8.3 Culture Bias in Psychological Theory and Research

AQA 7182 · about 50 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 State one statistical procedure to check item equivalence across cultures and explain how it helps.

(Total for Question 1 is 3 marks)

2 Identify the issue and term when using an unadapted UK obedience script in another culture.

(Total for Question 2 is 1 mark)

3 Identify two threats to validity when Western test items mention unfamiliar household objects.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 Identify two practical steps to avoid ethnocentrism when adapting a Western obedience study.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

5 Explain how collectivist vs individualist cultures could produce different obedience patterns and implications for universality claims.

(Total for Question 5 is 3 marks)

6 Discuss culture bias in psychological research, with definitions, examples and evaluation.

(Total for Question 6 is 16 marks)

7 Explain one ethical and one methodological issue when asking participants to disagree aloud in a culture where public disagreement is discouraged.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

8 Identify and explain one cultural alternative explanation for group differences in standardised memory test scores.

(Total for Question 8 is 3 marks)

9 Outline one strength and one limitation of cross-cultural replications in testing universality, with conformity or obedience examples.

(Total for Question 9 is 4 marks)

Mark scheme · 8.3 Culture Bias in Psychological Theory and Research

Question 1

names a suitable procedure, e.g. item analysis using item-total correlations or differential item functioning (DIF) analysis oe — **M1**

explains that item-total correlations show whether an item correlates with the overall test score similarly across groups, indicating consistent functioning oe — **A1**

or explains that DIF identifies items that perform differently for groups with the same underlying ability, flagging culturally biased items oe — **A1**

Answer: Use item analysis such as item-total correlations or differential item functioning (DIF). Item-total correlations check whether an item relates to the overall score similarly across groups, and DIF detects items that give different probabilities of success for groups with the same ability, flagging culturally biased items.

Question 2

identifies the problem as the procedure not being culturally appropriate or valid in the new culture, oe — **B1**

Answer: The problem is the procedure is not culturally appropriate in the other culture; this is an example of an imposed etic.

Question 3

cultural bias in test content, meaning content validity is threatened oe — **B1**

lack of construct validity or ecological validity because items are not appropriate to participants' everyday experiences oe — **B1**

Answer: Cultural bias in test content, threatening content validity; and reduced construct or ecological validity because items are irrelevant to participants' real-life experience.

Question 4

consult local cultural experts or collaborators during design oe — **B1**

adapt materials and scenarios through translation, back-translation and pilot testing with the target population oe — **B1**

Answer: Consult local cultural experts or collaborators; and adapt materials using translation, back-translation and pilot testing with the target population.

Question 5

states that collectivist cultures emphasise group harmony, respect for authority and conformity to group norms, while individualist cultures emphasise personal autonomy and questioning authority oe — **M1**

explains that in a collectivist context participants may show higher compliance with authority commands to preserve group harmony, whereas in individualist settings participants may be more likely to resist oe — **A1**

links consequence: therefore differing obedience rates may reflect cultural values rather than a failure of the original theory, so universality claims must be qualified and cultural moderators considered oe — **A1**

Answer: Collectivist cultures stress group harmony and respect for authority, so participants may be more compliant in obedience studies; individualist cultures stress autonomy, so participants may resist more. This means different obedience rates can reflect cultural values, so claims of universality need to account for cultural moderators rather than assuming a single pattern everywhere.

Question 6

Level 4 Knowledge and understanding of culture bias is accurate, detailed and well organised. Discussion is thorough and evaluative across theory, methods and applications, using appropriate examples from intelligence testing and conformity or obedience replications. There is clear, sustained analysis of ways to reduce bias, including methodological controls and ethical considerations. Specialist terminology is used accurately throughout. — **13-16**

Level 3 Knowledge and understanding of culture bias is clear with relevant examples. There is balanced discussion and some evaluation, but one or two points may be less developed. Applications to intelligence testing and cross-cultural replications are present and generally well linked to evaluation. Terminology is mostly accurate. — **9-12**

