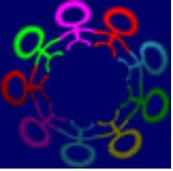


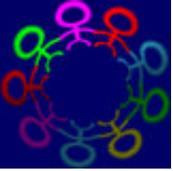
Lecture 4: The Situation (Culture)

- Part I: The Situation
- Part II: Cross-cultural Variation



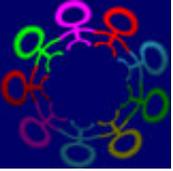
Part I: The Situation

- Persons as Situations: Mere Presence, Affordances, and Descriptive Norms
 - Focus on Social Dysfunction: Descriptive Norms, Pluralistic Ignorance, and Binge Drinking on Campus
- Rules: Injunctive Norms and Scripted Situations
- Strong Versus Weak Situation



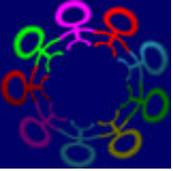
Persons as Situations: Mere Presence

- Small schools are “undermanned” – they need all their students. Because of this, students participate in more activities and feel more challenged.
- Large schools are “overmanned” – they don’t need all their students. Thus, students are less needed and more likely to be socially isolated (Barker & Gump, 1964).



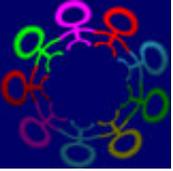
Persons as Situations: Affordance

- Imagine you are at the company picnic and you spot your new boss sitting by himself.
- This could be a good chance to advance your career.



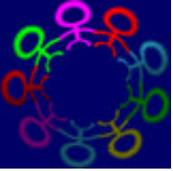
Persons as Situations: Affordance

- *Affordance* –
opportunity or threat provided by a situation



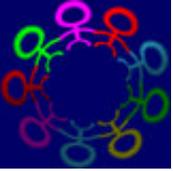
Persons as Situations: Descriptive Norms

- *Descriptive norm* –
information about what people commonly
do in a situation
 - Example: Many students wear jeans to classes.



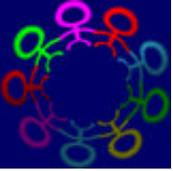
Persons as Situations: Pluralistic Ignorance

- Imagine you are in your social psychology class, and don't understand a concept the professor just explained.
- You look around and no one else seems confused.
- Not wanting to look like the only one who doesn't understand, you don't raise your hand.
- What if everyone else is doing the same?



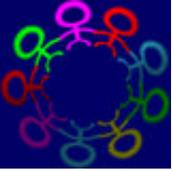
Persons as Situations: Pluralistic Ignorance

- *Pluralistic ignorance* –
the phenomenon in which people in a group misperceive the beliefs of others because everyone in the group is acting inconsistently with their beliefs



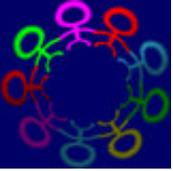
Descriptive Norms, Pluralistic Ignorance, and Binge Drinking on Campus

- Over 40 percent of students binge drink at least twice a month.
- Males are more likely to drink than females (51% vs. 40%).
- Pluralistic ignorance plays a role in student drinking.



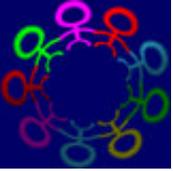
Descriptive Norms, Pluralistic Ignorance, and Binge Drinking on Campus

- The typical student erroneously believes that he or she is relatively alone in being uncomfortable with alcohol abuse on campus.
- Over time, men shift their opinions to be more consistent with their misperceptions of others.



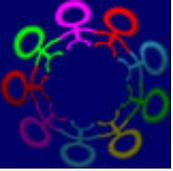
Rules: Injunctive Norms and Scripted Situations

- *Injunctive norm* – rules that define what is typically approved and disapproved of in a situation



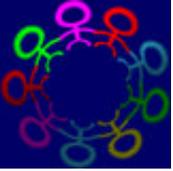
Rules: Injunctive Norms and Scripted Situations

- *Scripted situation* – a situation in which certain events are expected to occur in a particular order



Script For a Getting a Date

1. Two people notice each other.
2. They get caught staring, and smile.
3. They attempt to “accidentally” come across one another again.
4. They get a friend to introduce them.
5. They begin a conversation.
6. One person finally asks the other out.



Strong Versus Weak Situations

- Strong situations demand people act in particular ways.
 - Examples: Funeral, job interview
- Weak situations allow people to behave in many different ways.
 - Examples: Nightclub, picnic



Part II: The Person and the Situation Interact

- Different Persons Respond Differently to the Same Situation
- Situations Choose the Person
- Persons Choose Their Situations
- Different Situations Prime Different Parts of the Person
- Persons Change The Situation
- Situations Change the Person



Different Persons Respond Differently to the Same Situation

- Different people are attuned to different parts of a situation, and the same situation means different things to different people.



Different Persons Respond Differently to the Same Situation

- *Person-Situation fit* –
the extent to which a person and a situation
are compatible



Situations Choose the Person

- Example: Athletic teams have slots for only so many players, so not everyone gets the experience of playing on the team.



Persons Choose Their Situations

- We choose situations that provide opportunities that fit with our personal characteristics.
 - Example: If you are an introvert, a quiet evening at home might be more appealing than a crowded rock concert.



Different Situations Prime Different Parts of the Person

- Inside each one of us there are different motives, memories, and feelings.
- Each of these is likely to be triggered by some situations more than others.



Different Situations Prime Different Parts of the Person

- Example: After watching a slapstick comedy that primes memories of innocent accidents, an ambiguous collision with a stranger may draw one reaction:
 - (“Oops. How clumsy of me!”)
- But a blow-em-up action thriller may trigger your inner Rambo:
 - (“Hey! How dare you bump into me!”)



Persons Change The Situation

- Sometimes people change situations to better achieve their goals.
 - (a teacher will set up her class so that her students get along)
- Other times people change situations inadvertently.
 - (depressed college students may depress their roommates)
 - (*Joiner & Metalsky, 1996*) (*Strack & Coyne, 1983*)



