

# **Complex Selves: Understanding Independent and Interdependent Identities**

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# The Backdrop: Globalization



- **Advances in transportation and technology have led to unprecedented globalization.**
- **The world is smaller, flatter, and hotter than ever before, which means that people of different backgrounds and cultures are interacting, working, problem-solving, and learning side by side more than ever before.**
- **In the U.S., there will be no racial or ethnic majority by 2050, and new immigrants and their children will make up 83% of the workforce within this half century.**
- **Globalization can be seen in the economy, workplace, civic institutions, community organizations, educational institutions, etc.**
- **Cal is an increasingly global environment and will only become more so in the coming decade.**
- **This means teaching, advising, motivational philosophies, organizational structures, etc. must take into account these evolving cultural realities.**



# Idioms

**Which of these sayings resonates with you more?**


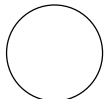
**A. The squeaky wheel gets the grease.**



**B. The nail that sticks up gets pounded down.**



# Colors

- What does the color red signify to you?
  - A. Bloodshed? Anger?
  - B. Success? Celebration? Victory?
- What color would you wear to a funeral?
  - A. Black? 
  - B. White? 

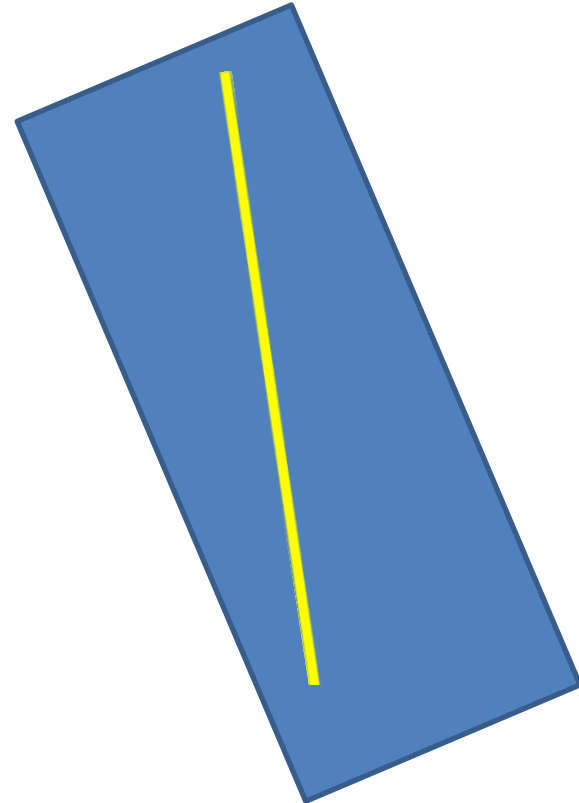
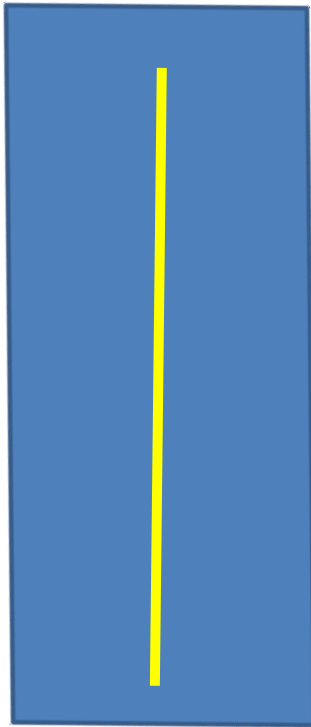
# Visual Perception

How about this line?

Is this yellow line straight? Is this a harder judgment to make?

A. Yes

B. No



# Beliefs about Social Class

**Do you tend to agree or disagree with the following statements?**

**A. Yes**

**B. No**

- A person's social class is easy to figure out even when they are from another country.
- Children probably learn about social class automatically, without much help from adults.
- A person's social class does not change much from their social class at birth.
- Social class is partly biological.

# Reading Others' Emotions

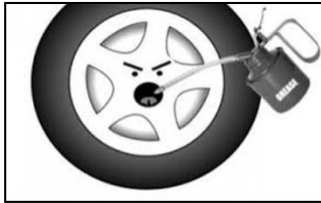
Can you accurately guess the emotion this woman is feeling?



- A. Joking
- B. Ashamed
- C. Confident ←
- D. Dispirited



# Some Cultures & Culture Divides



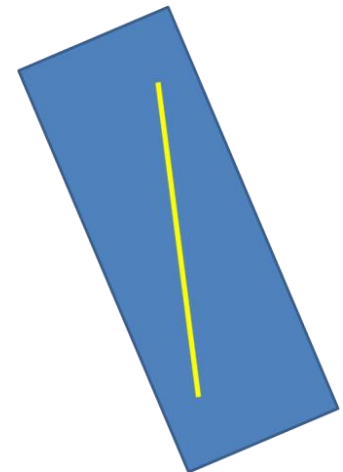
- Social class is partly biological.

**Upper vs. Lower Social Class**

**East vs. West**



**Men vs. Women**



# Broad Aims

- **21<sup>st</sup> century world is smaller, flatter, & hotter than ever before, making it fertile ground for culture clashes**
- **To soften clashes and flourish in this world, you need to...**
  - **Be aware of and understand how culture and selves operate**
  - **Be able to summon the right self at the right time**
  - **Help shape culture cycles that allow for more than one kind of self**

# Roadmap

- What is culture? What are selves?
- Culture clashes = clashes between selves
- What are culture cycles?
- Shaping culture cycles, shaping selves
- What are your cultures?
- How to navigate cultures and flourish in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- What are the implications for advising the 21<sup>st</sup> century Cal student?

