

# Essay on Cultural Relativism

## Essay On Cultural Relativism (Structure/Outline)

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### Introduction

Cultural relativism is an important concept in anthropology, which deals with the comparative study of different cultures. It states that all cultures are equally valuable and should be respected and accepted on their terms. The term 'cultural relativism' means to view and judge another culture by its standards, not by the standards of one's own culture.

This way, it becomes easier to understand the particular society's beliefs and values without judging them or imposing our own opinions on them. Cultural relativism is also known as cultural relativity and was first used by Franz Boas in 1887.

### Types of Cultural Relativism

There are two major types of cultural relativism, namely ethical relativism and descriptive relativism. Ethical relativism states that all cultures are equal and no one culture is superior to another. This type of cultural relativism states that there is no universal moral code applicable to all societies, as each has its own set of values and beliefs.

Descriptive relativism, on the other hand, states that all cultures are unique and should be studied objectively. This type of cultural relativism does not promote any specific belief or value but rather explores the

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cultural practices and beliefs of a particular society.

## **Advantages and Disadvantages of Cultural Relativism**

Cultural relativism has many advantages as it allows for greater understanding and appreciation of different cultures. This approach also allows for greater tolerance and respect for diverse cultural practices, instead of judging them using our standards. By understanding a culture from its perspective, we can learn more about it and recognize its unique traits.

However, there are some drawbacks to this approach as well. For one, it can lead to acceptance of practices and beliefs that are morally wrong. For example, cultural relativism may lead to the acceptance of female genital mutilation or religious fundamentalism. In addition, it can also lead to a lack of awareness about human rights and the universal moral code applicable to all societies.

## **Importance of Cultural Relativism**

Cultural relativism is an essential concept in anthropology, as it allows us to study a culture without interference or bias. It is also important for understanding different cultures and fostering respect and appreciation between them.

This approach can help us form better relationships with other cultures, as we are not imposing our beliefs on them. Cultural relativism also helps us understand the values of diversity, as each culture has its own unique set of beliefs and values.

## **Effect of Cultural Relativism on Society**

Cultural relativism has had a positive effect on society, as it has allowed for a greater understanding and appreciation of different cultures. This approach has also led to increased tolerance and respect for diverse cultural practices, instead of judging them using our own standards. Cultural relativism can help us form better relationships with other

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societies, as we are not imposing our beliefs on them. It can also help us understand the importance of diversity and recognize the unique traits that each culture has to offer.

By understanding a culture from its perspective, we can learn more about it and be more accepting of different ideologies and beliefs. Cultural relativism helps foster peace and harmony in society, as we are no longer judging other cultures or forcing our values upon them.

This approach can also lead to a better understanding of global issues and create more equitable solutions as we are no longer looking at the world from one perspective. Ultimately, cultural relativism has had a positive effect on society, as it has allowed us to embrace diversity and recognize that each culture is unique and should be respected.

## **Challenges of Cultural Relativism**

One of the main challenges with cultural relativism is that it can lead to the acceptance of practices and beliefs that are not morally right. This can be especially problematic when dealing with human rights issues, as some societies may have different standards regarding what is acceptable behavior.

In addition, cultural relativism can lead to an erosion of universal moral standards. This is because some cultures may be more tolerant of certain practices, while others may view them as wrong or inappropriate.

## **Criticism of Cultural Relativism**

Cultural relativism has been criticized by some, as it can lead to the acceptance of certain practices that are morally wrong. In particular, some have argued that this approach is not conducive to human rights and universal moral codes, as different societies may have different standards regarding what is acceptable behavior.

Additionally, cultural relativism can be seen as a form of cultural imperialism, as it can allow one culture to impose its values and beliefs on

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another. In this way, cultural relativism can be seen as a tool for perpetuating power imbalances between cultures. Ultimately, the criticism of cultural relativism emphasizes the need to maintain universal moral standards while also recognizing and respecting different cultures.

## **Cultural Relativism and Universal Human Rights**

While there is a need to respect different cultures, this should not come at the cost of human rights. All cultures have the responsibility to adhere to and promote universal human rights, as these are fundamental for any society. Cultural relativism should not be used as an excuse for violating human rights, but rather as a tool for understanding different cultures and respecting their practices and beliefs.

## **FAQ's**

### **What is the main idea of relativism?**

The main idea of cultural relativism is that each culture should be seen and judged from its perspective, instead of imposing our values and beliefs on it.

### **Compare cultural relativism vs ethnocentrism.**

Cultural relativism is the belief that each culture should be judged by its standards, while ethnocentrism is the attitude that one's own culture is superior to all others. Cultural relativism emphasizes understanding and tolerance of different cultures and beliefs, while ethnocentrism can lead to prejudice and discrimination.

### **What is a good example of relativism?**

A good example of relativism is the belief that there are no universal moral standards, and that each culture has its own unique set of values and beliefs.

### **What is the purpose of cultural relativism?**

The purpose of cultural relativism is to promote understanding and tolerance between different cultures by recognizing and