Level 2 Basic knowledge of culture bias with limited or descriptive examples. Discussion is present but superficial and evaluation is limited. May list ways to reduce bias without fully developing why they matter. Application to examples may be brief or only partly relevant. Some terminology used, but with occasional inaccuracy. — **5-8**

Level 1 Very limited knowledge or understanding. Little relevant discussion or evaluation. Examples, if present, are vague. Terminology is missing or used incorrectly. Answer is poorly organised. — **1-4**

Level 0 No creditable content. — **0**

Indicative content:

- AO1 definitions: ethnocentrism is judging other cultures by one's own cultural standards; cultural relativism is the view that behaviour and mental processes must be understood in the context of the local culture; imposed etic is applying a method or theory developed in one culture to another without adaptation.
- AO1 examples: intelligence-testing items that assume Western knowledge, such as references to specific holidays or school experiences; conformity or obedience procedures developed in Western labs applied unmodified in cultures with different norms about public disagreement or authority.
- AO3 methodological evaluation: culturally biased test items reduce content and construct validity and can produce unfair comparisons; translation and back-translation alone may not remove cultural assumptions, so item analysis and differential item functioning checks are important.
- AO3 theoretical evaluation: claims of universality should be cautious, because cultural factors such as collectivism or power-distance can moderate behaviours like conformity and obedience; cross-cultural replications that show different levels challenge universalist theories but must be interpreted carefully.
- AO3 ethical and practical issues: exposing participants to tasks that conflict with local norms can cause distress and raises ethical concerns; researchers should obtain cultural consultation and ensure informed consent and the right to withdraw are culturally appropriate.
- AO3 solutions and applications: use emic approaches that develop concepts locally as well as etic approaches carefully adapted; involve local collaborators, pilot tests, translation and back-translation, use of culturally relevant norms for standardisation, and statistical checks for item bias; report cultural limitations in conclusions.
- AO3 balance and implication: while culture bias can undermine the validity of findings, cross-cultural research remains valuable for testing the scope of psychological theories; the best approach combines sensitivity to cultural context with rigorous methods to allow cautious generalisation or the identification of cultural moderators.

Question 7

ethical issue: potential psychological harm or discomfort from social ostracism or shame if participants are asked to disagree publicly oe **M1**

explains why it matters: participants may experience distress, so researchers must take extra care with informed consent and right to withdraw oe **A1**

methodological issue: artificial increase in conformity due to cultural norms about public agreement, reducing internal validity oe **M1**

explains consequence: the behaviour measured may reflect cultural norms about public speech rather than the psychological process the original study intended to measure oe **A1**

Answer: Ethical issue: participants may feel shame or distress when asked to disagree publicly in a culture where that is discouraged, requiring careful consent and support. Methodological issue: public-answer format may inflate conformity because of local norms, so results may measure cultural norms about speaking up rather than the intended conformity process.

Question 8

identifies a cultural alternative, e.g. differences in familiarity with test format or practice with similar tasks oe **M1**

explains how this could cause score differences: Group A may have more experience with test-taking or formal schooling, boosting scores independent of innate ability oe **A1**

adds consequence: therefore attributing the difference to innate intelligence is unwarranted without controlling for cultural and educational factors oe **A1**

Answer: An alternative is that Group A are more familiar with test formats or have greater schooling, so they perform better on standardised memory tasks; this experience, not innate intelligence, could account for the difference unless cultural and educational factors are controlled.

Question 9

strength: replications in different cultures can reveal whether findings are universal or culture-specific, increasing external validity oe **M1**

explains with example: if obedience levels are lower in one culture replication, this suggests the original finding may not be universal oe **A1**

limitation: differences may reflect methodological or translation issues rather than true cultural differences oe **M1**

explains consequence: without careful adaptation, a failed replication could be due to an imposed etic or poor operationalisation, limiting the inference that the theory is culture-specific oe **A1**

Answer: Strength: cross-cultural replications test universality and can show whether findings generalise; for example different obedience rates suggest culture matters. Limitation: differences may be due to poor adaptation or translation rather than true cultural effects, so careful methodology is needed before concluding a theory is culture-specific.