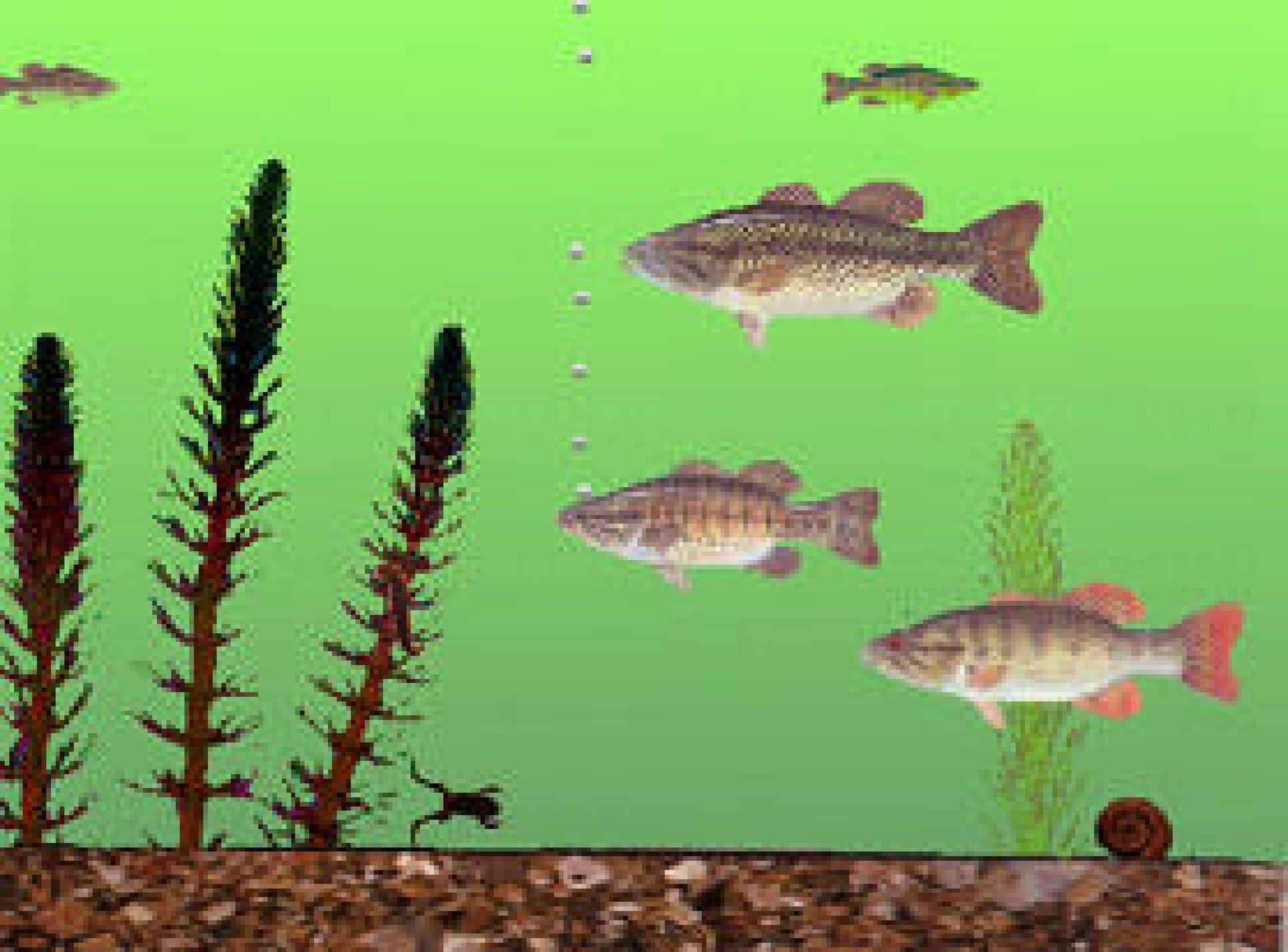
Situations Change the Person

- You may be a different person after spending time in a situation.
 - Example: Two similar high school students may be very different after one spends four years in the military while the other is in a liberal arts college.



Situations Change the Person

- *Socialization* –
the process through which a culture teaches its members about its beliefs, customs, habits, and language



Part III: Cross-Cultural Social Psychology

- Universalism vs. Cross-cultural approaches
- Sociological and Historical Comparisons of East Asian (e.g., Chinese) and Western Societies.
- Experimental Findings From Richard Nisbett's work.

Universalism vs. Cultural Variation

- Do findings from a psychology lab in one university generalize to people across the globe?
- The “Science of Sophomores” ?

Universalism

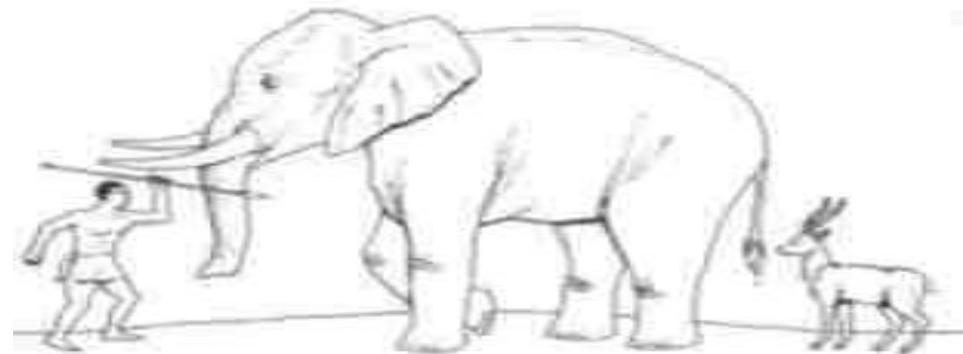
- Assumes all societies have similar cognitive processes. Thus, !Kung hunter-gatherers, Zuni Indians, and George Bush all rely on the same tools of perception, memory, causal analysis, categorization, and inference.

