

Immunity to Change Theory
Cross Campus Leadership Initiative
Theory Workshop

I. Common title given to the model:

Immunity to Change

II. Most often cited author or translator of the model:

Kegan, R., & Lahey, L. L. (2001). *How the way we talk can change the way we work: Seven languages for transformation*. John Wiley & Sons.

Kegan, R., & Lahey, L. L. (2009). *Immunity to change: How to overcome it and unlock potential in yourself and your organization*. Harvard Business Press.

III. Other research/theory from which the model is derived:

Kegan and Lahey's Immunity to Change Theory derives from Kegan's *Theory of Self-Authorship (1982, 1994)*. Immunity to Change and Immunity Mapping are used when mental plateaus occur in three adult meaning systems – the socialized mind, self-authored mind, and self-transforming mind. Additionally, Kegan and Lahey note that Heifetz's *Adaptive Leadership Theory (2004, 2009)* aligns with Immunity to Change as the complexity of adaptive challenges can “only be met by transforming your mindset, by advancing to a more sophisticated stage of mental development.” By recognizing a problem as adaptive instead of technical, the way we think needs to change to create solutions that address the root issues of the problem. In other words, to create an adaptive solution we ourselves need to adapt in some way.

IV. Definition of the model or concept:

Kegan and Lahey's argue that immunity to change is the self-defense mechanism that individuals use to hinder their ability to make desired change in their lives, to their problems, and to reach their goals. This mechanism is made up of three systems: Change-prevention, feeling, and knowing systems. By recognizing one's hidden commitments and big assumptions (through immunity mapping), individuals are able to uncover these systems and make change.

V. How could this model be used to look at the ongoing process of leadership learning for students?

As students hone and develop their leadership skills, they have the need to continually assess their challenges, goals, and making sense of the world. While change and recognizing new ways of knowing and problem solving can create internal conflict, the use of immunity mapping helps students develop the tools needed to address resistance to change.

VI. How could this model be used as a theory to teach in CCLI services and programs?

As we explore the ways in which to support students through their journey to self-authorship, the Immunity to Change Theory and immunity mapping allows for staff, students, and groups to outline their commitments, verbalize their behaviors that work against that commitment, recognize their competing commitments, and address any big assumptions that they fear will happen on their way to achieve their goal.

VII. Is student understanding of this theory likely to be immediately evident or unfold over a period of time?

Student understanding of the theory could be immediate, or by students having that “aha moment,” however the practice and evolution of change could unfold over a period time depending on the access, ability, and openness to change. The use of the tool and process can be used throughout their entire collegiate journey (and beyond).

VIII. What measures are used (could be used) to assess students' progress in learning this theory?

Like self-authorship, Immunity to Change is not clearly assessed. However, observations, self-report data, and review of immunity mapping exercises can be used to assess growth during a shorter period of time.

Large scale change and the use of Immunity to Change's impact on self-authorship would need to explore more advanced assessment like "Subject-Object Interviewing." See self-authorship handout.

- IX. What is different about students who deeply understand and use this model in their leadership?** Students who actively use immunity mapping and recognize their resistance to change are better able to adapt, solve problems, think more complexly, and live in alignment with their core values, beliefs, and purpose. They use three ingredients to overcome their immunities; their "gut" for motivation, their "head and heart" to engage their thinking and feeling about problems, and their "hands" to work through behaviors (see 2009 Kegan & Lahey book for more information on the three ingredients). Groups can also use immunity mapping to work collaboratively to overcome obstacles, address assumptions, and reach goals.

Additional Resources:

Example of Framework in Action: See page 78 for an example

[https://books.google.com/books?id=D2VLlbdMIAAC&pg=PA78&lpg=PA78&dq="supporting+my+staff+to+exercise+more+individual+initiative."&source=bl&ots=YzyYa_Euy&sig=VrddF6WEpF6eRjNDIbG4iI7EFqk&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjWta2Wi9_VAhWK0YMKHcnsAC0Q6AEIKDAAht](https://books.google.com/books?id=D2VLlbdMIAAC&pg=PA78&lpg=PA78&dq=)

Immunity Map Worksheet

Link: <http://experiencelife.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/ImmunityMapWsht.pdf>