Perceived Malleability of Self versus the World and Its Impact on Youths' Control Orientation and Well-Being in Four Cultures

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Primary/Secondary Control Orientation

> Perceived discrepancy between self's resources and the world's demands induces stress, which calls for changes in either self or/and the world

> **Primary Control:** changing the world to fit the self's needs

— self as agent, change in social and physical environment as outcome

> **Secondary Control:** changing the self to fit the world

— people not always try to influence their environment,
but often flexibly adapt to and accept existing realitites

— emphasizes functionality of flexibility in a (Western) culture that prioritizes determination and autonomous behavior

— can SC be purposeful, intentional, planned, and "in your control"?

> Why do different individuals (and cultures) tend to emphasize and use different kinds of control?

Rothbaum, Weisz, & Snyder, 1982; Heckhausen & Schultz, 1995; Skinner, 1996; Morling & Evered, 2008

Implicit Theories

> **Implicit theories of self:** Intelligence, personality

Entity theory: Performance goal; when setbacks occur ➔ primary control, or helplessness when the world is NOT changeable

Incremental theory: Learning goal; when setbacks occur ➔ tendency to exert more effort to change self
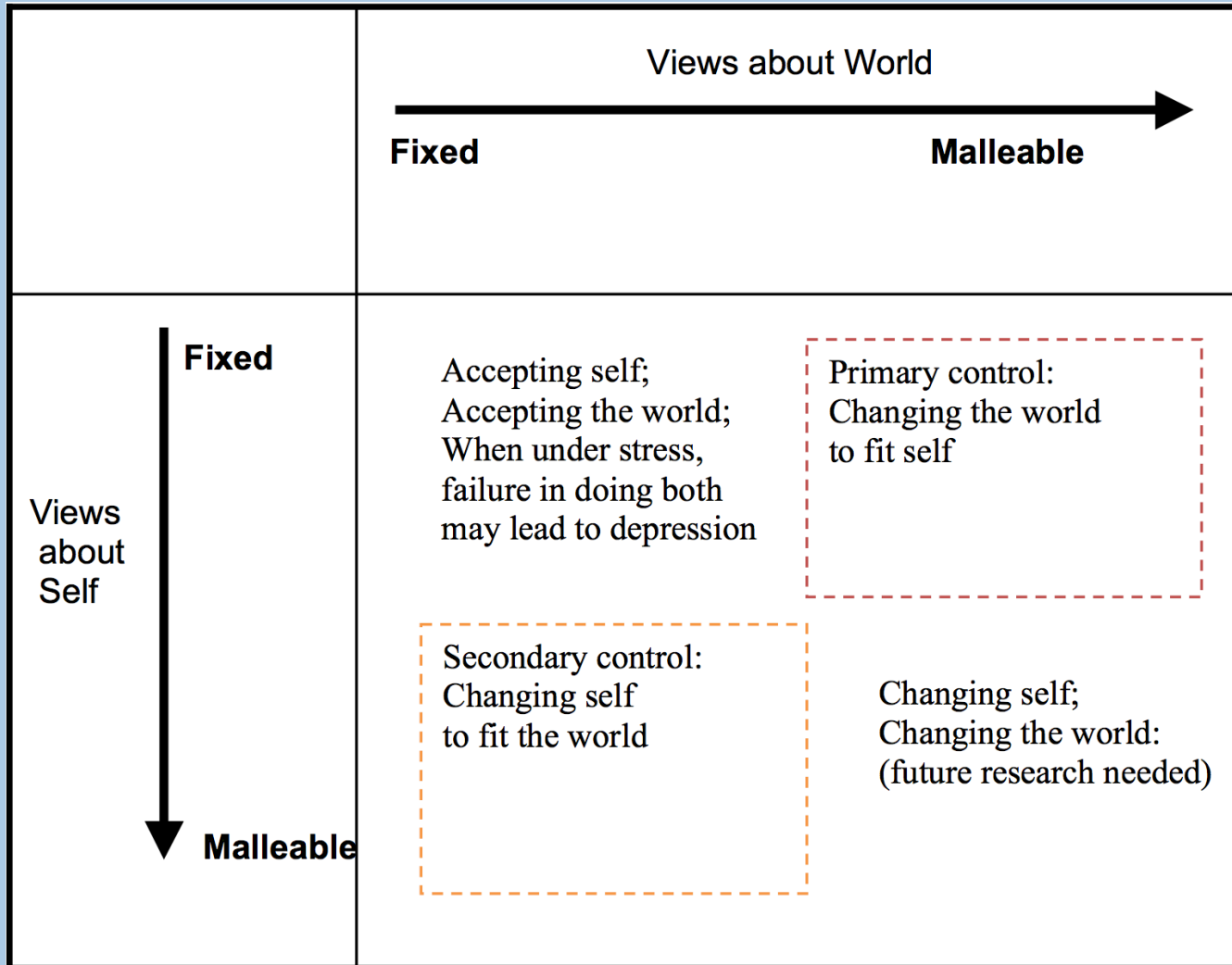
> **Implicit theories of the world**

