

# Ethnocentrism as a research object: A bibliometric approach

**Fernando Alonso Botello-Juárez<sup>1</sup>, Rosa Lidia Vega-Almeida<sup>2</sup>, Ricardo Arencibia-Jorge<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Biblioteca, Plantel Sur 1, Universidad de Insurgentes, Ciudad de México (México).  
Email: ferbopolis@gmail.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0009-2989-5374>.

<sup>2</sup> Centro de Ciencias de la Complejidad, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Ciudad de México (México).  
Email: vegaalmeida.rosa@gmail.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4203-6207>.

<sup>3</sup> Centro de Ciencias de la Complejidad, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Ciudad de México (México).  
Email: ricardo.arencibia@c3.unam.mx. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8907-2454>.  
Autor correspondiente.

## ABSTRACT

**Objective.** To characterize the world's scientific production on ethnocentrism and describe the evolution of its research lines over the last 80 years.

**Design/Methodology/Approach.** Web of Science was used as a data source. Articles related to the study of ethnocentrism were analyzed using bibliometric methods, such as Bradford's Law and bibliographic coupling. A bibliographic review was also developed to describe the main research fronts identified.

**Results/Discussion.** An exponential growth of literature was observed, as well as the absence of specialized journals on the subject, and a gradual increase of disciplines studying ethnocentrism, which shows a research activity in process of expansion and consolidation. Three main research fronts were identified and described, focused on the study of the personality of ethnocentric individuals, their group attitudes, and their behavior as consumers of products and services.

**Conclusions.** The study provided a comprehensive overview of the current state of research on ethnocentrism, its evolution and significance in various historical and disciplinary contexts. The absence of solid library research on this topic provides opportunities for future studies on ethnocentric biases in bibliographic collections, user education, and classification systems.

**Originality/Value.** To our knowledge, this is the first bibliometric study that analyzes the evolution of research on ethnocentrism in a global way. It also constitutes a first approach to the study of ethnocentrism in the field of Library and Information Science.

**Keywords:** ethnocentrism, bibliometrics, bibliometric mapping, bibliographic coupling, Bradford's Law.

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**HE DEVELOPMENT achieved by humanity in the course of history would be inconceivable without its mechanisms of adaptation to live in society. During this process, human beings have established moral, cultural, and ideological foundations that makeup what has been termed “cultural identity.” In every populated region of the world, this phenomenon is manifested, which characterizes and accompanies people at the group and individual levels throughout their lives. However, it has been a very common characteristic for different groups, ethnicities, or societies to have an attitude of superiority over others and to assume a position where their culture becomes a criterion of exclusivity to interpret and value the behavior of others. This ideological tendency, which has given rise to countless conflicts throughout history, and which is associated with behaviors and actions of violence, xenophobia, discrimination, prejudice, separation of groups, disqualification, and creation of negative stereotypes towards other people, is called ethnocentrism.

The concept of ethnocentrism was introduced to the realm of sociology by William Graham Sumner. It is defined as the “view of things in which one’s own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and classified with reference to it” (Sumner, 1906). By combining the belief that one’s own culture is superior to others, along with the practice of judging other cultures by the standards of a specific culture, the term has led to multiple definitions for the same phenomenon, such as eurocentrism (which centralizes the Western European experience over the rest of the civilizations), or sinocentrism (Chinese supremacy over the rest of the nations). It has even been extrapolated to other areas.

In the case of economics, for example, it is presented as a personality trait that represents consumers’ beliefs about the inappropriateness of buying products from a foreign country (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). In this way, an ethnocentric consumer will always favor local products (developed by their group, ethnicity, or society) over foreign products, maintaining a moral obligation to protect the local economy through their consumption choices

(Balabanis & Siamagka, 2017). In contrast, xenocentrism (Kent and Burnight, 1951) has been used to refer to the idea that one’s own culture is inferior to others and is an obstacle to prosperity and personal development. A consumer with this behavior would always have a position in favor of foreign products over domestic ones during their choice (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2016).

Since the introduction of the term, hundreds of researchers from all over the world have made contributions from Psychology, Anthropology, and other domains of knowledge within the Social Sciences and Humanities. In the context of informational disciplines, it would be crucial to know how the concept has been appropriated to study phenomena related to the behavior of authors and users of information systems. However, the existence of quantitative studies analyzing the evolution of research on these topics is insufficient. There is a general lack of knowledge about how the main research fronts and the most important topics involved in the studies are formed, as well as the characteristics of the main studies on ethnocentrism in the area of library and information studies.

## BACKGROUND

The use of bibliometric techniques to analyze topics related to ethnocentrism has been scarce and especially aimed at studying the phenomenon within a specific economic or sociocultural context. Ethnocentrism in the context of trade relations was the most addressed. American researchers Saeed Samiee and Brian Chabowski analyzed the literature on international marketing from 1999 to 2008 through combinatorial factor analysis, hierarchical cluster analysis, and multidimensional scaling (Samiee and Chabowski, 2012). The authors determined the intellectual basis that makes up research on international marketing and, using co-citation analysis techniques, were able to identify a set of research focused on how market-oriented firms globally manage consumer animosity (hostility) and ethnocentrism.