Cross-cultural Perspective

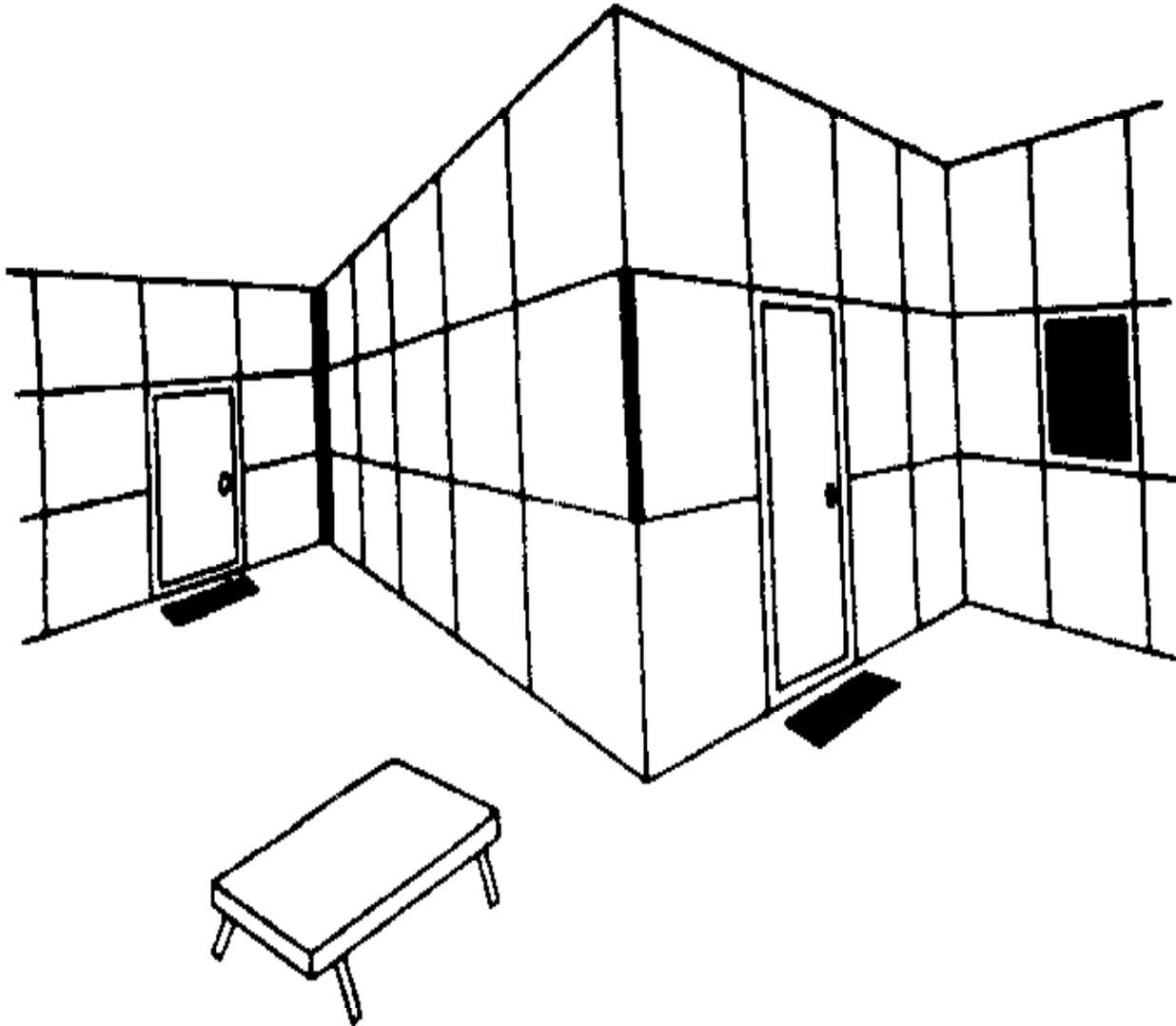
- Assumes that humans share many universals (e.g., ability to learn language), but different societies vary with respect to specific cognitive processes.
- Assumes that culture exists at the macro-level, and has an influence on processes at the micro-level.

Empirical Studies: Comparing “Westerners” and Zambians

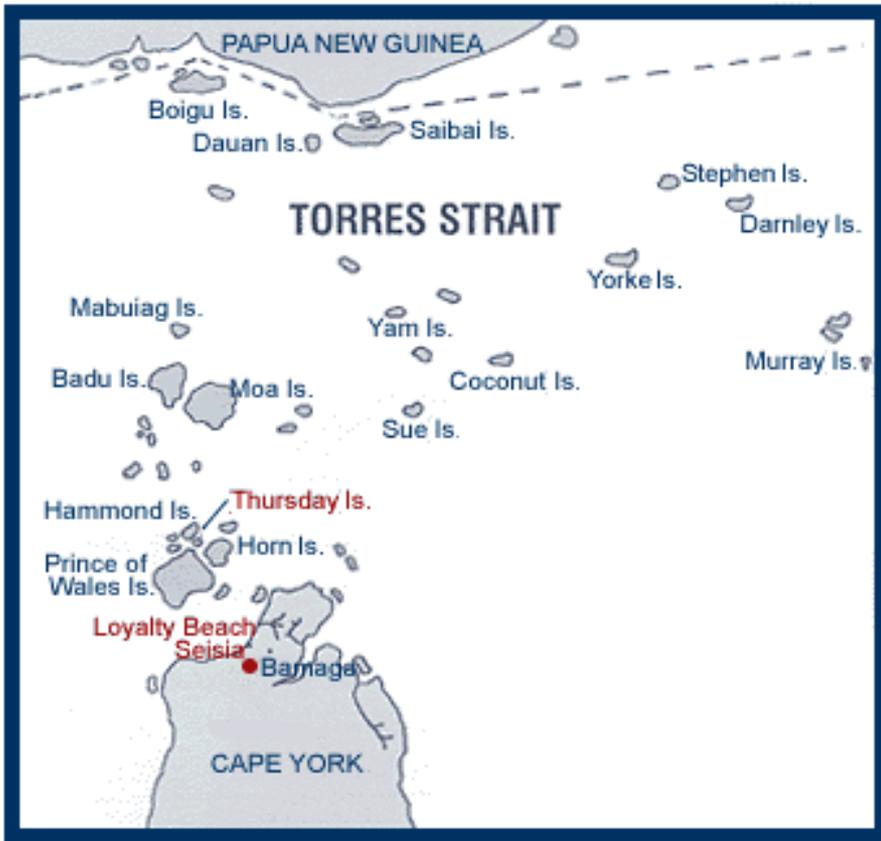
- Participants were shown the top picture and asked a number of questions including ‘what is the man is doing with the spear?’ and ‘which is nearer the antelope or the elephant?’
- Both children and adults from African groups found it difficult to perceive depth in the pictorial material.



Müller-Lyer Illusion



“Westerners” tend to be susceptible to the Müller-Lyer. Torres Strait islanders do not (Rivers, 1901)



Comparisons of East Asian (e.g., Chinese) and Western Societies.

- Dr. Richard Nisbett's Student: "You know, the difference between you and me is that I think the world is a circle, and you think it's a line. The Chinese believe in constant change, but with things always moving back to some prior state. They pay attention to a wide range of events; they search for relationships between things; and they think you can't understand the part without understanding the whole. Westerners live in a simpler, more deterministic world; they focus on salient objects or people instead of the larger picture; and they think they can control events because they know the rules that govern the behavior of objects."

“The Geography of Thought: Why We Think the Way We Do” (2003) by Richard Nisbett

- Compares “East Asians” (societies influenced by China) with “Westerners” (societies influenced by Europe, especially Greek thought).
- Nisbett criticizes the assumption of universalism, and attempts to evaluate cross-cultural differences in cognitive processes between East Asians and Westerners.
- Collaborated with researchers in China, Korea and Japan.

Ancient Greece and China: 2500 Years of History

- More than a billion people in the world claim intellectual inheritance from ancient Greece.
- More than two billion people have been influenced by Chinese thought.
- Nisbett argues that these intellectual traditions have been culturally transmitted, and have important consequences.

Greek Thought

- Importance of individual identity and personal agency.
- While many civilizations made systematic scientific observations, only the Greeks attempted to explain these observations

Chinese Thought

- Chinese philosophy influenced by Taoism, Confucianism, and much later Buddhism.
- General belief that the world is constantly changing and is full of contradictions.
- The Sign of the Tao



Reasoning styles in China and the West

China	West
<p>Principle of Change: Reality is a dynamical, constantly-changing process. The concepts that reflect reality must be subjective, active, flexible.</p>	<p>Law of Identity Everything is what it is. Thus it is a necessary fact that A equals A, no matter what A is</p>
<p>Principle of Contradiction Reality is full of contradictions and never clear-cut or precise. Opposites coexist in harmony with one another, opposed but connected</p>	<p>Law of Noncontradiction No statement can be both true and false.</p>
<p>Principle of Relationship To know something completely, it is necessary to know its relations, what it affects and what affects it.</p>	<p>Law of the Excluded Middle Every statement is either true or false. There is no middle term.</p>

Part III: Experimental Findings

- Does the experimental evidence conducted by Nisbett and his associates conform with the sociological and historical patterns?

