

Ji, L.J., Yap, S. (2016)
Culture and cognition.
Current Opinion in Psychology, 8, 105-111

Abstract: In this paper, we review the latest developments in cultural influences on attention, perception, categorization, memory and cognitive heuristics. We then explore the origin of these cultural differences, and highlight the implications of such culture-specific thinking styles for people's judgment and decision-making processes. We conclude this review by discussing some of the future research directions to further advance our understanding in culture and cognition.

Cultural influences on cognition

Two ways of thinking: analytical (European North Americans) **and holistic** (East Asians)

ANALYTICAL THINKERS

HOLISTIC THINKERS

Attention

Focus on the focal object and its features.

Focus on the context and relationships between the focal object and its context.

Perception

Perceive things as a whole:

Attend to focal targets:

Tracking more objects on average in tasks of tracking multiple moving objects.

More often use overall resemblance instead of feature matching in tasks of identifying a prototypic face.

More primacy effect in a person perception task.

Cultural influences on cognition

ANALYTICAL THINKERS

HOLISTIC THINKERS

Cultural products and self-presentation

More attention to faces and less to the context, higher intensity in facial expressions.

Faster processing of information-rich designs;

More context-oriented visual attention.

Categorization

Based on similarities in features and taxonomic commonalities.

Based on their thematic and contextual relationships.

Memory performance

Outperform in memory for categorically processed information;

Multitasking decreases memory recognition.

Outperform in memory for contextual information;

Multitasking doesn't decrease memory recognition.

Cultural influences on cognition

ANALYTICAL THINKERS

HOLISTIC THINKERS

Heuristics

Stronger representative heuristic;

Expect cause and effect to correspond in magnitude.

More appreciate and understand the phenomenon of regression toward the mean.

Time and temporal info perception, use and valuation

Attend to a narrower breadth of temporal information and put more weight on the most immediate information;

Stronger future orientation.

Attend to a wider breadth of temporal information and put less weight on the most immediate information;

Perceive stronger relatedness of the past and future with the present;

Stronger past orientation.

Culture and cognition in judgment and decision-making

ANALYTICAL THINKERS

HOLISTIC THINKERS

Decision making

Selectively focus only on the information deemed as important.

Consider more information as well as more contextual factors.

Processing of contradictory info

Process inconsistent or contradictory information less fluently, and experience more cognitive discomfort.

More accept contradictions and seek compromise

Origins of cultural differences in cognition

Social interdependence hypothesis - social orientation, such as interdependence and independence, can account for the cultural differences in cognitive styles:

- interdependent social orientation promotes holistic thinking;
- independent social orientation promotes analytic thinking

Evidence:

- cultures or communities that differ in social orientation also tend to differ in cognitive styles;
- priming interdependence can lead to holistic thinking, whereas priming independence can lead to analytic thinking.