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**So, what exactly is  
culture?**

***Why do cultures  
matter?***

# **Different cultures promote different ways of being a person**

- Culture tell us the right ways to approach and interact with the world
- Culture tells us the right beliefs to hold
- Culture tells us the right ways to raise and educate our children
- Culture tells us what and who should be valued and rewarded in the classroom and boardroom
- Culture tells us the right kind of person to be—they tell us the “self” we should be striving to be

# **Cultures shape selves**

**(and selves shape culture)**

- **What kind of self does our culture promote?**
- **Does each of us only have one self? Or do we have multiple selves?**
- **What kind of self or selves will succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world?**
- **What of self or selves are you advising and when?**

# Defining Selves

- Sense of being an enduring agent who act and reacts to the world around you
- Entity that perceives, attends, thinks, feels, learns, strives, imagines, remembers, decides, and acts
- We have an abiding sense of continuity in the self across places, times, and situations
- But each of us actually has many different selves that we turn on and off depending on the ever-changing circumstances of daily life
- Self with boss vs. self with best friend, self playing pick-up game of basketball vs. self giving a class presentation



# Two Basic Styles of Selves

## INDEPENDENT

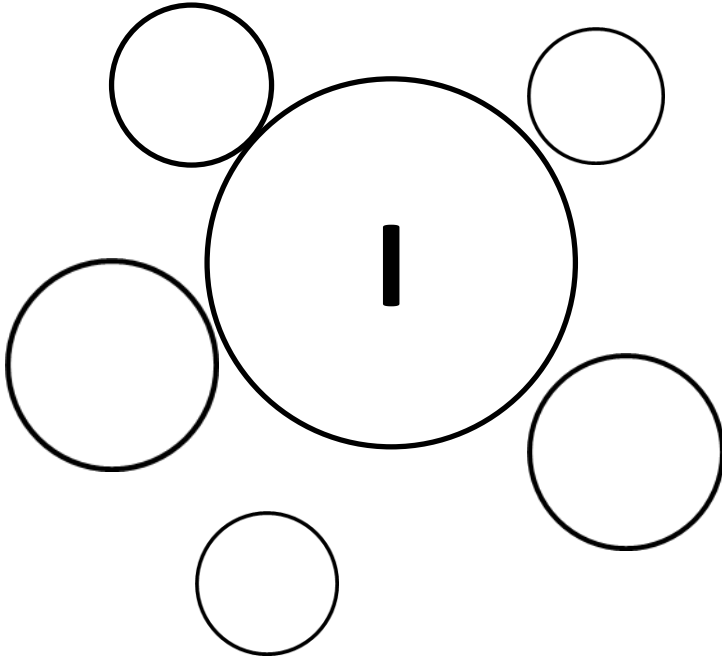
- Individual
- Unique
- Influencing
- Free
- Equal (but great!)

## INTERDEPENDENT

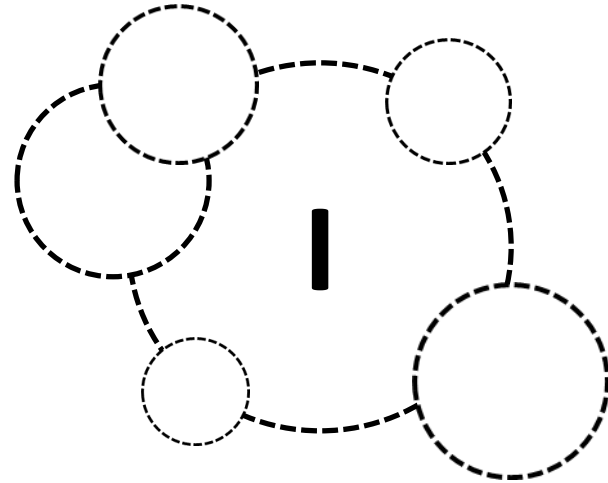
- Relational
- Similar
- Adjusting
- Rooted
- Ranked

# Who Am I?

## INDEPENDENT



## INTERDEPENDENT



# Who Am I?

1. I am...\_\_\_\_\_.
2. I am...\_\_\_\_\_.
3. I am...\_\_\_\_\_.
4. I am...\_\_\_\_\_.
5. I am...\_\_\_\_\_.
6. I am...\_\_\_\_\_.
7. I am...\_\_\_\_\_.
8. I am...\_\_\_\_\_.
9. I am...\_\_\_\_\_.
10. I am...\_\_\_\_\_.