Finding 1: Individualistic vs. Collectivistic Views of Self

- Culture informs people how they should see themselves and behave.
- East Asians and Westerners may have different Self-Concepts

Who am I?

Mrs. Robertson

A teacher

Divorced

Scottish

A long way from home

Active

Lonely

Mr. Chan

A student at Hong Kong
University

I come from the Chan family

I joined the Pokfulam
basketball team

I care for my sister

I visit my mother in the
hospital everyday.

Categorical proportions of responses to the question: “Who am I?”

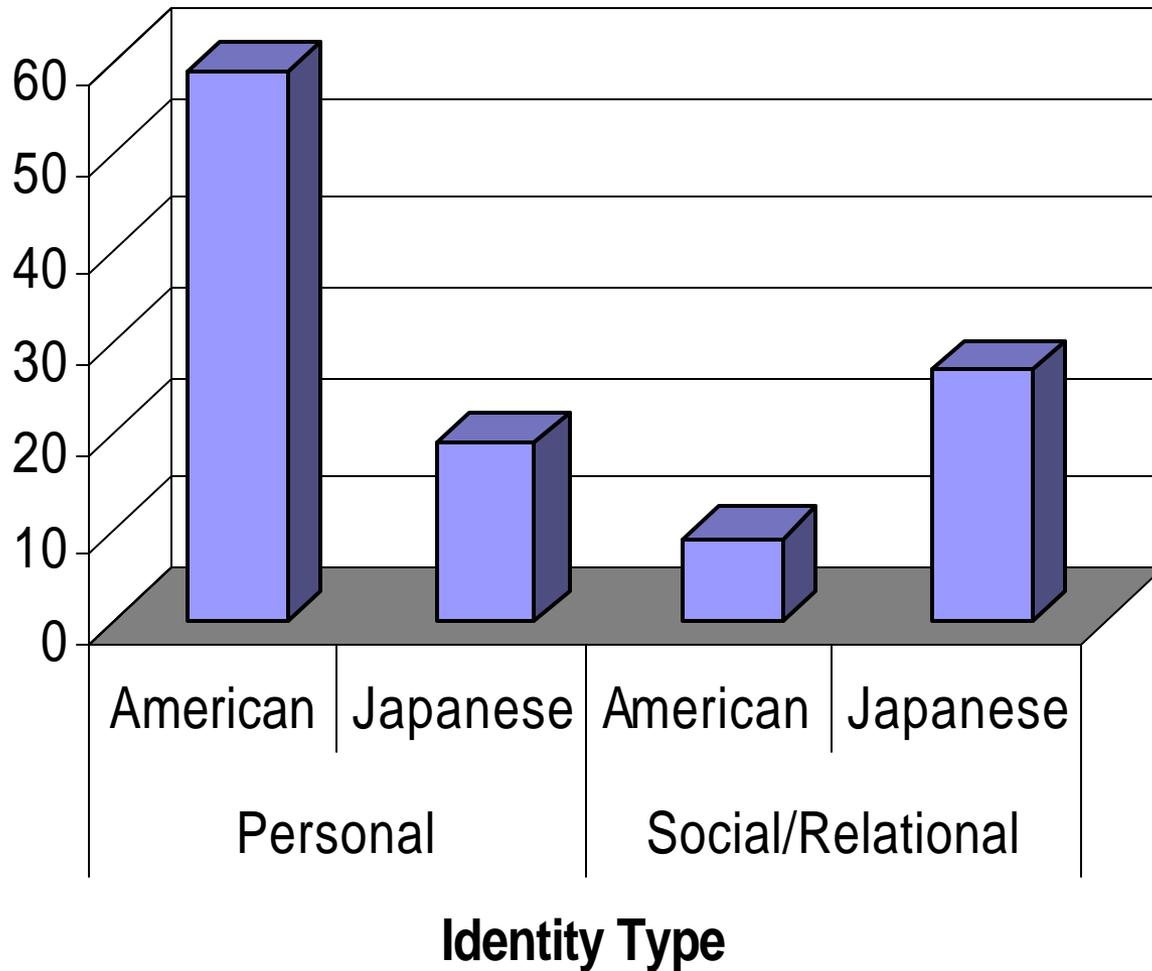
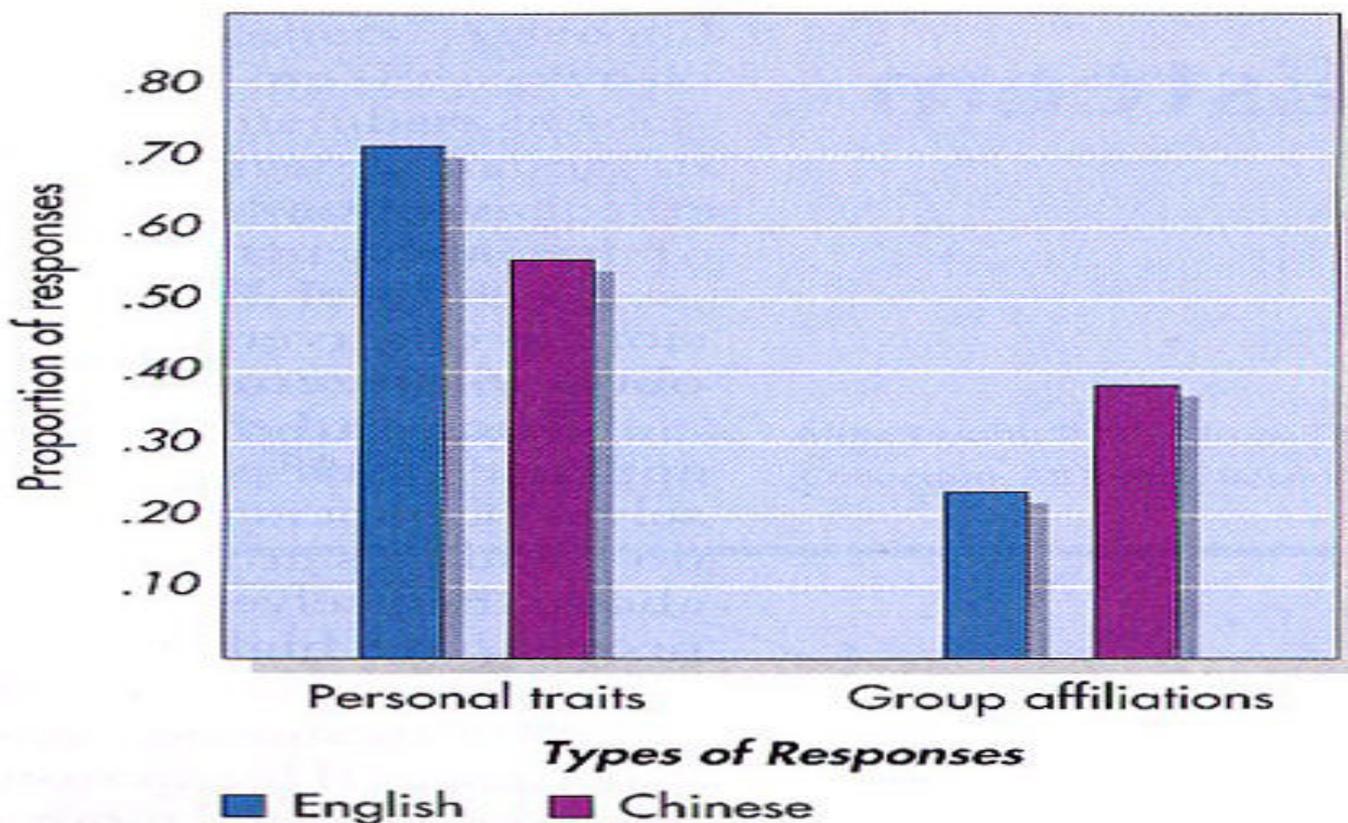


