This is "Adapting and Performing", chapter 6 from the book Cultural Intelligence for Leaders (index.html) (v. 1.0).

Chapter 6

Adapting and Performing

Early in my professional career, I was a part of a marketing and sales team that included two team members who had very different working styles and personalities. Louisa was quiet, spent a lot of time reflecting, and responded only when asked questions or prompted to speak. When she arrived at work, she went straight to her desk, shut the door, and got right to her tasks. She was seen as "level-headed," practical, and a no-nonsense type of person. When you had to ask her a question, you could find Louisa in her office, steadily working on her tasks and projects. When she spoke, she was direct and concise. Sometimes, when making a point or supporting argument, she numbered her points out loud, such as, "First, I think we need to do this. Second, we will move on to this. Third, if the previous situation does not work, then we can go to option two." Our team thought she was friendly, although a bit distant and not very personable in her interactions.

Joseph was the opposite. He had was very gregarious in nature. He talked all the time, whether someone wanted to hear his ideas or not; most of the time, it was just entertaining to hear him speak and share his stories. Upon his arrival every morning, he went around to all the offices (this was a small organization) and chatted with whoever had arrived. It took him awhile to get settled into his office and to begin his work. When you needed Joseph to review a document or ask him a question, he could be found talking with people outside of his office. When he spoke, it was hard to follow his thoughts because he jumped from story to story, sometimes confusing himself in the process. And there were times that he would say things out loud, not to get our feedback but just to process the information. We thought he just liked hearing himself talk, and our team culture was such that we found him to be very personable and likeable, quirks and all.

As a young professional who was looking to make her mark on the working world, I found my time with Louisa to be extremely challenging. How was I to make an impression when this manager did not even want to talk to me? How was she to be aware of my talents and skill sets? I quickly learned that I related more easily to Joseph. He always asked me how I was, what projects I was working on, and whether I was enjoying my time with the organization. These conversations with Joseph were not short; rather, they often lasted as long as 30 minutes. Through these conversations, I learned a lot about the workings of the organization, where my skills could be most helpful, and where I could advance in the company.

Every time I interacted with Louisa, I took a cautious and pragmatic approach. I knew my conversations with her would be short and to the point. In the beginning, I went into her office, engaging her in dialogue about things outside of work and failed miserably. But after a few conversations, I picked up some verbal and nonverbal cues about her "conversation motto," which was "Make it short and to the point." I began to mimic her actions and language. When speaking about several points, I numbered them out loud the way she did. I found that I was more formal than usual with her than with others. I looked directly in her eyes, and once even caught myself looking at my watch when I thought she was talking too long!

With Joseph, talking to him could take awhile. I talked to him only when I knew I had no other appointments or deadlines to meet. I entered his office with a singsong-like "hello," which was the way he greeted others. We never talked business right away. And I noticed that, when explaining a story or a point, my hand gestures always matched his. Even the tone of my voice mimicked his.

When I interacted with Louisa and Joseph, my behavior changed from person to person. I cannot tell you exactly when in our working relationship this began; I assume it happened partly on a conscious level and partly on an unconscious level. What is important to note about this personal story is that changing my behaviors enabled me to work better with both Louisa and Joseph.

Earley and Peterson stated, "Adopting the behaviors consistent with a target culture is an important aspect of intercultural adjustment and interaction."Earley & Peterson (2004), p. 109. Similarly, Thomas and Inkson said,

Whether or not social behavior takes place in a cross cultural setting, each situation will be unique and in particular will involve interaction with other unique people...you must be able to adapt your general approach and specific interactions to the particular characteristics of the situation, and particularly, to the expectations of the other people involved.Thomas & Inkson (2003), p. 58.

Thus, cultural intelligence requires that you engage in adaptive behavior and necessitates that you have the understanding and motivation to achieve it. This third element of cultural intelligence refers to the ability of individuals to go beyond thinking: they must be *doing* something. To be a culturally intelligent leader, it is not enough for you to know the information you need and how you will think about it, nor is it enough to be motivated. You must have the appropriate behavioral responses and be able to acquire or adapt the behaviors to new cultural situations. And you must be willing to try and learn new behaviors, and to know when and how to use them.

Learning new behaviors is considered the most challenging component of cultural intelligence. This is because behaviors are rooted in our beliefs and values. Rather than being skilled in particular sets of behaviors, as a culturally intelligent leader, it is better to have a repertoire of behaviors that you know of and use. You must be good at behaving in a manner that will not confuse other individuals. You cannot expect that your behavior will remain the same with all individuals from either the same or different cultural groups. You need to have a variety of behavioral skills you can draw from.

This chapter discusses four key ideas in relationship to adaptive behavior: the concept of self, cognitive dissonance, linguistic relativity, and behavior and communication.

6.1 Concept of Self

George Herbert MeadMead (1925). argued that individuals develop a **self-concept**[1] that evolves throughout their lives as a result of interacting with their social world, which may include parents, teachers, and peers. Similarly, William Purkey stated that "self-concept may be defined as the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence."Purkey (1988). These interactions help individuals form a perception of who they are based on expectations from, and responses to, their social environment. Our perceptions are stimulated by internal and external factors. These factors can create intense emotional responses, which impact our willingness to learn and our choice of action—they guide individual behaviors. The following example demonstrates this idea of self-concept and how it manifests in one's behaviors.

1. A general understanding of one's self that is learned, organized, and dynamic. It is learned early in life, it categories one's experiences and fits them in a way that makes sense to personal development, and it is actively shaped ongoingly by experiences.

Like many teenagers in the United States, Karen was required to take a foreign language course at her school. She chose to learn German because relatives on her mother's side lived in Germany, and her family was planning a visit in the summer. Unfortunately, Karen's few months of German class were not fun. She had a teacher who was very strict in her lesson plans and grading of the students. Additionally, Karen fell behind in the class work due to an after school sports injury; she was out for two weeks. When she returned to class, her teacher called her out in front of other students when she didn't know the correct vocabulary terms and proper responses. She didn't feel motivated to be in class and learn German.

