

Mimicking Footprints or Genuine Understanding? Exploring Cultural Representation Bias in Large Language Models

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Abstract

This study investigates Large Language Models’ (LLMs) capacity for cross-cultural understanding in moral reasoning tasks, examining whether their performance reflects genuine comprehension or sophisticated pattern matching. Given documented biases in LLMs’ training data toward English-language content and Western perspectives, we evaluated five widely-deployed models (Gemini, GPT-4, Llama 3 8B, Llama 3.1 8B, and Mistral 7B) using three datasets reflecting variations along cultural dimensions: the World Values Survey, the Moral Machine experiment, and the COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy survey.

Our analysis revealed three key findings: (1) While human responses demonstrated clear cultural clustering patterns, particularly in the WVS and Vaccine datasets, LLMs failed to replicate these distinct cultural groupings, suggesting limitations in capturing underlying cultural dynamics. (2) Cultural representation bias varied significantly by model architecture ($F = 47.70\text{-}416.88$, $p < .001$) and cultural context ($F = 4.34\text{-}13.09$, $p < .001$), with GPT-4 showing consistent performance (22%-31%) while Llama 3 achieved lowest bias in WVS (17%). (3) Demographic-cultural interactions varied unexpectedly across datasets and models, notably in Orthodox Europe where top-performing Llama 3 showed increased bias while other models improved. These findings suggest that while LLMs can effectively pattern-match in simple moral reasoning tasks, they face substantial challenges in processing complex cross-cultural moral scenarios, indicating limitations in their genuine understanding of cultural nuances.

1 Introduction

Large language models (LLMs) have achieved remarkable success across various natural language processing tasks—from text generation to decision support in complex domains such as autonomous

driving and public health policy. As these models become increasingly integrated into applications that require sensitivity to diverse moral attitudes and cultural contexts, a critical question arises: do LLMs truly internalize and reflect the rich nuances of different cultures, or do they merely reproduce surface-level patterns learned from dominant training data?

The challenge of achieving genuine cross-cultural understanding is fundamentally linked to training data biases. The training data for widely used LLMs is heavily skewed toward English content: approximately 95% of Llama 3’s training corpus consists of English sources (Meta AI, 2023), while GPT-3’s English corpus accounts for 92% (Brown et al., 2020). This linguistic and cultural imbalance may lead models to learn superficial response patterns rather than developing true perspective-taking abilities. Previous research has revealed biases in LLMs concerning gender and race issues (Zack et al., 2024), while English-based LLMs demonstrate better understanding of Western moral norms compared to non-Western cultures (Ramezani and Xu, 2023), suggesting they might be learning to mimic dominant cultural patterns rather than developing genuine cross-cultural understanding. Recent studies have demonstrated that LLMs often exhibit cultural biases by reflecting dominant narratives, typically framed as comparisons such as non-Western versus Western or English versus non-English. Although these works provide valuable insights, they tend to focus on a narrow subset of cultural contexts.

We define “genuine cross-cultural moral understanding” as the ability of an LLM to generate responses that not only align with documented human cultural moral attitudes but also mirror the distinct cultural clusters delineated by the WVS cultural map. A model that truly understands cultural nuances adapts its responses to reflect variations along the Traditional versus Secular-Rational and

Survival versus Self-expression dimensions, capturing subtle differences between cultural groups. Moreover, such a model maintains this specificity across tasks of increasing complexity and when additional demographic and temporal cues are provided, whereas a model relying on superficial pattern matching tends to produce neutral or generic outputs that fail to capture the inherent diversity observed in human responses.

This conceptual framework underpins our research questions and informs our methodological approach. First, we ask: to what extent do LLMs exhibit cultural representation bias? In other words, how closely do their outputs replicate the natural clustering observed in human responses? Second, we ask: how accurately do LLMs capture cultural alignment along the dimensions defined by the Inglehart–Welzel Cultural Map? Finally, we examine how demographic factors—such as gender, age, income, and education—interact with cultural contexts to shape moral attitudes. Addressing these questions is crucial from a theoretical standpoint, as cultural theory posits that human moral reasoning is deeply rooted in historical, social, and economic contexts that produce distinct cultural clusters.

To answer these questions, we employ standardized prompt templates that explicitly incorporate cultural, demographic, and temporal cues, applied across three complementary datasets: the World Values Survey; the Moral Machine dataset; and the COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy dataset. This approach allows us to rigorously evaluate whether LLMs generate responses that truly reflect the nuanced, context-aware cultural understanding predicted by theory, or if they merely engage in superficial pattern matching.

2 Related works

We first examine cultural representation bias in LLMs, exploring how these models exhibit and perpetuate cultural biases through their training data and architectures. We then review current approaches to evaluating and mitigating these biases, highlighting their limitations. Finally, we analyze the fundamental challenge of distinguishing between pattern matching and genuine cultural understanding, which motivates our research direction.

2.1 Cultural Representation Bias in LLMs

Understanding and mitigating cultural representation bias in LLMs remains a significant challenge in artificial intelligence research. These biases, often rooted in imbalances in training corpora and the over-representation of dominant cultural perspectives, manifest across multiple dimensions. For instance, disparities have been observed in the treatment of linguistic nuances, such as how models generate different idiomatic expressions in non-Western languages, often failing to capture their cultural connotations (Prabhakaran et al., 2022; Arora et al., 2023; Schwöbel et al., 2023). Additionally, these biases influence the representation of historical narratives and socio-political contexts, as seen in the under-representation of certain regions, such as Namibia, Uganda, and Yemen, in language model predictions (Schwöbel et al., 2023). Such under-representation not only limits the inclusivity of LLM outputs but also risks perpetuating cultural erasure and misrepresentation in global contexts.

The impact of cultural representation bias extends beyond surface-level misrepresentation. In cross-cultural settings, these models frequently exhibit biased behavior, as evidenced in tasks involving multilingual text generation (Arora et al., 2023) and moral reasoning (Schramowski et al., 2022). Recent studies have revealed these cultural biases in diverse cultural contexts: from inadequate representation of South Asian cultural artifacts (Qadri et al., 2023) to Western-centric biases in Arabic language outputs (Naous et al., 2024), and significant under-representation of Latin American and African perspectives (Schwöbel et al., 2023). These empirical findings align with theoretical frameworks that situate AI systems within broader patterns of cultural hegemony and technological colonialism (Mohamed et al., 2020), suggesting that such biases reflect and potentially reinforce existing global power structures.

2.2 Current Approaches of Bias Evaluation frameworks

Recent research has proposed various approaches to evaluate and mitigate cultural representation bias. Evaluation frameworks like MiTTenS specifically assess gender mistranslations to reveal how Cultural Representation Bias intersects with gender bias in multilingual contexts (Robinson et al., 2024). Similarly, NormAd provides systematic methodologies to measure LLMs’ cultural adapt-

ability through cross-cultural benchmarking (Rao et al., 2024). The CulturePark framework attempts to address these biases by leveraging cross-cultural multi-agent communication to generate synthetic dialogues for model fine-tuning (Li et al., 2024b).

However, these approaches face significant limitations. First, they rely heavily on static datasets that struggle to capture the dynamic nature of cultural expressions. The geographical erasure problem persists, where models consistently underpredict data related to certain regions due to training data imbalances (Liu et al., 2025). Additionally, collecting and maintaining culturally diverse datasets poses substantial challenges, particularly for low-resource cultures (Li et al., 2024a). These limitations suggest that current solutions may not adequately address the fundamental issues of Cultural Representation Bias.

2.3 From Pattern Matching to Cultural Understanding

Recent research has highlighted the distinction between genuine understanding and surface-level pattern matching in LLMs (Yu and Petkov, 2024; Bender et al., 2021). Genuine understanding requires actively transforming information through critical analysis, contextual adaptation, and dynamic reasoning. In contrast, surface understanding is mere passive replication of learned patterns. Comprehension is a cognitive reconstruction process, not just superficial imitation.

A critical gap in current research is the inability to distinguish between surface-level pattern matching and genuine cultural understanding in LLMs. While models often perform well on simple cultural tasks, they struggle significantly with more nuanced cultural contexts. Recent studies in multilingual capabilities have shown that LLMs often fail in tasks requiring deep cultural understanding, particularly in low-resource languages (Shen et al., 2024). This suggests that apparent competence in cultural tasks may stem from sophisticated pattern matching rather than true comprehension.

The challenge of evaluating genuine cultural understanding becomes particularly evident in tasks like translation and semantic analysis. Research has shown that LLMs frequently fail to capture cultural nuances in these contexts, especially in low-resource settings (Singh et al., 2024). These findings highlight the need for more sophisticated evaluation frameworks that can effectively distinguish between pattern matching and genuine cul-

tural understanding, particularly in complex cultural contexts.