Monolithic view: self and world as either changeable or unchangeable („world" seen as abstract, all encompassing, incl. other selves)

Complementarity view: **fixed self** corresponds to **malleable world** and vice versa („world" as social structure = what the individual has to come to terms with)
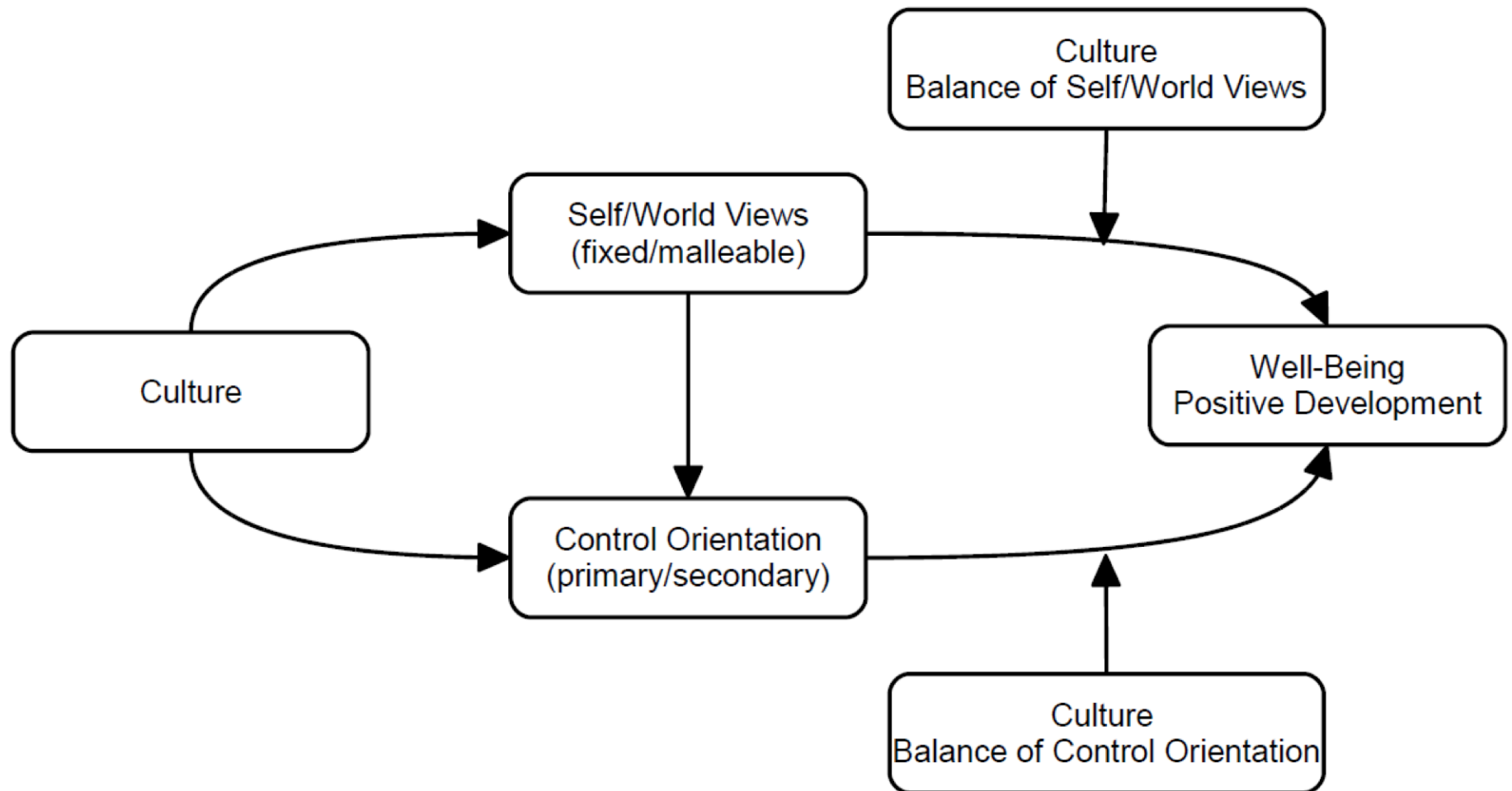
> **East Asian cultures:** "Individual self fits the world"

