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DIVERSITY IS A REALITY, INCLUSION IS A CHOICE

Whether you are continuously attached to your phone's news feed, or you have consciously placed yourself on a current affairs digital detox, we can all see that the world is in an interesting place right now in terms of diversity and inclusion. In this introductory chapter, we will analyse global D&I in the world at large, followed in Chapter 2 within organizations and then in Chapter 3 at the personal level. This is the essential context for the organizational work that follows.

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW

The US Presidential election of November 2016 was a defining moment. Norms were challenged as never before. A person best known as a television celebrity became the leader of the Free World. People were shocked. Many of his supporters didn't expect him to win. His opponents were horrified he

did. People who did not vote for Donald Trump, or indeed who opposed him, were visibly shaken. Their norms were completely upturned. For many, the result seemed to defy logic, merit or ethics. What they had previously assumed to be established protocol was suddenly just a point of view.

NORMS ARE NOT INFALLIBLE

A norm is a usual or typical convention or standard we use to govern our actions.

When we have particular behaviours or actions we desire as a society, but feel that we can't or shouldn't create a law to enforce them, norms are often what drives those behaviours. For example, we may decide that theft is something we so strongly want to deter that we create a law punishing those who commit that particular crime. However, while a society may also not want people to be scantily clad in public, they may also want to maintain citizens' freedom of choice as to whether or not to do so. Thus, as a society we can try to create norms around what we wear to deter others from wearing lingerie in public. In this way, we often assume norms to be limiting.

In our example here, limiting how people dress could limit a clothing designer's creativity or an individual's form of expression through clothes, but perhaps we've decided that this is a necessary cost of encouraging our desired behaviour. Other norms that limit us, though, can be much more damaging, such as the norm that surgeons are male and nurses are female. This limits the free flow of labour and stymies a true meritocracy because talented potential female surgeons and talented potential male nurses are needlessly limited due to invalid criteria.

We must be careful, though, of unintentionally changing norms that we like through our actions. Some norms such as politeness, respect, and the rule of law are important norms. The norm before November 2016 was that sexist behaviour would disqualify any candidate from election. The norm after was that even if people view a candidate's statements about women as derogatory, supporters might be willing to explain them away. Making those types of statements appears no longer to be a definite barrier to election. This example shows how radical Trump has been in overturning (temporarily

or permanently) deeply embedded norms. Norms are vital in governing the way we experience the world. As such, it is important to be aware of challenges to them, as Trump has shown.

We are governed by norms, and any organizational change programme has to calmly assess:

which norms are enabling and we want to preserve;

which norms are limiting and we want to challenge;

which norms are in the 'too difficult' box and we leave for another day.

For example, we might want to maintain our values such as rule of law, freedom of speech and desired gender equality. We might want to limit the norm of women as the sole provider for children. Many Scandinavian countries have introduced shared parental leave so that it is increasingly normal for men to also care for children, levelling the career playing field for both sexes. However, many countries have considered transgender rights too complicated or lacking sufficient public support and so it has not been a priority to date, although that is starting to change.

Generally speaking, is there enough moral, conscious thought being applied in terms of the three types of norms detailed above? Which ones do we as a society deliberately want to safeguard? And which ones, as a society, do we deliberately want to challenge? If we don't think about these questions deeply and pre-emptively, radical forces and unpredictable events may change them for us without our consent or understanding.

This is often why it is difficult for many to go along with progress and instead fight against, say, marriage equality. In the United States, a majority of people once believed not too long ago that same-sex marriage should not be allowed. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, as recently as 2001, 65 per cent of Americans did not support same-sex marriage.¹ They might have felt that it was part of American identity to adhere to that norm. Thus, when the tide turned over the last 20 years and the majority now believed in marriage equality (62 per cent support in 2017)² and the courts made it legal, it makes sense that those who still thought it was morally wrong felt hurt.

It wasn't just that they disagreed with the decision, it was that they now felt the United States didn't represent them anymore, or at least not in that way. To some degree, a part of their identity was being stripped away from them. Whether we believe they are right or wrong, we can empathize with their pain and difficulty.