FIGURE 3.4 Can Language Bring Out Different Aspects of the Self?

In this study, bilingual students from Hong Kong filled in "I am _____" items in Chinese or in English. Suggesting that cultural orientation can bring out different aspects of the self, those who took the test in English focused more on personal traits (left), while those who took the test in Chinese were more focused on group affiliations (right). (Trafimow et al., 1997.)



Western concept of Self: **Independent Self-Conceptual**

- A view of the self that is characterized by a bounded and autonomous sense of self that is relatively distinct from others and the environment. Those with an independent self conceptual strive to assert their *individuality* and *uniqueness* and stress their *separateness* from the social world.
- This view is best exemplified by North American and Western European cultures.

Characteristics of Individualism

- Social behavior is largely determined by personal goals
- Goals overlap only slightly with collectives
 - family, work group, political allies, country & state
- In conflict: it is acceptable for the individual to place personal goals ahead of collective goals.
- Achievement benefits primarily the individual.

Eastern concept of self: **Interdependent Self-Construction**

- A view of the self that is characterized by an emphasis on the **interrelatedness** of the individual to others and to the environment. It is only within the contextual fabric of individuals' social relationships, roles, and duties that the self has meaning.
- This construal of self is most represented by Asian cultures

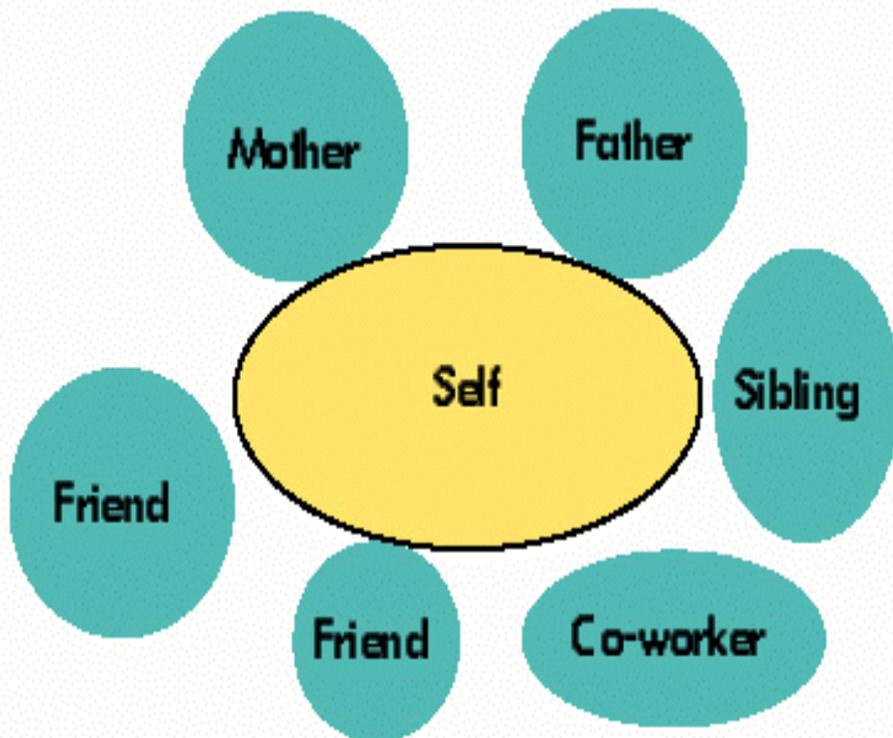
Characteristics of Collectivism

- Desire to stay with parents and extended family
- In conflict: It is considered socially desirable to place collective goals ahead of personal goals.
- Individual achievements are aimed at improving the position of the ingroup.
- Willingness to accept the presence of unequal power distribution (power distance): maintains group solidarity and harmony.

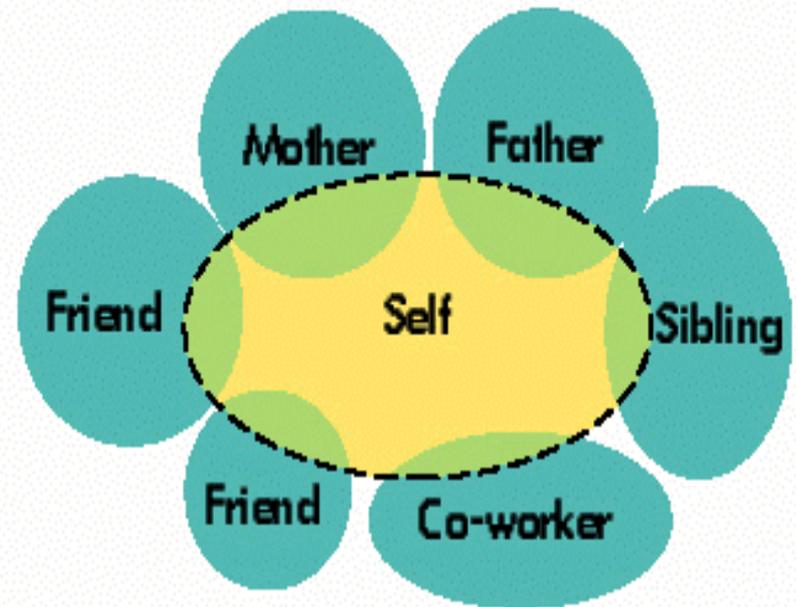
FIGURE 3.3 Cultural Conceptions of Self

As depicted here, different cultures foster different conceptions of the self. Many westerners have an *independent* view of the self as an entity that is distinct, autonomous, and self-contained. Yet many Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans hold an *interdependent* view of the self that encompasses others in a larger social network. (Markus & Kitayama, 1991.)