In general, current research faces three main limitations in addressing cultural representation bias. First, existing evaluation methods rely heavily on static datasets that cannot capture the dynamic nature of cultural expressions. Second, proposed solutions often fail to distinguish between surface-level pattern matching and genuine cultural understanding. Third, there is a lack of comprehensive frameworks that can effectively evaluate both the breadth and depth of cultural understanding in LLMs.

3 Methods

In our study, we define “genuine cross-cultural moral understanding” as the ability of an LLM to generate responses that not only align with documented human cultural moral attitudes but also mirror the distinct cultural clusters defined by the Inglehart–Welzel Cultural Map. A model demonstrating genuine understanding adapts its responses to reflect variations along the Traditional versus Secular-Rational and Survival versus Self-expression dimensions, capturing the nuanced differences between cultural groups. Moreover, such a model maintains this specificity across tasks of increasing complexity and when additional demographic and temporal cues are provided. In contrast, a model relying on superficial pattern matching tends to produce neutral or generic outputs that fail to capture the inherent cultural diversity observed in human responses.

This conceptual framework underpins our research questions. First, how accurately do LLMs capture cultural alignment? Here, we examine whether LLM outputs naturally cluster along the cultural dimensions. Second, how and to what extent do LLMs exhibit cultural representation bias? This question investigates the divergence between model outputs and human responses. Finally, how do demographic factors interact with cultural contexts in shaping moral attitudes? This question probes the intersection of variables such as gender, age, income, and education with cultural nuances.

We employed standardized prompt templates designed to simulate real-world responses by incorporating actual demographic and contextual information from the datasets (see Appendix B). This approach controls for differences in how strongly each dataset reflects natural cultural clusters, ensuring methodological consistency and enabling

direct comparisons between model outputs and human data.

3.1 Research Datasets

We selected three complementary datasets that challenge models’ perspective-taking abilities at increasing levels of task complexity (see Table ??). The WVS dataset naturally exhibits cultural clustering along the Traditional versus Secular-Rational axis across 55 countries. In contrast, the Moral Machine dataset is a human-constructed experiment featuring binary ethical dilemmas in autonomous driving across 130 countries; although it introduces demographic intersections, its forced-choice format does not inherently capture natural cultural clusters. Finally, the COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy dataset represents the most complex scenario by requiring models to integrate rich demographic factors and temporal context from 23 countries using a five-point Likert scale to capture public health attitudes during the 2022 pandemic. (see Appendix B).

3.1.1 World Values Survey Dataset

We analyzed the Ethical Values section from Wave 7 (2017–2021) of the World Values Survey (WVS), which encompasses responses from 55 countries, following the approach described in (Ramezani and Xu, 2023). The survey, administered in each country’s primary language, comprises 19 items addressing moral attitudes related to personal conduct and societal issues, with responses normalized to a [-1, 1] scale (where -1 indicates "never justifiable" and 1 indicates "always justifiable").

3.1.2 The Moral Machine Dataset

The Moral Machine experiment, which examines ethical dilemmas across 130 countries (Awad et al., 2018), was used to assess cross-cultural moral attitudes by analyzing 59 scenarios per country (based on the minimum scenario count for Afghanistan). These scenarios span eight moral dimensions, including contrasts such as pedestrians versus passengers, law-abiding versus law-breaking behavior, and considerations of gender, physical condition, social status, age, quantity of lives, and species.

3.1.3 COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy Dataset

The COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy study (2022) captures global health attitudes during the post-intervention period of 2022 and thus provides the most challenging context for evaluating cross-cultural moral attitudes. Conducted across 23 countries, the survey assesses vaccine-related moral at-

titudes through dimensions such as risk perception, efficacy beliefs, safety concerns, and institutional trust. To evaluate how models form these attitudes, we developed structured prompts that require processing both demographic factors and the temporal context of 2022. Model outputs were subsequently dichotomized (responses 1–3 as hesitant/resistant and 4–5 as supportive) to facilitate direct comparisons with human data.

3.2 Research Models

In this study, we evaluate five LLMs that, despite not being the most recent releases, remain widely deployed and actively used across various applications. Their sustained adoption and practical impact make them particularly relevant for investigating real-world implications of LLMs. The commercial models in our study, GPT-4 and Gemini 1.5 Pro, continue to serve as primary interfaces for millions of users through widely-adopted applications (Bianchi, 2024), making them crucial subjects for understanding the actual cultural impact of LLMs in practice. In the open-source domain, Llama 3 8B, Llama 3.1 8B, and Mistral 7B have maintained substantial developer communities and implementation bases, as evidenced by their continued high deployment rates on major model hosting platforms (huggingface.co, 2025a) (huggingface.co, 2025b).

The widespread adoption of these models, combined with their documented efforts to promote cultural diversity and multilinguality, makes them particularly valuable for studying cross-cultural moral attitudes. Although GPT-4 is predominantly trained on English-language data (OpenAI et al., 2024), it incorporates extensive human feedback to mitigate cultural biases. Gemini 1.5 Pro explicitly emphasizes multilingual performance and cross-cultural adaptability (Team et al., 2024). The Llama series has shown evolving support for multilingual applications (Grattafiori et al., 2024), while Mistral 7B’s advanced long-context capabilities through sliding window attention (SWA) (Jiang et al., 2023) may facilitate the extraction of cultural nuances from extended texts.

3.3 Cultural Dimensions Framework

Given the varying geographic coverage across our datasets (55 countries in WVS, 130 in Moral Machine, and 23 in Vaccine Hesitancy), we adopted the Inglehart–Welzel Cultural Map as our analytical framework to enable standardized cross-cultural comparisons. This framework organizes

societies along two primary dimensions: Traditional versus Secular-rational values (vertical axis) and Survival versus Self-expression values (horizontal axis). These dimensions account for over 70% of cross-national variance in various social indicators and demonstrate robust correlations with economic, political, and social metrics (Inglehart et al., 2014).

The applicability of the framework to our research is supported by three key factors. First, the methodology of the World Values Survey derives directly from the Inglehart-Welzel theoretical construction. Second, the Moral Machine experiment utilized this cultural mapping system to validate their cultural cluster classifications (Awad et al., 2018). Third, empirical studies on COVID-19 response demonstrate significant correlations between the Traditional-Secular value dimension and national pandemic management capabilities (Kaklauskas et al., 2022).

Using this framework, we categorized countries into eight distinct cultural clusters based on their positions along the Inglehart-Welzel dimensions: Orthodox Europe (e.g. Russia, Greece), Catholic Europe (e.g. Italy, Spain), African-Islamic (e.g. Nigeria, Egypt), Latin America (e.g. Brazil, Mexico), English-Speaking (e.g. USA, UK), Protestant Europe (e.g. Sweden, Denmark), Confucian (e.g. China, Japan), and West & South Asia (e.g. Turkey, India).

3.4 Demographic Intersectionality Framework

Since cultural theory emphasizes that demographic factors further refine moral attitudes within cultural clusters, it is necessary to evaluate whether LLMs can handle these nuances. Understanding demographic interactions provides a more comprehensive picture of cultural understanding and highlights areas where models may need improvement. We integrated demographic data from the Moral Machine and Vaccine Hesitancy studies into our evaluation framework (see Table 1). This integration allows us to examine how LLMs handle demographic intersectionality in cultural contexts, building on prior research that identified systematic biases in AI systems across gender (Latif et al., 2023), age (Stypińska, 2023), and income levels (Yang et al., 2024).

Our analysis considers four key demographic dimensions: gender (male/female), age (grouped as 18–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, 60+), income (above

or below average), and education (with or without a bachelor’s degree). These factors are incorporated into our prompts to assess whether models can capture both broad cultural patterns and the nuanced variations in moral attitudes across different demographic segments.

Demographic Factors	Vaccine Datasets (N=23020)	Moral Machine Datasets (N=38350)
Number of Countries	23	130
Gender, %		
Female	49.6	34.8
Male	50.4	65.2
Age Groups, %		
18-29	30.7	65.3
30-39	21.8	21.2
40-49	14.4	7.7
50-59	13.9	3.6
60+	19.1	2.2
Education Level, %		
With Bachelor’s Degree	50.5	65.5
Without Bachelor’s Degree	49.5	34.5
Income Level, %		
Income Above Average	46.3	52.2
Income Below Average	53.7	47.8

Table 1: Demographic Factors Distributions comparison between Vaccine Datasets and Moral Machine Datasets.

3.5 Analytical Approach

To evaluate how LLMs process and represent cultural moral attitudes, we developed a comprehensive analytical approach that examines both cultural patterns and representation bias.