> **Western cultures:** "The world accommodates individual self"

Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995; Rothbaum & Wang, 2010; Su et al., 1999; Heine et al., 2001; Church et al., 2012

Relation Between Implicit Theories and Control Orientation

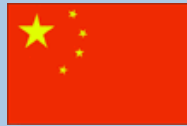|	Views about World	
	Fixed	**Malleable**
Views about Self — **Fixed**	Accepting self; Accepting the world; When under stress, failure in doing both may lead to depression	Primary control: Changing the world to fit self
Malleable	Secondary control: Changing self to fit the world	Changing self; Changing the world: (future research needed)

Tentative Model Including Culture and Positive Development

Sample

China

N = 100 (M = 66 & F = 34)

Age 18 – 28 years

M_M = 20.41 M_F = 20.76

Switzerland

N = 103 (M = 50 & F = 53)

Age 19 – 28 years

M_M = 23.10 M_F = 22.21

USA

N = 95 (M = 63 & F = 32)

Age 18 – 22 years

M_M = 19.50 M_F = 19.48

India

N = 100 (M = 50 & F = 50)

Age 18 – 25 years

M_M = 20.86 M_F = 20.36

Scenarios Primary/Secondary Control

❑ **Problems with Likert scales**
▪ Reference group effect
▪ Culture-specific response tendencies

❑ **Possible solutions**
▪ Concrete behavior in concrete situations
▪ Forced choice item format, here combined with probability of choice
  ▪ allows differentiated response (e.g., equally strong tendencies)
  ▪ + percieved difficulty to carry out the respective behavior (5-point scale)
  ▪ + overall stressfulness of situation

❑ **Situations especially relevant for youths/students**
▪ University / Living together / Friendship / Work / Partnership

Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2002; Smith, 2011

Scenario Example: „Partner"

Your romantic partner/spouse is fond of criticizing you in public and you do not like it at all.

What will you do in this situation?

(a) Try to change my partner's habit.

