

INTRODUCTION

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RECENTLY AUDIENCES FLOCKED IN RECORD NUMBERS TO WATCH *Hidden Figures*, which told the uplifting story of three brilliant African American women who played indispensable but largely unknown roles at NASA in the iconic American success story of John Glenn's launch into orbit and the Apollo missions that followed. These women, products of the segregated South, made lasting contributions to the nation's space program in spite of social strictures that initially limited their inclusion. Their achievements improved the work of NASA's teams of scientists, enriched the space program as a whole, and helped accomplish the national goal of putting a man on the moon. For the team tackling a complex problem, their cognitive skills, grit, determination, and drive proved a plus.

Hollywood's dramatization of a moment of exclusion that begrudgingly transitioned to a moment of inclusion is set against the backdrop of unfolding social and political practices. Recall that segregation was birthed in the late nineteenth century, matured into a hardened system through the middle of the twentieth century, and ended formally in the latter quarter of that century. It didn't end voluntarily, naturally, or completely on its own. It ended because women, men, and children organized, agitated, and fought to end it. The women profiled in the film were agents in the forging of change.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: CONTESTED OR VALUED?

As we prepare this introduction, diversity and inclusion remain highly contested. Americans of all faiths, hues, and histories take to the streets and the airports to protest a hastily configured immigration ban that seems to target Muslims and deny access to the refuge and the opportunities that have defined this country's core values for centuries. In London, a global city if ever there was one, marchers

remind Prime Minister Theresa May that while a majority might have voted for Brexit, they won't tolerate sending their neighbors out of Britain or blocking others' entrance into it. Back in the United States, Native Americans rightfully question the normalization of one version of history: "Let me get this straight: You're afraid of refugees coming to America, killing you, and taking your property?"

At the same time, those who oppose the more restrictive rhetoric cannot ignore the fact that scores of others, in the United States, Great Britain, and across Europe, celebrate the "us" versus "them" viewpoint. Online, at family gatherings, and in the press, they fashion a worldview according to which it is better to exclude than to be victimized by those who are included. They are not all nationalists or on the political fringe; some simply question institutions they deem elite and out of touch with their realities. They seek to preserve advantages and look for ways to pass those advantages on to their children and relatives.

In the first volume in the *Our Compelling Interests* series, we informed readers that diversity and inclusion would not come easily, but a better understanding of what is to be derived from a fuller embrace would redound to the benefit of the broader society. Invariably the question turned to how. How would we make such a decision? How do we know that diversity and inclusion would benefit the common good? How do we imagine this working in the future? Sometimes the past provides a window into the future. During the height of the Cold War, we imagined that people of integrity and substance, once vetted, could and would enrich the United States. Then as now, we selectively let them enter the country and, once admitted, most became loving, devoted citizens. Along the way, their diverse backgrounds, intellectual powers, and honed skills helped us advance as a nation and people.

Emblematic is the story *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof shares about his father, Wladislaw Krysztofowicz: "A refugee who had repeatedly faced death in the Old Country for not belonging . . . now somehow counted as American even before he had set foot on American soil, even before he had learned English. It

was an inclusiveness that dazzled him, that kindled a love for America that he passed on to his son. . . . The church sponsored Krzysztofowicz even though he wasn't Presbyterian, even though he was Eastern European at a time when the Communist bloc posed an existential threat to America. He could have been a spy or a terrorist."¹ But he wasn't, and, in fact, in 1952 the Oregon farming town that embraced him as one of theirs was bettered for welcoming new talent and new diversity to its community; in time it got to claim the "favorite son" that he fathered.

What stands at the core of the argument in this book series, *Our Compelling Interests*, is the proposition that diversity is to be valued; that welcoming, inclusive communities are strong communities. This is true even at a time when this country (and many others) looks more insular, xenophobic, and divided than it has in some time. This is true even when the dreams of so many different groups seem similarly at risk and the "recovery" from the Great Recession fails to reach evenly across America, evoking a cry for recognition in a "hillbilly elegy,"² offering a stark reminder that black lives matter, and producing a searing look of insecurity on the faces of our student DREAMers. Alas, it is even true when the rise of nationalist movements around the globe, equating Islam with terrorism, scarily evoke Nazism and feed the extremism of the very groups we fear, Al Qaeda and ISIS.

Even now, or perhaps especially now, we have a responsibility to turn to first principles: remembering the inclusive assurance of civil rights in the Bill of Rights, even as it remains unrealized;³ working neighbor to neighbor on the social connectedness ascribed to *E pluribus unum*, even as strong bonds of similarity remain a precondition for secure bridges across difference;⁴ and according due weight to the contributions to economic prosperity from full participation in a flat world,⁵ even as we continue to leave on the sidelines of educational opportunity too much of our fastest-growing talent pool⁶ in the midst of a diversity explosion.⁷ Diversity has tremendous value for democracy and a prosperous nation, and we all need to take a step back from the necessary struggles of actualizing it to unpack its dimensions.