Most of us rely on the supposed permanence of norms and live our lives with that understanding. However, norms can change. The question is whether we are changing them consciously in a positive sense or allowing them to be changed for us unconsciously, without even being fully aware.

BIAS RUNS RAMPANT

If you are human, you are biased. Bias, when speaking about people, is a preference or prejudice for certain groups over others. We will discuss bias, both conscious and unconscious, in more depth later in the book, especially Chapter 5. But for now, it's important to acknowledge the increasing importance of how bias is impacting our daily lives and our societal norms.

The more we are able to personalize services through technology, the more we are able to indulge our points of view, however ill-informed they may be. This bias is exhibited most clearly in social media. There, expressing opinions can be taken as fact. Your likes or dislikes can be used by commercial and political entities to feed you similar opinions or products that speak to your point of view, indulging the natural human desire to have your ideas affirmed.

Social media, however, is simply one example of how new technology has narrowed the range of opinions we consume. Consider television – the number of channels available, not to mention the number of ways to watch television programmes, has grown exponentially in the last 20 years. As a result, we now have the ability to choose to only watch content that caters to our point of view. This is precisely what many of us do, even though we may not do it consciously. And it's understandable that we do this, because why would we want to spend our time watching things that will simply make us angry or annoyed at the way a topic is presented? The same is true of radio, news, and film.

In this hyper-personalized, hyper-indulged situation we find ourselves in, our biases, rather than being checked and countered, can actually be inflamed and exacerbated.

This is even more so when we feel we have permission. When authority figures exhibit bias, we may feel a sense of validation, or even a sense of entitlement. This mimicry enables and empowers points of view but may in turn shut down others.

We tend to copy those in power, like Van Zanten, and not those with less power, like Schreuder. In this sense, in the guise of individual emancipation, we may in fact simply be entrenching questionable power bases and thwarting diverse voices. Similarly, if leaders in your organization are exhibiting inclusive behaviour, since they have power and authority they will be mimicked by others in the organization and the culture will become more inclusive. If they act non-inclusively, then so will others and so will the organization as a whole.

Take for example the election of Rodrigo Duterte, who became the 16th President of the Philippines in 2016. Duterte, who ranked on the Forbes list of the world's most powerful people, has advocated the extrajudicial killing of drug pushers. This challenged the widely positively regarded norms of law and order previously in place. At the same time he, perhaps surprisingly, supported the push for gay marriage, arguably challenging a restricting norm. In both cases his authority has been used to challenge norms and to empower others who would seek to challenge them also.

Consider Malala Yousafzai, the youngest ever winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. She was shot by the Taliban in response to her activism challenging the Taliban-instigated norm of denying girls education equivalent to boys. Previously just another teenager, she achieved global significance and recognition in view of her challenging of norms. That global significance empowered other schoolgirls to also fight for the right to education.

POLARIZATION, 'IN' AND 'OUT' GROUPS

The United States' political situation also represents acute polarization. It has solidified 'in' and 'out' groups, which is important for anyone wanting

to build an inclusive organization. In-groups are our relatively small inner circles of friends and colleagues with whom we share identities, interests or perspectives. Out-groups are the opposite – they're the people who are different from us, with whom we may not share aspects core to our identities and have had different life experiences. We will discuss them more in subsequent chapters.

However, the response of Trump's opponents has perhaps unintentionally solidified his support base. Similarly, the rhetoric from Trump's base has solidified the left's opinion of them. Attacking, rather than empathizing, initiates a race to the bottom. For his opponents, delisting Trump supporters on a Twitter feed or Facebook profile doesn't mean they don't exist, and vice versa. It just means they are not challenged any more, and neither are his opponents. Polarization begets polarization.

Research in social psychology suggests that, at a very primal level, our default position is to congregate into groups that afford us safety. Our natural reaction is also to reject the unfamiliar, in a 'flight or fight' unconscious response.

Furthermore, the academic literature explains that humans identify with groups of their own kind, and will make attempts to fit into these groups to secure their social status.³ This effect can explain why we have segregated communities in the first place, and also why we curate the information we see online the way we do.

