**Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism Moodle doc**

**Ethnocentrism**

The tendency to view the traits, ways, ideas, and values observed in other cultures as invariably inferior and less natural or logical than those of one’s own group.

Ethnocentric fallacy: Our beliefs are *always* right and true while those of other peoples are wrong and misguided.

**Cultural Relativism:**

**Cultural Relativism is** the notion that **all** cultural systems are inherently equal in value and that the traits characteristic of each need to be assessed and explained **within the context** of the system in which they occur. A specific behaviour or belief and only be understood in relation to the culture or system of meanings in which it is embedded (Robbins).

**Relativistic fallacy:** The idea that it is impossible to make moral judgements about the beliefs and behaviours of others. Everything goes

**Absolute Cultural Relativism:**

the prespective that says a person from one culture should not question the rightness or wrongness of behavior or ideas in other cultures because that would be ethnocentric.

*Anything* that is acceptable in any one culture *has* to be viewed as acceptable by an outsider seeking to *understand* the practice.

**Getting Around Absolute Cultural Relativism**

**Critical Cultural Relativism** offers an alternative view that poses questions about cultural practices and ideas in terms of who accepts them and why, and who they might be harming or helping

We have the right to critique the behaviour of groups from the standpoint of some more or less agreed upon human rights.

But we have to do our **analysis before judging**

**How to do Critical Cultural Relativism**

* *Understanding*  the plural interests in any society and understand power relations between them without having to *accept* them.
* Critiquing the behaviour of the groups doing the problematic behaviour from the standpoint of some more or less agreed upon human rights.
* Rights should be guaranteed to all people everywhere regardless of culture i.e. universal human rights
* **Context** is important here too.
* What are the social, historical and cultural contexts in which a particular practice occurs?
* Why critical cultural relativism? Even though most anthropologists do not want to be  *ethnocentric*, there is nonetheless a consensus that **perhaps** certain practices should not be carried out, even if they are said to be an integral part of a given culture.
* We can **critically assess** the behaviour of these groups from a set of more or less agreed upon human rights.
* Just because you understand something does not mean you “must” accept it.
* You have the right to disagree with how people do a thing **as long as you carefully interrogate yourself for your own cultural biases.**
* **And practice critical cultural relativism**