A. Independent View of Self



B. Interdependent View of Self



“Different” vs. “Similar”

- Being “different” implies being “unique”, and being “unique” is valued in individualist cultures
- This is not necessarily the case in collectivist cultures
 - Example: In Japanese language, “different” also means “wrong”

Culturally-rooted Insults

- Individualistic Insults from Northern Italy

“You are stupid”

“You are a cretin”

Swear-words referring to religious figures and sexual nouns

- Collective Insults from Southern Italy

“I wish cancer on you and your relatives”

“Your sister is a cow”

“You are queer and so is your father”

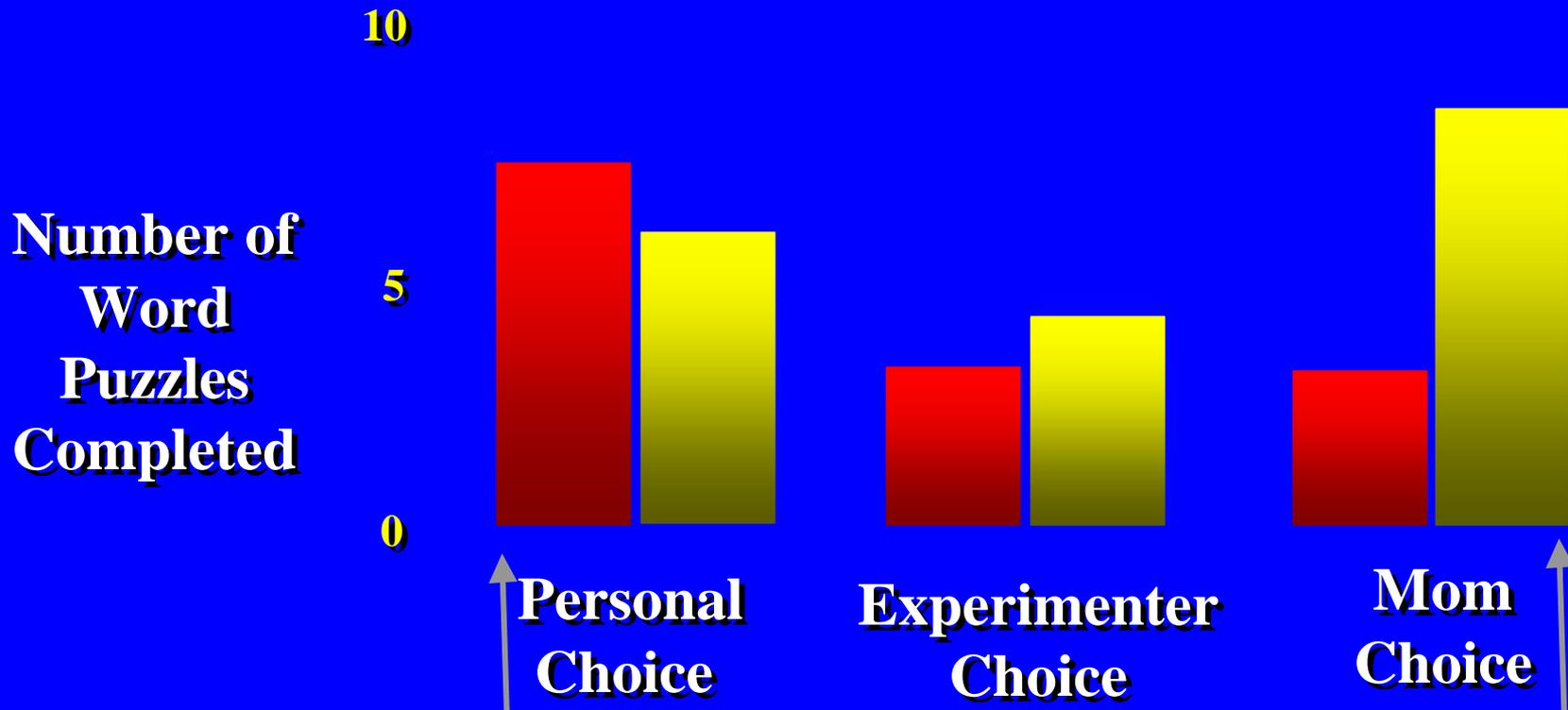
“You are a communist”

Insults related to incest

Culture, Choice & Intrinsic Motivation

In one study, researchers asked Anglo-American and Asian-American children to solve word puzzles that were either:

- Chosen by the **child (Personal Choice)**
- Chosen by the **experimenter**
- Chosen by the **child's mom**