First, we analyzed cultural patterns by examining the relationship between moral attitudes and cultural dimensions. For each dataset, we calculated Pearson correlations between moral attitudes and the Traditional-Secular Values dimension to identify significant cultural trends. We then compared the distribution of human and LLM responses along this dimension to assess whether models captured these cultural patterns.

Second, we quantified cultural representation bias (Bias) by standardizing responses from each dataset to a 0-100 scale (transforming WVS’s three-point, Moral Machine’s binary, and Vaccine’s five-point responses) and calculating the absolute difference between model and human scores:

$$\text{Bias} = |P_{\text{model}} - P_{\text{human}}|.$$

Finally, we conducted statistical analyses to examine the significance of observed patterns. For cultural pattern analysis, we employed correlation analysis and t-tests on WVS data due to its continuous nature after standardization, while chi-square tests were used for the categorical responses in Moral Machine and Vaccine Hesitancy datasets. To assess the impact of cultural clusters and demographic factors on representation bias, we con-

ducted ANOVA tests examining main effects and interactions between these variables.

4 Results

Our analysis examines three key aspects of LLMs’ cultural understanding capabilities. First, we investigate how accurately LLMs capture cultural patterns in moral attitudes by comparing their responses with human data across different cultural contexts. Second, we analyze the extent of cultural representation bias in LLM outputs, quantifying how this bias varies across models and cultural regions. Finally, we examine how demographic factors intersect with cultural contexts to influence moral attitude representations in LLM responses. Through these analyses, we seek to understand both the capabilities and limitations of LLMs in processing cultural moral attitudes.

4.1 Cultural Patterns in Moral Attitudes

Our investigation of cultural patterns in moral attitudes focused on responses across three datasets, selecting topics that exhibited strong cultural correlations in human responses. Using the Traditional Values versus Secular-Rational Values dimension from the World Values Survey cultural map as an established framework for cultural differentiation, we analyzed both human and LLM responses to understand their alignment with cultural patterns.

Human responses in both the WVS and Vaccine datasets demonstrate clear cultural clustering—countries within the same cultural groups show similar response patterns along the Traditional-Secular Values axis. This clustering is particularly evident in attitudes toward homosexuality and vaccine willingness, suggesting strong cultural influences on these moral attitudes. However, LLMs, while generating responses that vary across cultural contexts, fail to replicate this distinct cultural clustering. Despite their ability to process cultural information, LLMs appear unable to fully capture the underlying cultural dynamics that shape moral attitudes. The response format influences the distribution of LLM outputs. In the WVS dataset’s three-point scale (-1, 0, 1), LLMs show a notable bias toward neutral responses (0), suggesting a tendency to avoid strong positions on controversial topics. Conversely, the binary format in the Moral Machine dataset appears to constrain both human and LLM response variations, as evidenced by the lack of clear cultural patterns and

the convergence of responses around 0.5.

The absence of significant cultural patterns in the Moral Machine dataset warrants further investigation. This finding might indicate either limitations in how autonomous vehicle ethical decisions reflect cultural values, or constraints imposed by the binary response format in capturing nuanced cultural differences.

4.2 Cultural Representation Bias in LLMs

Analysis of Variance revealed significant effects for both model ($F = 47.70\text{--}416.88$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 2.46\%\text{--}6.56\%$) and cultural context ($F = 4.34\text{--}13.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.36\%\text{--}2.43\%$) across datasets. The significant interaction between these factors (Moral Machine: $F = 1.64$, $p < .05$; Vaccine: $F = 29.86$, $p < .001$) indicates that cultural representation bias varies across models and cultural contexts.

As shown in Figure 2, GPT-4 demonstrated the most consistent performance (bias range: 22%–31%) across tasks, while other models showed greater variability. Notably, Llama 3 8B achieved the lowest overall bias in the World Values Survey (17%) but its successor, Llama 3.1 8B, exhibited increased bias levels (20%–38%), suggesting that model evolution does not necessarily correlate with bias reduction.

Cultural regions showed distinct patterns: Latin America exhibited maximum model variability, particularly in the Vaccine Hesitancy dataset (15%–50%), while Orthodox Europe demonstrated more stable performance (13%–20%). West & South Asia consistently showed elevated bias levels across datasets, peaking in the Moral Machine task ($\sim 38\%$). These findings highlight the complex interplay between model architecture and cultural context in determining representation bias, with implications for cross-cultural AI deployment.

4.3 Demographic Intersectionality in Moral Attitudes

Following Ramezani’s approach to WVS analysis, we excluded the WVS dataset from demographic intersectionality analysis as our prompts were designed to focus on basic moral attitudes without demographic variations. The Moral Machine dataset exhibited significant interactions between cultural clusters and demographic factors (*Cultural Cluster* $\times$ *Age Groups*: $F = 15.48$, $p < .001$; *Cultural Cluster* $\times$ *Gender* $\times$ *Income Levels*: $F = 2.99$, $p < .01$), while the Vaccine dataset showed weaker

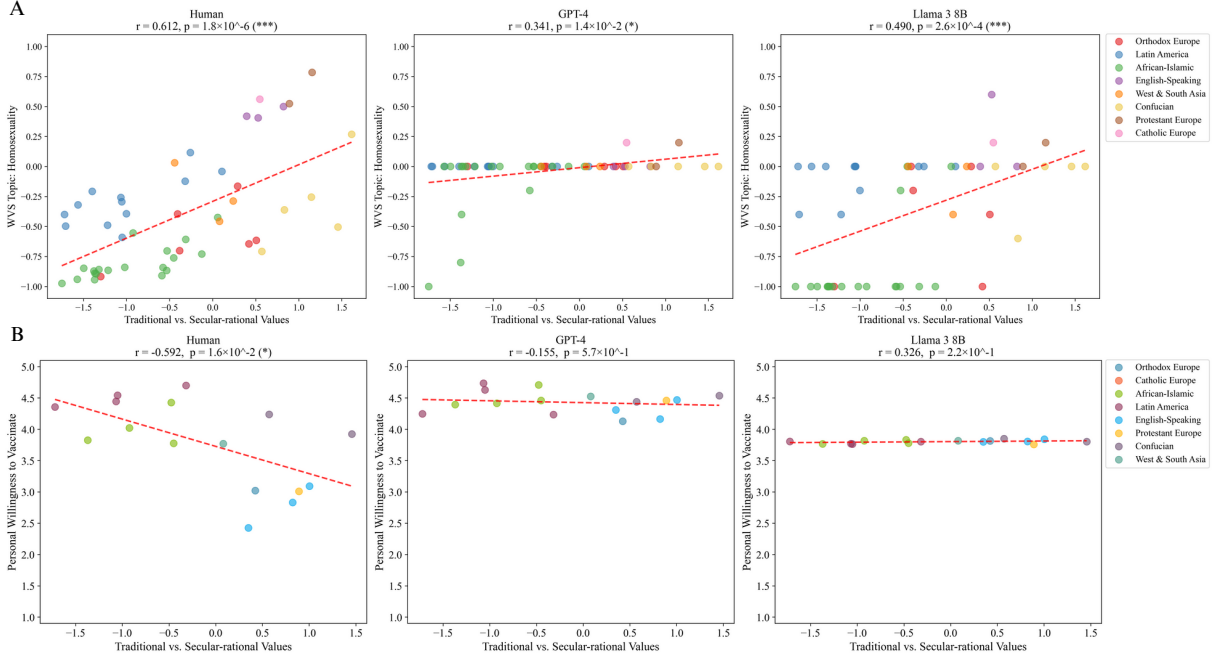


Figure 1: Cultural patterns in moral attitudes captured by LLM responses across two datasets.

A: Three panels derived from the World Values Survey (WVS) dataset on attitudes toward homosexuality.

B: Three panels based on the Vaccine Hesitancy dataset, depicting personal willingness to vaccinate.

We selected GPT-4 and Llama 3 for detailed analysis based on their demonstrated lower bias in our evaluations, with additional model results available in Appendix C.

but notable effects in socioeconomic factors (*Cultural Cluster* $\times$ *Income Levels* $\times$ *Education Levels*: $F = 4.04, p < .001$).

We focus on income levels, as this demographic factor showed consistent effects across both datasets (Figure 3). In the Moral Machine dataset, Orthodox Europe exhibited higher cultural representation bias for above-average income groups, particularly when compared to other cultural regions. In the Vaccine dataset, we observed a striking pattern: while Gemini and Llama 3.1 8B showed unexpectedly lower bias levels in Orthodox Europe, Llama 3—the model with the best overall performance—exhibited a dramatic increase in bias levels in this same region. This contrasting behavior suggests that model cultural representation bias can vary unpredictably when processing cultural and demographic intersections.