A DIVERSITY BONUS

In this volume, Scott Page starts that unpacking process right at the core of our knowledge economy, examining the diversity bonus as manifest in complex, nonroutine, cognitive tasks, precisely the group problem-solving contexts that virtually define the opportunities for growth and prosperity going forward. The Silicon Valley CEOs knew this well when they all committed to diversifying the high-technology industry.⁸ Such group diversity also defined the life and work of the three hidden figures at NASA who helped turn around the space race.⁹ It was what educational leaders defended when they asserted, in the affirmative action cases at the University of Michigan, that diversity produces educational benefits for all students.¹⁰ And, in those cases, it was central to the arguments put forward in the amicus brief filed by military generals who stressed the national security risk of not having a cadre of leaders as diverse as the teams under them in taxing conditions of uncertainty.¹¹

There is a bonus to be reaped in bottom-line performance when diverse groups function effectively together as teams in the highly charged, competitive, fast-changing work settings we face increasingly in today's world—be it in business or in scientific discovery, in classrooms or on the battlefield. The relevant ability of an individual may not suffice—especially if those in the room share almost the same knowledge and set of approaches to problems that require the flow of all kinds of insights and the application of varied tools. Success may depend on the cognitive diversity that makes for intelligent teams, as Page demonstrates in this volume. What we want today are high-ability people who think in different ways and can function together, playing off each other and maximizing the emergent properties of diverse, inclusive, well-functioning teams.

In everyday parlance, the diversity of a team will likely be described as a function of the social identities, complex and intersectional as they surely are (arrayed along dimensions such as race, heritage, sexual orientation, class, and so on), of its members. Yet in Page's analysis, it is the cognitive diversity of a team—measured by

the lack of overlap in its members' repertoires—that produces a *diversity bonus*. It is cognitive diversity that needs to be leveraged for increased profits in business, innovative solutions in science, efficiency in policy making, and deeper discussion in our classrooms. Nevertheless, identity diversity can produce cognitive diversity, both directly, by engaging unique repertoires derived from particular experiences, and indirectly, as individuals with particular identities elicit novel ideas from others in a team.

In fact, identity diversity is most likely to matter for the diversity bonus in precisely those service sectors (for example, education, finance, entertainment, and health care) in which the most postrecession jobs have been added.¹² Therefore, as Page argues, we should always err on the side of more diversity in not only training and experience but identity too. And while we fill our workplaces and our classrooms and the halls of justice and government with as identity diverse a collection of well-trained participants as we can, we can never forget the hard work it takes for a diverse team to gel, for an inclusive group to thrive, bringing out the best in everyone at the table, as Katherine Phillips's extensive demonstrations remind us in the commentary chapter.

In this regard, it is instructive to think about one arena, science and engineering, where leaders in industry, academia, and government have all agreed for quite some time that broadening participation is vital to the very excellence and health of the enterprise, making precisely the arguments that Page calls the business case for diversity and inclusion. Consider, for example, the following statement from a broad global consortium gathered to write a road map for action at the Third International Gender Innovation Summit North America, organized by the National Science Foundation (and many partners) in Washington in 2013: "A diverse STEM workforce, drawing on the ideas and talents of all members of society, is critical for expanding our pool of knowledge in STEM through boosting creativity in research and innovation. . . . Inclusion of all members of society in the scientific research enterprise is necessary not only for equity but because it widens the pool of talent,

increases innovation and group performance, and increases business performance.”¹³

This is precisely the three-pronged argument in Page’s volume—beyond equity, diversity in science and engineering provides access to more talent, better solutions to challenging problems, and therefore better science, business, and society. Moreover, as hard as it has turned out to be to move the dial on STEM diversity, those organizations and institutions that have succeeded did it by creating more inclusive organizational cultures in which team members are better listeners and more open to more people’s ideas. In turn, they have experienced a diversity bonus, not only in productivity but also in the attractiveness of their workplace to the fresh talent pool of the next generation—a continuously reinforcing cycle that affirms the value of diversity to organizations, as well as to the work itself.

There are, in reality, multiple other motivations beyond the diversity bonus in our knowledge economy for erring on the side of diversity. Some rationales draw on our founding principles as a nation (even as we have yet to come near fulfillment, as recent events confirm); others point to the value of redressing past wrongs and reducing current disparities to affirm the legitimacy of avenues of access to leadership in our institutions (as Justice Sandra Day O’Connor opined in her Supreme Court decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger*).¹⁴ Side by side with these compelling interests for a fair and well-functioning democracy, the pragmatics of the arguments in this volume may surprise some, especially as we think of the moral force of arguments for inclusion written in the faces of the families of refugees around the globe and children striving to be educated against all odds here at home.

Yet, as we argued in the first volume of this series, *Our Compelling Interest: The Value of Diversity for Democracy and a Prosperous Society*, there is a profound synergy to be leveraged in the contributions of diverse groups of experts and citizens alike. The dynamics of identity and cognitively diverse groups produce the innovation that bolsters our knowledge economy. It also can reinforce the trust that comes when we build a “community of communities,” as Danielle Allen named it,¹⁵ teaching Americans (and our neighbors) how to

operate across boundaries of difference in an inclusive society. In that light, Page ends his book by asserting that we have a compelling interest to embrace and engage our differences, and the rhetoric and reality that surrounds us all in these times adds an urgency to this clarion call to action.