(b) Try to accept that it's my partner's nature to be straightforward and he/she does not have any bad intentions.
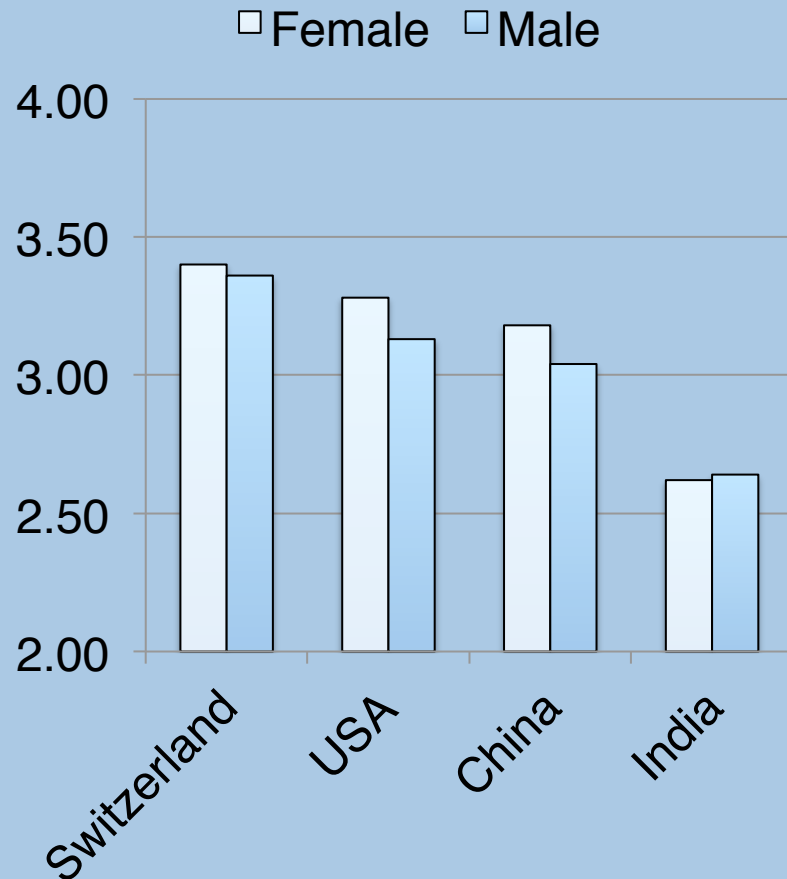
On a scale from 0-100% to what extent do you think it is likely that you will choose (a) and (b), respectively. The two percentages must sum up to 100.

(a)_____%   (b)_____%

Entity Theory of Self (Yang & Hong, 2010)
3 Items; α = .72 / .55 / .49 / .63

> Culture
> $F(3, 389) = 15.92$, p < .001, eta^2 = .11
> India < all others

> Gender
> $F(1, 389) = 0.95$, p = .330
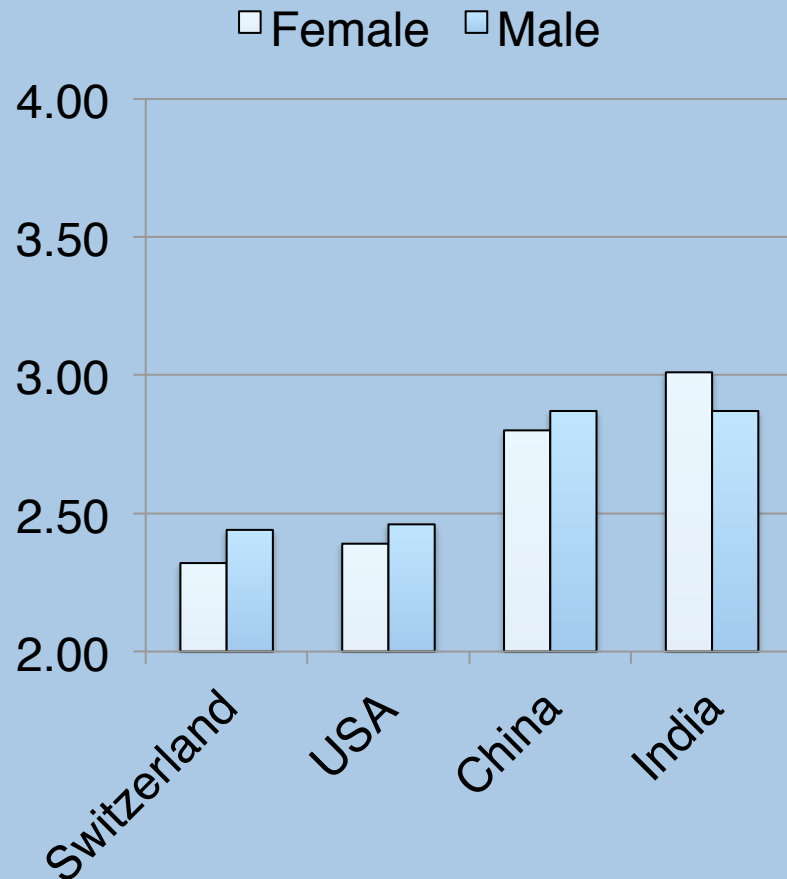
> Culture x Gender
> $F(3, 389) = 0.25$, p = .858

„I am a certain kind of person, and there is not much that can be done to really change that."