When summer arrived, her family went to Germany as planned to visit their relatives. Karen's parents had been excited about her foreign language choice, and her relatives knew she was taking a German culture and language course. During the stay with the relatives, Karen tried to practice her German but stopped trying after her relatives told her, "You need to improve your German." The next year, her family visited Germany again, and her relatives question her about her German language skills. Upon hearing her speak, they told her again, "You're not there yet. You need a lot of improvements."

Twenty years later, Karen works for a financial company that has a location in Germany. Karen's supervisor tells her that she will need to relocate to Germany for two years; she thinks that with Karen's great interpersonal skills, she would be able to help the success of the project. Upon hearing this, Karen becomes anxious and uncomfortable. She makes excuses for not going, and her supervisor is confused. Karen has been an outstanding worker and her actions are puzzling and surprising.

Karen's self-concept has contributed to her self-efficacy. The expectations of her teacher, her family, and her relatives to learn a new language is too much for her to handle. The responses she receives are not what she wants or needs to hear to help her improve her German language skills. As a result, she withdraws from learning the language and culture. She develops a self-concept that may consist of any of the following:

- I will never learn the German language and the culture.
- I do not have the ability or skills to learn a new language.
- It is easier if I just do what is comfortable for me.
- I cannot make mistakes or people will lose their confidence in me.

These beliefs and attitudes surface when her supervisor asks her to relocate to Germany. The negative memories and experiences she had become barriers to her success and self-efficacy. She feels anxious, and her behaviors are seen as strange.

Developing a Self-Concept

There are three general understandings about how a self-concept is developed. **First, a self-concept is learned**. As Mead indicates, a self-concept gradually emerges early in one's life and is constantly shaped throughout life by one's perceived experiences. This means that a self-concept is learned: it is a social product of one's experiences. The perception of one's self-concept may differ from how others perceive that person, and it is different during every life stage. When a person is presented with an experience that differs from the self-concept he or she has developed, the person sees the experience as a threat. The more experiences that challenge the self-concept, the more rigid the self-concept becomes. Generally, an individual will try to overthink, overgeneralize, or rationalize the experience so as to reduce the emotional havoc it creates.

Second, a self-concept is organized. Most scholars agree that individuals develop a self-concept that has stable characteristics in order to maintain harmony. Our self-concept is orderly: it categorizes our experiences and "fits" them in a way that will make sense to our development. It discards experiences that present different beliefs and values because it cannot be placed in a categorical way. It is our self-concept that tries to resist change, because the changes disrupt the stability of one's personality. Let us say you hold a very specific belief, such as, "English is the primary language of this country and everyone should learn to speak and write it. There is no reason to have billboards and signs in other languages." The more central this belief is to your self-concept, the more resistant you are to learning new experiences and to adapting your belief.

Third, a self-concept is dynamic. Self-concepts are actively shaped based on one's experiences, which means that they are dynamic. The self-concept can be seen as a guidance system directing your behaviors to match up with your beliefs. I often hear employees in organizations say, "My company does not do what it says it will do around diversity and **inclusion**[2]. It says one thing, and its actions are completely the opposite." At an organizational level, the company may perceive itself differently, defending its self-concept. There is a conflict between this perception of who they are versus what others think they really are. Complaints from employees will be rationalized, or bended, to fit the self-concept of the organization and its leaders. In psychology, this is called cognitive dissonance, that is, one's justification for one's beliefs even when the facts clearly demonstrate the opposite.

2. The act of including. In cultural interactions, it implies an acceptance of individuals from different cultures.

The following case study illustrates the self-concept in action.

Joe leads a Public Safety department in Garden Grove, a suburb located just outside of a large urban city in the Midwest. He's lived and worked in this city all his life, and generations of his family have made Garden Grove their home. They settled in the area when it was just farmland and have seen it develop over time into a bustling city of 128,000.

Garden Grove, like other suburban cities in the United States, has seen an increase in the number of non-white residents. A large number of Asian residents move into the city because they are attracted to the educational system and quality of life the city offers. This change has made the city more racially diverse than ever.

Joe sees the visible differences on a personal and professional level. In his neighborhood, 25% of his neighbors are Asian Indian, 10% are Vietnamese, and 10% are Chinese. He's had problems with his neighbors; what used to be a quiet neighborhood is now a festival every week. His neighbors have lots of visitors who park up and down the side street, their children running around without any parental guidance. Once, he held a party to celebrate his son's graduation from high school, and his relatives and friends had to park two blocks away because of his neighbor's party.

At work, he's pressured from his director to hire more people who "reflect the community" that Garden Grove has become. From volunteers to paid staff, he's had to work through policy changes and make accommodations for who he hires. He disagrees with his director that he should hire someone just to make a quota, and besides, he can't find anyone who has the skills or the experience for the department jobs. Although he loves his job, it's not what it used to be. He's increasingly unmotivated to go to work. It seems that all he does these days is attend training sessions on diversity. What's happened to his passion for public service?

As the director, you have noticed the changes in Joe. You know it has to do with the new vision of the organization to increase racial and cultural diversity as part of the city's strategic vision. To help Joe manage his self-concept, think about the following questions: What do you think is Joe's self-concept? What are the beliefs that are being challenged? When evaluating this case study, there are several items that are important to note:

- Joe has a long history of family traditions and roots in Garden Grove.
- His experiences and knowledge of Garden Grove span generations.
- Joe and his family are accustomed to interacting with people who are Caucasian.
- He has a belief that his neighborhood was a "quiet" place to live, but it is now disrupted because of the new neighbors, who are not so quiet.
- He has a belief that the parties thrown by his neighbors are so large that he considers them festivals.
- He does not understand the collective nature of the Asian Indians, Vietnamese, and Chinese neighbors in his neighborhood.
- He believes that one should be hired on the basis of merit and skill rather than filling a quota.

All of these items are some examples of Joe's beliefs that form his self-concept. In the case study, you can also identify what emotions and feelings he has related to his self-concept, such as his discomfort with nonwhites. Identifying emotions is useful for understanding how the self-concept develops to make the person feel comfortable.

Developing a Self-Understanding

One's self-concept is developed throughout one's lifetime and has an impact on behaviors and choice of action. How have you come to understand yourself over time? How has this understanding led to the choices you make? One way of gaining knowledge of who you are is through personality assessments. There is a plethora of assessments and inventories, and I describe three that I have used successfully with diverse audiences. I have found that these three assessments are excellent tools for building cultural intelligence and leadership.