In a later work, both authors again used citation analysis to study publications on the origins of products and brands (Samiee & Chabowski,

In this same field, the Indian researcher Som Sekhar Bhattacharyya conducted a systematic review of the literature related to international business strategies to analyze this domain of knowledge and develop a classification scheme to characterize it (Bhattacharyya, 2020). The author identified six basic conceptual elements and 12 types of strategies around the dominant role of home and host countries in the international market context. The ethnocentric aspect (mainly, consumer ethnocentrism) was one of the elements indirectly valued in the process of identifying these 12 strategies and was one of the aspects to consider when planning and executing a successful strategy to penetrate a foreign market, especially in the mediation and moderation processes to achieve it. A different methodology, but with the same results, was executed by a group of Indian and American researchers. In this case, the authors studied 27 years of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics* using bibliometric mapping techniques based on bibliographic coupling (Donthu *et al.*, 2021). The study covered several periods of the journal, and one of the most critical findings among the various research fronts was the emergence of work on marketing and consumer ethnocentrism.

and Joseph Kaswengi. The study focused on specialized research on consumer ethnocentrism during the period 1984-2021. Through bibliometric techniques (analysis of co-authorship, co-citation, and co-occurrence of keywords), the authors determined how this type of research relates to international trade (Tahali, Yildiz, & Kaswengi, 2022). Among their main findings, they observed how the inflation data reported by the World Bank and the scientific production on the subject grew in parallel. According to them, this demonstrated the effects of globalization on research. Likewise, the three main research fronts identified were the theoretical foundations of ethnocentrism, the operability of the concept of ethnocentrism, and the intersection between research on the operational and conceptual aspects. The latter is the one that experienced the most mutations among the different sub-periods analyzed in the study (Tahali, Yildiz & Kaswengi, 2022).

In the food industry, Norwegian professor John Thøgersen developed a systematic review on ethnocentrism in the decision-making process regarding the consumption of national or international food products (Thøgersen,

2023). The author used bibliometric elements during the selection of the research to be considered in the study and found a solid ethnocentric bias, not only about the products that consumers buy, but even more so in terms of their beliefs about products from different origins. Thogersen found that ignorance plays an important role in consumers' understanding and interpretation of information about the origin of food.

From sociological approaches, authors such as the Norwegian Harald Saetren and the Japanese Lee Thomson also considered bibliometrics in their methodology. In one of the first bibliometric studies identified, Saetren (2005) identified a solid ethnocentric bias towards the Western Hemisphere in research on implementing public policies. The author considered in his analysis that some political sectors received much more attention than others. On the other hand, Thompson examined the distinctiveness of sociocultural research on sport in Japan, and identified that Japanese sociologists' theoretical and methodological approach was highly dependent on Western strategies. In a general sense, the author considered that the generation of universal concepts from particular Asian concepts was the main challenge to effectively respond to the prevailing ethnocentrism, and thus achieve a more international and universal sociology of sport (Thompson, 2015).

Outside of this research, we found no other bibliometric study that focused on ethnocentrism as a general research topic. Therefore, this research is the first bibliometric study that analyzes the evolution of research on

ethnocentrism in a global way, using the citation indexes that make up the Web of Science (Clarivate Analytics) as a source. In addition, given the academic background and particular interest of the authors of this article, it also constitutes a first approach to the study of ethnocentrism in the Library and Information Science field.

## OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research has been to characterize the world scientific production on ethnocentrism, using bibliometric and bibliographic review methods. Specifically, the study seeks to identify trends in scientific output and impact, observe the dispersion of literature related to the topic, to determine the research fronts and the main themes involved in the studies, and to explore the relevance of the topic in the context of Library and Information Science.

## METHODOLOGY

Web of Science Core Collection, accessible from the Digital Library of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), was used as a data source. The selection criterion was its national and international acceptance as a qualified source of scientific literature (Birkle *et al.*, 2020) and the possibility of processing the bibliographic records derived from this database with bibliometric techniques based on citation analysis. The methodological approach is represented through the following workflow:

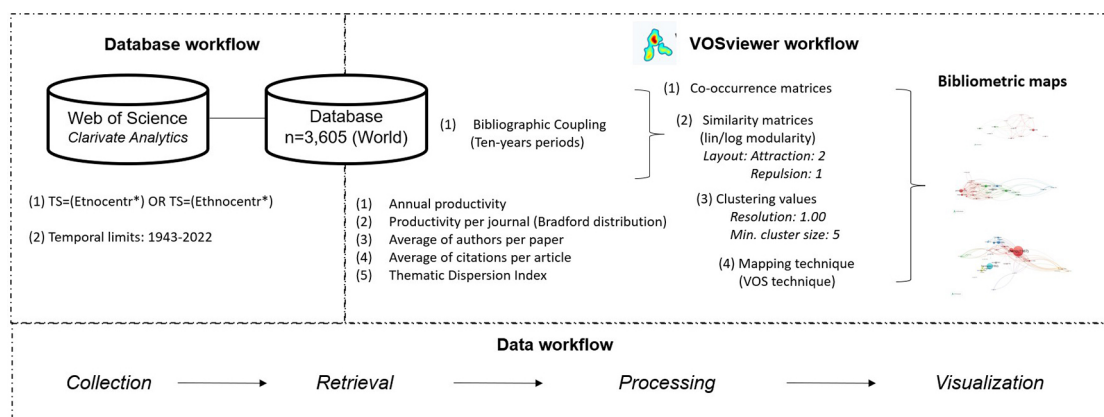


Figure 1. Methodological workflow.

The search strategy consisted of identifying the word ethnocentrism in the title, abstract and keywords of the bibliographic records, using the following syntax: TS=(Etnocentr\*) OR TS=(Ethnocentr\*), limited to the period 1943-2022. The study of the last hundred years was valued, but the first records found were published after the Second World War. All records were retrieved on October 26, 2023, and divided into eight sets spanning 10-year subperiods. The use of decades was justified by the high half-life values traditionally observed in publications on the Social Sciences and Humanities (Gilyarevskii *et al.*, 2021).

