

Culture inefficient.  
however, conducting  
research in countries

Literature



Culture is the different ways of living that are noticeable in different cultures throughout the world, and how these ways of living are portrayed through the everyday lives of the people within these cultures, and how Universality is when specific findings or research is assumed to be generalisable to all cultures across the world.

The studies conducted by Asch on obedience and the studies on obedience conducted by Milgram showed significantly different results when they were replicated in other countries and cultures around the world, and not just in the USA. If a behaviour is seen as normal or standard for one particular culture, there may be other cultures around the world that will see this particular behaviour as not normal and not the norm to be carried out, and even potentially looked down upon. One limitation of this is the distinction between individualism and collectivism, and the reference to culture as individualism vs. Collectivism.

Individualist cultures, such as the USA, care more about people valuing individuality and independence, whereas collectivist cultures, such as India, put more emphasis on the group, or family, rather than independence. Some psychologists argue however that this is a very vague and outdated way of looking at culture differences, and therefore suggesting somewhat “ bias” opinions on culture nowadays. Ethnocentrism is believing that one (usually your own) culture’s behaviours and norms are the only correct and efficient way of living, and any other cultures ones are irrelevant and flawed.

Usually, it will be the case that certain behaviours will not be seen to match the Western way of behaving, and therefore will be seen as incorrect or

inefficient. However, conducting research in countries where perhaps there is not much historical experience or involvement of research and researchers, the local populations may be less affected by demand characteristics than those from western countries which have a large number of experiments and tests carried out, and are therefore used to it in their culture. This can therefore be said to be threatening the validity of the outcome of results in both western and countries without historical experience of research as those results cannot be generalised universally. Cultural relativism insists that behaviour can be properly understood only if the cultural context is taken into consideration. Therefore, any study which draws its sample from only one cultural context (such as just American college students, and nobody else) and then generalises its findings to all people everywhere around the world in all different cultures, is not how it should be done.

A psychologist called Sternberg (1985) pointed out that coordination skills that may be key to life in a preliterate society (as in those motor skills required for shooting a bow and arrow) may be mostly irrelevant to intelligent behaviour for most people in a literate and more “ developed” society, such as Western countries. A strength of this cross cultural research however is that it challenges countries in the West’s assumptions, and their typical ways of thinking and judging the world and other countries unknown to them. The need for understanding and comprehending the idea that the views and ideas that people in the west have may not be necessarily shared by others in other cultures worldwide. This should then promote a greater sensitivity to individual differences and cultural relativism.

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This means that the conclusions and end decision that psychologists come to are likely to be more valid if they recognise that the role culture plays in their final decision to either generalise them or not.