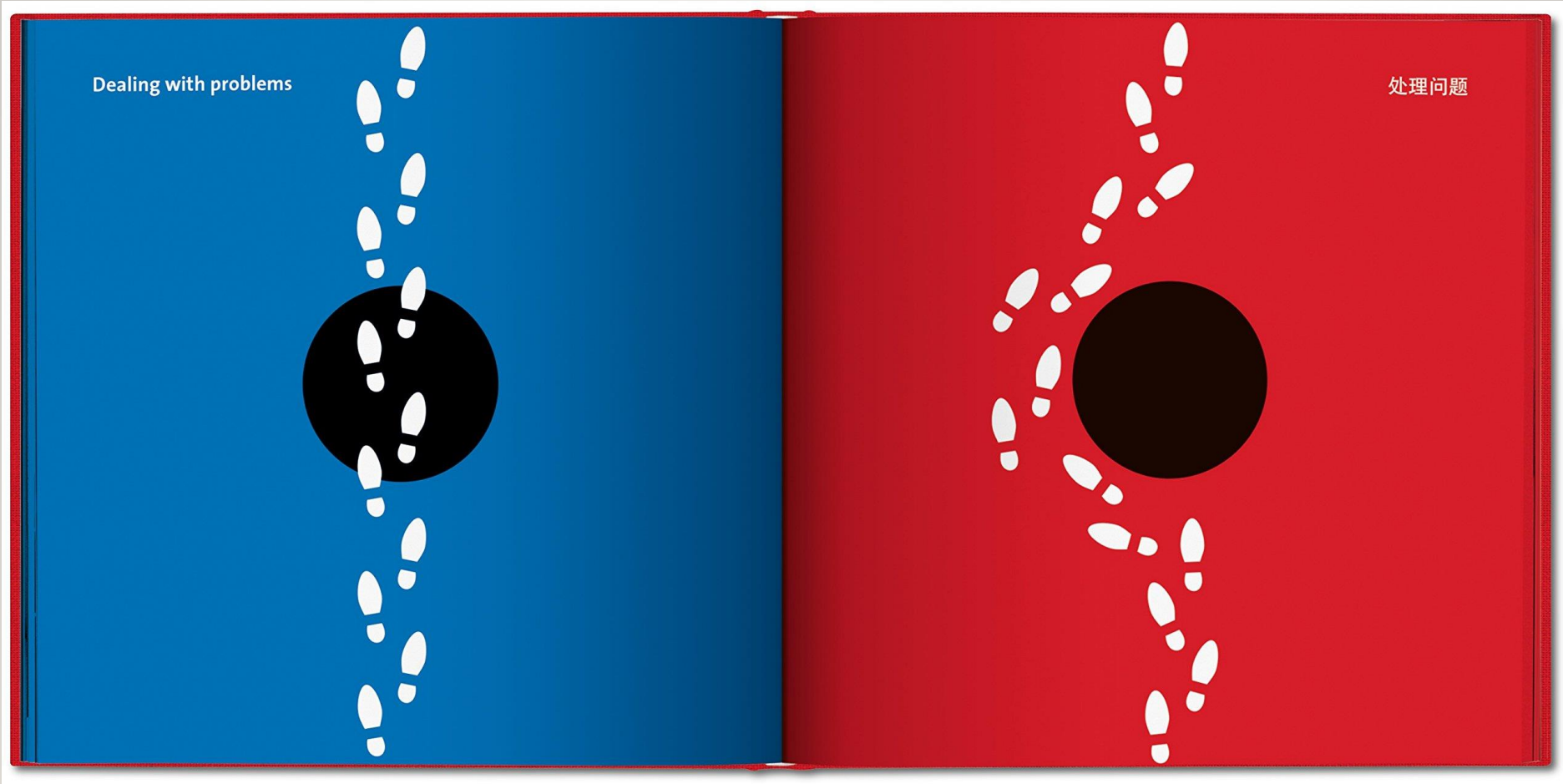


# INTERCULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN DECISION MAKING

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# DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO PROBLEMS: WEST VS. EAST



