Preface

As a young Hmong American child growing up in two cultures, I played a game where I guessed the cultural background of everyone around me, regardless of their ethnicity or race, gender or class. It was my version of the game "I Spy," a popular game in the United States that encourages children to be observant of, and learn to identify, objects, places, people, and things. My elementary schoolteacher taught me the game, and because I wanted to be "just like every American child," I played it every time I had the opportunity. At that time, I did not realize that I was categorizing the things "I spied" into boxes:

I spy a white person who goes to church.

I spy a rich, white man going to work.

I spy a black man running to catch the bus.

I did not know about "labels" and "stereotypes" and how an innocent game of observation can become harmful in creating blind spots, yet be powerful in bringing to the surface one's assumptions and perceptions.

As an educator and consultant, I use this personal story in my classroom as an example when discussing core elements of identity, culture, diversity, and inclusion. Generally, the conversation starts with a discussion of the physical differences of people and then moves into the invisible differences of culture: rules of engagement, a culture's relationship to nature, socially acceptable ways of interacting, notions of justice, decision making, working styles, and more. More often than I would like to admit, a large majority of time, conversations about cultural differences (whether in a classroom or organizational setting) focus on physical differences and race and ethnicity as the core of culture. I have to remind managers and leaders that subcultures exist, as well as invisible things they do not see, including individual beliefs and assumptions that contribute to the creation of culture.

It is hard for human beings not to categorize because labels help us relate to the world. Ruth Hubbard,[1] an American scientist, said that language helps us to

categorize our feelings and thoughts. In this way, we come to understand what is real in our world. These thoughts and feelings set the context for the ways in which we see the world. They frame our thinking and structure our behaviors. George Lakoff[2] wrote that every word in our thinking "evokes a frame," which has been embedded in the brain over long periods of time. Speaking or thinking about the words and images strengthens the neural circuit and reinforces the frame. Although much of what we know and what we have learned came from our early childhood, our thinking continues to be shaped through daily verbal and nonverbal communication and interactions. When we see something that disrupts our frame, our reaction is to protect ourselves and our ways of knowing—anything we can do to reinforce our frame.

There have been numerous times when I have stood in line—in a grocery store, a movie theater, a bank, or a retail store—and the person before or after me becomes visibly upset when a person (usually from a different ethnic group) cuts into the line. "Those people! Don't they know what a line is?" Yet, in other situations, I hear, "That person just cut in line. Oh well." Depending on one's frame—in this case, a cultural frame—standing in a line may or may not be a cultural norm. Your response to the disruption (the image of someone cutting in line) reinforces your frame. You can react with any of the following emotions: anger, surprise, disappointment, rage, or impatience. Alternatively, you may simply ignore it.

Cultural frameworks have a significant impact on how we express ourselves. I frequently tell managers and leaders that we need to learn how to shift our paradigms when working with cultural differences. When we shift, we not only see a different perspective, we are transformed in the process. Margaret Wheatley calls this system shift "emergence," which she describes as "a sudden appearance of a new insight, a new system, and a new capacity."[3] The process is about "stepping outside" and "standing apart" from our world views. When we emerge, we see our thought patterns and habits that form. In this process, we choose to let go of old, inactive learning. Consciously, we choose to participate in continuously learning by adapting to the changing nature of our environments.

Cultural intelligence (CI) principles help to facilitate awareness for, and understanding of, cultural frames. When applied, they bring our frameworks to a conscious level. At a level where we can see the frames, we can then identify what it will take to learn new patterns of thought—new ways to reframe. Reframing, according to Lakoff, "requires a rewiring of the brain. That may take an investment of time, effort, and money."[4] To be culturally intelligent is to reframe or rewire your brain. You create new patterns and new frames by suspending your judgments and assumptions, by considering the old patterns in the face of the new or unfamiliar, and by choosing to change your behavior and attitudes based on reflection and new interpretation. Cultural intelligence is the openness to

emergence, not just about the unfamiliar and new culture but about you—who you are and who you could become.

Why This Book?