Annual productivity was analyzed throughout the period, and Bradford's Law was applied to identify the core of journals that concentrated research on ethnocentrism (Bradford, 1934). In addition, the multidisciplinary scope of research was examined through the behavior of the proportion of articles in the 152 general research areas that make up the Web of Science during each subperiod, as well as from the calculation of a thematic dispersion index (TDI) (Arencibia-Jorge, Vega-Almeida, & Carrillo-Calvet, 2021). In the current study, this index was calculated from the total number of Web of Science research areas that accounted for 80% of the scientific production (Thematic Concentration of production, TCp), and 80% of the citing articles (Thematic Concentration of citations, TCc), using the following formula:

$$IDT = \sqrt{TCp \times TCc}$$

Records for each subperiod were processed by bibliographic coupling (Kessler, 1963). This bibliometric technique groups the documents considering the references they have in common, which implies a thematic proximity. This proximity was used as a criterion to identify the main research fronts at each stage.

All networks were obtained and visualized using the VOSviewer v1.6.19 program, developed by the Center for Science and Technology Studies at Leiden University in the Netherlands (Van Eck and Waltman, 2010). The program allowed the processing of bibliographic records downloaded from the Web of Science to create co-occurrence matrices, which were then transformed by the program into similarity matrices (Van Eck and Waltman, 2007), deploying the

"lin/log modularity" algorithm as a measure of similarity. For the design of these matrices, the default values of the computer program were used (Attraction: 2; Repulsion: 1). The number of documents needed to form a group or cluster was determined at 5. The new matrices were processed using a mapping technique that determined the distances between the documents based on their similarity (Van Eck and Waltman, 2010) and then displayed the results on two-dimensional maps.

Finally, an exhaustive review of the literature included in each cluster was carried out for the interpretation of the various research fronts, as well as the general characterization of world research on ethnocentrism, and also the exploration of research on this topic in the field of Library and Information Science.

## RESULTS

During the 80 years between 1943 and 2022, 3605 documents related to ethnocentrism research were published in the scientific journals with the highest international visibility. This constitutes 0.004% of the world's scientific production indexed on the Science Web (Table 1). The proportion evolved from 0.002% during the 1943-1952 sub-period to 0.007% during the 2013-2022 sub-period, the latter being the one in which the highest volume of production was recorded (66% of the total articles on ethnocentrism). The average number of authors per article during the entire period reached values from 1 to 2.3. This behavior is typical of the Social Sciences and Humanities, where collaboration rates are much lower than in the Natural and Exact Sciences. During the last 20 years, 65% of all citations received for articles on ethnocentrism were concentrated, reaching high averages during the subperiods 1943-1954 (38.6), 2003-2012 (43.9), and 1993-2002 (51.6).

A total of 1946 scientific journals published articles on ethnocentrism, led by four Marketing and Business journals (*International Marketing Review*, 54 articles; *Journal of Business Research*, 42; *Journal of International Marketing*, 32; *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 28), two journals of Social Psychology (*Political Psychology*, 28; *Journal of Social Psychology*, 25), and an *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 43. Given the length



Indicators	1943-52	1953-62	1963-72	1973-82	1983-92	1993-02	2003-12	2013-22	Period
Total of Documents	16	36	52	85	142	463	786	2025	3605
% 1943-2022	0.52	1.17	1.70	2.77	4.63	15.11	25.64	66.07	100.00
% World	0.002	0.003	0.002	0.001	0.002	0.004	0.004	0.007	0.004
Dating	618	445	474	667	3313	23870	34245	19989	83621
Average of citations per article	38.6	12.4	9.1	7.8	23.3	51.6	43.6	9.9	23.20
Average of authors per article	1.00	1.42	1.38	1.22	1.32	1.62	2.03	2.30	2.06
Journals involved	9	24	38	67	119	325	567	1378	1946
Countries involved	1	2	5	17	21	45	72	106	113
TCp	1	2	5	8	10	11	13	13	13
TCc	2	3	8	8	8	11	10	11	13
TDI	1.41	2.45	6.32	8.00	8.94	11.00	11.40	11.96	13

**Table 1.** Bibliometric indicators analyzed in the study of research on Ethnocentrism

of the period analyzed (80 years), the volumes observed in the most productive journals can be considered very low. When Bradford's Law was applied, the literature was very dispersed (Table 2, Figure 2).

Zone	Articles	%	Journals	%
1	1081	30	107	5
2	1163	32,3	478	25
3	1361	37,7	1361	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>3605</b>	<b>3605</b>	<b>1946</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2.** Bradford zones for scientific production on Ethnocentrism.

Zone 1, which concentrates the core of leading journals (5%), covered 107 journals with an average productivity of 10 articles per journal (Table 2, Figure 2). This low productivity confirmed that there are no channels of communication for research specialized in ethnocentrism, but that scientific production is dispersed in journals of various specialties, where ethnocentrism has been part of its thematic scope.

This diversity can be seen in the thematic dispersion index (TDI) behavior calculated over the period (Table 1). The production and the volume of citations received were concentrated in 13 research areas of the Web of Science (TCp and TCc values). However, the TDI evolved from

1.41 during the 1943-1952 subperiod (dominated by Psychology journals) to 11.96 during the 2013-2022 subperiod (with the predominance of Economics and Business journals).

A comprehensive representation of this behavior can be seen in Figure 3. It shows the research areas of the Web of Science with the largest accumulation of articles and the behavior of the proportion of articles in each of the areas during the corresponding subperiods analyzed.