# Who Am I?

## Twenty Statements Test (TST; Kuhn & McPartland, 1954)

Physical descriptors: blonde, tall, wear glasses

Trait characteristics: ambitious, creative, shy

Emotional states: happy, anxious, excited

Values & ideological beliefs: conservative, honesty, innovation, sustainability

Social roles & relationships: older sister, team leader, Catholic, University of Michigan alum, woman, Black, Texan

Existential statements: human being

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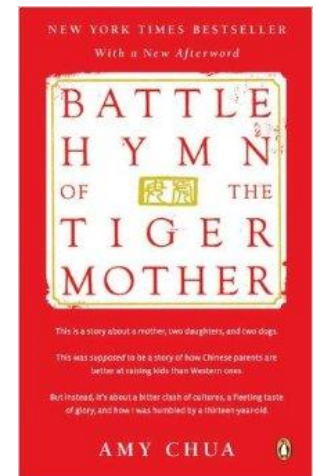
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# Clash of the Selves

- Most cultural divides can be interpreted as clashes between independent vs. interdependent selves
- Classic example is clash between East vs. West cultures (e.g., American vs. Japanese business practices; American vs. Chinese “Tiger mom” parenting)
- But clash between selves lies at the heart of many local, national, and global clashes
  - Men vs. women
  - Higher vs. lower social class
  - White vs. Latino/a
  - First-generation vs. continuing-education student





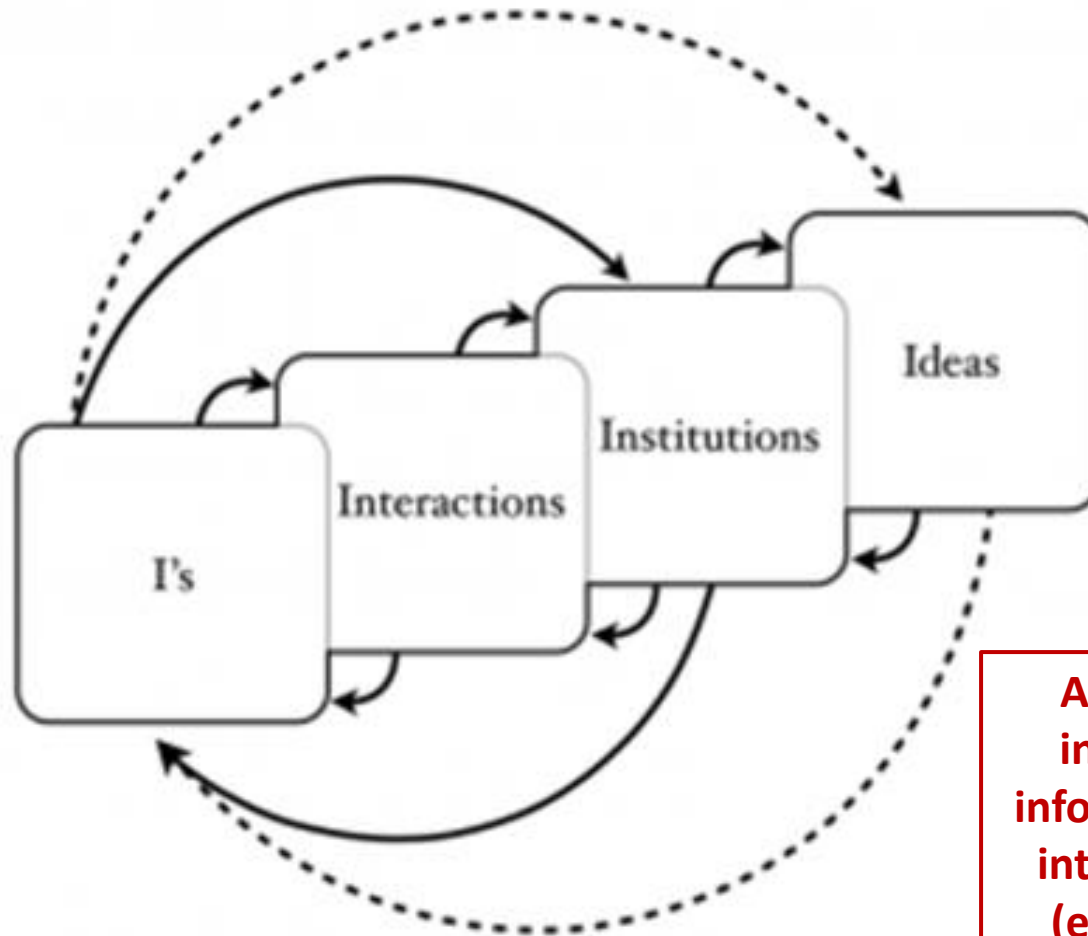
# Clash of the Selves

- How does one navigate these clashes of selves?
- Longstanding (and decided Western) mentality has been to choose to be one self, assumes there is one right way of being a person
- But 21<sup>st</sup> century world calls for being able to be BOTH selves
- How does one do this effectively?
- **First things first, need to understand the processes through which selves and cultures make each other up**

# The Culture Cycle: The 4 “I”s

Daily interactions with other people and cultural products (songs, stories, ads, architecture), guided by norms

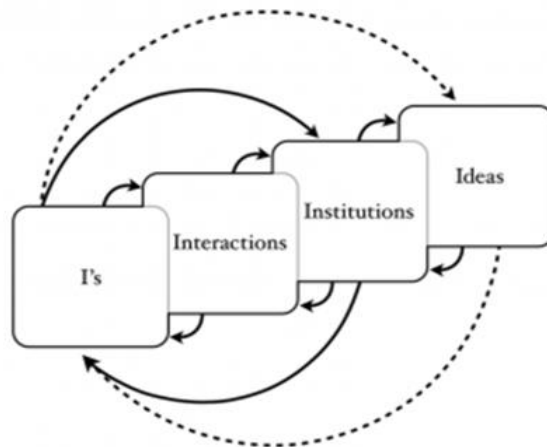
Your selves (thoughts, feelings, behaviors)



Legal, economic, scientific, government, educational, religious, etc. bodies that spell out the laws, rules, policies, theories, etc. that play out in society

Abstract and often invisible ideas that inform our institutions, interactions, and “I”s (e.g., where did the world come from?, what is good?)