Peter Drucker,[5] the famous scholar of management, said that we are in an "age of social transformation," a period of our lives where social order is drastically transforming the human condition and what it means from what we have previously known it to be. This age requires us to reflect differently than before about our relationships, about how we resolve intercultural and social conflicts, and the consequences our actions produce when we are not mindful of our intentions. Similarly, Daniel Pink,[6] in *A Whole New Mind*, speaks about a conceptual age where empathy and emotional intelligence are essential in business; where stories and storytelling are powerful tools to create unity, develop trust, and resolve unsettled business; and how using play can help us find life's meaning and a deeper alignment to our core values.

The changes we see in societies around the globe necessitate a new and different paradigm for how we come to think about culture. All this makes it harder and more challenging to think and practice cultural competence in the same way. Gardner[7] says we need to approach the challenges that differences bring through acceptance, respect, and learning—a frame that he calls the "respectful mind." We must engage in intercultural situations and activities fully; we need to immerse ourselves and experience the "flow"[8] in order to harness the emotions needed to perform and learn from our cultural interactions. Leaders must be willing to explore and create new ways of thinking and interacting with the flow of culture.

In this age of social transformation, cultural intelligence is a topic of urgency for organizational leaders. I hear it from leaders and managers, and I see it in everyday organizational life. Environmental, political, and technological factors are quickly shifting the ways we work and interrelate with one another. Culture shifts are happening at a faster rate than organizations are ready for and capable of managing, thus creating mental and emotional havoc in managing and leading through cultural transitions. In many cases, the result is a tighter hold on the invisible aspects of culture and stronger emphasis for "the 'right' way to do the work."

More and more, people ask for the tools and information that help carry them through intercultural and cross-cultural interactions. There are a multitude of tools and methodologies that are useful for managing and leading on a global level—the cultural intelligence framework is one of them. It is only one component in the equation for improving the management and leadership of cultural interactions. I

tell leaders, "You need to recognize that no matter what tool or method you use, who you are and how you use the tool or method is the biggest part of the equation."

The information in this book is designed to help you understand a piece of that equation. The ideas behind cultural intelligence help you to grasp the important impact of cultural interactions while assisting in your practice as a culturally intelligent leader. Even if you have worked with cultural intelligence or other intercultural communication tools and principles, this book serves as a tool to further develop your proficiency.

Who Is This Book For?

This book is written for leaders who want to learn about cultural intelligence and its application to leadership. Leaders emerge from all walks of life, in formal and informal ways, and notions of leadership differ among cultures. This book uses the definition of leadership from the GLOBE study of leadership across cultures: *the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations which they are members.*[9] People who engage in this process are called leaders.

The model of cultural intelligence is a research-based model that I have used in my consulting and education work with executives, leaders, administrators, boards of directors, students, volunteers, parents, and more. Whether you are in government or in a nonprofit or private sector business, the cultural intelligence framework is practical enough to help you create organizational growth and change. The model speaks to a diverse audience base, and its theoretical foundations, are useful to those who want to learn more about the scientific elements of culture.

Reading the Book

This book outlines the importance of understanding culture and its impact on our lives, the strategic value of cultural intelligence, and the significance of integrating and practicing cultural intelligence in everyday life. The book is designed to help you overcome the challenges in intercultural interactions by focusing on cultural intelligence in leadership and management.

This book does not focus on specific cultural etiquettes or how to do business in other countries. It is a book designed to help you apply cultural intelligence to any cultural situation. This is not an academic textbook, although the concepts

presented here are essential to your knowledge about culture and intercultural interactions.

The eight chapters in this book consist of reflection exercises and case studies that can be used as a guide to your continued learning and development in cultural intelligence. Each chapter begins with a personal story, quote, or idea about culture and intercultural work and ends with a summary of the key concepts. To continue your work in cultural intelligence, there is a website (http://www.cileadership.com) that has been set up to provide you with more sample case studies and inventories.