However, discrimination, marginalization, stereotyping and bias (both conscious and unconscious) can create additional fear that triggers the basic need for safety, similarity and familiarity. Our increasing self-segregation, both physical and in our online communities, gives us more space to indulge our opinions. We increasingly see our own views as correct, and we also dismiss other opposing ideas, even when they might be valid.

If we aren't surrounded by difference, our ideas become increasingly reinforced by similar people around us. We might not be willing to even entertain the idea that those with different opinions might have a point or that their point of view could be valid. What's worse, we begin to attribute our hatred for those ideas to the people who espouse them, and so we don't just dismiss the ideas, but the people themselves. And we don't even know we're doing this to ourselves. So whilst segregation may be a natural

phenomenon, it can be compounded and accelerated by unchecked human actions.

For example, whatever your view on Britain's decision to leave the European Union, the vote itself was polarizing, turning a complex set of issues and perspectives into a binary decision. The resultant political change, rather than being a steadying measure and counterweight to polarization, has actually exacerbated it.

It's fairly evident that when UK Prime Minister Theresa May triggered Article 50 she unleashed a wave of behaviour detrimental to inclusion efforts. Practically, companies and workers are struggling with labour mobility – in 2017 the British government had to launch an investigation into reports that EU nationals in the UK were being illegally blocked from applying for jobs and renting properties.⁴ Socially, a 2017 report revealed higher levels of hate crimes since the Brexit vote.⁵ Politically, an event meant to unite the Conservative party has ended up dividing the country.

THE DAMAGE TO DIVERSITY

Less diversity in the UK workforce could result in even lower productivity, lower resilience to shocks and higher exposure to risk. Exchange rate changes have made foreign travel (and cultural experiences) more expensive. There are dangers for Britain's research community with European partners dropping collaborative projects, fearful the UK won't be able to access EU funding.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) found 57 per cent of employers have concerns that Brexit will significantly weaken their ability to acquire and retain skilled employees.⁶ The argument of the leavers is that British workers can now take these jobs. But this like-for-like substitution is simplistic, ignoring different skill sets, geographical locations and desire or aptitude to actually undertake the work. In this sense the vote has not only damaged Britain's reputation as a good home to overseas workers, it could also signal regression in former progress towards more multicultural workplaces.

Our natural tendency is to recruit people like us because they are the ones that 'get it'. In this sense, Brexit simply indulges pre-existing unconscious

biases. It allows us a false sense of security, comfort in being around people like us. If we don't create and nurture a culture where an inclusive and diverse workforce is viewed in a positive light then the business benefits of diversity simply won't follow. The way the campaign was run, and the way it is still being conducted, is perhaps most harmful of all.

Once-fringe views are now acquiring mainstream status. To be clear, the threat to diversity comes not just from the leavers – social harm is also being inflicted by remainers too. Extreme remainers query the intelligence of the 'leavers' and whether they should have even had the right to vote on such an important topic. This goes back to the point above, about how we begin to attribute our feelings about an opinion to the person espousing that opinion, and it can have dangerous consequences.

In fact, we've been here before. In the United States, when African-Americans gained the right to vote, many states instituted intelligence tests requiring that Black citizens pass them if they wanted to vote.⁷ While these rules were certainly driven by animus against a racial group, intelligence was used as a scapegoat for their more sinister points of view. It seems a bit ironic, then, that some extreme remainers who might self-identify as 'liberals' are considering the merits of trying to limit the voting rights of those they disagree with based on a similar argument.

ARE THERE ANY POSITIVES?

The 'shock' result has refocused attention on diversity, including widening rates of inequality in Britain. We are reminded that segregation is the default position and multiculturalism actually has to be built, it doesn't just happen.

The vote realigned party and social allegiances. Both bankers and teachers voted to remain. Both elderly rich rural dwellers and young poor urban citizens voted to leave. In that sense it redefined party politics and reawakened civic interest. Therein lies new space to find common ground among previously fractured groups, new opportunities for inclusion.

Diversity and inclusion has now moved up the agenda. What were once fringe topics seen as a subset of HR, are now acquiring front-page status in global newspapers and becoming a standing agenda item in many boardrooms and executive committees.

This new prominence is largely a result of a now burning platform for action. Whatever your views on Brexit, or the US election, or the European refugee crisis, it is clear that inclusive policies are now required if we are not to implode.