# Illustrative Example



## WEST

**I's = defined by unique attributes**

**Interactions = speaking up, making choices for oneself**

**Institutions = educational system values fulfillment and creativity**

**Ideas = analytical thinking, individualism**

## EAST

**I's = defined by social roles**

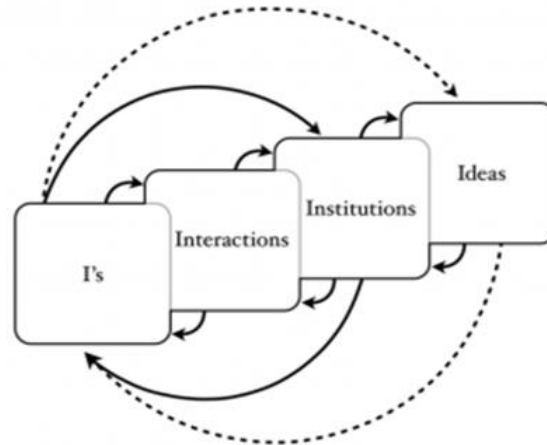
**Interactions = listening, others making choices for oneself**

**Institutions = educational system values results and effort/struggle**

**Ideas = holistic thinking, collectivism**

# Illustrative Example

## Madison



## Momoko



### WEST

I's = defined by unique attributes

Interactions = speaking up, making choices for oneself

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Ideas = analytical thinking, individualism

### EAST

I's = defined by social roles

Interactions = listening, others making choices for the oneself

Institutions = educational system values results and effort/struggle

Ideas = holistic thinking, collectivism

# **Culture cycles are *cycling* around us everywhere**

- **Characterized by iterative, recursive processes through the 4 “I’s”**
- **Means no action is caused by either individuals or external agents—both are always at work—we are culturally-shaped shapers**
- **Culture cycles exist for all sorts of social distinctions, both macro (nation, race, gender, religion, region) and micro (occupation, neighborhood, family, hobby)**

# But here's the thing about culture cycles...

- Often UNAWARE of our culture's recipe for being a self—especially us Westerners who are inclined to see actions as being internally caused
- Culture is powerful because it's usually INVISIBLE—only when we travel to new places, etc. that we begin to grasp how much culture shapes our selves and how many different forms cultures can take
- But now that you know how culture cycles work...
  - Will see culture EVERYWHERE—in the ads on TV, in the policies you follow at work, in how you choose to raise and praise your children, in how and whether you express certain emotions, in the behaviors that are rewarded in the classroom, etc.
  - Will think about differences in a NEW LIGHT and WITH LESS JUDGMENT—namely, in terms of different selves with neither self being better than the other, just suitable and effective in different contexts

# Roadmap

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# **Now that you know about selves and culture cycles...**

- **Begin to see how to nudge, alter, and disrupt culture cycles to calm the culture clashes or avoid them altogether**
- **First, you need to be able to enact both independent and interdependent selves—taking a middle ground, or letting one self take the lead while the other take the backseat, depending on the situation**
- **In other words, both selves will need to take pages from each other's playbooks; sticking to a single playbook in this 21<sup>st</sup> century world of ours is a recipe for clashes**
- **Second, bridging cultural divides requires shifts at the level of interactions, institutions and, over time, ideas**



**Let's practice by dissecting  
the culture cycles of gender.**

# Gender Culture Cycles

## Examples of each “I”

- **SELVES:** women tend to have more interdependent selves, whereas men tend to have more independent selves
- **INTERACTIONS:** women tend to be more empathic and less assertive than men; parents admonish daughters more than sons to be polite
- **INSTITUTIONS:** media portray women as the caregivers (interdependent) vs. men who are the breadwinners (independent); men are more likely to be hired in the business realm (independent), whereas women are more advantaged in teaching, nursing, etc. (interdependent) realms
- **IDEAs:** gender stereotypes constitute a pervasive and powerful “idea” that influences selves, interactions, and institutions

# Gender Culture Cycles

## POSSIBLE WAYS TO BRIDGE THE DIVIDE and HARNESS THE STRENGTHS OF BOTH MEN AND WOMEN

- Men still hold more sway at the institutional level, so onus on them to instigate changes at the interaction and institutional levels (e.g., make concerted effort to recruit women into STEM fields, ensure diversity training, allow for different forms of “speaking up”)
- Women need to assert their independent selves (still) more, particularly asserting their needs more
- Need to be more receptive to independent ways of conceptualizing traditionally female career pathways

# Other common culture clashes

- **Race cultures in the U.S.** (Black vs. White)
- **Social class cultures in the U.S.** (upper vs. working class)
- **Regional cultures in the U.S.** (Northerners vs. Southerners)
- **Global North vs. South cultures**
- **Workplace cultures** (e.g., business vs. non-profit)
- **Religious cultures** (e.g., Protestant vs. Catholics)