- *Reflected "Best Self" Exercise* helps individuals to identify their strengths and talents. The exercise requires that you seek out and request feedback from significant people in your life—siblings, parents, friends co-workers, colleagues, mentors, supervisors, relatives, and so on. Once you collect the information, you create a picture of your "best self."This exercise was found by The Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship at the University of Michigan, Ross School of Business, http://www.bus.umich.edu/Positive/POS-Teaching-and-Learning/ReflectedBestSelfExercise.htm
- *Via Institute on Character* is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 2000 by Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman and Dr. Neal H. Mayerson. The organization provides, free of charge, a survey (VIA Survey of Character) that measures 24 character strengths. VIA stands for "Values in Action," and the survey can be used to help improve one's

performance and well-being.See the organization's website for more information: http://www.viacharacter.org/

- *The Enneagram Institute* provides a personality assessment to help you discover and understand your personality type. The institute suggests that there are nine basic personality types, and these types serve as a framework for understanding oneself and working with others.See the organization's website for more information: http://www.enneagraminstitute.com/

6.2 Cognitive Dissonance

Parker Palmer wrote, "When leaders operate with a deep, unexamined insecurity about their own identity, they create institutional settings that deprive *other* people of *their* identity as a way of dealing with the unexamined fears in the leaders themselves."Palmer (1998). What Palmer speaks to is a level of dissonance that often occurs often in human interactions, particularly with leaders.

Cognitive dissonance[3] is a state of discomfort that humans experience when one of their beliefs, ideas, or attitudes is contradicted by evidence or when two of their beliefs, ideas, or their attitudes come into conflict with each other. Dissonance makes people feel uncomfortable and "is bothersome under any circumstance, but it is most painful to people when an important element of their self-concept is threatened—typically when they do something that is inconsistent with their view of themselves."Tavris & Aronson (2007), p. 29. A famous case in cognitive dissonance comes from the work of Leon Festinger, who described the workings of cognitive dissonance that occurred in a group setting.

Festinger and his associates studied a group that believed that the earth was going to be destroyed by a flood on a certain date. This belief led group members to gather in the same location and pray; by doing so, they believed they would be saved. In the end, there was no flood and no end of the world. So what happened to the members? For the group members who were really committed to the belief (basically, giving up their homes and jobs), when the flood did not happen, these individuals had a large dissonance between their beliefs and the evidence they saw. Because of this large gap between their beliefs and the evidence at hand, they were more likely to reinterpret the evidence to show that they were right all along. For example, they would say that the earth was not destroyed because they came together to pray. While these individuals justified their beliefs, the others recognized the foolishness of the experience and changed their beliefs or actions.

Using this example to guide our thinking about cultural intelligence, we can see that culturally intelligent leaders must be able to address the dissonance between their beliefs, ideas, or their attitudes and behaviors. When leaders fail to see the connection, they are not really walking the cultural intelligence they talk. Some leaders will justify their beliefs even when the evidence eventually contradicts their belief systems. And rarely do we see organizational leaders change their beliefs or actions to align with what they say they will do around diversity and culture.

3. A state of discomfort experienced when an individual's beliefs, ideas, or attitudes are incompatible with each other.

Learning and Dissonance

Dissonance can also occur when new learning or ideas are presented that conflict with what is already known. For example, an employee is required to attend a diversity workshop. During the session, the employee hears ideas that contradict, or come in conflict with, her belief about the topic. This employee already has certain knowledge about cultural diversity that she brings to the workshop, and because she is especially committed to her own knowledge and belief system, it is more likely that the employee will resist the new learning.

You can tell when a person is struggling with dissonance when you hear statements like, "Why can't people who come to this country be more like us," or "Why do we have to take these classes," or "I have to change my belief (or what I do) just to accommodate someone else?" More often than not, when the new learning is difficult, uncomfortable, or even humiliating, people are more likely to say that the learning or workshop was useless, pointless, or valueless. To admit one's dissonance would symbolize that one has been "had" or "conned" into believing something different.

If all this sounds familiar to you, or resonates with what is going in your organization, you are not alone. Our behaviors are very much rooted in beliefs that are not completely explored within a working environment. Organizational leaders do not clearly articulate how to think about and practice cultural intelligence. The result is a failure to implement and practice cultural intelligence that corresponds with the belief systems. Organizational leaders—especially those specifically working on diversity initiatives—need to identify the points of dissonance that occur in their organization and among their staff. Leaders should pay attention to this dissonance and how it is being expressed.

Larger Gaps, Larger Dissonance

According to cognitive dissonance theory, the more important the issue and the larger the gap between the beliefs, the greater the dissonance among people. This is critical for leaders to understand because culture is a very important issue within an organization. There are inherently large gaps in beliefs on a personal, team, and organizational level related to this culture. Individual beliefs about power and privilege—as they relate to gender inequity, race inequity, generational differences, ability and disability, sexual orientation, religion, and so on—need to be explored in organizations and among leaders. If dissonance is not discussed, leaders will continue to employ workers who (a) feel uncomfortable talking about culture and diversity, (b) continue to behave in inappropriate ways, (c) are accepting of culture on the outside but do not align diversity with their beliefs, and (d) feel that all they need are the "right tools" or the "right answers" to be culturally competent.

Without careful attention to exploring the stories of dissonance, leaders allow their organizations to bury their inclusion blind spots. **Blind spots**[4] in cognitive dissonance describe the things you cannot see because they are hidden or because you choose not to see them. We are unaware of our blind spots because our focus is directed toward other things or we are distracted from what needs to be done. Blind spots can lead to underestimating or overestimating our cultural abilities and to truly understanding what needs to be done regarding culture and diversity. Regardless of the talent that is recruited, the accomplishments or progress that is made, or even how much money is poured into diversity initiatives, these blind spots can cause leaders to miss opportunities that bring about positive, transformative change and innovation.