Note: Ipsatized values with a constant added.

Fixed World (Domain Specific)
(11 items; α = .72 / .70 / .53 / .42)

> ## Culture
  $F (3, 395) = 46.63, p < .001,$ $eta^2 = .26$
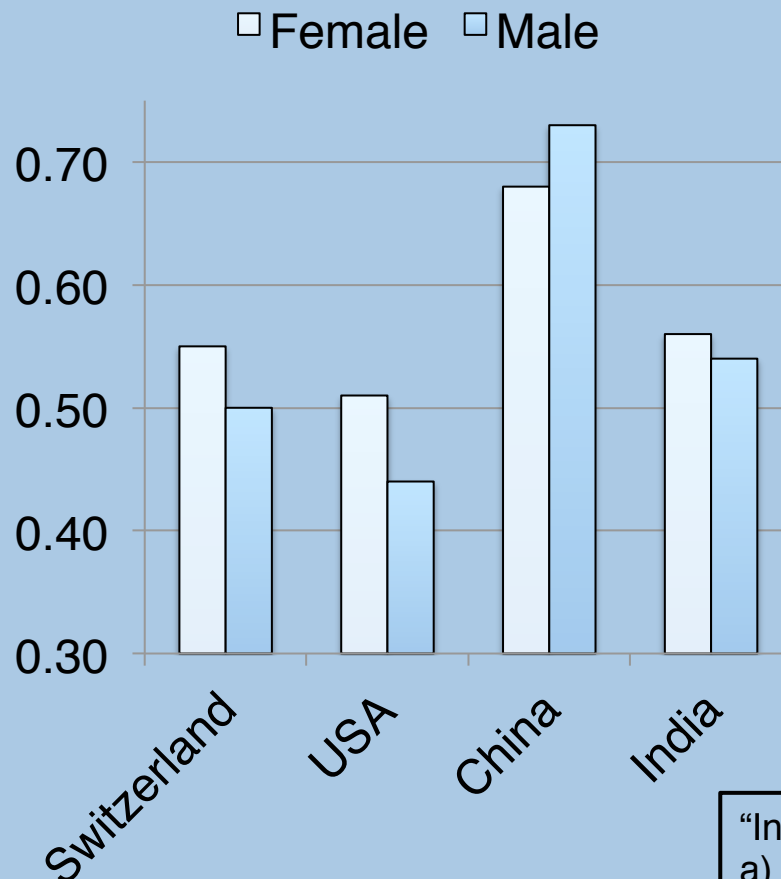 (India = China) > (USA = CH)

> ## Gender
  $F (1, 395) = 0.48, p = .487$

> ## Culture x Gender
  $F (3, 395) = 1.99, p = .114$

"In our society, divorce is something to be avoided under all circumstances."

Note: Ipsatized values with a constant added.

Self-Monitoring (Lennox & Wolfe,1984; Church et al., 2012)
(20 items; α = .78 / .78 / .70 / .72)

> **Culture**
F (3, 395) = 25.71, p < .001, eta^2 = .16
China > (USA = CH = India)