- The *Introduction* provides an overview to the topic of cultural intelligence. It examines globalization and its significance for culturally intelligent leadership.
- *Chapter 1 "Culturally Intelligent Leadership Matters"* explores the literature on culture and leadership. It examines several studies that illustrate the importance of understanding culture in leadership and management.
- *Chapter 2 "Understanding Culture"* examines the concept of culture. The chapter focuses on recognizing the different levels of culture and how culture is shared and learned. It also highlights the significance of cultural value dimensions in intercultural work.
- *Chapter 3 "Cultural Intelligence Defined"* focuses on what cultural intelligence is and what it consists of. It describes how cultural intelligence is different from other forms of intelligences.
- *Chapter 4 "Thinking About Thinking"* delves into the first component of cultural intelligence: cultural strategic thinking. It focuses on the topics of cognition and metacognition. Techniques and tools to practice and improve metacognition are offered.
- *Chapter 5 "I Think I Can and I Will"* moves into a discussion of motivation and mindfulness, the second part to cultural intelligence. The chapter centers on the role of self-efficacy in culture and the value mindfulness has in intercultural interactions.
- *Chapter 6 "Adapting and Performing"* focuses on the third component of cultural intelligence: behavior. It focuses on the notion of self-concept and how this impacts behavior and attitudes. Additionally, this section examines the impact of behavioral communication.
- *Chapter 7 "Cultural Intelligence in Action"* consists of 10 case studies that illustrate different cultural situations. It provides you with the opportunity to practice the cultural intelligence principles.
- *Chapter 8 "The Future of Cultural Intelligence"* looks into the future and examines what is needed for cultural intelligence principles to thrive. It also discusses the types of leadership needed to bring more attention to cultural intelligence.

You can read this book in the following ways:

- *Begin at the beginning.* If you would like to understand cultural intelligence and its relationship to culture in depth, I recommend starting at the beginning and reading the book sequentially. The book is written as if you were taking a workshop in cultural intelligence; it begins with a basic foundation to culture before delving into principles of cultural intelligence.
- *Read individual chapters.* Cultural intelligence principles overlap with each other. In this book, each cultural intelligence principle is discussed separately in its own chapter so you can choose which chapter to focus on. But each chapter is written in a way to help you connect that principle to other principles of cultural intelligence.
- *Read case studies and work on inventories.* If you would like to use cultural intelligence as a training tool, you can visit the website http://www.cileadership.com for a list of inventories and updated case studies.

Definitions and Terminology

Throughout the book, the following terms will be used. Sometimes they are used interchangeably, sometimes alone, and sometimes together. Additionally, this book makes a clear distinction between management and leadership and managers and leaders, a difference that is outlined in Chapter 1 "Culturally Intelligent Leadership Matters".

- Culture: shared beliefs, values, and assumptions of a group of people who learn from one another and teach to others that their behaviors, attitudes, and perspectives are the correct ways to think, act, and feel.[10]
- Cross-Cultural: involving two or more cultures
- Diversity: *distinct and unlike elements or qualities* (interests, people, ideas, perspectives, ability, region, etc.); can be visible and invisible
- Intercultural: *between or among people of different cultures*
- Intracultural: *within the same culture*
- Multicultural: *many or several cultures*
- Intercultural competence: ability to successfully interact with people of different cultural backgrounds

We are living in exciting times that call for courageous and authentic leadership in leading through blurred boundaries. The changes we see are opportunities for growth and development as individuals, organizations, and communities. We have

an opportunity to identify and clarify our interpretation of the world through our relationships with one another. We can seize the chance to identify our blind spots and to uncover the stories we tell about ourselves and why we can or cannot interact with others. We have the potential to explore our work around cultures in a way that uncovers the hidden routines and habitual behaviors that contribute negatively to human relationships.

Endnotes

1. Hubbard (2002), p. 1.
2. Lakoff (2006), p. 1.
3. Wheatley (n.d.), p. 4.
4. Lakoff (2006), p. 4.
5. Drucker (1994), p. 7.
6. Pink (2005).
7. Gardner (2006).
8. Csikszentmihalyi (1996).
9. House, et al. (2004), p. 15.
10. This definition of culture is adapted from Edgar Schein's definition found in "Organizational Culture and Leadership" 2010.