Given this information, what can leaders do about the cultural dissonance within their organizations? First, leaders must have the courage to be open to the possibilities that their beliefs, or the organization's beliefs, are not aligned with their actions and behaviors. It takes courageous leadership to *not* maintain the status quo and to explore the stories that give root to organizational and individual beliefs. Second, leaders can, and should, explore the dissonance by asking themselves the following questions:

- What are my organization's beliefs about culture?
- What dissonance is present in our beliefs and our behaviors?
- What gaps (in recruitment, within policy, and in intrapersonal interactions) are created because of the dissonance?
- How is this dissonance stopping us from truly understanding culture?

In cultural intelligence work, it is critical that you recognize your self-concept to understand your blind spots. As a leader, it is your responsibility to help others recognize their self-concept and the role it plays in intercultural interactions. It is essential for you to understand that people will often choose to stick to their beliefs (even if it no longer serves them) to alleviate the emotional stress that reorganizing a self-concept requires. They would rather fend off the perceived threat than create learning opportunities out of these experiences.

Finally, it is important for leaders to work with employees to explore employee dissonance. Learning to work with, and understand, cultures is not the sole responsibility of leaders; it is the responsibility of everyone within an organization. Because leaders are in the positional power to promote and support the work, it is the responsibility of the leaders to help their employees uncover their blind spots. With clear sight of these blinds spots, organizations can turn them into an advantage. By doing so, organizations can find significantly greater possibilities that expand and deepen intercultural work than previously imagined.

4. Things that an individual or group cannot see because they are hidden or because the individual or group chooses not to see them.

Adapting and Modifying Behaviors

When we learn something new, we change our perspectives of our world, the way we interact with others, and our behaviors. We also learn when our behaviors are inappropriate and, hopefully, learn not to repeat them. We do this by adjusting our behaviors so that the situation does not occur again. We act differently based on previous consequences. If our behaviors resulted in a positive impact, we would continue the behavior. Take, for example, the following story about New Zealand's soccer team, "*All Whites.*"

> After landing from a long flight from Austria, New Zealand's soccer team, *All Whites*, heads to the South African stadium for their first day of training. They are met by a "smelly fog" on the field, making it difficult for players and coaches to breathe and see. One player comments on the smell and smog saying, "You could tell [it was smoky] as we came in on the bus. You could taste it, breathe it on the bus. It's something that's a bit different for us and something else to adapt to on tour." The management team debates canceling the training and in the end decides to have players stretch their legs and get some exercise. Local South Africans on staff are confused at the entire ruckus and can't understand why a team would stop playing because of a "little smog." The players and team management can't understand how anyone could play under such conditions.Lammers (June 8, 2010). The Dominion Post. *Bizarre first training hit out for All Whites.* Retrieved from http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/sport/football/3785307/Bizarre-first-training-hit-out-for-All-Whites

Learning a new pattern of behavior requires modifying small behaviors that add up to a complex behavior. Learning new patterns can be difficult but the motivation to modify and change can be transformational. Kevin Cashman said that positive change means letting go of our old behaviors and allowing change to be our teacher.Cashman (1999), pp. 87–88. As leaders, we must recognize our own capacity to change—that we have what it takes to make a change. To make a change, you need to believe you are capable of performing the behavioral change and that there is an incentive to change. Similarly, Margaret Wheatley said this about the human capacity to change and transform,

Viability and resiliency of a self-organizing system comes from its great capacity to adapt as needed, to create structures that fit the moment. Neither form nor function alone dictates how the system is organized...The system may maintain itself in its present form or evolve into a new order, depending on what is required.

It is not locked into any one structure; it is capable of organizing into whatever form it determines best suits the present situation.Wheatley (2006), p. 82.

When making changes to your behaviors, there are three questions to ask to help initiate the change. Bridges (2004).

What is changing? To understand change, you must be clear about what you want to change in your cultural interactions. Then, make it your intention to change and carry out the change. Finally, your change must be linked to your motivation for changing. You will need to ask, why is it important that I make this change? How will this change my future interactions with this individual or cultural group?

What will actually be different because of the change? Because transformative change in cultural interactions can be hard, the ability to visualize the end result or outcome of the change can help move the situation forward. Visualization requires an articulation for what the desired result and outcomes look like. Setting clear expectations for getting to the desire result can help motivate you to making the change.

Who's going to lose what? In any cultural shift you will need to ask yourself, What beliefs and values might I have to let go? Why is it hard to abandon your beliefs and values? How well have these values and beliefs served you? What are the barriers they create for your future? Consider the following case study of two individuals' behaviors in relation to one other:

> Jose is from Costa Rica and Mary is from Great Britain. They work together in an international company located in the United States. Mary notices that whenever Jose talks, he always inches closer to her personal space. She's extremely uncomfortable when this happens and always takes steps back to give more physical space to the conversation. When she does this, Jose comes closer. One time, Mary was backed up to a work place counter and Jose didn't even notice!

Imagine that Mary and Jose work for you, and Mary has approached you with her concerns. To help Mary find a solution to this situation, use the following table to help you to think through some important questions; then, look at the second column as one possible perspective or thought about the question. Finally, fill in your perspective and thoughts.

Self-concept does not necessarily mean that you have the knowledge and skills to be where you need to be. Because change and transitions are emotionally and psychologically taxing, making a connection between the behavior change and the outcomes can help to ease the transition. In some cases, if an individual is not responding to the change, rewards and reinforcers are used to increase a behavioral response. Even adding a compliment can increase a person's behavior toward However, if a person does not know what fuels his or her self-concept, then the challenge in making a transition will be more difficult.

Table 6.1 Changing Cultural Behaviors

Questions	One Perspective/Thoughts	Your Perspective/ Thoughts
How do Mary and Jose view personal space? How does this impact their behaviors?	Mary feels a great need for personal space. As a woman, perhaps she feels a greater need for this space. Jose does not see a problem with the personal space. Maybe getting closer to her is one way of relating to her.	
What are the adaptive behaviors needed in this situation?	Mary and Jose need to understand that everyone has different ideas of what personal space means. It may be helpful for Mary and Jose to talk about personal space issues, especially what it looks like for both of them. Perhaps Mary is the only person who feels uncomfortable and the only one to have brought this up. Maybe others do not feel the same way.	
What, if anything, will Mary and Jose lose if they change their behaviors?	Through conversation, Jose and Mary will discover that their idea of personal space is related to their cultural upbringing. They might be resistant to the change in the beginning, because they see it as "their individual cultures or their national cultures."	
What will be gained from changing the behaviors of Mary and Jose?	Mary and Jose will have a greater understanding for working together. Mary can focus on what Jose says instead of focusing on his body language toward her, and Jose can learn to control his own body language and to read that of others.	