The 1946 serial publications involved in ethnocentrism studies were classified into 109 of the 152 Web of Science research areas. Among the 40 most productive areas, 22 were part of the core that concentrated 80% of scientific production in one of the subperiods analyzed (areas with bold typography in Figure 3), according to the values of the thematic concentration of the scientific output (TCp). In this way, it was evident that the evolution of research on ethnocentrism started from a deeply disciplinary vision from the area of Psychology, and to a lesser extent from anthropology, towards an increasingly multidisciplinary vision, encompassing new areas of research throughout the period, such as Sociology, Business Economics, Education, Government Legislation, and Communication, essentially. Psychology accounted for the largest volumes of scientific production during most of the period, followed

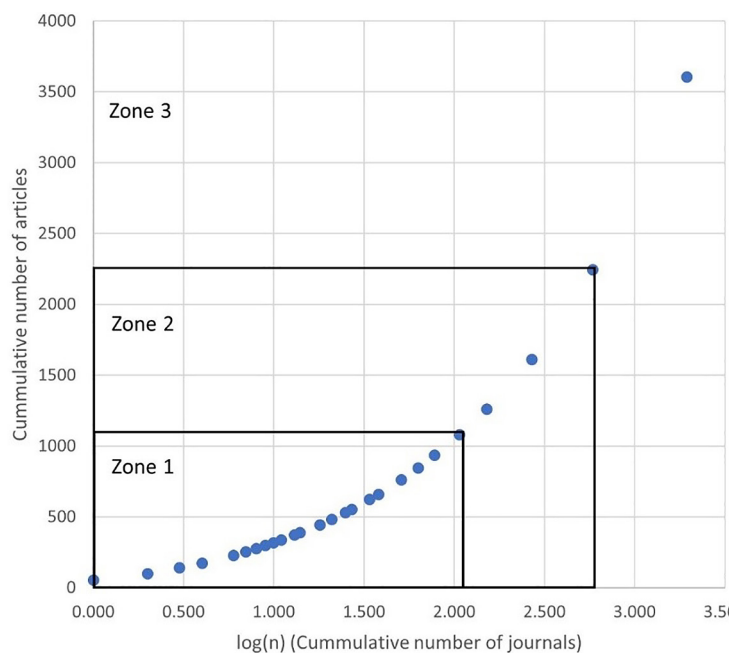


Figure 2. Bradford distribution of articles on Ethnocentrism.

Research Areas	1943-52	1953-62	1963-72	1973-82	1983-92	1993-02	2003-12	2013-22	Doc	%
Business Economics	6.3			3.5	10.6	11.0	22.5	29.5	844	23.412
Psychology	75.0	69.4	42.3	30.6	24.6	30.5	25.4	12.1	707	19.612
Social Sciences Other Topics	6.3		3.8	10.6	7.7	9.7	7.9	8.3	298	8.266
Sociology		16.7	21.2	8.2	16.2	11.9	6.9	5.3	264	7.323
Education Educational Research	6.3	8.3	11.5	4.7	8.5	8.0	5.9	7.6	262	7.268
Government Law			7.7	10.6	7.0	6.5	6.9	6.8	244	6.768
Anthropology	12.5	2.8	1.9	12.9	15.5	5.4	2.5	2.2	127	3.523
Communication			3.8	1.2	4.9	4.5	2.7	3.7	127	3.523
Religion			1.9	1.2	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.0	110	3.051
History				2.4	2.1	1.9	3.3	3.4	109	3.024
Linguistics				3.5	1.4	3.9	2.9	3.1	109	3.024
Literature				2.4	3.5	2.6	3.6	2.9	106	2.94
Philosophy			1.9		3.5	1.1	3.4	3.3	105	2.913
Arts Humanities Other Topics				7.1	2.1	2.6	1.7	3.4	102	2.829
International Relations			1.9	2.4	0.7	1.7	2.9	2.2	80	2.219
Ethnic Studies			3.8	1.2	2.1	1.7	2.4	1.9	71	1.969
Area Studies			1.9	2.4	0.7	0.9	1.4	2.0	60	1.664
Science Technology Other Topics				1.2	1.4	0.9	0.3	2.3	56	1.553
Environmental Sciences Ecology				1.2	1.4	1.1	1.0	1.9	55	1.526
Nursing					0.7	3.7	1.7	1.2	55	1.526
Public Environmental Occupational Health					2.1	2.2	0.9	1.5	51	1.415
Food Science Technology							0.8	2.0	47	1.304
Geography			1.9	4.7	0.7	3.0	1.5	0.7	47	1.304
Social Issues			3.8		5.6	2.4	1.5	0.6	46	1.276
Agriculture							1.3	1.7	45	1.248
Behavioral Sciences					2.8	0.9	2.3	0.9	44	1.221
Computer Science			1.9		0.7	0.9	1.3	1.0	36	0.999
Biomedical Social Sciences					3.5	1.3	1.1	0.7	34	0.943
Psychiatry		5.6	5.8		1.4	2.4	0.6	0.5	34	0.943
Cultural Studies						0.4	0.5	1.3	33	0.915
Social Work					0.7	1.9	0.6	0.8	31	0.86
Public Administration					1.4	1.1	1.0	0.6	28	0.777
Women S Studies				1.2	1.4	1.1	1.1	0.5	28	0.777
Neurosciences Neurology					2.1	0.6	1.0	0.5	25	0.693
Engineering					0.7	0.6	1.1	0.5	24	0.666
Demography			1.9	1.2	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	21	0.583
Information Science Library Science				2.4	1.4	0.9	0.4	0.5	21	0.583
History Philosophy Of Science		2.8		1.2	3.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	20	0.555
Art					0.7	0.2	0.5	0.6	19	0.527
Criminology Penology				1.2		0.9	0.5	0.5	19	0.527

Figure 3. Evolution of the main research areas on ethnocentrism (Web of Science research areas with more than 0.5% of articles). In bold: areas that have been part of the core where 80% of the articles are concentrated in each subperiod analyzed.