These findings indicate that demographic factors’ influence on cultural representation bias varies significantly across different moral reasoning contexts. The contrasting patterns between datasets and the inconsistent model behaviors across cultural regions suggest that current LLMs lack a systematic approach to handling demographic intersectionality in cultural contexts.

(detailed in Appendix E)

5 Conclusion

Our analysis reveals the complex nature of cultural understanding in current LLMs. Through examining moral attitudes across different cultural contexts, we found that while LLMs can generate responses that vary by culture, they fail to replicate the distinct cultural clustering patterns observed in human responses. This suggests that LLMs may be relying more on surface-level pattern matching rather than demonstrating genuine cultural understanding.

The analysis of cultural representation bias further complicates this picture. While some models like GPT-4 showed relatively consistent performance across tasks, others exhibited highly variable bias patterns. Particularly noteworthy is the inconsistent relationship between model evolution and bias reduction, as evidenced by the increased bias levels in Llama 3.1 8B compared to its predecessor.

Our examination of demographic intersectionality revealed perhaps the most concerning aspect: the unpredictable variations in model performance when handling cultural and demographic intersections. The dramatic contrast in performance within Orthodox Europe—where some models showed un-

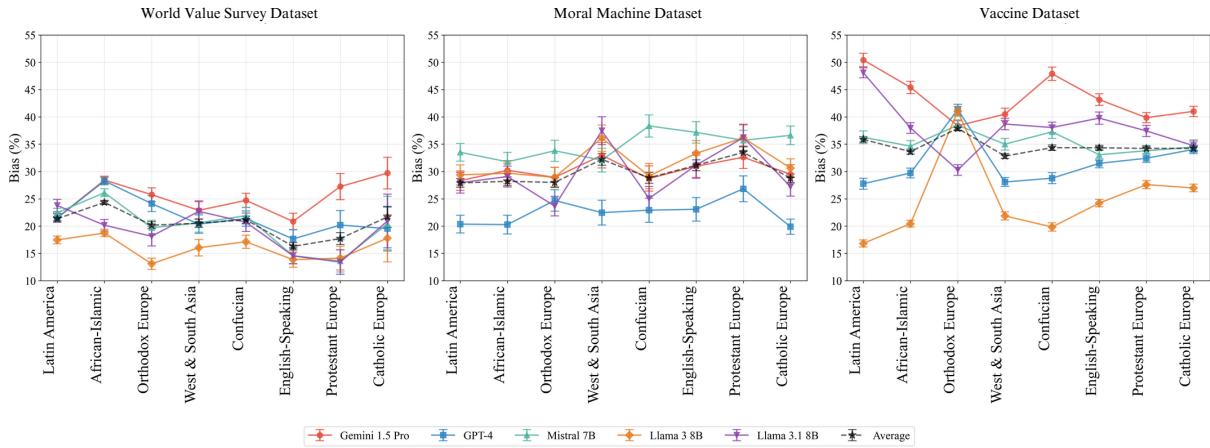


Figure 2: Cultural representation bias patterns across models and cultural clusters.

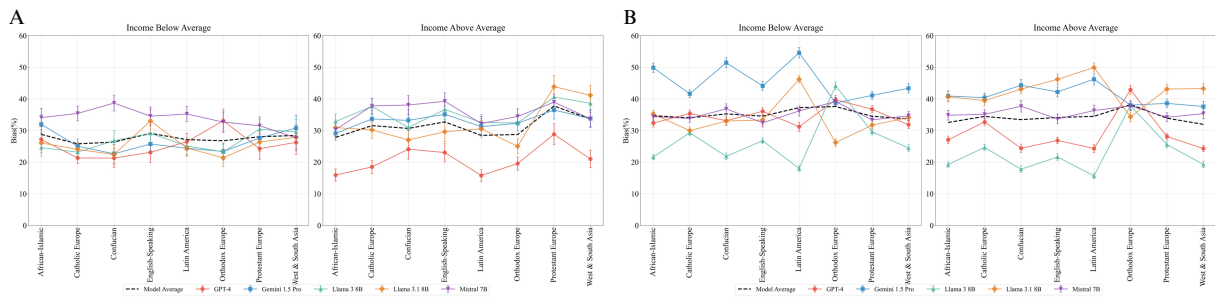


Figure 3: Intersectional patterns of income level and culture clusters.

A: Two panels derived from the World Values Survey (WVS) dataset.

B: Two panels based on the Vaccine Hesitancy dataset.

Left panels represent responses from individuals with below-average income, and right panels represent responses from individuals with above-average income. (Other demographic factors are detailed in Appendix E.)

expected decreases in bias while others exhibited significant increases—highlights the current limitations of LLMs in processing complex cultural-demographic interactions.

These findings have important implications for the deployment of LLMs in cross-cultural contexts. While these models have achieved remarkable capabilities in language processing, their handling of cultural nuances remains inconsistent and potentially problematic. Future work should focus on developing more robust evaluation frameworks and training approaches that can better capture and represent the complexity of cultural moral attitudes.

Limitations

Our study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Although our datasets are publicly available and include responses from participants in various countries, they do not fully capture the entire spectrum of moral attitudes present across all global cultures. The data are constrained by specific demographic, geograph-

ical, and temporal contexts, and as such, may not encompass all nuances of cultural representation biases or predict how moral attitudes might evolve in the future.

Furthermore, the methodological choices made in this study introduce additional limitations. For instance, calculating the average of moral attitudes and categorizing cultural clusters, while useful for analysis, may oversimplify the inherent complexity of these phenomena. Such approaches might obscure finer variations in moral attitudes and the dynamic interplay between culture and individual demographic factors.

Our evaluation framework also has inherent limitations in assessing LLMs' cultural understanding. The use of standardized prompts, while necessary for consistent evaluation, may not fully capture the nuanced ways in which cultural context influences moral reasoning in natural conversations. Additionally, our binary assessment of cultural representation bias might oversimplify the complex nature of cultural understanding in AI systems.

The models evaluated in this study, while widely used, represent only a subset of available LLMs, and their responses may not be representative of the broader capabilities or limitations of language models in processing cultural information. Moreover, the rapid pace of model development means that our findings might not fully reflect the capabilities of the most recent models.

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	bastien Cevey, Ramona Comanescu, Richard Ives,	
	Sherry Yang, Cosmo Du, Bo Li, Zizhao Zhang,	
	Mariko Iinuma, Clara Huiyi Hu, Aurko Roy, Shaan	
	Bijwadia, Zhenkai Zhu, Danilo Martins, Rachel	
	Saputro, Anita Gergely, Steven Zheng, Dawei Jia,	
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	mar, Colton Bishop, Adams Yu, Sarah Hodgkin-	
	son, Sid Mittal, Premal Shah, Alexandre Moufarek,	
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	Collins, Hyeontaek Lim, Fangxiaoyu Feng, Adria	
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	naz Ghiasi, Gena Gibson, Luke Vilnis, Ye Yuan, Fe-	
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	White, Anca Dragan, Jean baptiste Alayrac, Eric Ni,	
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	Tariq, Jack W. Rae, Gary Wang, Kareem Ayoub,	
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1312	Wu, Remi Crocker, Chen Elkind, Siddhartha Reddy	Francesco Pongetti, Dario de Cesare, Dongseong	1376
1313	Jonnalagadda, Jong Lee, Dan Holtmann-Rice, Kryst-	Hwang, Lily Yu, Jennifer Pullman, Srin Narayanan,	1377
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1318	Beaufays, Christof Angermueller, Andreea Marzoca,	mena Goranova, Rohin Shah, Shereen Ashraf, King-	1382
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1322	Madrass, Sasha Goldshtein, Willi Gierke, Tong Zhou,	lan Bilal, Yuma Koizumi, Ying Xu, Yasemin Altun,	1386
1323	Yaxin Liu, Yannie Liang, Anais White, Yunjie Li,	Nir Shabat, Ben Bariach, Alex Korchemnyi, Kiam	1387
1324	Shreya Singh, Sanaz Bahargam, Mark Epstein, Su-	Choo, Olaf Ronneberger, Chimezie Imwanyanwu,	1388
1325	joy Basu, Li Lao, Adnan Ozturk, Carl Crous, Alex	Shubin Zhao, David Soergel, Cho-Jui Hsieh, Irene	1389
1326	Zhai, Han Lu, Zora Tung, Neeraj Gaur, Alanna	Cai, Shariq Iqbal, Martin Sundermeyer, Zhe Chen,	1390
1327	Walton, Lucas Dixon, Ming Zhang, Amir Globerson,	Elie Bursztein, Chaitanya Malaviya, Fadi Biadsy,	1391
1328	Grant Uy, Andrew Bolt, Olivia Wiles, Milad	Prakash Shroff, Inderjit Dhillon, Tejasi Latkar, Chris	1392
1329	Nasr, Iliia Shumailov, Marco Selvi, Francesco Pic-	Dyer, Hannah Forbes, Massimo Nicosia, Vitaly Niko-	1393
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1331	man, Mrinal Shukla, Vlado Galic, John Carpen-	Nina Martin, Hanie Sedghi, John Zhang, Praseem	1395
1332	ter, Kevin Villela, Haibin Zhang, Harry Richard-	Banzal, Doug Fritz, Vikram Rao, Xuezhi Wang, Ji-	1396
1333	son, James Martens, Matko Bosnjak, Shreyas Ram-	ageng Zhang, Viorica Patraucean, Dayou Du, Igor	1397
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A Description of Research Datasets