6.3 Linguistic Relativity

In *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, Anne FadimanFadiman (1998). described the story of a Hmong refugee family, the Lees, and their intercultural interactions with doctors in Merced, California. The story is about Lia Lee, the second-youngest daughter who is diagnosed with severe epilepsy. Within the Hmong culture, epilepsy is not described in the same way that Western medical doctors describe it; epilepsy is described as *qaug dab peg* or "the spirit catches you and you fall down." According to animism, the foundation for Hmong religious beliefs, both good and bad spirits surround us. Epileptic attacks are seen as the ability of an individual to temporarily join the spirit world. This is seen as honorable because the spirits have chosen that person to communicate with them.

The language used by Hmong and Americans to describe their understanding and knowledge of what was happening to Lia can be referred to as linguistic relativity. **Linguistic relativity**[5] was first developed by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, and is known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis,Whorf (1956). or the *principle of linguistic relativity*. It describes the idea that language influences the perceptions and thoughts of people, thus affecting their behavior. In Hmong culture, there is no word for "*epilepsy*"; instead, the word is associated with the animistic worldview of the Hmong, which serves as a philosophical, religious, and spiritual guide to operating one's life. The only way to describe epilepsy is related to this world view of spirits. In Western medicine and science, rationality, logic, and objectivity are important—scientific words and definitions are not abstract; rather, they are concrete.

Sapir and Whorf argued that individuals are not aware of the influence of language, and it is only when moving between cultures that individuals become aware. A commonly cited example of linguistic relativity is the example of how Inuit Eskimos describe snow. In English, there is only one word for snow, but in the Inuit language, many words are used to describe snow: "wet snow," "clinging snow," "frosty snow," and so on.

The following case study further explains the idea behind linguistic relativity:

5. The idea that language influences the perceptions and thoughts of people, which in turn affects their behavior.

Carol serves as a program director for a local nonprofit in the Washington DC area. Her organization has received a federal grant to implement employment training and resources to serve the large and growing Somali population in the area. The grant requires her organization to track outcomes and the impact of the training program on participants' lives. Each participant is required to attend an exit interview session conducted by a staff person.

Carol creates a survey that is both qualitative and quantitative to measure the impact. Questions relate to the participant's experience in the program and ask participants to rate their level of agreement to statements. Table 6.2 "Survey to Measure Program Impact" shows sample questions from the quantitative survey.

Pattie serves as the interviewer for all the sessions. She reads out loud each statement and given the responses, checks the appropriate box. She notices that during the first round of interviews, participants are unsure how to respond. They are unclear about the levels of rating given to them: *strongly agree, agree, disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. Additionally, some of the statements are confusing. She tries to explain the difference but is unsure how to describe the statements differently. She's frustrated because she's concerned she's not getting the right information, and she knows that it must upset the participants.

Table 6.2 Survey to Measure Program Impact

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I know how to use the Internet to find a job.				
I am able to put together a resume for a job.				
When I find a job I like, I know how to respond to the job posting.				
I know the appropriate questions to ask a potential employer in interviews.				

Carol and Pattie discuss what they could do differently in the survey or process to help the Somali participants understand the questions. Unfortunately, they do not have an employee on staff that can translate. In the end, Carol and Pattie decide to change the process and the language barriers in the interview. They decide that pictures may help illustrate a level of agreement. They also agree to take out the "big words" or words that would further confuse the participants. They also changed the rating scale to reflect: *yes, no, and maybe*. The revised survey had the following questions.

I know how to use the Internet to find a job.

I know how to create a resume for a job.

When I find a job I like, I know who to call in the company.

I know what I can and can't ask in interviews.

Now imagine that you are Carol's boss and you have been updated about this situation. What suggestions do you have for Carol and Pattie as they continue their work?

There are a number of ways to think about the work. In cultural intelligence, understanding how to adapt your behavior is critical. The following are questions that you should think about in order to help Carol and Pattie adapt their behaviors:

- What emotions come up for you in this work?
- Are the emotions negative or positive? How does it fuel your work?
- What is the influence of language on evaluation?
- What body language do you notice? What does it tell you? How can it be helpful to our work to identify verbal and nonverbal cues?
- What are we doing that works?
- What do we know does not work in this project?
- What are the learning opportunities for all?

Asking these questions is a start toward continuing the good work that Carol and Pattie have already begun. As the two move forward in their work and learn more

about what works and what does not work, they will learn to ask and reflect on questions that are inclusive to other cultures.

6.4 Behavior and Communication

Our behaviors are communicated both verbally and nonverbally. Culturally intelligent leaders pay attention to both cues. Earley et al.Earley, Ang, & Tan (2006), p. 83. noted, "When we meet strangers from other cultures for the first time, their outward appearances and overt behaviors are the most immediately obvious features, not their hidden thoughts and feelings." I experienced this when on my first trip from the United States to France.

In my mid-20s, I went to France with my family to visit my uncle on my mother's side. As we boarded the flight and found our seats, my father and I had challenges finding an overhead space for our bags. Because we did not want to hold up the line of people who needed to pass us to get to their seats, we needed some assistance. I explained to my father in our native Hmong language that there were flight attendants who could assist us. Not too far from us, I spotted a flight attendant and said to my father, "I think he could help us."

My father, who was distracted and gently being pushed to the side by much taller passengers making their way to their seats, could not see where the attendant was. I said, while pointing in the direction of the attendant, "Dad, he's over there." My father looked up and, at that same time, I looked over at the flight attendant. We made eye contact, and because the plane was bustling with passengers, rather than calling out for assistance, I signaled with my hands for him to come over to us.

The next thing I knew, the flight attendant came over. I was so ecstatic to see that he was going to help us that what he said took me by surprise. "In our country, we don't point our fingers at other people. It's rude." Because his voice was loud, other passengers turned to look at what was going on. Completely embarrassed, I said, "I'm sorry. I didn't know." He replied curtly, "Don't ever do this [points his finger at me] again."