■ Anglo American

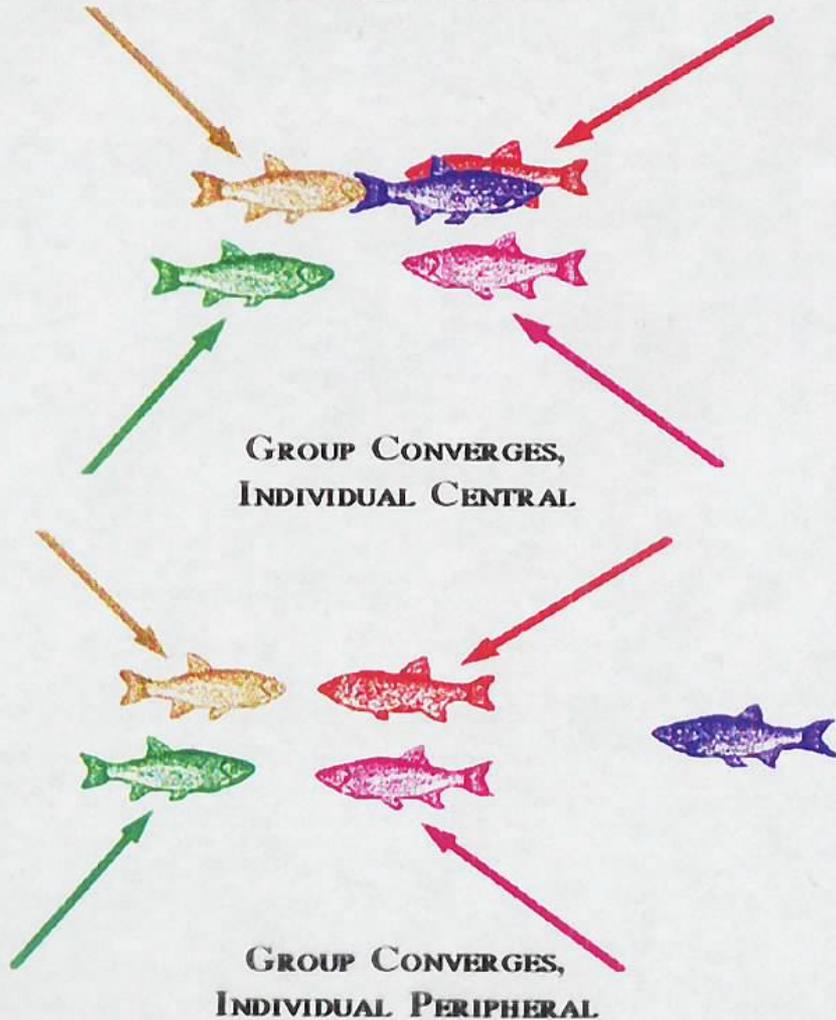
■ Asian American

• **Personal choice** enhanced motivation for Anglo-American children

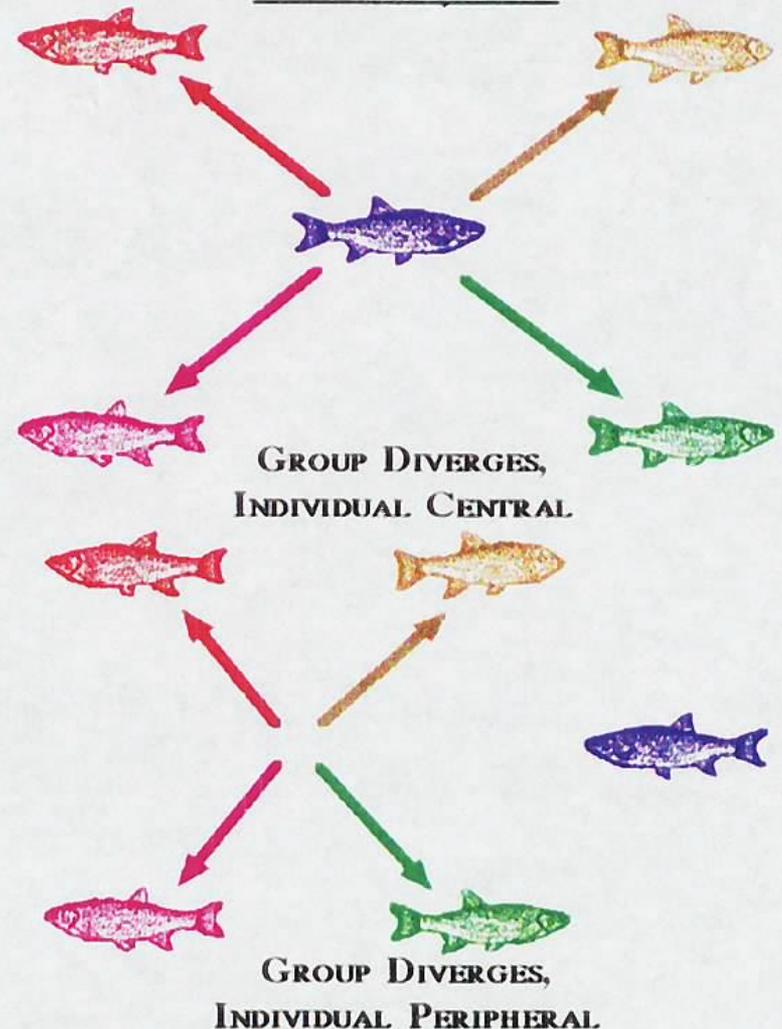
• **But Asian-American** children were more motivated when their **mothers** had chosen the task

What do people see when they watch videos of fish?

COLLECTING



DISPERSING



Do Asians and Westerners differ in their responses to the fish videos?

- Japanese reported “seeing” more feelings and motivations on the part of fish in a video than Americans.
- When the blue fish leaves the group behind, Americans are likely to say the blue fish is angry, and that it's leaving because it wants to get away from the group. Chinese are likely to say the blue fish is sad, and feels lonely and rejected. "Their interpretation is that the group has kicked the blue fish out."

Acculturation

- U.S. Hispanics: more collectivist than non-Hispanics
 - **But Hispanics tend to become more and more individualist as they become acculturated.**
- Asian-Americans higher on collectivism than European-Americans.
 - **But by 3rd generation, can be almost identical to European-Americans in level of individualistic self-definition.**

Finding 2: Holism vs. Analysis

- Western tradition emphasizes analytic thought:
Detach objects from context, use formal logic, avoid contradictions
- East-Asian tradition emphasizes holistic thought:
pay attention to context, note relationships between objects and their background. Rely more on experience-based knowledge than formal logic, dialectical (search for the “middle way”)

Japanese (JP) and US students observe animated scenes of fish and underwater objects. They then report what they observed.



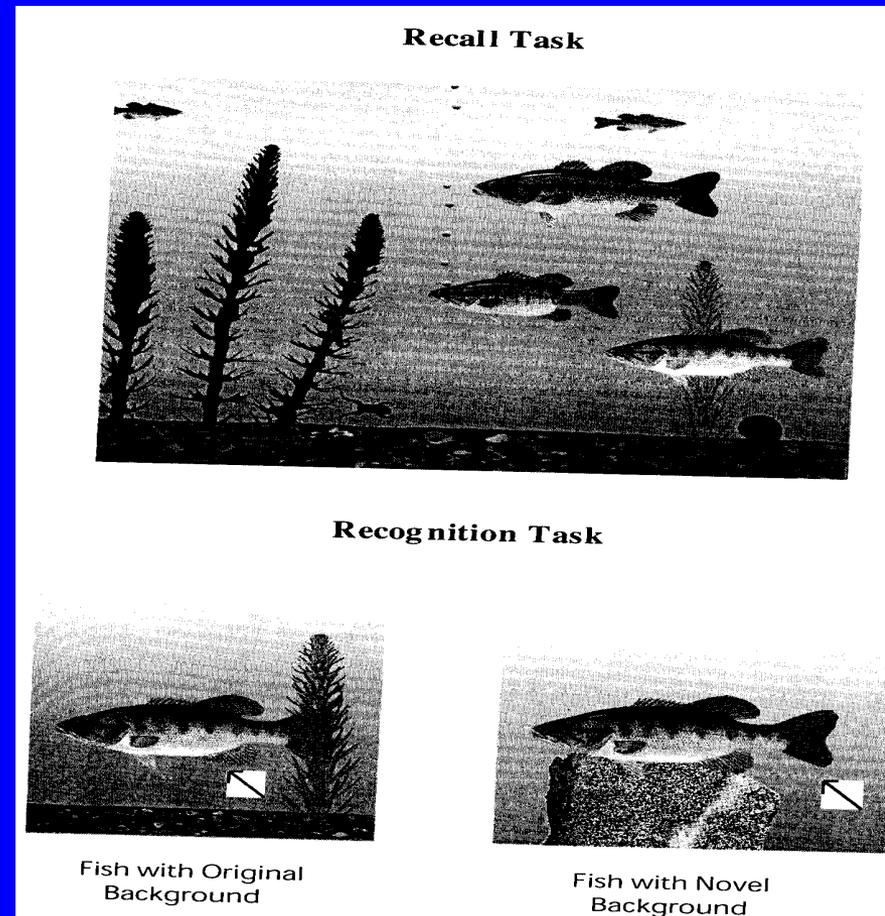
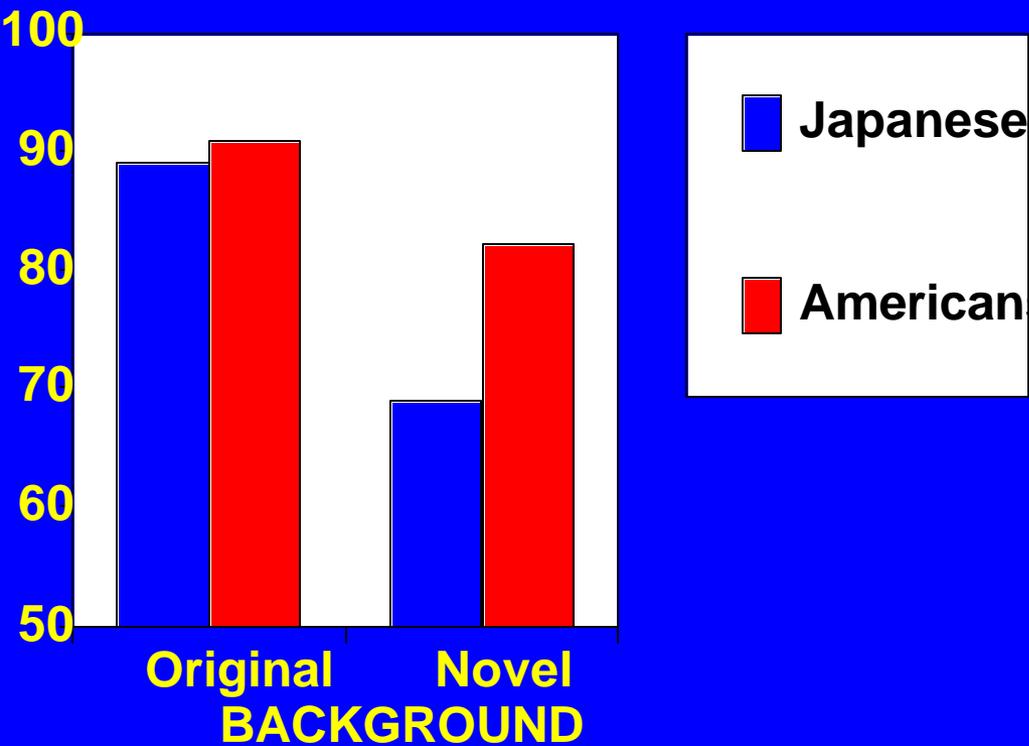
Holistic vs. Analytic attention