# **This means that...**

- **We are all “multicultural.”**
- **We mingle with multiple cultures within a single day—class, race, gender, religion, neighborhood, profession, etc.**
- **You’re born into some cultures (e.g., race, religion), you pick up others along the way (e.g., based on where you grew up, the college you attended, the career you are pursuing)**
- **Your cultures may promote the same OR different selves**
- **So people vary in the nature and degree of their independence and interdependence**
- **No two people are 100% identical in their array of cultures and selves**

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# What are your cultures?

|                | Independent                                   |  | Interdependent  |  |
|----------------|---|--|---|--|
| Hemisphere     | <i>West</i>                                   |  | <i>East</i>   |  |
| Gender         | <i>Male</i>                                   |  | <i>Female</i>   |  |
| Race/Ethnicity | <i>White</i>                                  |  | <i>Not White</i>  |  |
| Class          | <i>Middle</i>                                 |  | <i>Working</i>  |  |
| Religion       | <i>Mainline Protestant,<br/>Not religious</i> |  | <i>Conservative Protestant,<br/>Catholic, Jewish, Other</i> |  |
| U.S. Region    | <i>Northeast, West</i>                        |  | <i>South, Midwest</i>                                       |  |
| Workplace      | <i>Business</i>                               |  | <i>Government, Nonprofit</i>                                |  |
| Global Region  | <i>Global North</i>                           |  | <i>Global South</i>   |  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |   |  |   |  |

(This is by no means an exhaustive list of possible independent and interdependent cultures.)

# Barack Obama

|                | Independent                                   |  | Interdependent  |  |
|----------------|---|--|---|--|
| Hemisphere     | <i>West</i>                                   |  | <i>East</i>   |  |
| Gender         | <i>Male</i>                                   |  | <i>Female</i>   |  |
| Race/Ethnicity | <i>White</i>                                  |  | <i>Not White</i>  |  |
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| Global Region  | <i>Global North</i>                           |  | <i>Global South</i>   |  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |   |  |   |  |



# Barack Obama

|                | Independent                                   |          | Interdependent  |          |
|----------------|---|----------|---|----------|
| Hemisphere     | <i>West</i>                                   | 1        | <i>East</i>   | 1        |
| Gender         | <i>Male</i>                                   | 1        | <i>Female</i>   |          |
| Race/Ethnicity | <i>White</i>                                  |          | <i>Not White</i>  | 1        |
| Class          | <i>Middle</i>                                 | 1        | <i>Working</i>  |          |
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| Workplace      | <i>Business</i>                               | 1        | <i>Government, Nonprofit</i>                                | 1        |
| Global Region  | <i>Global North</i>                           | 1        | <i>Global South</i>   | 1        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |   | <b>6</b> |   | <b>6</b> |

# Bill Gates

|                | Independent                                   |  | Interdependent  |  |
|----------------|---|--|---|--|
| Hemisphere     | <i>West</i>                                   |  | <i>East</i>   |  |
| Gender         | <i>Male</i>                                   |  | <i>Female</i>   |  |
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| Global Region  | <i>Global North</i>                           |  | <i>Global South</i>   |  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |   |  |   |  |

# Bill Gates

|                | Independent                                   |          | Interdependent  |          |
|----------------|---|----------|---|----------|
| Hemisphere     | <i>West</i>                                   | 1        | <i>East</i>   |          |
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| Global Region  | <i>Global North</i>                           | 1        | <i>Global South</i>   | 1        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |   | <b>8</b> |   | <b>2</b> |

# You?

|                | Independent                                   |  | Interdependent  |  |
|----------------|---|--|---|--|
| Hemisphere     | <i>West</i>                                   |  | <i>East</i>   |  |
| Gender         | <i>Male</i>                                   |  | <i>Female</i>   |  |
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| <b>TOTAL</b>   |   |  |   |  |

# **Small Group Activity**

- **Get into small groups of 3-4 people.**
- **Let's take our analysis of selves to your workplace.**
- **How would you characterize the culture of your workplace?**
- **What self or selves are promoted in your workplace culture?**
- **How did you make your assessment?**

# Small Group Activity:

## What's your workplace culture?

### INDEPENDENT

- Individual
- Unique
- Influencing
- Free
- Equal (but great!)

### INTERDEPENDENT

- Relational
- Similar
- Adjusting
- Rooted
- Ranked

# **Share your analysis of your workplace culture**

- **How do people of different ranks/positions interact? Are roles strict? Do people socialize across the organizational hierarchy?**
- **Is the emphasis on what each person can do, or what the team can do? On “me” or “we”?**
- **Are there many opportunities to stand out? Distinguish the self from the pack? Is this encouraged?**
- **How much choice is there? Who makes the choices?**
- **Are people rewarded for speaking up or listening well?**
- **Is being a team player a must or a bonus?**
- **What do people focus on more? Strengths or how to improve weaknesses?**

