

**IB DP Psychology**  
**Higher level**  
**Paper 3 – resource booklet**

The sources in this examination have been collated to assess the claim that culture plays a key role in cognition.

**Source 2**

A study investigated whether System 2 thinking differs across cultural contexts. System 2 thinking refers to slow, deliberate, and effortful cognitive processing used when individuals consciously analyse information or solve complex problems.

A total of 120 participants took part in the study, with 60 adults from an individualistic culture (USA) and 60 adults from a collectivist culture (Japan). All participants completed a standardised Cognitive Reflection Test (CRT), which measures the tendency to override an immediate intuitive response (System 1) and engage in deliberate, analytical thinking (System 2). Scores on the CRT ranged from 0 to 6, with higher scores indicating greater use of System 2 thinking..

**Table 1** shows mean CRT scores for participants from the two cultural groups.

**Table 1: Cognitive Reflection Test (CRT) scores by cultural context**

<b>Cultural context</b>	<b>Mean CRT score</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Individualistic (USA)	3.1	1.4
Collectivist (Japan)	4.2	1.3

### Source 3

A researcher conducted a diary study followed by unstructured interviews with adults from individualistic and collectivist cultural backgrounds to explore how culture influences experiences of cognitive load in everyday multitasking situations.

Participants kept a 7-day diary recording situations they found mentally demanding (e.g. studying while messaging or commuting while planning). Follow-up unstructured interviews explored participants' perceptions of cognitive load, emotional and physical responses to overload, coping strategies, and cultural expectations surrounding effort and responsibility.

The diary entries and interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis. The following themes were identified:

- Participants from individualistic cultures described cognitive load in terms of personal efficiency and mental fatigue, often viewing overload as a signal to stop or restructure tasks
- Participants from collectivist cultures described cognitive load as something to be endured and frequently framed high mental demand as a normal part of daily responsibilities
- Collectivist participants emphasised social obligation and avoiding burdening others, which led them to tolerate higher cognitive load
- Individualistic participants emphasised personal limits and self-care when experiencing overload
- Under high cognitive load, individualistic participants reported frustration linked to loss of control or efficiency, whereas collectivist participants reported stress related to fear of making mistakes or letting others down

## Source 4

A cross-cultural study examined the relationship between cultural orientation and analytic cognition. Cultural orientation was defined using the individualism–collectivism dimension.

A total of 640 participants aged 18–30 took part in the study. Participants were drawn from multiple countries and were grouped into individualistic cultures and collectivist cultures, with 320 participants in each cultural group.

Cultural orientation was measured using a standardised individualism–collectivism questionnaire, with higher scores indicating greater individualism. Analytic cognition was measured using the Cognitive Reflection Test (CRT), which assesses the tendency to override intuitive responses and engage in System 2 (deliberate, analytical) thinking. Participants completed the CRT under timed conditions.

Pearson’s correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationship between individualism scores and CRT performance within each cultural group. The results are shown in **Table 2**.

**Table 2: Correlation coefficients between individualism score and CRT score by cultural orientation**

Cultural orientation	Correlation coefficient
Individualistic cultures	0.45
Collectivist cultures	0.20

## Source 5

A study examined whether cultural context influences perceptual judgement. Participants from individualistic and collectivist cultural backgrounds completed a task in which they interpreted ambiguous social situations.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two priming conditions before completing the task:

- Individualistic cultural prime
- Collectivist cultural prime

Perception was measured using an attribution task, where higher scores indicated a greater tendency to make internal (dispositional) attributions, and lower scores indicated a greater tendency to make external (situational) attributions.

**Table 3** shows mean attribution scores by cultural background and priming condition.

**Table 3: Mean attribution scores by culture and priming condition**

Cultural background	Individualistic prime	Collectivist prime
Individualistic	7.2	6.8
Collectivist	6.9	5.8