Source: Liu, Y. *East Meets West*

# HOFSTEDE: *CULTURE AS A SOFTWARE OF THE MIND*

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- Differences in decision making across cultures pertain to:
  - preferred ways of perceiving a problem
  - preferred ways of seeking a satisfactory solution

# FONS TROMPENAARS *RIDING THE WAVES OF CULTURE*:

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- *Culture is the way in which people solve problems*
- He identified 7 dimensions of differences that he considers important across cultures

# DIMENSIONS

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5 dimensions describe how we relate to other people:

- Universalism vs. Particularism
- Individualism vs. Collectivism
- Neutral vs. Emotional
- Diffuse vs Specific
- Achievement vs. Ascription

# TWO DIMENSIONS DESCRIBE ATTITUDE TO NATURE

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- Monochronic vs. Polychronic
- Internal vs. External locus of control

# TROMPENAAR'S DILEMMA - UNIVERSALISM VS. PARTICULARISM

- You are riding in a car driven by a close friend. He hits a pedestrian. You know he was going at least 60 km/h in an area of the city where maximum allowed speed is 40 km/h. There are no witnesses. His lawyer says that if you testify under oath that he was only driving 40 km/h it may save him from serious consequences. What right has your friend to expect you to protect him?
  - a) My friend has a definite right as a friend to expect me to testify to the lower figure
  - b) He has some right
  - c) He has no right

What would you do?

- d) I d Testify that he was going 40 km/h
- e) I e Not testify that



# UNIVERSALISM VS. PARTICULARISM

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- On the one side we have people believing that rules are universal and on the other people believing that we should treat others differently depending on who they are to us (or in general)



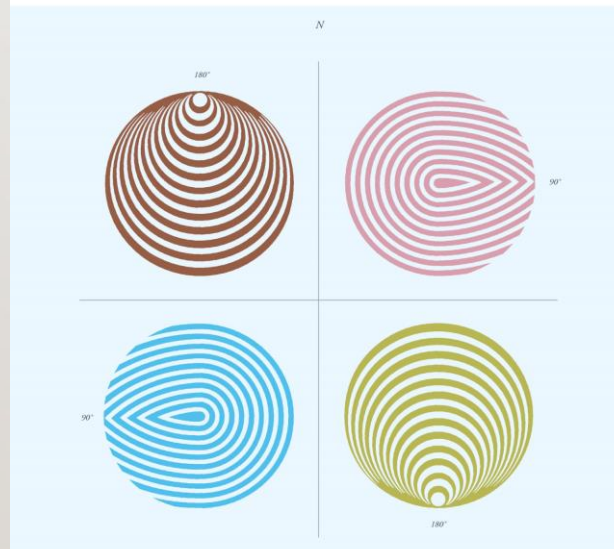
# INDIVIDUALISM VS. COLLECTIVISM – THE GREAT DIVIDE

(SOURCE: HOFSTEDE, JONKER, VERWAART, 2008)

Collectivist	Individualist
Maintain harmony, avoid confrontation High-context, implicit communication Use the word "we,, Show favor to in-group No business without a personal relation A relation brings rights and obligations Relations are given Save face for in-group Responsible for group interests	Speak your mind Low-context, explicit communication Use the word "I,, Treat people equally Task is more important than a good relation Mutual advantage is the basis of relations Build and maintain relations actively Keep self-respect Responsible for personal interests

# NISBETT AND DECADES OF STUDIES ABOUT EASTERN HOLISTIC AND WESTERN ANALYTICAL APPROACH

“Understanding the thought processes of other cultures may very well turn out to be critical to the survival of Western civilization. . . . *The Geography of Thought* is a wake-up call.” —*Providence Journal-Bulletin*