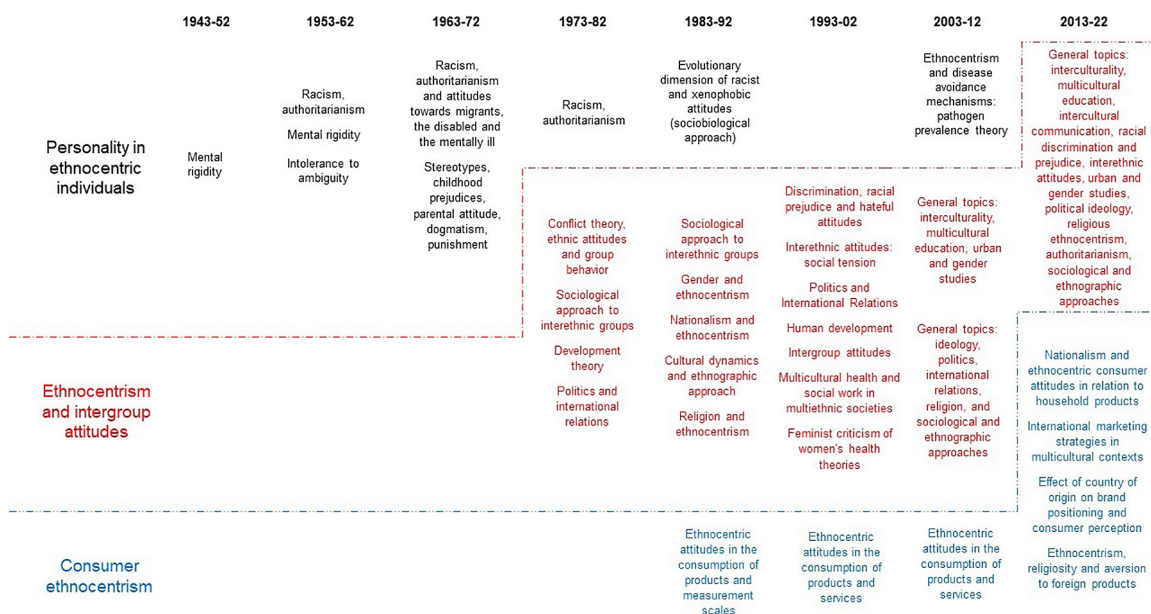
by sociology, until the emergence of articles on consumer ethnocentrism in business economics journals, which made this area the most productive during the last decade analyzed. Researchers from the Social Sciences and the Arts and Humanities played a leading role in the scientific production.

In each subperiod, journals belonging to the areas of Psychology, Anthropology and Research in Education were vehicles of dissemination that consistently published results on ethnocentrism. In the 1953-1962 sub-period, Sociology was inserted into the core of key areas. To a lesser extent, the subject began to be disseminated in Psychiatry and Philosophy and History of Science journals. In the 60s and early 70s, its consolidation in Sociology, Education and Psychiatry was already visible, and its emergence in spaces of knowledge such as Government Legislation, Communication, Ethnic Studies; as well as in Philosophy, Religion, International Relations, Geography, Demography and Study of Geographical Areas (basically, Asia and Africa). In the 1973-1982 sub-period there was a great dispersion of literature among the various research areas, and research in the Arts and Humanities appeared; above all, in journals specialized in Linguistics, Literature, and History. In addition, ethnocentrism began to be studied in serial publications devoted to

Women's Studies, and Library and Information Science. In fact, in this sub-period, the library area was among those that concentrated 80% of the scientific production on ethnocentrism, an aspect that will be addressed later.

During the 1983-1992 subperiod, research on economics and business experienced remarkable growth, stimulated by the development of scales to measure ethnocentrism in the consumer, such as the one proposed by Shimp and Sharma (1987). Anthropological and sociological research reached its peak. Communication research was consolidated, and works on Social Issues, Biomedical Social Sciences, and History and Philosophy of Science stood out. Starting in 1993, there was an increase in research published in Linguistics and Religion journals, and articles emerged in Nursing journals. Finally, with the new millennium, the most significant thing was the predominance of research on Marketing and Business, which ended up displacing psychological research during the last period.

The analysis of the main research fronts in each subperiod, through the technique of bibliographic coupling and the visualization of networks of similar articles, offered more elements about the dominant themes and their evolution over the 80 years (Figure 4; Appendix 1). In general, the scientific production on ethnocentrism was structured in three main



**Figure 4.** Evolution of the main research fronts on ethnocentrism. Conceptual map based on the interpretation of bibliographic coupling networks.



research fronts: a front dedicated to the study of personality in ethnocentric individuals from a psychological perspective that began in the first half of the twentieth century; another front specialized in the study of group attitudes, from a sociological perspective, which began to develop in 1970; and finally, a research front that began in the 80s of the last century and exploded during the last 20 years analyzed, specialized in the ethnocentrism of the consumer, from an economic perspective and focused on the research of international markets.

The personality of ethnocentric individuals became a priority topic in the early days of ethnocentric research. The contributions of the Polish-born American psychologist Milton Rokeach were essential during this first period (1943-1952), especially from his pioneering studies on mental rigidity in children and university students (Rokeach, 1948). The impact of their results was evidenced by making this subperiod the third with the highest average number of citations per article (38.6). Rokeach attempted to determine the basis of racial prejudice in the southern United States and found an inversely proportional relationship between racial prejudice and socioeconomic status, which led him to conclude that individuals used prejudice as a mechanism to elevate their own social status. The psychological perspective also dominated for the next two decades. Authors such as the American psychologist Abraham S. Luchin, creator of group therapy in the 1960s, or the Australian social psychologist John J. Ray, led the scientific production related to psychological authoritarianism, conservatism, intolerance of ambiguity, racism, and acquiescent attitudes at that early stage; as well as childhood prejudices derived from parental attitudes. Discrimination against disabled, mentally ill, and migrants were among the topics on the research agenda.