"Okay. Thanks for letting me know," I responded with an apologetic tone. It was certainly not my intention to point directly at him, or to call him to us in that manner.

After settling in our seats with the plane on its way to France, I found myself getting emotional about the situation. *He thinks I'm rude for pointing? He's rude for not even letting me explain. Besides, I didn't point my finger at him. I was just pointing in the direction he was standing. And, what's his problem that he doesn't know pointing fingers is also rude in America? Does he think I'm NOT from America?*

I describe the emotions I felt as my "emotional hijack" moment, which is when the thalamus in the brain bypasses the "thinking brain" (cortex) and sends signals directly to the amygdala (emotional brain); I took out my journal and deconstructed the situation. It was my way to slow down and understand what happened; it was an opportunity to think through my thinking.

From this experience, I was reminded of the impact verbal and nonverbal communication has within intercultural interactions. And that, sometimes, the intention of your communication does not have the impact that you hoped for.

Silence

Edward HallHall (1990). found that **silence**[6] serves as a critical communication device and that it is viewed differently in different cultural contexts; he called these cultural contexts high-context and low-context cultures. Societies around the world fall into one or the other cultural context. Hall explained that in high-context cultures, pauses and silence reflect the thoughts of the speaker whereas, in many European countries, silence can be uncomfortable. Aida HurtadoHurtado (1996). found that women of color used *silence and outspokenness* as a mechanism of testing knowledge and acquiring new knowledge about social environments. She argued that women of color use silence as a strategy for obtaining and reconstructing knowledge, and the usage of *outspokenness* compliments silence in "knowing when to talk and just exactly what to say is especially effective if individuals are not expected to talk."Hurtado (1996), p. 382.

As culturally intelligent leaders, we have to recognize the moments of silence and their meaning. As an educator in the United States, I often come across students in my classroom and training who are from high-context cultures. The majority of them do not speak unless specifically called out to provide a response; this differs from my students who are from low-context cultures, such as the United States, who constantly raise their hands and have something to say. The following is another example of silence and talk:

6. A critical communication device that plays different roles, depending on the cultural context.

> A few years ago, Dr. Osmo Wiio, a communication scholar from Finland came to the United States as a visiting professor. While riding a public bus to the campus, a woman sitting next to him struck up a conversation, intending to be friendly. "I see by your clothes that you may be a European. What country are you from?" Wiio replied curtly, trying to discourage further conversation: "Finland." He held his newspaper so as to cover his face. But his fellow passenger stated, "Oh, how wonderful! Please tell me all about Finland." Professor Wiio felt very angry that a complete stranger had initiated a conversation with him. In Finland, a cultural norm discourages striking up conversation with strangers in public places.Rogers & Steinfatt (1999), p. 151.

Cultural norms can also vary within a country. In some parts of the United States, a stranger attempting to initiate a conversation would be treated brusquely, while, in other parts of the country, the same stranger would be treated kindly.

Self-Disclosure

Individual behaviors also differ based on a culture's notion of **self-disclosure**[7], the degree to which individuals share personal information with others. In general, collectivist and high-context cultures do not disclose much, while individualistic and low-context cultures are more self-disclosing. Take, for example, the following case study of a market research company that conducted surveys for their client, a health clinic:

7. The degree to which individuals share personal information with others.

ActiveSearch, a market research company in the Midwest, was contracted to conduct follow up surveys with patients of a local health clinic. The clinic wanted to improve the quality of services and care provided and especially wanted to receive feedback from their African, Southeast Asian, and Latino patients. The phone surveys were short, no more than ten questions that asked about the quality of service, reason(s) for visit, timeliness, and ability of staff to respond knowledgeably and appropriately. Phone surveyors made calls to 1000 patients who were seen by the clinic within a six month period. To the surprise of the market research company, they encountered what they perceived in the beginning as "resistance" to respond to the satisfaction survey. Results from the surveys were disappointing because less than 70 African, Latino, and Southeast Asians participated compared to 638 white patients who responded. After careful evaluation and reflection, the company realized their error. African, Latino, and Southeast Asians patients did not want to share their health concerns with the surveyors; they were suspicious of the company. Whereas, white patients were accustomed to taking satisfaction surveys and did not express concerns over how the information would be used.

ActiveSearch mistook the refusal to participate as "resistance." The company did not realize that the African, Latino, and Southeast Asian groups they surveyed had cultural norms that spoke to keeping information within certain circles. The idea of sharing one's health issues is considered a private family matter in these groups, and trust was a large issue as well, as they were not sure what the information would be used for. Many respondents may even have thought they would lose their insurance or health care if they gave out information. Understanding the different belief systems that underline the cultural norms of self-disclosure would have been helpful to the business.

Maintaining Relationships

In their communication behaviors, collectivist cultures emphasize the importance of maintaining relationships. They will shape messages that will not be offensive, shaming, or cause a person to lose face. To a person from an individualistic culture, however, the message may be unclear, indirect, and ambiguous. The following case study provides an example of this:

Savitha and Mary are new coworkers having worked together for the past six months. Mary feels that she would like to get to know Savitha better. She invites Savitha and other colleagues to a barbeque at her house. Savitha declines, saying, "Thank you but I have a family commitment that day." Mary understands and says, "Of course. Hopefully we can do something another time." Over the next year, Mary invites Savitha on several occasions to join her for coffee, dinner, or social events—sometimes with colleagues and sometimes just the two of them. Each time that Mary suggests a time to get together, Savitha responds that she is busy. Savitha says "no" because she also believes that her relationship with Mary needs to stay at a professional level, but she doesn't tell this to Mary. Mary's beginning to think that Savitha does not like her, and if that's the case, why doesn't she just come right out and say that?

In this example, Savitha is maintaining what she perceives as a harmonious relationship with her family, which Mary does not understand. From a collectivist culture, Savitha wants to ensure that the family relationship dynamics are not disturbed. Additionally, she wants to preserve the harmony of a professional relationship with Mary; rather than disrupt the flow of that relationship, she chooses to communicate this indirectly to Mary. She does not want Mary to lose face or take offense, yet the results are exactly the opposite of what Savitha expects. Mary thinks she is evasive. Both Savitha and Mary can learn about the different ways that different cultures express relationships and maintain healthy relationships. If both were aware of each other's cultural norms, they could adapt their behaviors.