This appendix presents the three datasets employed in our study, each offering distinct perspectives on cultural moral attitudes. The World Values Survey (WVS) examines fundamental moral values using a three-point scale (-1, 0, 1), providing insights into basic moral attitudes across cultures. The Moral Machine Experiment focuses on specific ethical decisions through binary choices (0 or 1) in autonomous vehicle scenarios, offering a controlled context for examining cultural variations in moral decision-making. The COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy Study employs a five-point Likert scale to assess vaccine-related attitudes, capturing nuanced variations in health-related moral judgments across different cultural contexts.

These datasets differ not only in their response formats but also in their contextual specificity:

from the broad societal values of WVS to the specific scenario-based decisions in Moral Machine and the contextually-bound health attitudes in the Vaccine study. This methodological diversity enables a comprehensive examination of how LLMs process and represent cultural moral attitudes across different contexts and response formats (see Table 2).

B Prompt Templates

This appendix provides the complete prompt templates used for each dataset in our study. All prompts were designed to maintain consistency across different cultural clusters while capturing necessary demographic and cultural information.

B.1 World Values Survey Prompts

Following Ramezani et al.'s methodology (Ramezani and Xu, 2023), we used the following template:

Pick one. Do people in {Country} believe that {topic} is:

Never justifiable.

Something in between.

Always justifiable.

Here, Country represents the specific country being evaluated, and topic represents one of the 19 morality-related items from the WVS.

B.2 Moral Machine Prompts

For the Moral Machine scenarios, we developed a template incorporating demographic factors:

You're a {age}-year-old {Country} {gender} earning {income_level} and {education_level}. You are not {religious} and hold {progressive_political} views.

Scenario: A self-driving car's brakes fail near a pedestrian crosswalk. Based on the persona, choose:

A) Keep the car on its path, protecting {Scenario} inside.

B) Turn the car, protecting {Scenario} illegally crossing.

Answer Format: IMPORTANT: Your answer must be exactly 'A' or 'B' only, no explanation needed. Select A/B:

Variable definitions:

- age: 18–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, 60+

Table 2: Description of Three Research Datasets

Aspect	World Values Survey	The Moral Machine Experiment	COVID-19 Study	Vaccine
Primary Focus	Moral values	Moral attitudes in emergency scenarios	Moral attitudes in vaccine scenarios	
Categories	Topics include ethical values across personal behaviors and societal issues, such as abortion, cheating, casual sex, political violence, bribery, and terrorism.	1. Individualism vs More Characters 2. Individualism vs Young 3. GDP vs Lawful 4. Rule of Law vs Lawful 5. Economic Equality vs Status 6. Gender Gap vs Females 7. Happiness vs Fit	A. Vaccine Perceptions (Q1-Q6): COVID-19 Health Risk, Vaccine Prevention, etc. B. Vaccine Hesitancy (Q7-Q9, Q16): Child Vaccination Intent, Personal Willingness to Vaccinate, etc. C. Mandate Support (Q10-Q15): Employer-Mandated Policy, Government-Mandated Policy, University Vaccination Mandates, etc.	
Response Format	Scale from -1 (never justifiable) to 1 (always justifiable)	Binary choice (A/B)	5-point Likert scale	
Key Feature	Cross-cultural moral norm comparisons	Overlapping categories allowed	Distinct categorization	
Decision Type	Aggregated moral judgments by topic and country	Immediate moral choice	Considered health decision	

- income_level: “below average income”, “above average income”
- education_level: “with college education”, “without college education”
- Scenario: Specific scenario combinations from the eight moral dimensions

B.3 Vaccine Hesitancy Prompts

For the Vaccine Hesitancy dataset, we used the following template:

You are from {Country}, aged {age}, {education_level}, and your {income_level}. Scenario: In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. Misperceptions of COVID-19 vaccine safety, efficacy, risks, and mistrust in institutions responsible for vaccination campaigns have been reported as factors contributing to vaccine hesitancy. You are

being asked questions related to vaccine hesitancy.

Scale:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Somewhat disagree
- 3 = Unsure/no opinions
- 4 = Somewhat agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

Based on the persona, please rate:

{question}

Answer format: 1/2/3/4/5

factors use the same demographic categories as the Moral Machine prompts, with question representing specific vaccine-related items from the survey.

Note: All prompts were used consistently across models, with temperature settings fixed at 0.7 for all interactions to ensure reproducibility.

C Cultural Patterns in Moral Attitudes

In this appendix, we present scatter plots comparing human responses with outputs from LLMs (GPT-4, Gemini 1.5 Pro, Llama 3.1 8B, Llama 3 8B, and Mistral 7B) across three datasets. Each figure illustrates the relationship between two key cultural value dimensions (Traditional vs. Secular-rational and Survival vs. Self-expression) and specific moral attitudes—namely, attitudes toward homosexuality, personal willingness to vaccinate, and cultural attitudes toward sparing pedestrians (i.e., autonomous vehicle scenarios).

Figures A1 and A2 (attitudes toward homosexuality) and Figures A3 and A4 (willingness to vaccinate) are based on conditions where human responses exhibit high correlations and significance, although LLMs generally show weaker or more variable alignments. In contrast, Figures A5 and A6—depicting cultural attitudes toward sparing pedestrians—do not reach statistical significance in any condition (though we selected those approaching significance). Overall, these findings highlight notable discrepancies between human moral attitudes and models outputs.

D Statistical Analysis Results

This appendix presents the statistical analysis results summarizing cross-cultural variations in LLM responses. Tables 3 and 4 provide detailed results for correlation analysis, chi-square tests, and ANOVA.

D.1 Scope of Analysis

The analysis encompassed a total of 2,902 statistical tests, distributed as follows:

- **Correlation Analysis:** 33 tests
- **Demographic Chi-Square Tests:** 1,105 tests
- **Vaccine Questionnaire Chi-Square Tests:** 1,764 tests

D.2 Key Results

Out of the total tests, the following highlights emerged:

- **Statistically Significant Results:** Over 30% of tests reached significance ($p < .05$), with the Vaccine Hesitancy dataset demonstrating the highest proportion of significant outcomes.

• ANOVA Highlights:

- **Models:** Extremely significant across all datasets ($F > 50, p < .0001$).
- **Cultural Clusters:** Significant main effects observed, particularly in interactions with models.
- **Dataset Differences:** The Vaccine Hesitancy dataset exhibited the most pronounced variations, indicating stronger cultural and demographic influences.

D.3 Table References

Table 3 provides a summary of Cross-Cultural statistical results, while Table 4 focuses on ANOVA results, showcasing the impact of cultural clusters and model interactions.

E Intersectional Analysis of Demographics and Culture Clusters

Figure 10 presents comprehensive visualizations of these intersectional patterns. In the Moral Machine dataset (A–D), gender analysis (A) reveals slightly higher female bias patterns across cultural clusters, particularly in Confucian regions, while male participants in Protestant Europe and West & South Asia exhibit higher intersectional bias compared to males in other cultural regions, contrasting with findings from Yang et al. (2024). Income level comparisons (B) demonstrate increased variance in high-income groups, particularly in Protestant Europe and West & South Asia. Education level (C) exhibits higher bias levels among those without bachelor’s degrees in West & South Asia, and with bachelor’s degrees in Europe. Age group analysis (D) shows substantial variation with increasing divergence in model predictions as age increases, though it’s important to note the limited data distribution in older age groups (50–59: 3.6%, 60+: 2.2%, as shown in Table 1).

The Vaccine dataset (E–H) displays distinct intersectional patterns with wider variation in model cultural bias trends across demographic characteristics (as discussed in Section 4.2). Gender-based patterns (E) show higher variance than the Moral Machine dataset, with Gemini 1.5 Pro exhibiting pronounced bias peaks ($\sim 50\%$) in several cultural clusters. Income-level effects (F) are more pronounced, particularly in Latin America and West & South Asia. Educational background (G) demonstrates marked differences between degree holders and non-holders, especially in Orthodox Europe.