From 1973 onwards, the sociological approach began to predominate in the articles. Intergroup attitudes (particularly, the behavior of interethnic groups in different contexts, characterized by the preeminence of nationalist or religious ideas) became the object of study by researchers. Intergroup attribution (i.e., the process by which members of different social groups explain the behaviors of members of their own group and the behaviors of members

of other groups) (Hewstone, 1990) was one of the topics that had the most significant impact during the subperiod. The most cited work in this decade was led by the Canadian psychologist Donald M. Taylor, who analyzed for the first time intergroup attribution in the conflict between Hindus and Muslims in southern India, and together with the Indian linguist Vaishna Jaggi hypothesized that these attributions (associated with the manifestation of stereotypes) were ethnocentric (Taylor and Jaggi, 1974). Another of the most cited works of this sub-period was on the perception of the harem by Western cultures (Ahmed, 1982), developed by the Egyptian-American researcher Leila Ahmed, the first woman to be professor of Women's Studies and Religion at Harvard Divinity School. Ethnocentrism in the context of politics and international relations was another of the central themes of the period.

The use of ethnographic methods, the insertion of gender studies, and the analysis of religion and cultural dynamics in societies were topics that were consolidated in the research agenda of the 1980s. However, in 1987, two marketing professors from the University of South Carolina introduced the concept of "Consumer Ethnocentrism" (Shimp and Sharma, 1987), thus opening the third most important research front during the 80 years analyzed. The work carried out by the American Terence A. Shimp was of paramount importance because they offered the various importers and exporters of products a measurement scale (CETSCALE) to evaluate the reasons behind the preference of purchasing domestic versus imported products of extraordinary usefulness at the time of formulating their marketing strategies. The ethnocentric consumer, in general, will prioritize the domestic manufacture of a product in their purchase choice. Not taking this tendency into account can be fatal to the survival of any business that aspires to cross international borders. During the 1980s, a research trend also emerged that extended the concept of natural selection to social systems and the social behavior of human beings (sociobiological perspective), considering that the patterns of behavior with which one is born can be modified and even disappear during the process of natural selection (Reynolds, Falger, and Vine, 1999; 1986; Wilson, 1978). Criticisms

of this perspective were frequent not only among the community of psychologists but also by sociologists and anthropologists.

The end of the 20th century and the early years of the new millennium coincided with the subperiod with the highest average number of citations per article recorded in the literature (51.6). Research on ethnocentrism in intergroup attitudes was predominant, focusing on problems of discrimination, interethnic conflicts, and the social tension arising from these interactions. The American psychologist Marilyn B. Brewer, professor emerita at Ohio State University and president of the *American Psychological Association* from 1993 to 1995, was identified among the most important authors of this decade, mainly for her contributions to social identity and intergroup relations. His most cited work at this stage is related to his theory of optimal distinction (Brewer, 1999). The theory of optimal distinction states that the distinction of a group must be equalized by assimilation. An “optimal” identity would satisfy the need for inclusion within the group to which the individual belongs, as well as the need to distinguish between the group to which it belongs (ingroup) and external groups (outgroups). According to the author, understanding the roles that ingroup formation and identification play for human beings is essential to understanding the roots of prejudice and discrimination and to influence conflict resolution (Brewer, 1999).

Another of the most cited studies was related to parental control and authoritarian style in Asians (Chao, 1994). Its author, the American psychologist Ruth K. Chao, identified better school performance among the children of Chinese immigrants than that of European immigrants in the United States and Canada. Consequently, he considered the prevailing concepts of authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles to be ethnocentric, as they did not contemplate essential characteristics of parenting in Asian migrant families. The prominence of research in multicultural and multiethnic societies was significant. It included approaches opposed to Western academic thought, such as the “perspectivist” approach of the Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, derived from the study of Amazonian ethnographic literature (De Castro, 1994). However, the most cited article of the subperiod, and even of

the 80 years analyzed in the present study, was related to the research front on consumer ethnocentrism. This was carried out at the Catholic University of Leuven by the Dutch researcher Jan-Benedict Steenkamp and the American Hans Baumgartner, who developed in 1998 a procedure to assess measurement invariance in transnational consumer research, which they applied to measure consumer ethnocentrism in three European countries (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998).

The arrival of the new millennium led to more research on understanding multicultural contexts, particularly in large urban environments. Thus, issues related to all types of discrimination, especially racial and gender discrimination, have been addressed comprehensively. The 2003-2012 subperiod was the second with the highest average number of citations per article (43.9) in the 80 years analyzed. The most cited article was a literature review on the different hypotheses derived from the Systems Justification Theory (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). The theory of system justification, proposed by the Canadian psychologist John Thomas Jost together with the Indian-American Mahzarin Rustom Banaji, points out that individuals are capable of justifying and rationalizing the social systems to which they belong, perceiving as fair and legitimate any political, social or economic decision that is made, even if they affect or harm them. This theory, as well as Banaji’s own concept of implicit bias (pre-reflective attribution of particular qualities by an individual to a member of some external social group), and the study of political and ideological contexts, were highly examined topics from the perspective of Social Psychology at this stage. Of particular note is the work of American psychologists Valerie Purdie-Vaughns and Richard P. Eibach, who described the “intersectional invisibility” that individuals with multiple subordinate group identities (e.g., women belonging to ethnic minorities) often receive concerning those with a single subordinate group identity (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008). According to these authors, androcentric, ethnocentric, and heterocentric ideologies will cause these people with multiple subordinate group identities to be defined as non-prototypical members of their respective identity groups.

Steenkamp achieved notoriety in developing market research methodologies and published relevant articles focused on measuring consumer ethnocentrism. Among them, one that stands out often cited in the different ways in which the perceived globality of a brand (both quality and perceived prestige) influences the probability of buying it (Steenkamp, Batra & Alden, 2003). Within the theme, part of the scientific production of the economist Adamantios Diamantopoulos, the most productive author identified in the present study, was inserted. During the sub-period, Diamantopoulos published a paper on the preference patterns of UK consumers for eight product categories, where consumer ethnocentrism was identified as a determining factor in the observed variability in preferences (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2004). On the other hand, a line of research related to the theory of pathogen prevalence emerged from a social epidemiological approach at this stage. This theory has associated cultural norms that promote ethnocentric and conformist attitudes with regions that have historically suffered high levels of infectious diseases and where pathogens were more prevalent (Schaller & Murray, 2008; Murray, Trudeau, & Schaller, 2011; van Leeuwen *et al.*, 2012). Thus, a trend began toward understanding certain mechanisms through which environmental conditions could influence personality and social organization.

