Cultural relativism tells us that we must examine cultural practices within their cultural contexts, seeking to understand cultural practices from the perspective of those who take part in them. It is always difficult to understand another culture from an emic perspective, and there is an ethnocentric tendency to favor your own culture, viewing it as superior to others. In order to overcome this tendency toward ethnocentrism, it is helpful to change your perspective, assuming an outsider’s view toward your own culture and taking on an insider’s perspective toward another culture. Over the course of this paper, I will examine an aspect of my own culture through an etic lens in order to gain the perspective of an outsider, and I will examine an aspect of another culture from an insider’s perspective in order to become more familiar with the motivations behind this practice. Specifically, I will examine the state of higher education in America and discuss anti-school culture among boys in Sweden to show that what Americans consider “normal” is unusual in a wider context, and to examine how cultural narratives are perpetuated and how they can negatively affect student performance. In both cases, culturally based expectations are treated as the norm and often go unquestioned.

Helpful tip: Use the introduction to set up the major concepts and topics that will be covered in the paper. End your introduction with a thesis statement that sets up what you will cover in the body of the paper and explains the purpose of your paper.