DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION 3.0

In this edition's Deep Dive, Philippe Rosinski argues that intercultural coaching can work across three levels of diversity and inclusion to enable individuals, teams and organisations to flourish and grow.

DEEP DIVE!

Promoting diversity and inclusion (D&I) is increasingly perceived as a societal imperative and many organisations are putting in place D&I policies and practices.

However, an important difficulty with the concept of diversity is that various things exist under this headline (Harrison and Klein, 2007; Meyer, 2017). Likewise, D&I can be understood at different levels.

When most organisations talk about D&I, they are really referring to what I would label D&I 1.0. As necessary as these efforts are, a lot more could be achieved through diversity and inclusion programmes. Augmenting D&I 1.0 with D&I 2.0 and then D&I 3.0 represents a formidable yet still underused opportunity to boost creativity, flourishing and unity, for greater impact.

D&I 1.0: EXTERNAL (OR VISIBLE) DIVERSITY

Combatting prejudice and discrimination against certain groups of people, and promoting equal opportunity constitutes the primary goal of D&I 1.0.

Social psychology is particularly helpful to understand how the social context shapes individual attitudes and behaviours, and can give rise to phenomena such as polarisation, exclusion and racism.

Social categories turn out to be much blurrier than we think (Herbes-Sommers et al., 2003; Thomas, 2005; Plous, 2020). Who is a Black person? Someone with 1/8th Black ancestry? 1/16th? Any Black ancestry? All-Black ancestry? There is not a unique answer. Still, the ambiguity does not prevent people from thinking in terms of 'us' versus 'them'.

Henri Tajfel showed that it is easy to trigger 'ingroup bias' (or 'ingroup favouritism') even when the groups are constituted randomly: those in our group constitute the 'ingroup' and those outside are the 'outgroup' (Tajfel, 1970).

Stereotyping is a common tendency, which is about minimising differences in the outgroup (i.e., 'outgroup homogeneity bias') and exaggerating differences between the outgroup and our ingroup (Wilder, 1986).

As Gordon Allport argued (1954), there is a slippery slope: this categorical thinking gives rise to prejudice, which is a 'preconceived negative judgment of a group and its individual members'. While prejudice is a negative attitude, it often leads to discrimination, which is an 'unjustified negative behaviour toward a group of people' (Myers and Twenge, 2019).

Racism typically involves prejudice and discrimination vis-à-vis certain people, viewed as belonging to a different 'race'. Racist acts can be characterised not only by their severity but also by the authors' drives: rage and hatred, blind obedience (i.e., following orders), bystander effect/diffusion of responsibility (i.e., not intervening). Social psychology research (e.g., Milgram, 1974; Latané and Darley, 1970) has revealed that we are more prone to blind obedience and diffusion of responsibility than we think.

Once we become aware of these dynamics, we don't need to fall prey to the detrimental phenomena and can learn instead to act responsibly and humanely. We can promote inclusion, which amounts to making our ingroup larger, possibly to embrace all humanity.

What is more, Mahzarin Banaji has shown with her Implicit Association Test (Banaji and Greenwald, 2013) that our biases may be unconscious, operating like 'blindspots in our minds'. We may be unconsciously prejudiced against certain people without being consciously aware of it. Raising awareness is key again and it is also a matter of 'feeding our brain the right stuff': information and images of what reality is like in all its nuances, beyond limiting stereotypes (Plous, 2020).

Anthropology and traditional interculturalism are also very helpful here to describe cultural differences among nationalities and other groups. Geert Hofstede (2001) has, among others, compared cultural characteristics between various countries. Other researchers have contrasted different generations (e.g., Generation X, Generation Y, Baby Boomers). The intention is to become mindful of differences; to avoid judging people solely by our standards but strive instead to understand their worldview. We promote inclusion by welcoming and integrating people from different cultures.

D&I 1.0 is concerned with hiring/gathering people from various groups (e.g., avoiding leaving out minorities) as well as with promoting mutual understanding and respect. This is done notably by facilitating genuine human encounters between people from diverse backgrounds.