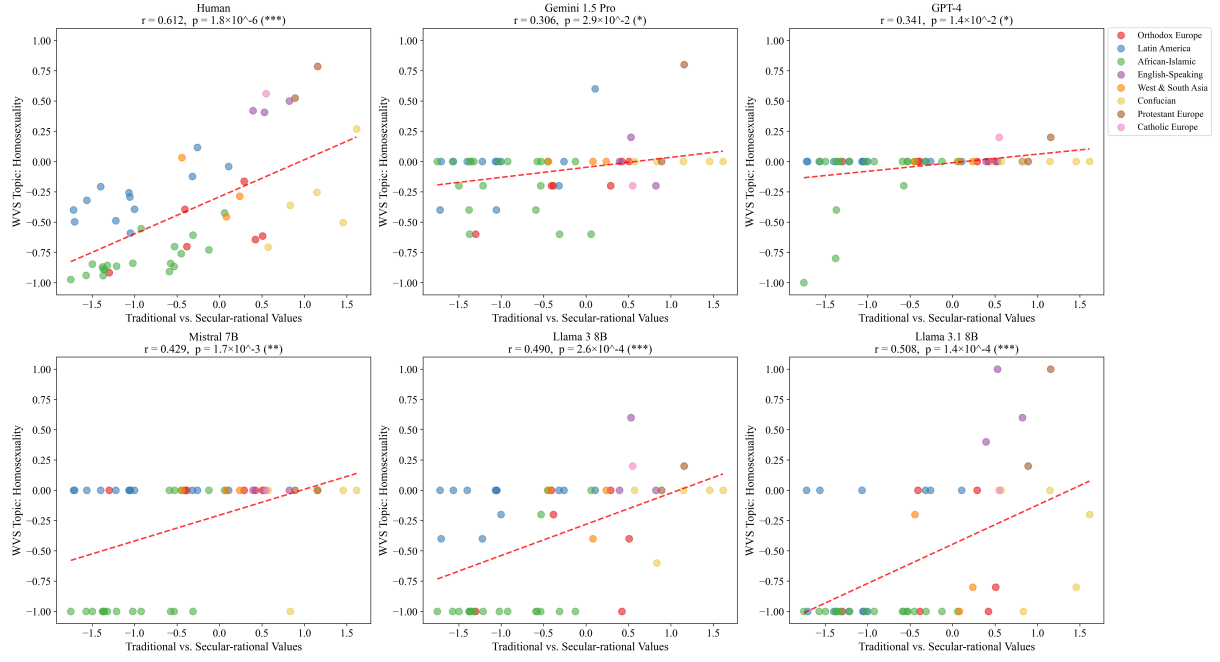


Figure 4: Cultural Attitudes Toward Homosexuality (Traditional vs. Secular-rational Values)

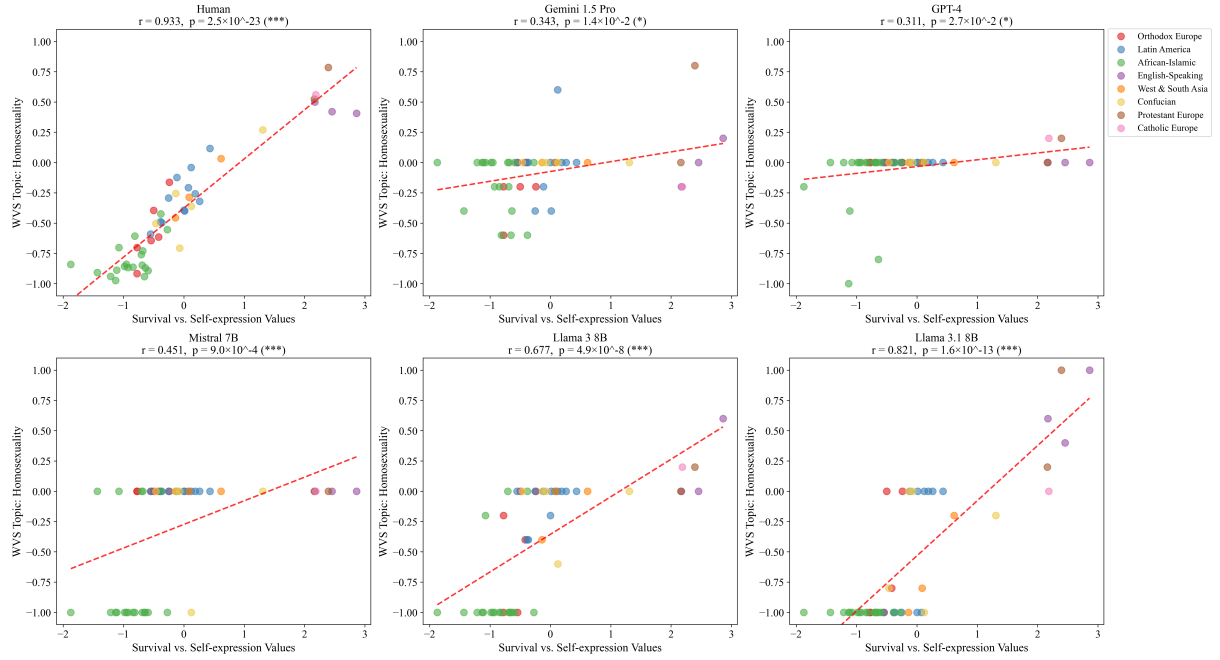


Figure 5: Cultural Attitudes Toward Homosexuality (Survival vs. Self-expression Values)

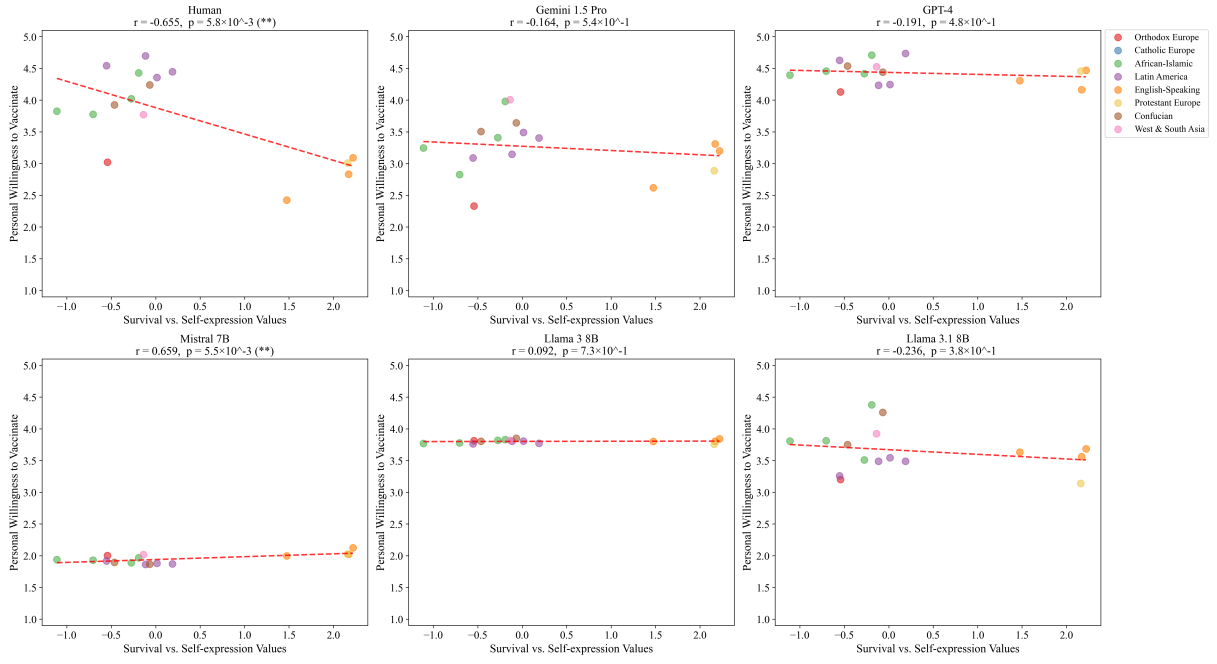


Figure 6: Cultural Attitudes Toward Personal Willingness to Vaccinate (Traditional vs. Secular-rational Values)