## THE GEOGRAPHY OF THOUGHT

How Asians and Westerners Think Differently . . . and Why

+

RICHARD E. NISBETT

MAKE A DECISION:  
INDICATE WHICH TWO OBJECTS SHOWN BELOW  
BELONG TOGETHER, JUSTIFY YOUR CHOICE

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# MAKE A DECISION: INDICATE WHICH TWO OBJECTS SHOWN BELOW BELONG TOGETHER, JUSTIFY YOUR CHOICE

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- Mother
- Father
- Child



# CATEGORIZING OBJECTS IS MUCH MORE NATURAL FOR WESTERNERS (AND PROBABLY ALSO MORE IMPORTANT TO THEM)

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- Western analytic thought as described by Nisbett is characterized by:
- *detachment of the object from its context, a tendency to focus on attributes of the object in order to assign it to categories, and a preference for using rules about the categories to explain and predict the object's behavior. Inferences rest in part on the practice of decontextualizing structure from content, the use of formal logic, and avoidance of contradiction. (Nisbett et al., 2001, p. 293)*

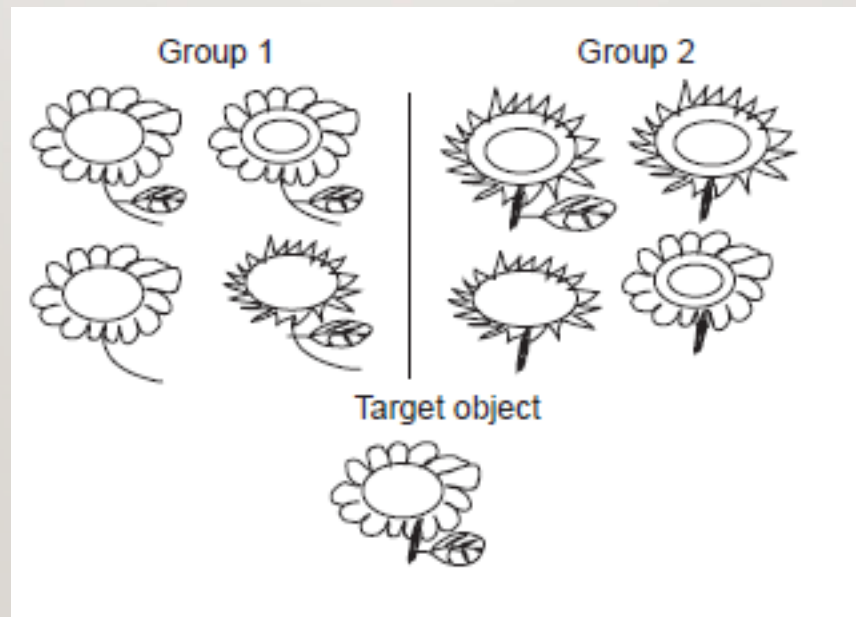
# CATEGORIZING OBJECTS IS MUCH MORE NATURAL FOR WESTERNERS (AND PROBABLY ALSO MORE IMPORTANT TO THEM)

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- Eastern holistic thought as described by Nisbett is characterized by:
- *an orientation to the context or field as a whole, including attention to relationships between a focal object and the field, and a preference for explaining and predicting events on the basis of such relationships. Holistic approaches rely on experience-based knowledge and are dialectical, which means a search for the "Middle Way" between opposing propositions.* (Nisbett et al., 2001, p. 15)