The case for D&I 1.0 is not solely a matter of ethics. It is not only about striving for equality, or even for equity: 'treating everyone justly according to their circumstances', which involves 'addressing imbalance' (Milken Institute School of Public Health, 2020). Attracting and retaining talent has become a challenge after the Covid pandemic. This phenomenon has been referred to as the 'Great Resignation' (Cook, 2021) and the 'Great Attrition' (De Smet et al., 2021). Aaron De Smet and his colleagues report: 'The top three factors employees cited as reasons for quitting were that they didn't feel valued by their organisations (54%) or their managers (52%) or because they didn't feel a sense of belonging at work (51%). Notably, employees who classified themselves as non-White or multiracial were more likely than their White counterparts to say that they had left because they didn't feel they belonged at their companies' (De Smet et al., 2021). In a time of great resignation/attrition, organisations can ill afford to shun the talents of diverse groups of people.

D&I 1.0 is still much needed and constitutes the majority of D&I initiatives. To institutionalise D&I 1.0 in an effective and sustainable fashion, education in social psychology and in anthropology is essential. Hopefully these disciplines will become part of coaches' and managers' educational curricula, but in the meantime the knowledge is already freely available for anyone ready to make the effort to acquire it.

CASE STUDY

I was invited to coach an international executive team (primarily European). The team was composed of 11 members representing six different nationalities. Although there were more men than women (eight versus three respectively), the regional director of the company and several other senior executives were women. In this team, D&I 1.0 seemed quite natural. However, this is not to say that the company as a whole was immune from racism. Building on the momentum of the Black Lives Matter movement, the company took new measures, notably hiring and empowering more local managers in various continents.

D&I 2.0: INTERNAL (OR COGNITIVE) DIVERSITY

At this stage, the categorical thinking that potentially gives rise to stereotyping and discrimination is avoided. Beyond demographics, D&I 2.0 focuses on diverse mental models.

Cass Sunstein has shown that diversity 'in terms of ideas and perspectives, not necessarily along demographic lines' (i.e., cognitive diversity) allows the promotion of creativity and innovation (2015).

Intercultural coaching (Rosinski, 2003) is meant to do this in practice, by unleashing the power that resides in cultural diversity, regardless of its demographic origin. The Cultural Orientations Framework (COF) assessment (Rosinski, 2018) facilitates the understanding of salient cultural characteristics (such as time management approaches, organisational arrangements, communication patterns, modes of thinking, etc.) for individuals, teams and organisations. It also offers a concrete way to leverage cultural differences.

Inclusion at this level is about the synthesis of cultural differences ('and' versus 'or') to promote unity in diversity. People don't only feel welcomed and respected. They have the sense that their different viewpoints are seen as opportunities rather than as threats. They feel they belong and can thrive, in the interests of all parties and stakeholders.

CASE STUDY (CONTINUED)

This team was quite heterogeneous regarding preferences for direct and indirect communication. The COF assessment revealed that the full spectrum was represented with members preferring direct communication (clarity matters most when delivering a difficult message, at the risk of offending or hurting) and indirect communication (sensitivity matters most, at the risk of misunderstanding). Furthermore, over 60% of the team scored unfavourably on the ability to communicate directly and close to 50% scored unfavourably for indirect communication.

In the preliminary one-on-one interviews I had with members of the team, some complained that certain members were too direct, which they perceived as aggressive. Others, upset by colleagues, would passively accept the situation without confronting their peers through fear of alienating them.

Using the COF team histograms allowed team members to reframe issues that had become personal into a cultural misunderstanding and offered them a path to bridge the gap: leveraging direct and indirect communication patterns can be achieved when you are clear on the content and sensitive in the form. For example, one member with a clear orientation for indirect communication mustered the courage to speak up to confront colleagues, when necessary, while another member with a clear orientation for direct communication made an effort to soften their tone. The team achieved D&I 2.0 by taking the best of both cultural perspectives while sacrificing neither.

Unattended internal diversity regarding direct and indirect communication had been a source of misunderstanding, frustration and conflict. When leveraged, it became a source of creativity. The open and constructive exchange of ideas was now possible because team members had learned to be mindful of differences and to speak both candidly and tactfully.