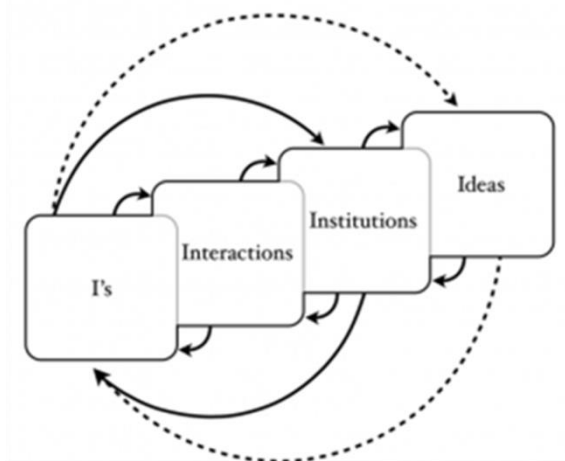
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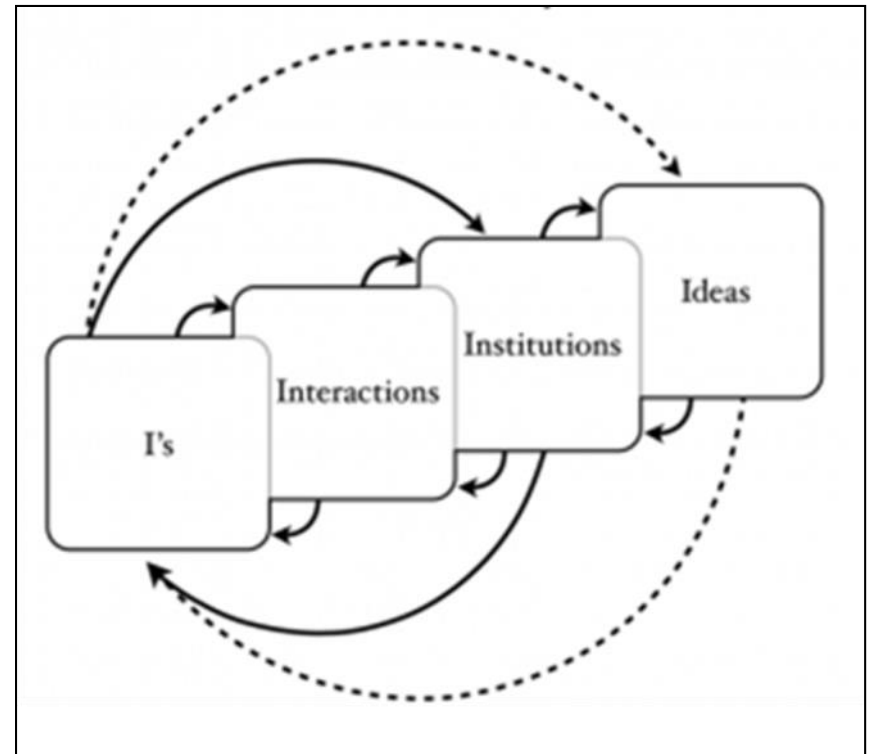
# OK, now what?

- Now that you know more about both sides of your self, let's first ask what should YOU do with them?
- How do you know which self to summon when?
- Although every situation is different, here are 3 basic steps that serve as a good starting point in most situations.



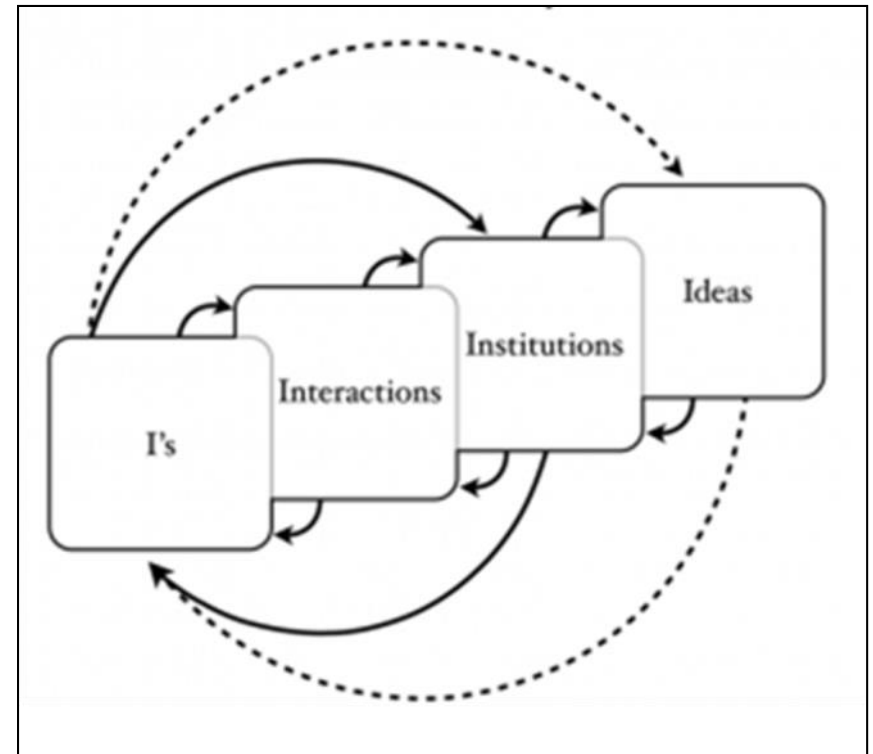
# 3 Basic Steps (and tactics for achieving them)

1. Be the right person at the right time.
2. Leverage interactions.
3. Leverage institutions.



# 3 Basic Steps (and tactics for achieving them)

1. Be the right person at the right time.
2. Leverage interactions.
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# 1. Be the Right Person at the Right Time

- **Lead with interdependence**
  - Facilitates accurate assessment of what selves others are bringing to the situation
  - Allows you to assess whether you want to adjust accordingly
- **Match or contrast**
  - If situation is going well, giving you the results you desire, match your self to those around you
  - If situation is faltering, not giving you the results you want, contrast your self with those around you
- **Switch**
  - If the first self you summon in a particular is not bringing success, try the other one
  - **Realize that you have 2 equally legitimate selves, giving you a 100% increase in psychological resources**

# Tactics for Summoning Selves

## INDEPENDENT

- Individual
- Unique
- Influencing
- Free
- Equal (but great!)