The Concept of Face

An important aspect of interpersonal relationships is the concept of **face**[8]. "Face" is seen as one's public image in social contexts, and this concept is very important in Asian cultures that have a collectivist identity. These societies are concerned with *saving face*, or how they will appear to those around them. Public criticisms that can lead to a person *losing face* may harm the person's identity and image, especially within their families and communities. Losing face can lead to deadly consequences, as in the following example:

8. A concept related to interpersonal relationships that refers to one's public image in social contexts.

In August 2007, Mattell was forced to recall over 900,000 plastic toys due to excessive amounts of lead in the paint. Later that month, Zhang Shuhong, the CEO of Lee Der Industrial in China, the manufacturer of the toys, committed suicide after China temporarily banned the company's exports. A Chinese newspaper said that a supplier, Zhang's best friend, sold Lee Der fake paint that was used in the toys. "The boss and the company were harmed by the paint supplier, the closest friend of our boss," the report said. It continued that "in China it is not unusual for disgraced officials to commit suicide."

Later that year, in September, Mattel's Executive Vice President for Worldwide Operations, Thomas Debrowski made a public apology to the Chinese government saying, "Mattel takes full responsibility for these recalls and apologizes personally to you, the Chinese people and all of our customers who received the toys. It is important for everyone to understand that the vast majority of these products that we recalled were the result of a flaw in Mattel's design, not through a manufacturing flaw in Chinese manufacturers."Selko (2007). *Industry Week*. "CEO Of Toy Manufacturing Company Commits Suicide". Retrieved from http://www.industryweek.com/articles/ ceo_of_toy_manufacturing_company_commits_suicide_14790.aspx

As this case illustrates, this situation even led to Mattel trying to save its face with the Chinese government and its people.

Time

Time[9] is an important value dimension of culture and, as a result, impacts the behaviors of people. As discussed in Chapter 2 "Understanding Culture", time is regarded in some cultures as punctuality, while, in others, time is more relaxed and is viewed as contributing to the building of relationships. The following case study illustrates the notion of time and the behaviors of cultures based on their interpretations of time.

9. An important value dimension of culture that impacts the behaviors of people.

Tim, a white man, manages a production department in an American private business. Many of his assembly line workers come from the Southeast Asian and Asian cultures. Whenever his employees had a problem, they would want to talk and discuss the project at length. They not only wanted to understand the problem but they wanted to keep harmony in the organization. They would come back to him several times even after the problem was resolved. For this manager, the problem had a quick solution: he provides the solution and his employees should comply. However, he doesn't understand why his employees keep coming back to him about the issues. He's annoyed at the amount of time it is taking to manage the process.

Tim and his employees have been raised with different notions of time. Tim thinks that time is associated with efficiency and effectiveness. To him, when an issue is discussed and a solution is provided, he believes there should be no further discussion. For his employees, the act of coming back to the problem is not to find more solutions; rather, it is to continue to develop a relationship with the manager—it is to ensure that the relationship is harmonious and in balance. For them, it is a check-in point in the relationship.

LeBaronLeBaron (2003). noted that cultural understanding of time can impact conflict management and negotiation processes. As an example, she described a negotiation process between First Nations people and the local Canadian government. She wrote,

First Nations people met with representatives from local, regional, and national governments to introduce themselves and begin their work. During this first meeting, First Nations people took time to tell the stories of their people and their relationships to the land over the past seven generations. They spoke of the spirit of the land, the kinds of things their people have traditionally done on the land and their sacred connection to it. They spoke in circular ways, weaving themes, feelings, ideas, and experiences together as they remembered seven generations into the past and projected seven generations forward.

When it was the government representatives' chance to speak, they projected flow charts showing internal processes for decision-making and spoke in present-focused ways about their intentions for entering the negotiation process. The flow charts were linear and spare in their lack of narrative, arising from the bureaucratic culture from which the government representatives came. Two different conceptions of time: in one, time stretches, loops forward and back, past

and future are both present in this time. In the other, time begins with the present moment and extends into the horizon in which the matters at hand will be decided.LeBaron (2003), pp. 7–9.

You can probably guess the result of this meeting. Both sides felt misunderstood and neither was happy with the results. Their world views, including the language used in the negotiation processes, originated from separate paradigms. Because neither of the groups understood the dimension of time and the influence of language in their behaviors, it led to decreased trust between them.

6.5 Changing Behaviors, Changing Minds

Successful adaptation requires cultural strategic thinking, motivation, and mindfulness. In this way, cultural intelligence principles are interconnected and interrelated. You must be able to think about your thinking, contemplate it, and then adapt it based on your findings and reflections. Behaviors, whether appropriate or inappropriate, must be identified and defined in objective terms. You have to know exactly what behaviors are reoccurring and why they need to be changed. By doing so, you can describe the things you say to yourself as well as the situations or behaviors that you are imagining. You can, and should, talk about the evaluation statements you make about yourself. The use of cultural strategic thinking and mindfulness can help you to identify your behaviors and thought patterns.

Table 6.3 "Identifying Behaviors and Thought Patterns" is a case study of Gillian, who has been asked by her supervisor to lead development for a new service in her organization. Observe how she analyzes the situation in order to identify her behavior, the thoughts she had, and the emotions or behavioral outcomes she experienced.

Next, Gillian decides to find a way to manage her distressing thoughts and emotions. Because her anxiety, fear, and nervousness do not serve her as a leader in this work, she needs to identify more desirable thoughts. When she does this, she is less likely to have negative emotional responses that can lead to depressed moods and behaviors. To reframe her behavior, she will ask three questions:

Where is the evidence that contributes to my thoughts? Gillian will use this broader question to further explore her confidence, her ability to manage the team, and whether she has facts that support her thought pattern.

Are there other possibilities to this situation? Gillian will use this broader question to explore what she is not seeing in the situation and whether the facts presented are true, or if there are other explanations.

What are the implications of my behaviors? Gillian will use this broader question to understand how she feels, whether the feelings help or hinder her, if the feelings create a positive end result, and what consequences would occur because of her resistance to change.