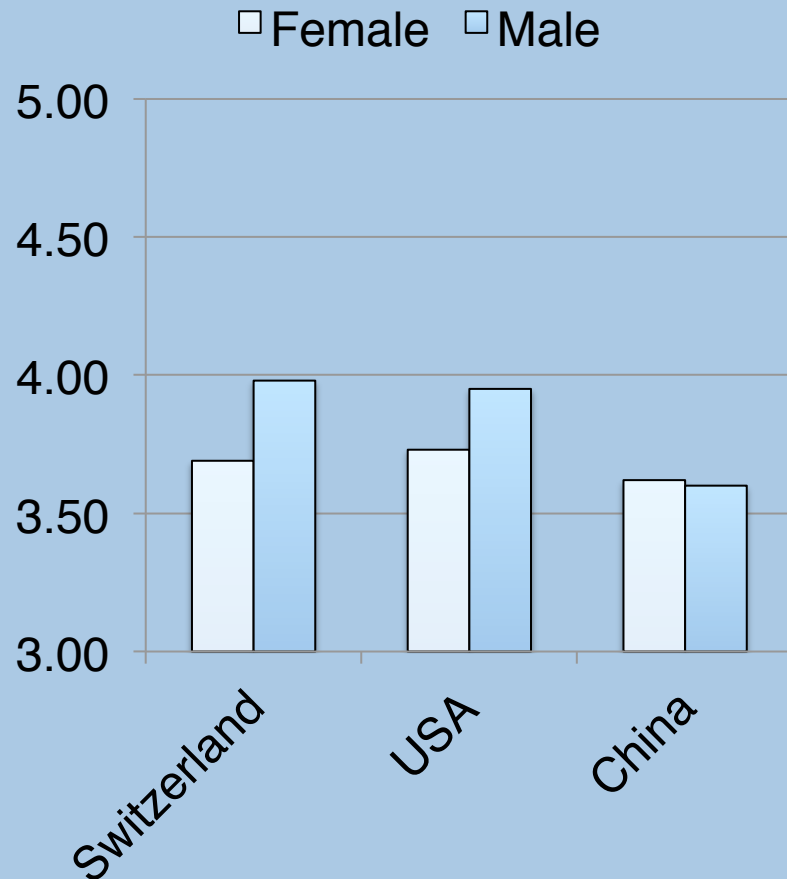> **Gender**
F (1, 395) = 1.37, p = .243

> **Culture x Gender**
F (3, 395) = 1.75, p = .156

"In social situations, I tend to:
a) Maintain behavior that is consistent with my personality.
b) Modify my behavior to fit better into the situation "

Note: Original values.

Primary Control / Proactive Coping
(Greenglass & Schwarzer, 1998)
(13 items; α = .74 / .87 / .79)

□Female □Male

> **Culture**
F (2, 286) = 7.19, p < .001, eta^2 = .05
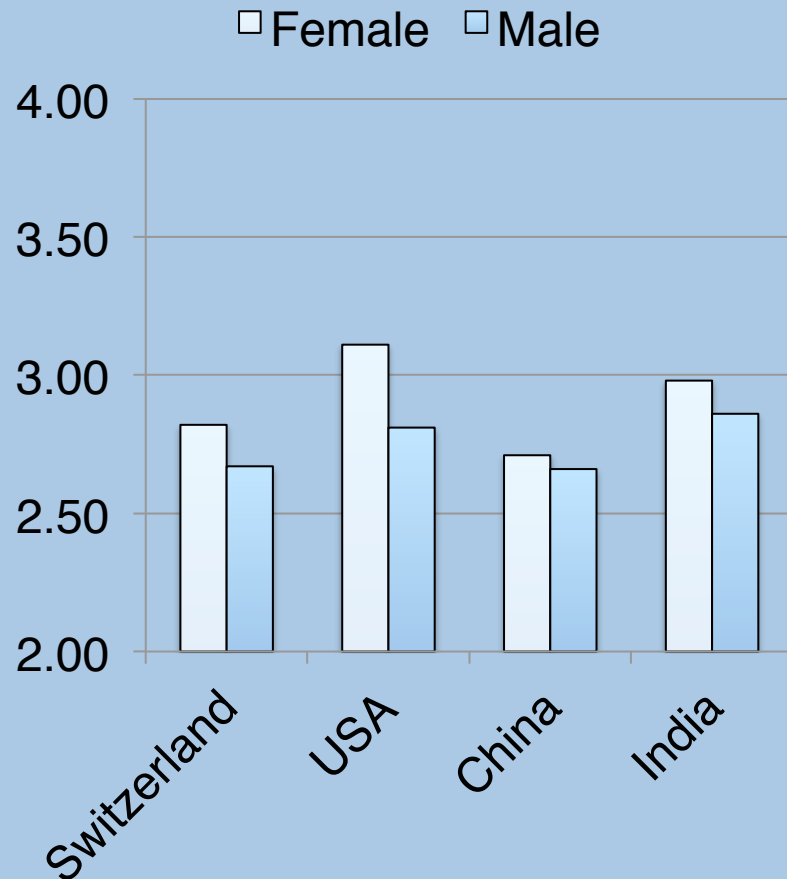(CH = USA) > China