EMPATHY FACILITATES INCLUSION

Empathy is required on all sides of the debate. It may be a bitter pill to swallow for *Guardian*, *Le Monde* or *New York Times* readers to contemplate empathy for Trump supporters, and for some Brexiters to fully empathize with immigrants, but that is, now, what is sorely needed. Inclusive leaders need to lead the empathy revolution. Illiberal liberalism can be just as problematic as some forms of xenophobia and jingoism.

Empathy is seen as soft, yet we are in desperate need. That does not mean we need to accept the other point of view as right, just that it may not be completely irrational. In this way, empathy is the antidote to polarization. By being able to see a situation from someone else's perspective, we might be able to find common ground.

Empathy is related to gender inequality. Various studies have shown that, overall, there is a statistically significant gender difference in the human mirror neuron system, with female participants tending to exhibit stronger motor resonance than male participants. This is related to women having higher Empathy Quotient (EQ) scores than men.⁸ This could be directly related to evolution, with women more often taking the primary caregiver role. Moreover, studies have shown that whereas women can empathize more with non-verbal cues and facial expressions, men tend only to respond better to threatening or aggressive behaviour.⁹ We refer you to the above sections detailing the behaviour of the Presidents of the United States and the Philippines.

Therefore, since women have been taught the importance of empathy for generations, it makes sense in a male-dominated world that empathy has traditionally been something society does not find to be valuable in the workplace or in leaders. This leads us to devalue important and useful skills that many women have learned from a young age that men may not have,

and so devalue women. This does not mean that men cannot learn empathy, or that there aren't empathetic men. It simply means that if we want to solve the problems that currently exist in the world that we've described above, we need to consciously teach empathy to men and boys and ensure that it becomes ingrained as a new social norm.

This isn't just about gender. The success of the Paralympic Games in recent years, for example, has contributed to placing disability on the global agenda. Since 1960 the event has grown into the world's third-biggest sporting event in terms of ticket sales; only the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup now sell more. The mission is 'to enable Para athletes to achieve sporting excellence and inspire and excite the world'. Its aspiration – its *raison d'être* – is to make for a more inclusive society for people with a disability through Para sport. In fact, today the Paralympic Games are regarded as the world's number one sporting event for driving social inclusion.

ZERO-SUM GAMES

Current polarization and its associated challenging of norms can best be described as a zero-sum game. This lack of empathy means that we not only want to win, but the other side winning means that we lose. We get stuck in a zero-sum game mentality. In an age of plenty we are still fighting over a fixed pie.

Steve teaches the Harvard MBAs a class on inclusive leadership. We ask the students to have an arm wrestle, the goal being to score as many points as possible in one minute and, if at all possible, avoid litigation. After one minute the room of future CEOs splits into two camps. In one, 80–90 per cent of the room, predominantly men, have scored zero points, or possibly one or two. In the other, 10–20 per cent of the room, predominantly women, have scored 30–40 points. They simply let each other win, and through cooperation as opposed to confrontation, enlarge the pie for all parties.

The classic application of zero-sum theory is to trade. When the Trump administration decided to impose tariffs on imported goods in June 2018, it provoked a response from key trading partners such as Canada, Mexico and the European Union. This is the global equivalent of a traditional arm

wrestle whereas the route to increased trade would be to simply cooperate. It is worth noting the gender differences in the arm-wrestling exercise as well as in the empathy quotient findings – more gender diversity among global trade negotiators might contribute to better outcomes.

It is also worth pointing out that only 38 per cent of 146 nations studied by the World Economic Forum have ever had a female leader. With the exception of one four-month stint in Canada, the United States, Canada and Mexico have never had a female leader. Two-fifths of female global leaders have been from Europe.¹⁰

ARE WE THERE YET?

To be positive, things are in many ways becoming more inclusive. Gay marriage is increasingly normal in Western countries. Gender equality tops the boardroom agenda. Millions of people of all genders are marching for women's rights. Many of our elected officials are more diverse (and therefore representative) than ever.

However, progress is not linear. And it doesn't just happen.