The last ten years analyzed were the most productive period (2025 articles). The subperiod was distinguished by the strengthening of the research front associated with ethnocentrism in intergroup attitudes and multicultural contexts and by an explosion of literature related to the study of consumer ethnocentrism. Balabanis and Diamantopoulos consolidated their leadership in the generation of methodologies to measure consumers' predisposition to purchase domestic and foreign products. They applied the concept of xenocentrism (as opposed to ethnocentrism) to describe consumers particularly attracted to foreign products and its corresponding measurement scale (the C-XENSCALE) of xenocentric tendencies (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2016). Other works with high visibility and wide thematic diversity during the last stage were related to the dominant ethnocentrism in anti-immigrant

attitudes in the United States (Valentino, Bradner, & Jardina, 2013; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2015; Chavez-Dueñas *et al.*, 2019); the rise of an increasingly influential Christian nationalism in electoral processes (Whitehead, Perry, & Baker, 2018); negative stereotypes towards Muslims derived from the global counter-terrorism agenda (Sides and Gross, 2013); identifying relationships between conservative attitudes and immune system behavior (Terrizzi, Shook, & McDaniel, 2013); the development of a new multilateral global framework for International Relations (Acharya, 2014); and xenophobia generated by the impact of COVID-19 globally (Kock *et al.*, 2020; Dhanani & Franz, 2021; Reny & Barreto, 2022).

Finally, the study of ethnocentrism in Library and Information Science did not reveal the existence of a consolidated research front in any of the subperiods analyzed. Some relevant but isolated works were identified during the literature review process. In the early 1990s, the Faculty of Library Studies, Information and Communication at Rutgers University, United States, considered the relevance of creating a multicultural curriculum for education in Library and Information Sciences (Belay, 1992). Some studies have focused on the need to democratize the Internet and make it more inclusive in a global context characterized by the leadership of large technology companies from developed countries (Komito, 1998; Muller, 1996). Other works were located on the border between Information Science and the Sociology of Science to study academic ethnocentrism. Among the notable results are the study of the methodological, interpretative, and practical issues that arise when there are ethnic differences between the researcher and the informant in qualitative research (Adamson & Donovan, 2002); the process of distinguishing between a scientific finding and its moral and ethical evaluation (Atzwanger, Schafer, & Schmitt, 1998); the study of interactions between areas (disciplinary ethnocentrism), and of transdisciplinary areas where conflicts occur between experts trained in disciplines related to the area and experts trained in other less related disciplines (Bosa, 2013; King and Lyytinen, 2004); the process of implementing policies that are deeply biased and aligned with Western thinking (Saetren, 2005); and the

process of measuring the influence (impact) of the channels for the dissemination of scientific research, which can be manipulated by the editors and authors themselves, regardless of the content (Svensson, 2010).

From a quantitative perspective, beyond the bibliometric explorations mentioned in the introduction of this article, it was identified how the appropriation of the concept of “ethnocentricity” in the field of Library and Information Science has also been associated with the study of very specific topics, such as the usability of collections in a library (McGrath, Simon & Bullard, 1979), and the levels of inbreeding in authorship and citation patterns of scientific journals (Barak, Philpot, & Levy, 1995). In general, these results show not only the conceptual appropriation but also the need to adapt it within the discipline itself to understand individual and social behaviors in the management of institutional processes and the publishing ecosystem.

## DISCUSSION

The findings obtained in this work, derived from both the analysis of bibliometric behavior and the bibliographic review, allow us to consider the study of ethnocentrism as a stable research line, but still in the process of consolidation. Evidence of a relatively well-structured research agenda over 80 years was found, diversified on three main fronts from 1983 onwards. However, the fact that the volume identified constitutes only 0.004% of the world's scientific production and that two-thirds of the articles have been published during the last ten years determines the existence of a theoretical-conceptual-methodological corpus in process of development. The exponential growth identified was considered evidence of the gradual construction and reconstruction of the research lines, based on the analysis of various social groups, as well as the reintroduction of new concepts that provide greater precision and contextualization.

The number of nations that contributed to scientific production also grew over the period, reaching more than 100 in the last decade, corroborating the development of the global discursive community in the study of ethnocentrism. We were able to identify authors

with relevant contributions. However, most of them are authors with a consolidated disciplinary trajectory who have approached ethnocentrism as an object of study at some point in their careers. The production was very dispersed among the journals that published on the subject. And this dispersion, corroborated by Bradford's law, confirmed the absence of highly specialized channels for disseminating research on the subject under analysis.

Interestingly, this low specialization observed in journals has resulted from the increasingly extensive application of ethnocentrism in various areas of knowledge throughout the period, especially during the 2013-2022 subperiod, where research on Marketing and Business stood out. Therefore, it can be considered that there has been a gradual appropriation of the concept in the conceptual and methodological tools of other academic disciplines. This transversality of the concept, expressed in its absorption from multiple domains of knowledge, denotes the transcendence that the study of ethnocentricity has reached as a category of analysis, and its variable behavior under certain historical and epistemological contexts.

It was possible to characterize for the first time two fundamental research fronts that studied the personality of ethnocentric individuals and their group behavior in multicultural and multiethnic contexts, from the Social Sciences perspective, and particularly from Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology. Previous bibliometric studies had addressed consumer ethnocentrism as a target of specialized research in Marketing and Business (Battacharyya, 2020; Donthu *et al.*, 2021; Samiee and Chabowski, 2012; Tahali, Yildiz, & Kaswengi, 2022; Thogersen, 2023). In the current study, the development of this area since the 80s, especially during the decade 2013-2022, was confirmed. In addition, it was possible to observe discrimination in hospitality and tourism services between the most important thematic lines during the last ten years, even related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which corroborated the findings of Zhou, Liu, and Liu (2022).