> **Gender**
F (1, 286) = 7.91, p = .005, eta^2 = .03

> **Culture x Gender**
F (2, 395) = 2.87, p = .059, eta^2 = .02

"I always try to find a way to work around obstacles; nothing really stops me."

Note: Ipsatized values with a constant added.

Difficulty of Using Primary Control
(Scenarios) (13 items; α = .76 / .83 / .78 / .77)

□Female □Male

> Culture
F (3, 395) = 8.68, p < .001, eta^2 = .06
USA > CH ; India > China

> Gender
F (1, 395) = 12.33, p < .001, eta^2 = .03

> Culture x Gender
F (3, 395) = 1.37, p = .252

"How difficult will it be for you to try to change your partner's habit?"

Note: Ipsatized values with a constant added.

Implicit Theories and Self-Monitoring
WITH Control Orientation

Pearson *r*		Primary Control (Proactive Coping)	Difficulty of Primary Control (Scenarios)
Entity Theory of Self	Switzerland	-.03	-.04
	USA	.00	-.01
	India		.00
	China	-.20	-.01
Fixed World (domain-specific)	Switzerland	-.02	**.36***
	USA	-.12	**.23****
	India		.10
	China	**-.30****	.14
Self-Monitoring	Switzerland	**-.19****	**.26****
	USA	**-.52****	**.55****
	India		.05
	China	-.08	.15

Implicit Theories and Self-Monitoring
WITH Well-Being

Pearson *r*		Life Satisfaction	Psychological Symptoms
Entity Theory of Self	Switzerland	.13	.00
	USA	.01	.09
	India	.05	
	China	-.02	**.26****
Fixed World (domain-specific)	Switzerland	**-.30****	**.35****
	USA	-.08	**.30****
	India	-.01	
	China	-.11	**.26****
Self-Monitoring	Switzerland	**-.31****	**.33****
	USA	**-.23***	**.37****
	India	.11	
	China	-.16	.07

Control Orientation WITH Well-Being

Pearson *r*		Life Satisfaction	Psychological Symptoms
Proactive Coping	Switzerland	**.29****	**-.40****
	USA	**.32****	**-.35****
	India		
	China	.10	**-.43****
Difficulty of Primary Control	Switzerland	**-.30****	**.47****
	USA	**-.25***	**.31****
	India	.10	
	China	**-.26****	**.24***

Summary of Results

- **Cultural differences in implicit theories, self-monitoring and primary control** mostly consistent with our hypotheses

- **Entity theory of self**
    - no correlations with control orientation
    - in China related to more psychological symptoms

- **In the West but not in the East:**
    - fixed world views related to more difficulty in using primary control
    - high self-monitoring negatively related to primary control and well-being
    - primary control (proactive coping) related to higher life satisfaction

- **In the West and in China:**
    - primary control (proactive coping) related to less psychological symptoms
    - difficulty in using primary control related to lower well-being

Discussion

- **Entity/incremental theory of self and world**
    - Monolithic, complementary or situation-specific?

- **Adaptiveness of self/world-views and control orientation**
    - Culture matters
    - (Universal) Reality also matters
    - Situation specificity seems to be very strong

- **Caveats and future directions**
    - Preliminary results ➜ Equivalence and moderation analyses follow
    - Only self-report ➜ IAT analyses follow
    - Situation-specific and balance-related analysis of control scenarios

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