## INTERDEPENDENT

- Relational
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# Tactics for Summoning Selves

## INDEPENDENT

- Speak up.

## INTERDEPENDENT

- Listen.

# Tactics for Summoning Selves

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- Individual
- Unique
- Influencing
- Free
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## INTERDEPENDENT

- Relational
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# Tactics for Summoning Selves

## INDEPENDENT

- Speak up.
- Think about how you're different from others.

## INTERDEPENDENT

- Listen.
- Think about how you're similar to others.

# Tactics for Summoning Selves

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- Individual
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- Free
- Equal (but great!)

## INTERDEPENDENT

- Relational
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# Tactics for Summoning Selves

## INDEPENDENT

- Speak up.
- Think about how you're different from others.
- Remember that asserting yourself doesn't mean you're selfish.

## INTERDEPENDENT

- Listen.
- Think about how you're similar to others.
- Remember that adjusting yourself to others doesn't mean you're weak.

# Tactics for Summoning Selves

## INDEPENDENT

- Individual
- Unique
- Influencing
- Free
- Equal (but great!)

## INTERDEPENDENT

- Relational
- Similar
- Adjusting
- Rooted
- Ranked

# Tactics for Summoning Selves

## INDEPENDENT

- Speak up.
- Think about how you're different from others.
- Remember that asserting yourself doesn't mean you're selfish.
- Consider each action a choice.

## INTERDEPENDENT

- Listen.
- Think about how you're similar to others.
- Remember that adjusting yourself to others doesn't mean you're weak.
- Consider how each action affects others.

# Tactics for Summoning Selves

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# Tactics for Summoning Selves

## INDEPENDENT

- Speak up.
- Think about how you're different from others.
- Remember that asserting yourself doesn't mean you're selfish.
- Consider each action a choice.
- Assume that you have as much authority as others.

## INTERDEPENDENT

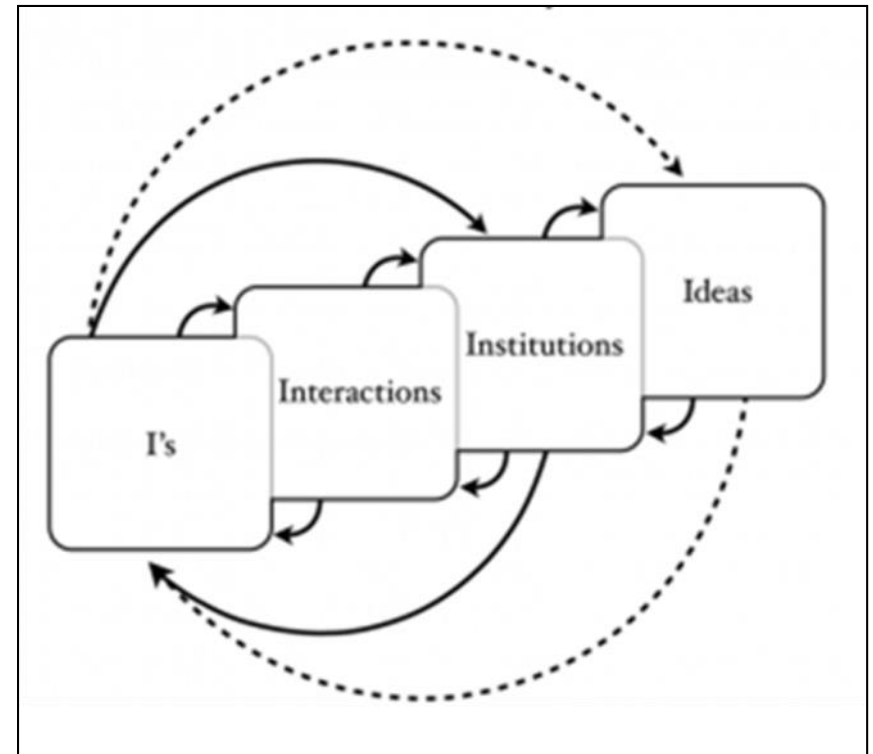
- Listen.
- Think about how you're similar to others.
- Remember that adjusting yourself to others doesn't mean you're weak.
- Consider how each action affects others.
- Assume that others have more authority than you.

