

# Cultural relativism assignment assignment

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Is cultural relativism good for our society? Cultural relativism is a belief where there are no absolute moral views or beliefs can be apply to all cultures, which makes “ right” and “ wrong” different in every society; what is considered “ right” in one society may be considered “ wrong” in another. Since no universal standard of morality exists, no one has the right to judge another society’s customs.

If this belief is held true, then every culture will have their own set of “ rules” to live by and no one can judge on, even they are doing things that are abnormal in this world, because in that particular group the action will be viewed as perfectly normal. This creates a situation where no person regardless of his or her authority in society can define what is right and wrong. This may lead to chaos and an attitude within people that they will never strive for progression or advancement.

Cultural relativism is not a good philosophy to guide the interactions among individuals and cultures because there are some universal rules we must follow, (ex: no murder, no genocide etc). Society’s rules should be created under those moral codes and human should judge on them because there isn’t perfect in any man-made things, but cultural relativism is also needed in society, in order to remind us to keep an open mind on everything. In each society, there has to be some universal rules that exist in order for a society to continue to work.

In the essay, *The Challenge of Cultural Relativism* by James Rachels, he argued that many values in each society must be more or less universal. For example, if a society does not prohibit murder, people can kill each other

freely at anytime, and no one will judge whether it is right or wrong. In that particular society, no one will feel safe, everyone is afraid of each other and will decrease the interaction between them. This eventually will lead a society to collapse because its existence is based on the interactions of human beings.

Although, people may form small groups with people that they trust and will not harm each other, but that also means that they are forming small society that has a rule where murder is prohibited. Another example will be genocide. The definition of genocide is a intentionally action that causes extinction of an ethnic, racial, religious, or national group, which means that if each group of people doesn't allow another to exist, then this world will become a mess where may lead to the whole human race extinction. In pg. of James Rachels's essay, he wrote, " There are some moral rules that all societies will have in common, because those rules are necessary for society to exist". The examples and quote explain why there are universal rules exist in each culture and every society's rules are not that different from each other. Society rules created by human are not perfect, we should have the right to judge and improve them. Cultural relativism prevents progress within the society because we don't have a standard to judge a new way of doing as better, when comparison is prohibited.

About a hundred years ago, slavery was common in our world, but this has changed recently. In nowadays, slavery doesn't exist anymore. Most people see this as progress for human rights, but if cultural relativism really exists, then prohibiting slavery will not be seen as progress. The definition of progress is an advance towards maturity and perfection, which in society can

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mean replacing an old idea with one that is “ better” so that it can become more perfect.

James Rachels wrote in his essay, “ but by what standard do we judge the new ways as better? “(Pg. 3), if the old way is considered appropriate during that period of time, according to cultural relativism, it will be a mistake to judge with the standards of a different time period. Back to the example of slavery, prohibiting slavery will not be seen as progress because the society at that time is very different from present-day society, slavery is considered to be normal during that period.

If we think prohibiting slavery is a progress, then we are saying that nowadays society is better, but by the definition of cultural relativism, it is not allowed because one is not supposed to make any judgment and there is no specific standard of what is considered to be better. Although cultural relativism is not a good philosophy to guide the interactions among individuals and culture, but it also has some good ideas that we apply on our society. One of the ideas in cultural relativism is keeping an opened mind on everything. When human is growing up, one learns what is right and what is wrong from parents, friends, teachers, etc.

As time goes by, one may find their belief being challenged when one meets someone that holds ideas totally different. In James Rachels’ essay, he gave an example that because we learned homosexuality is “ bad” since we are little and have this idea carved in our heart for so long, when we meet someone that thinks there is nothing bad about homosexuality, we may find it hard to accept it. If cultural relativism really exists, then prejudice and

racism will not exist in this world because no one can judge one another, everyone is equally the same so conflicts between people will decrease.

Through the examples I have proved that cultural relativism in general is not a good philosophy to guide a society. Cultural relativism states that every culture has their own set of rules and no one can judge on them, this can stop advancement of a society and may have a chance to lead to human destruction because no one will spend time on improving things that they know will never change and when some “ bad” rules are created, such as murder is acceptable, then it will create chaos in this world.

Although there are flaws in cultural relativism, there are also ideas that people should follow in life, such as keeping an open mind on everything. There aren't perfect in man-made things, including the ideas coming out from our mind, improvement and changing are absolutely needed to make those ideas close to perfect, therefore cultural relativism is not a good philosophy to guide our world. Works Cited: Rachels, James. “ The Challenge of Cultural Relativism. ” Ed, LAHS World-Lit Team. [print]