Following their first Black president ever, the United States elected someone who has put in place some of the least progressive measures in recent history. He has banned Syrian refugees from entering the country and trans people from serving in the military, withdrawn the United States from UNESCO and the Paris Climate Accords, and acted as a fulcrum for other populist figures worldwide. Breaking of positive norms gives permission to others to mimic it.

Many people thought Obama heralded the end of racism in the United States. Many of Trump's comments and policies suggest that this is not the case.

To give another example, when Grenfell tower burnt to its core in London in 2017, needlessly killing 70 innocent people in the middle of one of the wealthiest parts of the UK, profound questions were posed about social mobility in modern Britain. How could a building burn like a roman candle in London in 2017? The tentative answers pointed to a council detached from its voiceless poorer residents, cladding put up for decorative purposes for those living outside (rather than inside) and the establishment guilty of ignoring citizens in the false belief it was being inclusive.

This all seems a far cry from the British Prime Minister's July 2016 inaugural address on the steps of Number 10 Downing Street when she promised to place D&I at the top of her agenda, 'fighting against the burning injustice that, if you're born poor, you will die on average nine years earlier than others'.¹¹

Education isn't inclusive either. Cardiff University research has found that students from state schools gain better degrees than privately educated students with the same A-level grades. However, levels of diversity at Oxford and Cambridge universities are decreasing. Nationwide, 7 per cent of students are educated at private schools, yet Oxford and Cambridge colleges recruit 40 per cent from the private sector.¹²

It gets no better in the workplace, as made evident by the reporting of Harvey Weinstein's sexual assaults. Here was a progressive, Jewish, Democrat who had been accused by multiple women of being a misogynist abuser of power. As more and more women came forward to out not only Weinstein's behaviour but also that of other powerful men, the #MeToo campaign went viral. In an era of discussing gender pay it seemed we were back to the most basic of rights, women's safety.

The lack of inclusion seems to be a problem all over the world, across all sectors, and in all industries. So tackling this problem may seem like a daunting task. But the answer may lie in narrowing the problem down.

Whilst norms can be changed for the worse, they can also be adapted for the better. Good people want to live in a community and work in an organization full of positive reinforcement. For example, we don't want to live in a community subject to crime and we can reinforce the norms necessary to build community cohesion. In the same way, we increasingly view gender equality and LGBT+ inclusion as positive norms and so we introduce legislation highlighting the gender pay gap and cheer on the Pride parade with more organizations taking part than ever before.

Whilst bias runs rampant, we are more aware of it than ever before, we are learning how to tackle it, and good people genuinely seek objectivity in their decision making. For example, tech companies are now starting to take fake news seriously. Parliaments all over the world are considering legislation they can introduce to penalize misinformation. Behavioural economics is helping us deploy insights for social good, whether that's placing healthy

food at the front of the counter and sweets and chocolate further back to help us eat more healthy meals, or whether that's de-biasing a recruitment process by using gender-neutral language and blind CVs.

Whilst in and out groups are subject to polarization, people are still curious about diversity, whether it be in food, travel or people. Next time people stigmatize others, it's worth reflecting on the food they eat and where it's come from, or where they go on holiday. In organizations, people are increasingly aware of the need to reach out to people different from them in order to inform their perspective. The more society seems to pull apart, the more this organizational need becomes apparent. Empathy can help us overcome division.

Whilst there is much to be disheartened about, and whilst the challenges before us can appear overwhelming, progress is possible. Over the pages that follow, we will try to demonstrate this, one workplace at a time.

TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Norms are changing more than we might at first appreciate. We need to actively take part in creating them and benefitting from them, or risk having unforeseen norms affect us and society in potentially harmful ways.
- 2 Advances in technology have indulged our biases by curating content to expose us to similarity at the expense of challenge. This can lead to complacency and polarization.
- 3 Increased polarization is exacerbating the barriers between our in- and out-groups, making diversity even more difficult to deal with in the workplace and elsewhere.
- 4 Our siloed existence, exacerbated polarization, begets a lack of empathy for those different from us and a focus on everything as zero-sum.
- 5 Progress is not linear, it is a constant back and forth. But with conscious, constant and consistent effort, we can improve societal outcomes.

ENDNOTES

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