# 3 Basic Steps (and tactics for achieving them)

1. Be the right person at the right time.

2. Leverage interactions.

3. Leverage institutions.





## 2. Leverage Interactions

- **Primes**

- Culture cycles typically operate outside of awareness, subtly steering our behaviors w/o our realizing it.
- Subtle cues known as primes make it more likely we'll think feel and act in some ways over others.
- Examples:
  - Circling I/me/my/mine vs. we/us/ours changed how much people endorsed values such as choosing one's own goals, respect for elders, friendship
  - Exposure to image of Great Wall/dragon vs. Statue of Liberty/cowboy altered explanatory tendencies

- **Language**

- Bilinguals summon different selves depending on language used
- Words and phrases can summon independent or interdependent selves

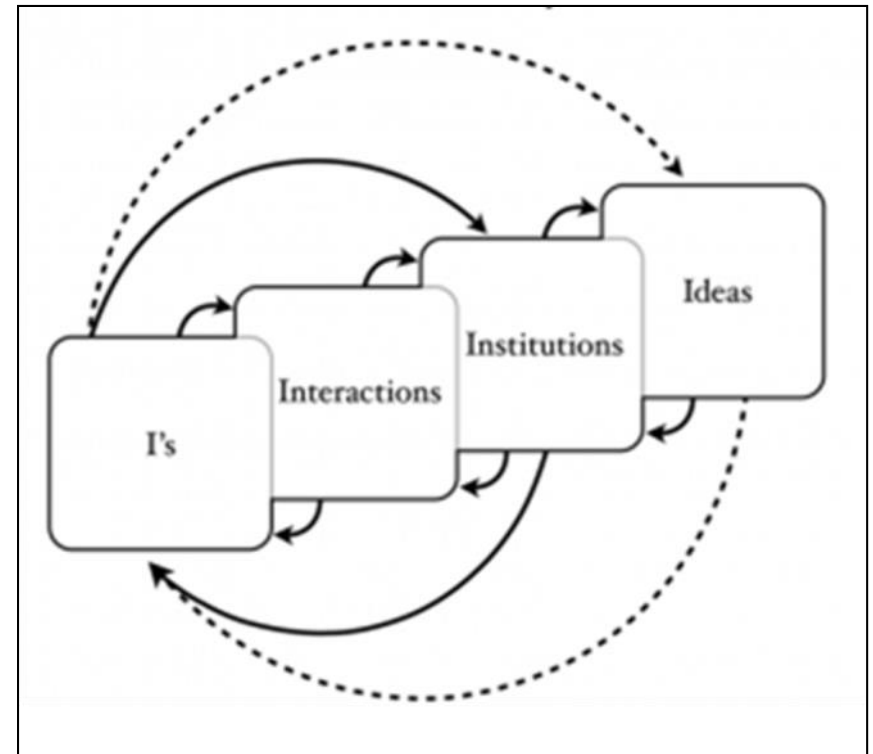
# Mouthwash Advertising Slogan

- *“Treat yourself to a breath-freshening experience”*
- *“Share this breath-freshening experience”*



# 3 Basic Steps (and tactics for achieving them)

1. Be the right person at the right time.
2. Leverage interactions.
3. Leverage institutions.



# 3. Leverage Institutions

Create environments that reflect and support different selves for different occasions

- Build **two-self institutions**—relinquish one-size-fits-all mentality
- Create **identity-safe spaces**—spaces where multiple selves are valued and can feel safe
- **Welcome both selves** (in oneself and others)—shed (Western) qualms with and distaste for (phony, fake, hypocrite, two-faced) having multifaceted selves

# Roadmap

- What is culture? What are selves?
- Culture clashes = clashes between selves
- What are culture cycles?
- Shaping culture cycles, shaping selves
- What are your cultures?
- How to navigate cultures and flourish in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- What are the implications for advising the 21st century Cal student?

# Implications for Advising

## Create environments that reflect and support different selves for different occasions

- Build **two-self institutions**—relinquish one-size-fits-all mentality
- Create **identity-safe spaces**—spaces where multiple selves are valued and can feel safe
- **Welcome both selves** (in oneself and others)—shed (Western) qualms with and distaste for (phony, fake, hypocrite, two-faced) having multifaceted selves

# Case Study Exercise

(some of you have seen this before in Ethics workshop)

- **A student states directly during an appointment that they are majoring in Mathematics because of the wishes of their parents. The student explains that they are from a closely knit Korean family and that they feel a very strong cultural imperative to satisfy the wishes of their parents. The student expresses no interest in any other major, and tells the advisor they only want advice that is consistent with the wishes of their family.**
- **The student's academic record indicates a stronger aptitude for non-math subjects. The advisor feels strongly that the student should explore all of their options, and make their own decisions.**

# Case Study Exercise

(if time, let's get into small groups to discuss)

- What would an independent style or approach to advising this student look like?
- What would an interdependent style or approach to advising this student look like?



# Case Study Exercise

(if time, let's get into small groups to discuss)

- What would an independent style or approach to advising this student look like?
- What would an interdependent style or approach to advising this student look like?
- Is one approach better than the other? Is there a “right” way to respond?

# Broad Aims

- **21<sup>st</sup> century world is smaller, flatter, & hotter than ever before, making it fertile ground for culture clashes**
- **To soften clashes and flourish in this world, you need to...**
  - **Be aware of and understand how culture and selves operate**
  - **Be able to summon the right self at the right time**
  - **Help shape culture cycles that allow for more than one kind of self**

# Take-Away

- **As the planet continues to get smaller, flatter, and hotter, we cannot afford to fear or ignore diversity.**
- **We will need to acknowledge, understand, and embrace our own and others' many selves and cultures.**
- **Don't need to choose one or the other self. Both selves are legitimate.**
- **We must pool our strengths and harness the energy of our clashing cultures (and selves)—in our teaching, advising, and guiding of the next generation.**
- **Doing so is crucial for promoting a more creative, cooperative, prosperous, and peaceful 21st century.**