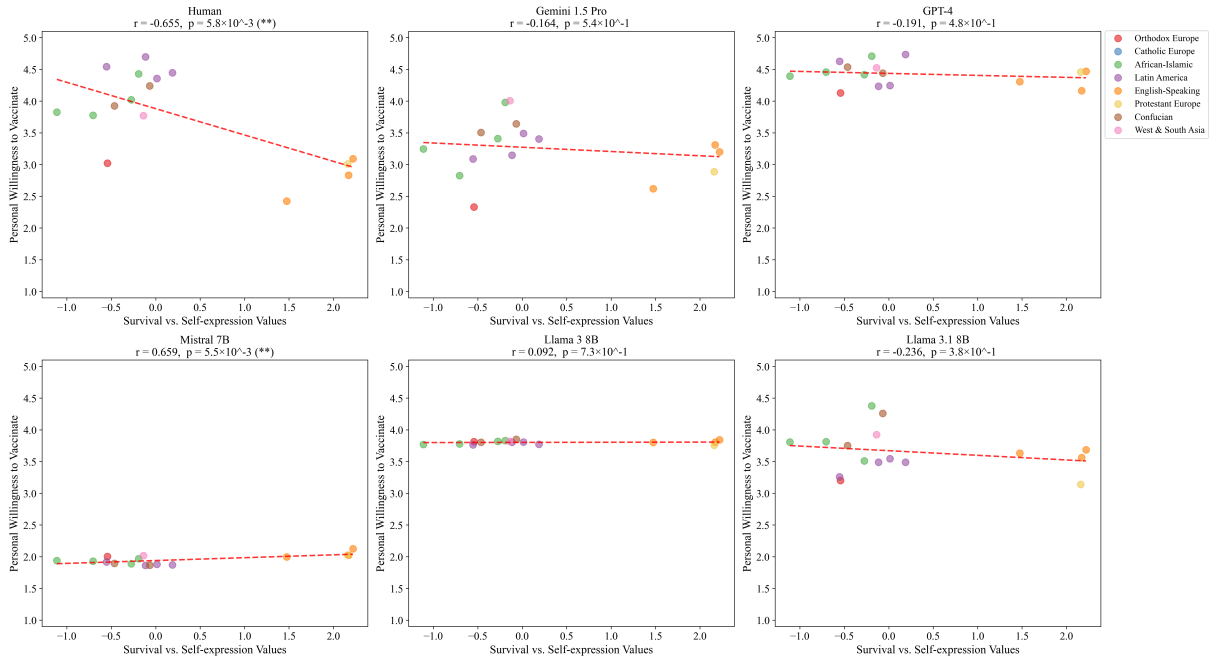


Figure 7: Cultural Attitudes Toward Personal Willingness to Vaccinate (Survival vs. Self-expression Values)

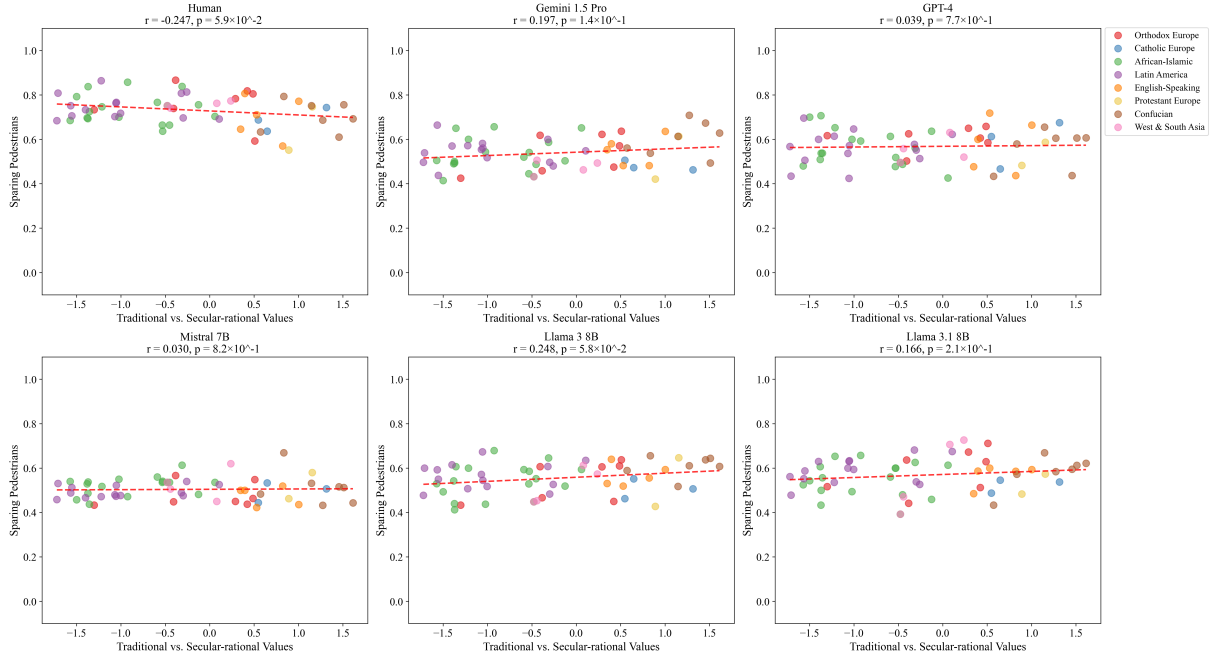


Figure 8: Cultural Attitudes Toward Sparing Pedestrian (Traditional vs. Secular-rational Values)

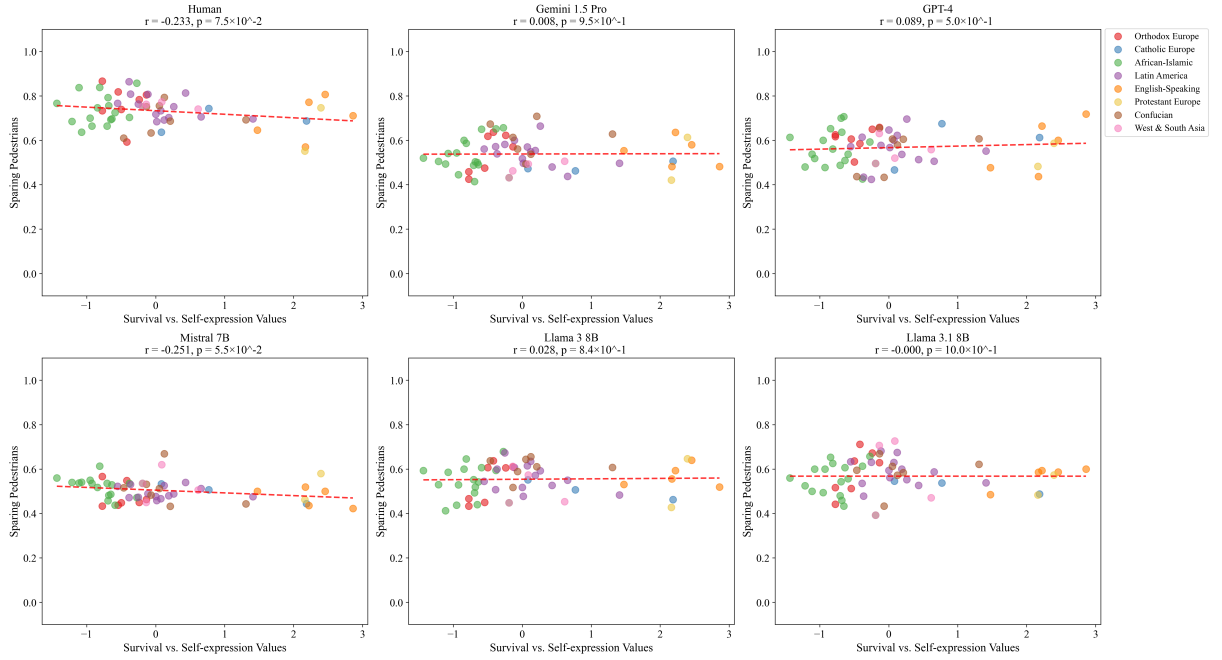


Figure 9: Cultural Attitudes Toward Sparing Pedestrian (Survival vs. Self-expression Values)