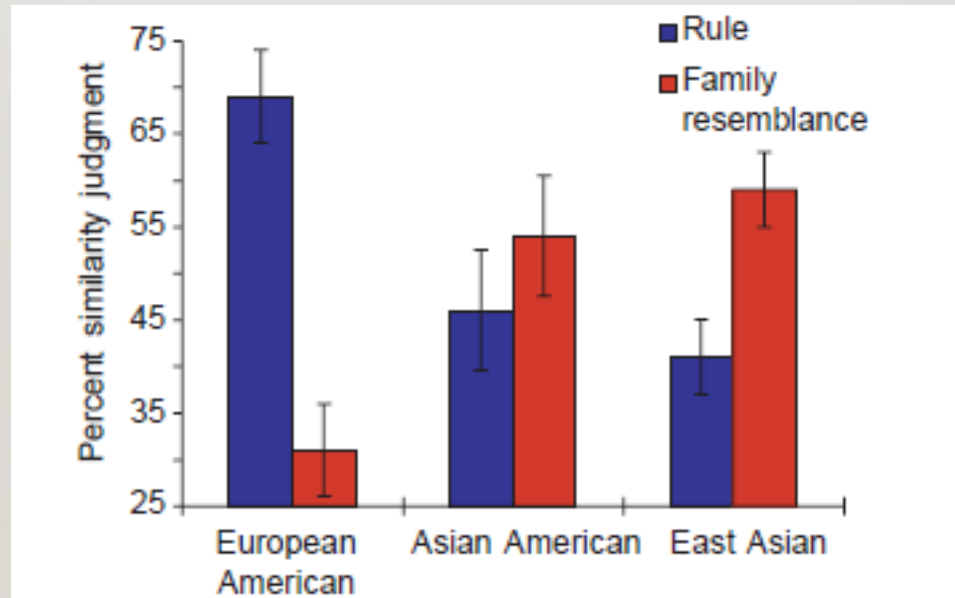
PLEASE JUDGE WHICH GROUP THE  
TARGET OBJECT IS MOST SIMILAR TO

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# PLEASE JUDGE WHICH GROUP THE TARGET OBJECT IS MOST SIMILAR TO

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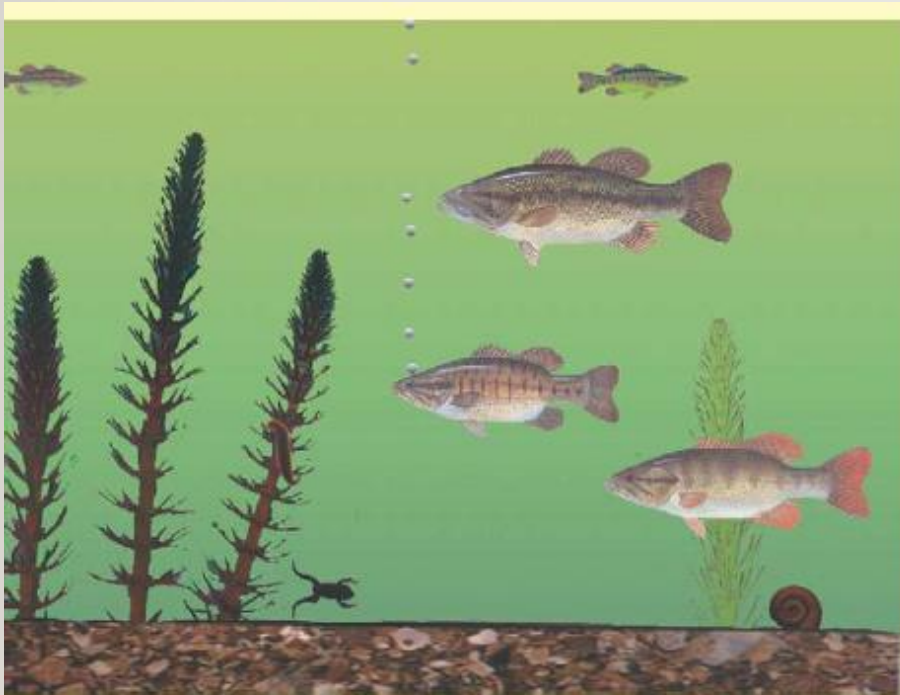


Source: Nisbett, Miyamoto (2005)



# AN EXPERIMENT WITH PEOPLE FROM THE WEST AND FROM THE EAST

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**Figure 1.** A still picture from one of the animated vignettes from Masuda and Nisbett [12]. They lasted for 20 s and were shown twice before participants were asked to report what they saw.

