

**Week 1 Assignment: Cultural Relativism and Moral Action**

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Chamberlain University

ETHC445N: Principles of Ethic

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### **The Situation and the Dilemma Involved**

Cultural relativism refers to respecting how others live and remain without judging faith based on someone's ideals (Rachels & Rachels, 2019, p. 42). Cultures differ in style of food, beliefs, attire, religion, and sex. As a result, individuals benefit from exchanging ideas as they are more tolerant of various cultures and dynamics. In addition, it helps people understand the various ways people choose to spend their lives. Human behavior is affected by societal ideas and conventions, and people in most communities have their own distinctive methods of doing things and dealing with problems. Their moral support and truth influence this. Whenever a decision-maker is presented with a dilemma circumstance, they have more than two alternatives to select from. As a result, the decision-maker is put in an uncomfortable position where he could make the wrong judgment.

I used to work at a particular clinic in Hawaii. One day, a patient, Mitchell, was brought to the clinic by a good Samaritan, bleeding profusely and unconscious. We were told that she had been involved in a bad accident. Mitchell was admitted directly to the theater as she required surgery to save her life. Unfortunately, her father arrived at the clinic and started to demand where his daughter was and what the physician was doing to save her life. He was informed that his daughter was in surgery, but there was an urgent need for type AB+ blood. The father told the doctor that his daughter could not be given a blood transfusion as his culture does not allow such practices. He remained adamant and insisted that he would rather lose his daughter than do an act they considered a sin in their community. The doctor was stuck on whether to follow Mitchell's father's command or save her life. He decided to continue with the surgery to save her life and

did the blood transfusion. The security had to be called to remove the girls' father from the clinic as he had started shouting and abusing the doctor doing the surgery and other hospital staff.

**What a Subjective Moral Relativist Would Say is the Right Approach to the Dilemma and Why They Would Say That**

In this case, a subjective moral relativist would argue that the decision lies with the doctor, whether or not to help Mitchell based on his own moral judgment. According to Newton (2019), subjective relativism subjects each individual to formulate their moral life by their own moral authority and principles. They would say this is because the patient needs blood to survive, but her culture does not allow such practices. Therefore, it is the doctor's mandate to judge the situation based on his morals, as every individual has their own moral authority and source of moral ideals not based on society's moral standards.

**What a Cultural Moral Relativist Would Say is the Right Approach to the Dilemma, Why They Would Say That, and If That is the Correct Approach**

According to a cultural relativist, the doctor should not participate in the blood transfusion since Mitchell's culture forbids it. A cultural moral relativist will argue that the doctor imposed his action (blood transfusion) on the girl against her culture. Brice-Montas (2019) states that cultural moral relativists believe that no one should impose their culture on another individual from a different society and that no culture is superior or inferior to the other. However, everyone views human life as precious, and we should do everything to protect or save someone's life. Therefore, the approach of a cultural moral relativist would be considered wrong in this kind of situation.

**What the Person Confronted with the Dilemma Decided to Do, the Moral Justification They Give and if the Approach was Morally Correct**

As a result of the healthcare practitioner's code of medical ethics, the doctor did a blood transfusion to save the girl's life. According to Chron Contributor (2021), doctors are mandated to safeguard the patient's primary care by always putting their welfare before their own interests and acting within the practice. The doctor justified his actions by saying that his code of ethics does not allow him just to watch a patient die and do nothing and that life is precious; only God has the authority to end it. His refusal to give the patient blood and die amounts to murder. Therefore, refusing to listen to the girl's father based on their culture is morally right.

### **Why or Why Not was an Objective Moral Truth in this Situation?**

Due to a lack of cultural understanding, this situation was very complicated—however, the case lacks objective moral truth. Cultural supporters might claim that it is within the father's cultural rights, so a nurse should respect that patient's cultural beliefs. On the other hand, healthcare professionals have the right to refuse any practice or procedure that is against their moral and ethical principles. They may not be able to tolerate different social norms, leading to miscommunications. Therefore, as future health practitioners, we need to be mindful and ready to face this kind of situation as we might face moral beliefs that differ from ours.

### References

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