- What did the students say about the video?

US students usually referred to fish, but the Japanese to the background elements of the video. Japanese made 70% more statements about background elements.

Holistic vs. Analytic attention

Recognition of focal fish by Japanese (but not US students) harmed by changing background of options on recognition task (i.e., perception of Japanese more "bound" to field)



Holistic vs. Analytic attention

- If East Asians pay more attention to background changes, will they be less likely than Westerners to see changes in foreground objects?
- Results suggest that the answer is yes.



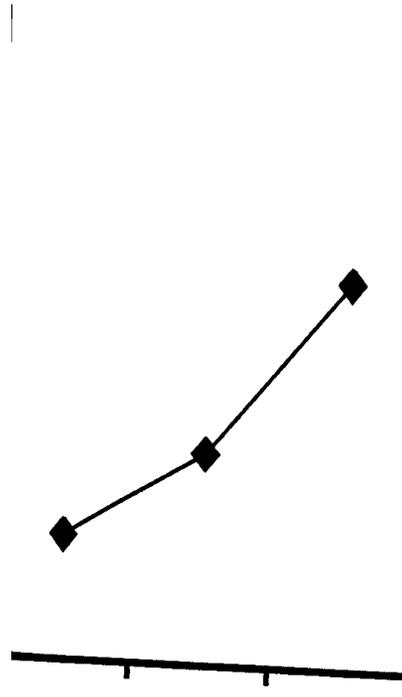
Frame from Airport Site Movie: Version 1



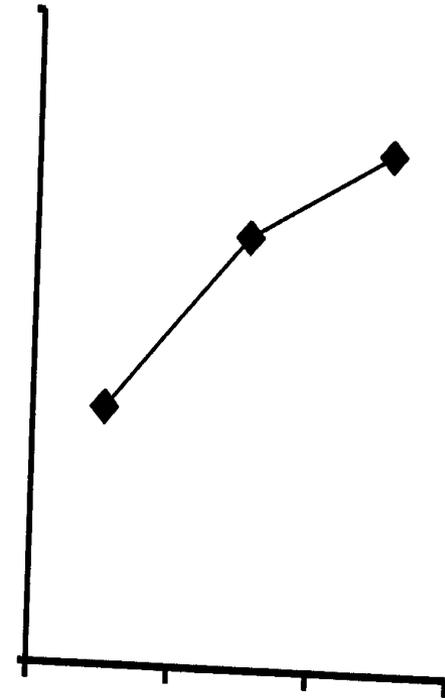
Frame from Airport Site Movie: Version 2

Stability and Change

- American students were more likely than Chinese students to say that the trends would continue to either go up or down.



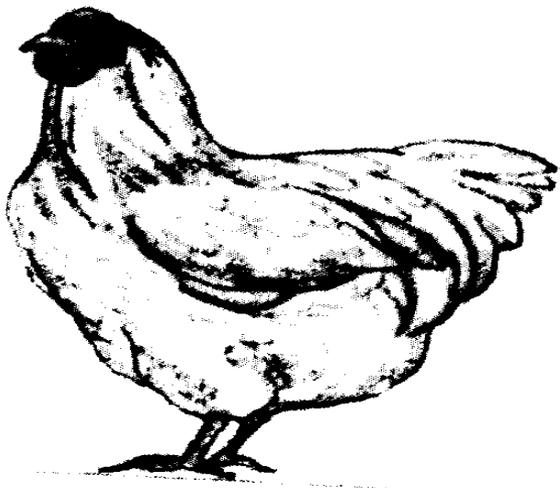
**Positively Accelerated
Growth Trend**



**Negatively Accelerated
Growth Trend**

Finding 3: Classification

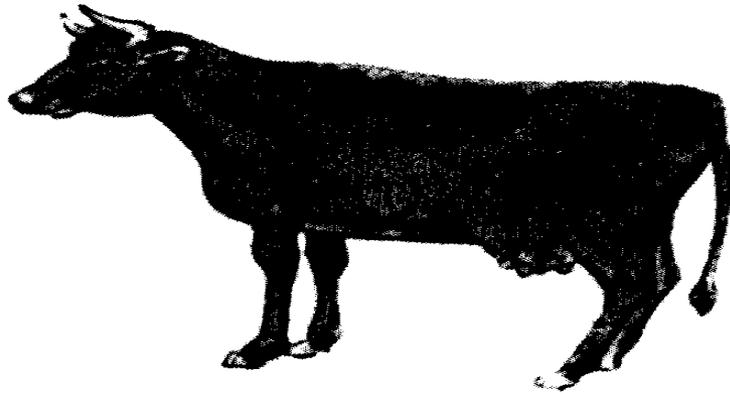
- For the Greeks, things belonged in the same categories if they had similar attributes.
- For the Chinese, shared membership did not establish shared class membership; things were classified together if they were thought to have influenced one another.



A



B



What goes with this? A or B