- Source: Nisbett, Miyamoto (2005)

# AN EXPERIMENT WITH PEOPLE FROM THE WEST AND FROM THE EAST – RESULT I (NISBETT, MIYAMOTO, 2005)

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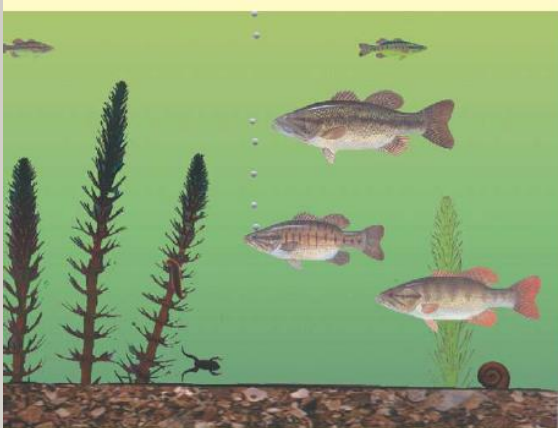


Figure 1. A still picture from one of the animated vignettes from Masuda and Nisbett [12]. They lasted for 20 s and were shown twice before participants were asked to report what they saw.

- *Americans started their statements by referring to salient objects (defined as being larger, brighter and more rapidly moving) far more frequently than did Japanese subjects, whereas Japanese started their statements by referring to context information (defined as nonmoving objects or objects that appeared to be in the background) almost twice as frequently as Americans did. Overall, Japanese subjects reported 60 percent more information about the context than did Americans.*

# AN EXPERIMENT WITH PEOPLE FROM THE WEST AND FROM THE EAST – RESULT 2 (NISBETT, MIYAMOTO, 2005)

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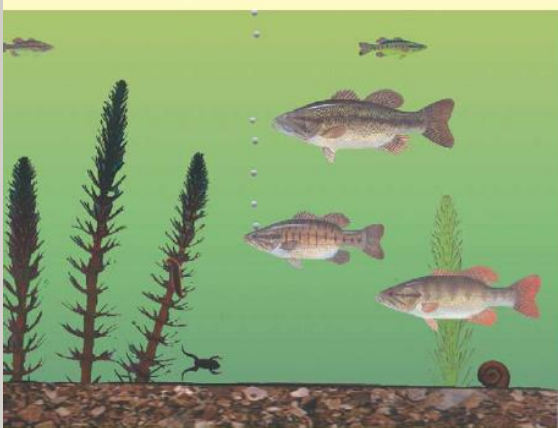


Figure 1. A still picture from one of the animated vignettes from Masuda and Nisbett [12]. They lasted for 20 s and were shown twice before participants were asked to report what they saw.

- *In a subsequent recognition task, participants were presented with objects they had seen previously, either with their original background, a novel background, or no background, and were asked to indicate whether they had previously seen the objects. Whereas Americans' performance was not affected by the background manipulation, Japanese performance was impaired when the background was novel. These results indicate that Japanese tended to perceive the object and the field as a whole and 'bind' them in perceptual memory. The findings overall indicate marked differences in what is attended to by Easterners and Westerners.*

# AN IMPORTANT EXAMPLE OF AN EFFECT THAT IS STRONGER IN SOME CULTURES THAN IN OTHERS

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- *The fundamental attribution error describes perceivers' tendency to underestimate the impact of situational factors on human behavior and to overestimate the impact of dispositional factors. For instance, people often tend to believe that aggressive behavior is caused by aggressive personality characteristics (dispositional factor) even though aggressive behavior can also be provoked by situational circumstances (situational factor). (Gawronski, 2009)*

# HOW DO THESE DIFFERENCES AFFECT THE WAY IN WHICH DECISIONS ARE MADE?

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- The example of Ringi
- What is a prototypical good decision in the West and in the East?
- What is a prototypical good decision making process in the West and in the East?

# HOW DO THESE DIFFERENCES AFFECT THE WAY IN WHICH DECISIONS ARE MADE?

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I. The decision takes into account many elements and relationships between them in the East, whereas in the West one proposition tends to win over another one

II. It includes a process in which open conflict and disagreement is avoided in the East

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