If only I could get off this plane right now. I locked myself in the rest room and glanced into the mirror to see a woman on the ragged edge of panic. I had just turned thirty-nine, and at that age a woman should have a handle on life. How, I wondered, had I lost control? (Betty Mahmoody, 1).

She is on the plane to have a vacation to Iran with her family. Yet she is truly sad and hopes to get off the plane. She thinks she has made a mistake to go to Iran. She is so panicked and locks herself in the restroom. It is included to an intergroup ethnocentrism named purity since it deals with Betty's desire not to go to Iran.

4. Group Cohesion

This is one of two of the intragroup ethnocentrism that reflected by Betty Mahmoody in the novel. This expression has a meaning that ethnocentric people would behave to reject their own individuality for the unity of their own group. Thus, the group would be a cooperative and unified. Then in this matter, Betty tries to reject her own individuality in order she could escape from Iran with Mahtob.

“Give us refuge here,” I pleaded. “Then find some way to get us home.”

“Why are you talking about?” Helen responded. “You cannot stay *here!*”

“We can't go back to his house.”

“You are an Iranian citizen,” Helen said softly.

“No, I’m an *American* citizen.”

“You are Iranian,” she repeated, “and you have to abide by Iranian law.”

Not unkindly, but firmly, she explained that from the moment I married an Iranian I became a citizen under Iranian law. Legally, both Mahtob and I were, indeed, Iranian.

A cold chill settled over me. “I don’t want to be an American citizen.”

Helen shook her head. “No,” she said softly. “You have to go back to him.”

“He’ll beat me,” I cried. I pointed to Mahtob. “He’ll beat *us!*” Helen empathized, but she was simply powerless to help. “We’re being held in this house,” I said, trying again as large tears rolled down my cheeks. “**We just managed to escape out the front door because everybody is sleeping.** We can’t go back. He’ll lock us up. I’m really afraid what will happen to us.” (Betty Mahmoody, 70-71).

Betty goes to the U.S Interest Section of the Embassy of Switzerland then she meets the officer named Helen. She tries hard to run away from home when everyone is sleeping. There is conversation between Helen and Betty. She tells how much she and Mahtob suffered in Iran, she just hopes Helen would help her and Mahtob to go back America. Yet Helen cannot do something since Betty and Mahtob are Iranian citizens in Iranian law. It shows that it included in an intragroup ethnocentrism named group cohesion since it deals with Betty’s effort and cooperative to come back to America to reunite with her own family.

THE EFFECTS OF ETHNOCENTRISM

Individual or group depicts their behavior ethnocentric through the expressions of ethnocentrism. Furthermore, it drives them to the negative effects. Then, that effects bring them to interact unkindly to other ethnic group. There are five of eight effects that depict in Betty Mahmoody as the main character in the novel of *Not Without My Daughter* by Betty Mahmoody, those have been explained in the following:

1. **Accepts ones group's norms, values and behaviors seen as moral, good and proper where as those of groups that differ from one's own often are seen as immoral, wrong, and improper.**

This effect makes the ethnocentric people would just accept their own group’s norms, values and behaviors seen as moral and good things while the other groups that differ from them are often seen the opposite. In this matter, Betty Mahmoody accepts that her ethnic’s norms, values, and behaviors is a moral, good, and proper things while Iranians’ are immoral, wrong, and improper.

Sitting on the floor cross-legged or perched on one knee, **the Iranians attacked the meal like a herd of untamed animals desperate for food...** (Betty Mahmoody, 15).

The quote is a monologue of Betty when Betty has first lunch with Moody’s family in the courtyard. They are sitting on the floor cross-legged or perched on one knee. Betty sees the way Iranians take the meal are like a herd of untamed animals desperate for food. It shows about the effect of ethnocentrism since it deals with Betty’s judgment about how bad Iranians take their food while they had lunch. In this

matter, as the ethnocentric person, Betty sees that Iranians' behaviors and norms are different from America. She evaluates that Iranians' behaviors are immoral and wrong.

2. Leads people to exaggerate group differences. Ethnocentric cultural groups see themselves as superior to other groups, which are treated, as inferior.

This effect makes the ethnocentric people to behave exaggerating group differences. This means that people tend to be intolerant of group differences. Therefore, based on the differences, they think that their own group is superior and others are inferior. In this matter, Betty Mahmoody sees the difference the way of life between American and Iranian. Then she assumes that American way is superior or better than Iranian.

The Iranians found every possible way to complicate life. For example, one day Moody took me to buy sugar, and the simple errand turned into a day-long task. Iranians are divided in their preference for the type of sugar they use in their tea. Ameh Bozorg preferred granulated sugar, which she spilled freely onto the floor. Mammal preferred to place a sugar cube on his tongue directly behind his front teeth and drink tea through it. (Betty Mahmoody, 93).

The quote is Betty's monologue when she sees that Iranian find every way to complicate life in this case buy some varieties of sugar. They have their own preference for the type of sugar they use in their tea. By the monologue, it can be seen that it includes the effect of ethnocentrism since it deals with Betty's feelings to exaggerate the difference between Iranians and Americans. In this matter, she judges that Iranians complicate their life. In other words, it makes her feel that she is superior or better than Iranians since Americans live simpler.