D&I 3.0: IMPLICIT (OR HIDDEN) DIVERSITY

Cultural diversity may be external (visible differences such as ethnicity, gender or age) and internal (cultural preferences regarding time management, communication, thinking, organising and so on). This dichotomy is related to the known surface-level/deep-level diversity distinction (Meyer, 2017) and to the associated D&I 1.0 and D&I 2.0 approaches described above.

This distinction is useful in that it allows us to describe and then enlarge our inner territory. By expanding our worldview, we access new external choices and become more effective. The separation is apparently an illusion, however, and reality is not that simple. It is more interconnected and complex than we think. In line with the holographic/complexity/organic paradigm (Bohm, 1980; Talbot, 1991; Morin, 2005; Rosinski, 2010) that transcends the still-prevalent mechanistic worldview without excluding it, I have proposed a complementary dichotomy (2019): cultural diversity is explicit (manifested) or implicit (hidden but nevertheless potentially available). In other words, for example, a team might come across as relatively homogeneous and would not be considered diverse under the usual definitions (referring to visible characteristics or to internal/cognitive diversity). However, from a holographic standpoint – which accounts for notions such as Carl Jung's collective unconscious as well as coaching's belief in the vast, yet largely untapped, human potential – this apparent homogeneous team would be still considered diverse and heterogeneous, albeit in an implicit, enfolded sense.

Inclusion at the 3.0 level is about tapping into our unconscious diversity potential and leveraging it, individually and collectively. I have shown how this concept can be put into practice when coaching teams in order to remove cultural blindspots and access teams' hidden cultural potential (Rosinski, 2019).

CASE STUDY (CONTINUED)

Despite being made up of various nationalities and comprising other demographic differences, the team was rather homogeneous with respect to the hierarchy-equality cultural dimension. The COF assessment showed that the dominant culture was glaringly equalitarian (73% favouring equality –

46% clearly and 27% mildly – and 27% neutral, with no one favouring hierarchy). The ability for hierarchy was also low, with over 60% of responses unfavourable (versus just 9% for equality).

The team leader was no exception. During the interviews, his leadership style was consistently described as 'laissez-faire', even if those specific words were not used. This worked well for the most senior members in the team, who felt fully empowered and unencumbered by unnecessary interventionism. Others appreciated the freedom to take the initiative. However, some complained about the leader's lack of guidance, his aversion to decisively settle conflicts and his insufficient confrontation with those who were not doing what they were supposed to.

I shared this feedback during the individual coaching with the team leader prior to the team retreat. He became aware of the necessity to flexibly adjust his leadership style in various situations: to venture outside his 'equalitarian' cultural preference to embrace a more 'hierarchical' directive approach at times.

During the team retreat, team members confronted their views on a particular topic. As a team coach, I often try to reconcile the various viewpoints. However, in this case, I realised that I was not going to be able to do so. It would have to be either one option or the other. I turned to the team leader and asked for his decision. He firmly announced his decision, and this was the end of the discussion. These behaviours were very unusual for the team, where endless debates had been the norm. Thanks to their new awareness of their individual and collective cultural profiles, and because they had come to realise the pitfalls of overlooking the hierarchical orientation, the team was able to move outside its comfort zone and to tap into its hidden hierarchical orientation. The team leader did so by being decisive, and the team members by accepting his decision without rebellion.

More generally, team members decided to alternate leadership and follower roles, learning to both take charge in the team and accept that others would do the same at other times. They started to hold themselves and each other more accountable for their actions. In sum, the team became more effective by leveraging equality (democratic) and hierarchy (directive).

D&I 3.0 refers to situations where the team appears to be homogeneous in how its members tend to handle certain situations. Diversity is hidden, thus still potentially available, rather than non-existent. One of the intercultural coach's key roles is precisely to unfold this implicit diversity.

The sad reality is that many people still view their cultural identity as a static concept and see their current cultural views as inevitable manifestations of their identity – declaring, for example, 'I speak directly because I am American', or conversely, 'I speak indirectly because I am Japanese'. Taken to an extreme, this inflexible view is at the heart of various forms of fanaticism, with deleterious impact.