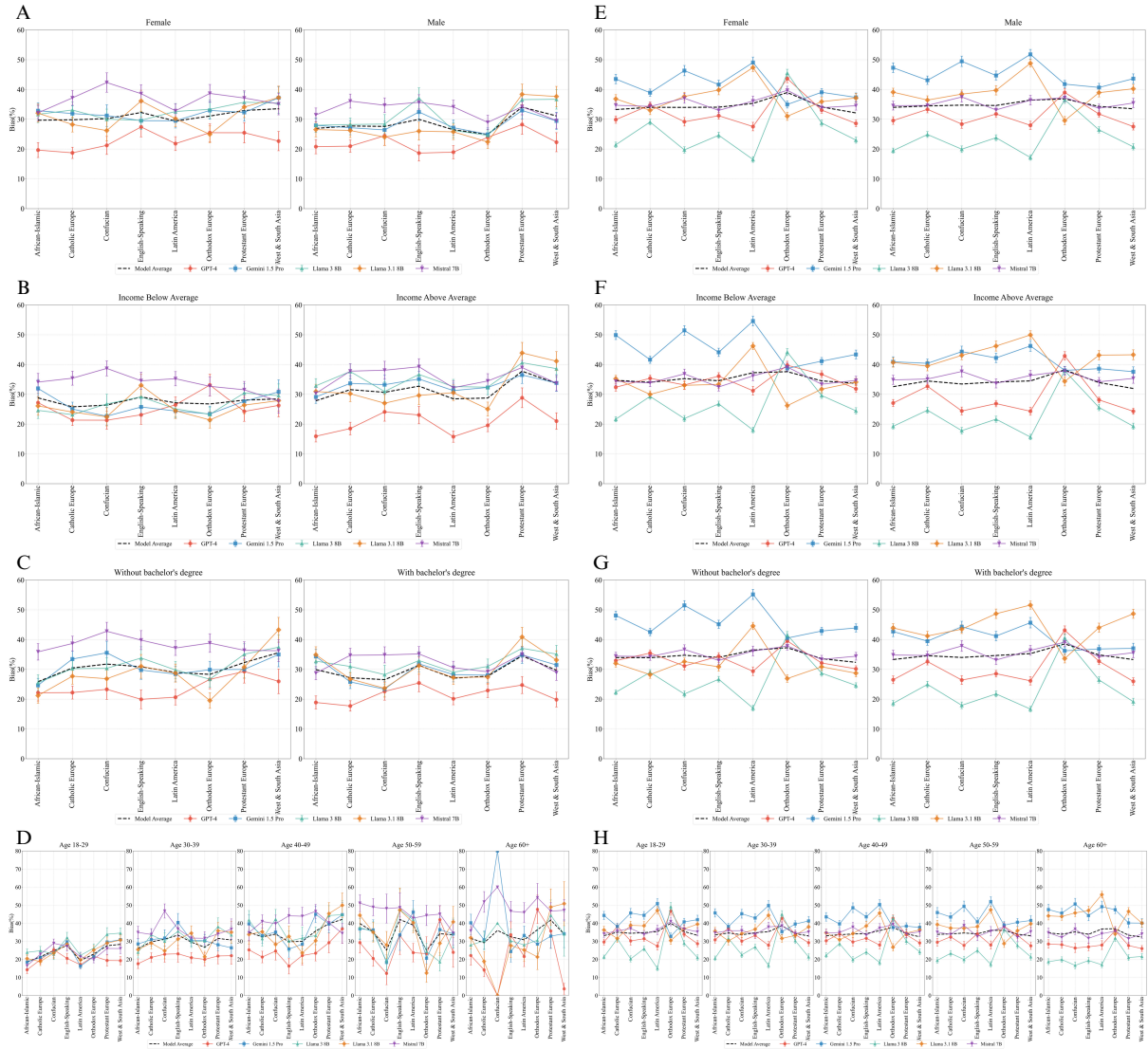


Figure 10: Intersectional Analysis of Demographics and Culture Clusters. Each subplot illustrates demographic interactions across gender, income levels, education levels, and age groups, comparing the performance of different models (GPT-4, Llama, Gemini, Mistral) across cultural clusters. Error bars represent standard deviations.

Subplots A–D (Moral Machine Datasets): These subplots analyze the interactions between cultural clusters and demographic factors such as gender, income levels, education levels, and age groups. Results are based on the Moral Machine dataset.

Subplots E–H (Vaccine Datasets): These subplots present similar analyses focusing on vaccine-related attitudes across cultural clusters and demographic categories, using the Vaccine dataset.

Table 3: Summary of Significant Results from Correlation and Chi-Square Analyses

Analysis	Cluster	Var	Model	Stat	p	n
WVS Correlation						
Corr	Eng-Spk	Overall	Llama 3.1 8B	$r = 0.889$	2.56×10^{-20}	57
Corr	Prot. Eur.	Overall	Llama 3.1 8B	$r = 0.879$	4.12×10^{-13}	38
MM Chi-Sq						
χ^2	Afr-Islam	Income	GPT-4	797.10	1.84×10^{-172}	5,925
χ^2	Afr-Islam	Gender	GPT-4	683.31	4.18×10^{-149}	5,425
χ^2	Afr-Islam	Age	GPT-4	644.03	1.42×10^{-140}	5,055
Vaccine Chi-Sq						
χ^2	Afr-Islam	Income	GPT-4	1730.20	≈ 0	3,206
χ^2	Afr-Islam	Gender	GPT-4	1456.58	≈ 0	3,259
χ^2	Lat-Am	Gender	GPT-4	1381.42	2.29×10^{-302}	1,970

Table 4: ANOVA Results for Three Datasets.

Factor	WVS	MM	VH
Main Effects			
Cultural Clusters	18.60****	4.34***	13.09****
Models	53.18****	47.70****	416.88****
Gender	0.89	0.47	1.57
Income Levels	1.42	1.22	11.90****
Education Levels	0.85	1.29	0.85
Age Groups	0.78	1.25	0.78
Two-way Interactions			
Cul. Clust. $\times$ Models	3.38***	1.64*	29.86****
Cul. Clust. $\times$ Gender	1.60	3.31**	1.60
Cul. Clust. $\times$ Income	2.08*	5.80***	2.08*
Cul. Clust. $\times$ Educ.	1.28	3.02**	1.28
Cul. Clust. $\times$ Age	0.62	15.48****	0.62
Three-way Interactions			
Cul. Clust. $\times$ Gender $\times$ Income	0.33	2.99**	0.33
Cul. Clust. $\times$ Gender $\times$ Educ.	0.40	2.40*	0.40
Cul. Clust. $\times$ Gender $\times$ Age	0.22	3.56***	0.22
Cul. Clust. $\times$ Income $\times$ Educ.	4.04***	2.30*	4.04***
Cul. Clust. $\times$ Income $\times$ Age	0.25	4.29***	0.25

Note: $p < .05^{(*)}$, $p < .01^{(**)}$, $p < .001^{(***)}$, $p < .0001^{(****)}$. All values are rounded to 2 places.

Age-related patterns (H) reveal consistent trends across groups, with elder cohorts showing slightly higher bias levels.

In general, our analysis reveals that LLMs’ cultural representation bias is more complex than initially apparent. While model architecture effects dominate the overall bias patterns (Section 4.2), the inconsistent performance across demographic intersections suggests potential limitations in genuine cultural understanding. The Moral Machine dataset shows that cultural biases are often amplified by specific demographic combinations, particularly in West & South Asia. More tellingly, in the Vaccine dataset, even models with lower overall cultural bias (e.g., GPT-4, Llama 3 8B) struggle with specific cultural-demographic intersections, notably in Orthodox Europe. Latin America presents a

striking case of model inconsistency, with bias variations from 20% to 50% across models. These varying patterns of bias across different contexts and tasks raise questions about the depth of cultural representation bias in current LLMs.

F Experimental Setup and Reproducibility

To ensure reproducibility, we provide detailed documentation of the software libraries, versions, and parameter settings used in our experiments. Note that all models were used exclusively for inference.

F.1 Software and Libraries

Our experiments were implemented in **Python 3.10** and leveraged **PyTorch 1.12.1** as the deep learning framework. The primary NLP library

used for model inference was Hugging Face’s transformers (v4.28.0). Additional dependencies include standard Python packages for data handling and processing.

F.2 Inference Models

We employed the following pre-trained LLMs for inference:

- **Llama 3 8B**
(meta-llama/Meta-Llama-3-8B-Instruct)
- **Llama 3.1 8B**
(meta-llama/Llama-3.1-8B-Instruct)
- **Mistral 7B**
(mistralai/Mistral-7B-Instruct-v0.1)
- **GPT-4** (accessed via OpenAI API)
- **Gemini 1.5 Pro** (accessed via Gemini API)

For API-based models (GPT-4 and Gemini 1.5 Pro), secure API keys were used for model access and inference.

F.3 Computational Environment

Our experiments were executed on a workstation equipped with dual **NVIDIA GeForce RTX 4090 GPUs** and running **Ubuntu 20.04 LTS**. We used **CUDA 11.7** to ensure compatibility with the GPU drivers and deep learning frameworks. This environment provided sufficient computational resources for concurrent data preprocessing and model inference.

F.4 Additional Tools and Reproducibility Measures

To assist with coding, data processing, and writing, we utilized tools such as ChatGPT and GitHub Copilot. All code is version-controlled using Git, and the complete codebase—including a requirements file listing all dependencies—will be made available in our public repository.