

What are the challenges for anthropologists in addressing the issues of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism? Give examples to sustain your arguments.

Anthropologists study the origin and development of human societies and cultures. Culture is the learned behaviour of people, including their languages, belief systems, social structures, institutions, and material goods; one of the main challenges for the researcher is measuring these issues against one's own enculturation. This is often referred to as ethnocentrism - the tendency to look at the world primarily from the perspective of one's own culture (Nickerson, 2022). On the other hand, Cultural relativism is an attitude that focuses on the importance of the local understanding of the meaning of particular beliefs and activities.

Ethnocentrism can be defined as making false assumptions about others' ways based on our own limited experience. We are often unaware that we don't understand what we don't understand. Presumptions from earlier enculturation can cause us to make mistakes.

An example of this could be seeing same-sex friends holding hands in public. In Australia, this could quite easily be considered a sign of a homosexual couple, with some people reacting, possibly with distaste. Still, in other cultures, such as Arab and North African countries, this is seen as friendly and quite agreeable.

Other, more major and global issues resulting from such ethnocentric prejudice may result in the general extremes of racialism, ethnic cleansing, exploitation, or misguided enculturation.

On the other hand, considering a more thorough examination of different cultures can enhance our progress by considering Cultural Relativism. This is the claim that ethical practices differ among cultures, and what is

considered right in one culture may be considered wrong in another. The implication of cultural relativism is that no one society is superior to another; they are merely different. This approach encourages people to look at the world from the perspective of their own culture.

If this approach is taken, and with a greater understanding of national differences and diplomatic accord, many populations would not suffer strife and injury but gain greater and more positive access to each other's populations and another profitable marketplace. This, sadly, has been experienced in a large list of genocidal wars resulting in, for instance, the Armenian diaspora and the civil war in Sri Lanka. These situations could be viewed as examples of Lose-Lose situations resulting from cultural ignorance, but with knowledgeable diplomacy, they could be changed into Win-Win situations.

On this more global scale, with the increasing global difficulties experienced in the efforts to produce diplomatically positive outcomes, it is essential to conduct scientific research on existent cultures and employ methods to escape the limits of ethnocentrism. Cultural relativism is a tool for an unbiased critique. It helps us to re-examine and correct our assumptions and bias about cultures and people of the world.