

# Cultural bias

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**Cultural bias** is the phenomenon of interpreting and judging phenomena by standards inherent to one's own culture. The phenomenon is sometimes considered a problem central to social and human sciences, such as economics, psychology, anthropology, and sociology. Some practitioners of the aforementioned fields have attempted to develop methods and theories to compensate for or eliminate cultural bias.

Cultural bias occurs when people of a culture make assumptions about conventions, including conventions of language, notation, proof and evidence. They are then accused of mistaking these assumptions for laws of logic or nature. Numerous such biases exist, concerning cultural norms for color, mate selection, concepts of justice, linguistic and logical validity, the acceptability of evidence, and taboos.

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### Psychology

Cultural bias has no a priori definition. Instead, its presence is inferred from differential performance of socioracial (e.g., Blacks, Whites), ethnic (e.g., Latinos/Latinas, Anglos), or national groups (e.g., U.S. Americans, Japanese) on measures of psychological constructs such as cognitive abilities, knowledge or skills (CAKS), or symptoms of psychopathology (e.g., depression). Historically, the term grew out of efforts to explain between-group score differences on CAKS tests primarily of African American and Latino/Latina American test takers relative to their White American counterparts and concerns that test scores should not be interpreted in the same manner across these groups. Although the concept of cultural bias in testing and assessment also pertains to score differences and potential misdiagnoses with respect to a broader range of psychological concepts, particularly in applied psychology and other social and behavioral sciences, this aspect of cultural bias has received less attention in the relevant literature.<sup>[1]</sup>

Cultural bias in psychological testing refers to the standardized psychological tests that are conducted to determine the level of intelligence among the test-takers. Limitations of such verbal or non-verbal intelligence tests have been observed since their introduction. However, the limitations they put forth, due to their particular culture-friendliness, has been realized much later. Many tests have been objected to, as they produced poor results for the ethnic or racial minorities (students), as compared to the

racial majorities. The problem lies not with the test-taker, but with the test itself. As discussed above, the learning environment, the questions posed or situations given in the test may be familiar and strange at the same time to students from different backgrounds.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Economics

Cultural bias in economic exchange is often overlooked. A study done at the [Northwestern University](#)<sup>[3]</sup> suggests that the cultural perception that two countries have of each other plays a large factor in the economic activity between them. This study suggests that low bilateral trust between two countries will result in less trade, less [portfolio investment](#), and less [direct investment](#). This effect is amplified for goods, as they are more trust intensive.

## Anthropology

The concept of [culture theory](#) in anthropology explains that cultural bias is a critical piece of human group formation.

## Sociology

It is thought that societies with conflicting beliefs will more likely have cultural bias as it is dependent on the group's standing in society, where the [social constructions](#) affect how a problem is produced. One example of cultural bias within the context of sociology can be seen in a study done at the [University of California](#) by Jane R. Mercer<sup>[4]</sup> of how test "validity", "bias", and "fairness" in different cultural belief systems affect one's future in a [pluralistic](#) society. A definition of the cultural bias was given as "the extent that the test contains cultural content that is generally peculiar to the members of one group but not to the members of another group", which leads to a belief that "the internal structure of the test will differ for different cultural groups". In addition, the different types of errors made on culture-biased tests are dependent on different cultural groups. This idea progressed to the conclusion that a non-cultural-test will represent the ability of a population as intended and will not reflect the abilities of a group that is not represented.

## History

Cultural bias may also arise in historical scholarship, when the standards, assumptions and conventions of the historian's own era are [anachronistically](#) used to report and assess events of the past. This tendency is sometimes known as [presentism](#), and is regarded by many historians as a fault to be avoided.<sup>[5]</sup> [Arthur Marwick](#) has argued that "a grasp of the fact that past societies are very different from our own, and ... very difficult to get to know" is an essential and fundamental skill of the professional historian; and that "anachronism is still one of the most obvious faults when the unqualified (those expert in other disciplines, perhaps) attempt to do history".<sup>[6]</sup>

## See also

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- [Cognitive bias](#)
- [Confirmation bias](#)
- [Cultural pluralism](#)
- [Determinism](#)
- [Embodied philosophy](#)
- [Environmental racism](#)
- [Ethnocentrism](#)
- [Framing \(social sciences\)](#)
- [Goodness and value theory](#)
- [Observer-expectancy effect](#)
- [Social Darwinism](#)

- Social learning theory
- Theory-ladenness
- Ultimate attribution error
- Xenocentrism

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3. Guiso, Luigi; Sapienza, Paola (October 2008). "Cultural Bias in Economic Exchange?" ([http://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/faculty/sapienza/htm/cultural\\_biases.pdf](http://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/faculty/sapienza/htm/cultural_biases.pdf)) (PDF). *Forthcoming: Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Retrieved April 22, 2018.
4. Mercer, Jane R. (March 1978). "Test "validity", "bias", and "fairness": An analysis from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge". *Interchange*. **9** (1): 1–16. doi:10.1007/BF01807733 (<https://doi.org/10.1007%2FBF01807733>).
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## External links

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- "Understanding the phenomena of cultural bias with examples" (<https://psychologenie.com/understanding-cultural-bias-with-examples>). *PsycholoGenie*. 24 February 2018. Retrieved 27 June 2018.

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