Table 6.3 Identifying Behaviors and Thought Patterns

Situation	Thoughts	Emotions or Behaviors
My manager placed me in a work group to lead development for a new service in our organization. Working with the team requires that I make several trips to different parts of the world to speak with different team members. I have never worked with any of the individuals before and have not worked in a multicultural team.	I don't know if my responses and interactions with them will be appropriate. I don't know what to expect because we are a new team. I'm not even sure I know how they want to interact with me. Do they think I will be controlling, demanding? Should I be more participatory than usual in my leadership style? I don't want to mess this up.	I feel anxious. I am not as confident in myself and my abilities. I feel nervous about the whole thing. I feel like I'm losing control.

When Gillian is able to identify the negative or inappropriate behaviors and identify the behaviors she wants, she is then able to respond and adapt appropriately. Sometimes during the adaptation and adjustment period, it is helpful to recite self-statements to cue you in the direction of the positive behaviors you want to express. Peer support can also be helpful in changing minds, because your peers can help point out in the situations where you revert back to old behaviors.

6.6 Changing Minds Through Storytelling

Gardner wrote in *Changing Minds* that to "capture the attention of a disparate population: create a compelling story, embodying that story in one's own life, and presenting the story in many different formats so that it can eventually topple the counterstories in one's culture."Gardner (2004), p. 82. Stories can, and do, shape culture in positive and negative ways. They help shape processes such as orienting new employees; they can serve as symbols that reinforce norms such as cubicles for employees and suites for executives; or they can create organizational heroes and heroines such as employee stories of leaders that go the extra mile.

Storytelling[10] is an excellent way for leaders to garner staff involvement, bring new clients to an organization, or paint a vision of an organization's future. In its essence, storytelling is about how you communicate your vision, your goal, or your objective to listeners—in other words, storytelling can help you get your point across. Telling different stories can initiate different actions from story listeners, eliciting stories that speak to their behaviors and their experiences.

The impact of storytelling in organizations has become increasingly important because stories are memorable, no matter how poorly or well told they are. Emerging research studies show that storytelling has a tremendous affect on an organization's capacity to grow and manage change. Organizations in transition that use elements of storytelling demonstrated improvements in team performance and in overall project management. Although the research literature on storytelling is limited, the importance of storytelling is being noted on an international level. Stories, like Gardner expressed, are powerful tools, and when the right story is told, leaders can take the proper action needed for intercultural work.

Storytelling Unites Cultures

Storytelling is a unique strategy for socializing members into your organization and encouraging them to abide by cultural norms and values. This technique is especially helpful in guiding new members in understanding company values and beliefs. New employees will have assumptions about what to expect in their first day on the job. They often create their own realities, through their own stories, of what the organization is to them based on the behaviors, actions, and attitudes seen, heard, or felt during this initial phase. For current employees, storytelling emphasizes the important aspects of an organization's culture that you want them to value and demonstrate in their work. Perhaps these aspects have been previously missing from the organization, and by using storytelling techniques, you automatically bring people together by creating and sharing a common story.

10. A means of communicating an individual's, a group's, or an organization's vision, goal, or objective to listeners through the telling of stories.

As leaders, it is important to cultivate stories that have meaning for employees and to guide members back to core values of the organization. For example, a principal of an elementary school may tell the story of a student who emulates her teacher in order to reveal how much impact teachers have on children. An executive director of a nonprofit organization will tell a story of the organization's founder by describing the founder's personality, character, and vision to motivate current employees in their work. The choice of the stories, the characters chosen, the timing of the story, and the details emphasized will create memorable stories that stay within the minds of organizational members. Leaders can create organizational stories that will be passed on throughout the life cycle of their organizations.

Culturally intelligent leaders can shape intercultural understanding by utilizing several methods that address the underlying assumptions, beliefs, and values of its members; however, this is not an easy task. As indicated, culture oftentimes consists of unconscious behaviors, values, and assumptions that develop over time and changes may occur as new associates enter into the organization. Too often, leaders will neglect to solicit information from their employees in building the organization's culture and values. This fallacy, often unintentional, can harm the organization and affect its leadership.

The following exercise will help you to identify stories that support intercultural interactions and understanding of culture in your place of work. By reflecting on these exercises, you will learn what stories drive your organization and what ones might be discarded:

1. In the space below, list the types of jokes about intercultural work that are told in your organization. If you know the words to the jokes, write them down.
2. Write down all the common phrases that are spoken in your organization related to intercultural understanding such as, "Here's *another* meeting we're required to attend on diversity," or "I'll work with this person but only because I have to."
3. Think of one common story that has been told in your organization. It could be a story of why your organization thinks diversity and culture is important to the work or why certain people leave the organization.

As you take a look at your responses, think about the following questions:

• What are the common stories in your organization?
• Are the stories generally positive or negative?
• What is your role in creating these stories?
• As a leader, what stories, if any, can you change in your organization?

- What steps, if any, will you take to change your organizational stories?

6.7 Chapter Summary

- Changing behaviors requires cultural strategic thinking and mindfulness in order to recognize which behaviors are inappropriate and which are desirable.
- Self-concept is critical to one's adaptation. Self-concepts are developed over time, they are dynamic, and they are organized.
- Cognitive dissonance can interrupt one's self-concept. Dissonance between one's self-concept and what is heard or observed causes one to feel uncomfortable, anxious, fearful, and, in the learning process, makes a person less likely to learn the new information.
- Adaptation of one's behaviors requires management of the internal change process and one's responses to it. Knowledge of your behaviors during change or transitions can help you to identify the emotions and thoughts you have that are counterproductive to your ability to adapt.
- Linguistic relativity is the idea that language shapes world views and also shapes behaviors. Words, and the understanding of words, take on many forms in different cultures; words may be understood differently in different cultures.
- Cultures communicate in different ways, and, as a result, the behaviors of people are different. It is important that, as a leader, while paying attention to the behaviors, you recognize the intention of the communication versus the impact.
- To change one's behaviors, you must learn to change your mind. This requires the ability to think in a culturally strategic manner and to be mindful of your thoughts and behaviors. Once you identify the situation, the thoughts you have about the situation, and the emotions you feel in the situation, you have a greater chance of changing the behavior.
- Storytelling is a strategy to use when changing behaviors. Stories can unite people of different cultures in recognizing core organizational values.