3. Hinders our understanding of the customs of other people, and at the same time, keeps us from understanding our own customs.

This effect makes the ethnocentric people would focus on understanding of their own customs in their ethnic group while they hinder the understanding of other's group customs. In this matter, Betty Mahmoody does not understand about Iranian's customs yet she just focuses on her understanding on American's customs.

I looked at moody questioningly. "Open it," he said.

I opened it to find a large coat that would reach down nearly to my ankles. There was no hint of tailoring in it, no sign of a waistline. **Moody told me the fabric was an expensive wool blend, but it felt almost like nylon or even plastic. It was fairly thin, but woven so tightly that it would surely intensify the heat of summer. I hated the color, a sort of light olive drab. There was also a long, heavy green scarf, much thicker than the one I was wearing.** (Betty Mahmoody, 11).

The quote is a monologue of Betty when she is given a gift-wrapped by Ameh Bozorg. Then she finds a large coat behind it. A large coat is a custom of Iranian women's clothes. She does not like it because of the color and size. This includes to

the effect of ethnocentrism since it deals with Betty's rejection to understand Iranians' customs and keeps understanding Americans' customs.

4. Brings about negative affective reactions to out groups such as distrust, hostility, and contempt.

This effect makes the ethnocentric people would bring the negative reactions to the other groups. It can be form like distrust, hostility, and contempt. In this case, Betty Mahmoody gives about negative words to Iranian.

During the following morning, as I sat in the office, Khanum Shaheen brought one of the teachers to see me. "My name is Mrs. Azahr," the woman said. "I speak some English. I talk with you." She sat down next to me, contemplating my suspicious look. "We know that you do not like us," she continued. "We do not wish you to think that we are baad people. You do not like the school?"

"It is dirty," I replied. "I don't like to have Mahtob here."

"We are sorry," Mrs. Azahr said. "We feel baad because you are a foreigner in our country. We would like to do something for you." (Betty Mahmoody, 116).

The quote is a dialogue of Betty and a teacher when she is in Mahtob's school named Mrs. Azahr. They are discussing why Betty does not like the school. Then Betty answers since it is dirty. It shows the effect of ethnocentrism since it deals with Betty's negative affective reaction to a teacher in Iran school. The bold words depict how Betty gives her negative reaction when the teacher asks her about her dislike of the school. The words "It is dirty," and "I don't like to have Mahtob here." are distrust and contempt expressions.

5. Leads to a rejection of the richness and knowledge of other cultures. Furthermore, it impedes communication and blocks the exchange of ideas and skills among peoples.

This effect makes ethnocentric people reject the knowledge of other group's culture. Even it can block the exchange of ideas and skills among member of the group. In this matter, Betty rejects the knowledge of Iranian's tradition.

Moody calmly explained that the family had purchased a sheep from a street vendor, who had slaughtered it in our honor. This should have been done before our arrival, so that we could have walked across the blood as we entered the house for the first time. Now we must enter again, he said, across the blood.

"Oh, come on, you do it," I said. "I don't want to do this stupid thing."

Moody said quietly but firmly, 'You must do it. You have to show respect. The meat will be given to poor people.

I thought it was a crazy tradition, but I did not want to offend anyone, so I agreed reluctantly. As I picked up Mahtob, she buried her face against my shoulder. I

followed Moody around the pool of blood to the street side and stepped across it as his relatives intoned a prayer. Now we were officially welcomed. (Betty Mahmoody, 14).

It is a monologue and dialogue between Betty and Moody about a tradition. She has to do a tradition of Iran as she, Moody, and Mahtob arrival. They have to walk across sheep's blood when they enter the house for the first time. Yet when Moody asks her to do it, she just answers that it is just a stupid thing thus she does not want that. After that, Moody forces her. Then she agrees reluctantly to do that since she does not want offend anyone. Although, on the other side, she thinks that it is such a crazy tradition. Then it can be seen that it includes to the effect of ethnocentrism since it deals with Betty's rejection of the knowledge of Iranians' culture in case of Iranians tradition.

CONCLUSION

Betty Mahmoody has shown how she reflected the expressions of ethnocentrism issue to Iranians. She does both intergroup and intragroup expression to Moody's family and other Iranians. It clearly shows ethnocentric behavior of Betty to Iranians. In this matter, she fails to be tolerant of another group that is Iranians. Whether her husband is Iranian, yet he is thoroughly Americanized. She tends to like her own group and its members, she evaluates all things that happened in Iran by American standards. Hence, it influences her interaction with Iranians.

Being an ethnocentric person brings Betty trapped in the negative impacts. Consciously or not, she interacts with Iranians intolerant. She always thinks that American is the best one than Iranian, she judges that Americans' behavior, lifestyle, tradition, values, norms, and so forth is true and moral while Iranians' is wrong and immoral. Then she is exaggerating group differences, which indicates how she feels American is superior to Iranian. Ethnocentrism also brings her to give negative affective reaction to Iranian and keep her understanding of customs in her own group. In another word, ethnocentrism drives Betty to be a loyal person to her own ethnic group.

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