The methodological strategy used made it possible to identify the evolution of these fronts over 80 years. However, the analysis of the



historical context reveals a series of important elements to understand the dynamics of the changes observed in the research fronts. It is not trivial that the end of the Second World War in Europe and the beginning of the long struggle of the civil rights movement in the United States coincided with the predominance of specialized research on the personality of ethnocentric individuals, focused on issues related to prejudice, racist and discriminatory attitudes. The need to understand the triggers of the Jewish genocide, or the consequences of racial segregation in the southern United States, led to research aimed at unraveling the psychological basis of social prejudice and its relationship to socioeconomic status and other factors inherent in the herd instinct of human beings (Adorno *et al.*, 1950; Morris, 1999). In the same way, the analysis of intergroup attitudes, as well as the processes of intergroup attribution, is not exempt from the deep transformations of society since the 1970s, nor from the increase in social and armed conflicts derived from the context of the Cold War and the national liberation movements in former colonies of European countries (Kwok, 2021).

On the other hand, the appropriation of the concept in the context of the business economy since the 1980s is closely linked to the process of globalization that accelerated with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the gradual opening of China and Asian countries to the market economy (Branstetter and Lardy, 2006; Hamashita, Selden, & Grove, 2013). The information and communication revolution that entailed the creation of the World Wide Web and the considerable liberalization of the international economy enhanced the opening of markets to a wide variety of products and services (Borchert and Yotov, 2017; Mukherjee, 2008; Suh and Kwon, 2002). The perception of quality and safety became an important factor to consider in marketing strategies, as well as the purchasing preferences of their potential consumers in a particular object of research. Thus, knowledge of psychology in marketing developed (Saad & Gill, 2000), and scales of consumer ethnocentrism (or xenocentrism) became widely used methodological tools over the last ten years.

Economic and political crises, the war against terrorism, pandemics, the third and

fourth waves of feminism, and the rise of religious conservatism during the last 30 years triggered the emergence of new actors as objects of study (migrants, refugees, the disabled, drug addicts, the sick and minority groups based on gender identity or sexual orientation). In the epistemological order, the approach to sociocultural realities from the perspective of complexity and complex thinking has promoted critical reflection on prejudices and racist and discriminatory attitudes in various areas and social groups. It has led to the need for a multicultural approach to phenomena, increasingly interdisciplinary and inclusive (Ferdman, 2017).

In the Library and Information Science field, the study revealed that research on ethnocentrism is incipient and still is out of the international research agenda of informational disciplines. Although the journals in the area were part of the core of areas that concentrated 80% of the articles during the decade 1973-1982, this was due to only two published works. In general, little has been explored on the subject. However, it was interesting to observe in some studies the concern for training in informational areas, the inclusive use of ICTs, and academic ethnocentrism, issues of interest not only within the profession but also from the profession to other areas.

The appropriation of the concept in the context of informational disciplines has opened the possibility of new studies to characterize phenomena inherent to librarianship and scientific information systems. Citations between disciplines or editorial endogamy, to cite two examples identified in scientific production (Barak, Philpot & Levy, 1995), are aspects addressed relatively frequently in Information Science. The ethnocentricity associated with these phenomena could be implicit in many other studies that analyze patents (Silva *et al.*, 2014), conference proceedings (Montolio, Dominguez-Sal, & Larriba-Pey, 2013), or collaborative networks (Miranda Grochocki & Cabello, 2023). However, "ethnocentrism" does not appear in their title, abstract, or keywords.

However, based on the low productivity identified in the library literature, as well as from the various research fronts identified in the world literature on ethnocentrism, it can be inferred that there is a large workspace for



future research that aims to identify ethnocentric biases from the analysis of bibliographic collections, information literacy models, user education strategies, or library classification systems.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research allowed us to study the characteristics of global research on ethnocentrism for the first time from a bibliometric perspective. The exponential growth of scientific production over 80 years evidenced the progress of its theoretical-conceptual-methodological corpus and its global community of researchers. However, the absence of highly specialized scientific journals on the subject and the extensive application of the concept from various areas of knowledge demonstrated that research is still in the process of consolidation.

The continuous conceptual precision, the broadening of the thematic contexts addressed, and the explosion of studies during the last decade constituted evidence that this is a research line under development, with a broad capacity to transcend disciplinary borders. In the context of library and information studies, the absence of a solid work agenda was confirmed, which opens a path of possibilities for opening new research lines of interest to the entire community of librarians and information scientists.

The study's limitations, like many bibliometric studies that use techniques based on citation analysis, were related to the insufficient coverage of the source used (in this case the Web of Science) and terminological biases derived from the search strategy used. In this sense, for future studies, it is important to consider the use of a methodology that considers multiple databases during the stages of searching, processing, and analyzing information. Similarly, a broader search strategy, which transcends the identification of the term "ethnocentrism" in the records and considers associated phenomena and concepts, could enrich the results obtained.

Nevertheless, this study provided a comprehensive overview of the current state of ethnocentric research and offered an interesting overview of its evolution and significance in various historical and disciplinary contexts.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## Contribution statement

Data curation; Methodology; Research: Fernando Alonso Botello-Juárez.

Formal analysis; Supervision; Validation: Rosa Lidia Vega Almeida.

Conceptualization; Project management; Writing – original draft: Ricardo Arencibia-Jorge.

## Statement of data consent

The data generated during the development of this study can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.25016441.v1> ●

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**Bibliographic coupling networks corresponding to the 8 subperiods analyzed.\***