In his acerbic essay on religion, originally published in *Parerga and Paralipomena* in 1851 (Schopenhauer, 2004), Arthur Schopenhauer offers this striking dialogue:

Philalethes *How can genuine philosophical effort, sincere search after truth, the noblest calling of the noblest men, be let and hindered more completely than by a conventional system of metaphysics enjoying a State monopoly, the principles of which are impressed into every head in earliest youth, so earnestly, so deeply, and so firmly, that, unless the mind is miraculously elastic, they remain indelible. In this way the groundwork of all healthy reason is once for all deranged; that is to say, the capacity for original thought and unbiased judgment, which is weak enough in itself, is, in regard to those subjects to which it might be applied, forever paralyzed and ruined.*

Demopheles *Which means, I suppose, that people have arrived at a conviction which they won't give up in order to embrace yours instead.*

Philalethes *Ah! if it were only a conviction based on insight. Then one could bring arguments to bear, and the battle would be fought with equal weapons. But religions admittedly appeal, not to conviction as the result of argument, but to belief as demanded by revelation. And as the capacity for believing is strongest in childhood… If, in early childhood, certain fundamental views and doctrines are paraded with unusual solemnity, and an air of the greatest earnestness never before visible in anything else; if, at the same time, the possibility of a doubt about them be completely passed over, or touched upon only to indicate that doubt is the first step to eternal perdition, the resulting impression will be so deep that, as a rule, that is, in almost every case, doubt about them will be almost as impossible as doubt about one's own existence. Hardly one in ten thousand will have the strength of mind to ask himself seriously and earnestly – is that true?*

These days, cultural conditioning often still appears hard to overcome and this phenomenon is certainly not limited to religion. However, the challenge is not as insurmountable as Schopenhauer believed.

Neuroscientific findings have confirmed that our brains do have remarkable plasticity (Hebb, 1949; Bliss and Lomo, 1973; Gazzaniga et al., 2019; McKay and Smith, 2021). Mental agility is widely available rather than being restricted to an elite. It is easy to understand that, had we been born with our same genes in a different cultural context, we would have learned other cultural habits. It is liberating to realise that we can still do so! We can learn from various cultural traditions, with a mind that is both open and critical.

Likewise, the potential for direct and indirect communications, or directive and consensual leadership, has been present all along, even if only one of the preferences has been activated in us for each cultural dimension. Cultural habits can be unlearned, relearned and most of all continuously enriched by enlarging our cultural repertoire (e.g., communicating both directly and indirectly, combining hierarchy and equality). In D&I 2.0, the underused cultural potential is revealed by engaging with colleagues with opposite cultural preferences. In D&I 3.0, it is brought to light by acquiring knowledge about the existence and

the merits of contrasting cultural preferences, even if these are not explicitly present in the team.

COMBINING D&I 1.0, 2.0 AND 3.0

Successive levels of D&I go together with increased complexity. Mastering D&I at the previous level is needed to effectively work at the next level. For example, if prejudice and discrimination still exist, it is unlikely that different viewpoints will be accepted, let alone celebrated. Combatting prejudice and discrimination (D&I 1.0) will pave the way for this acceptance but will usually be insufficient to promote creativity and innovation. The reverse is not true though: in my experience, D&I 2.0 and D&I 3.0 interventions also have a positive impact at the D&I 1.0 level. It is not by chance that a transgender participant chose one of our sessions to come out. Even though we had not explicitly addressed the theme of sexual orientation, we had promoted a safe climate of deep inclusion. However, this was possible because we were working from a foundation of existing implicit acceptance of diversity and readiness to be inclusive.

Intercultural coaching applies to all forms of diversity. Systematically weaving a cultural perspective into coaching represents a formidable opportunity to deploy the human potential in its rich cultural diversity, even when these cultural differences are still latent rather than unfolded.

In practice, intercultural coaching for D&I combines D&I 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 as appropriate and necessary in the situation. Interventions can draw from a range of disciplines and be tailored to clients' unique contexts. Intercultural coaching allows us to be more ambitious in what we can all expect from D&I programmes, by unleashing the full richness of diversity.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Philippe Rosinski is the best-selling author of the seminal books *Coaching Across Cultures* and *Global Coaching*, and a world authority in executive coaching, team coaching and global leadership development. The principal of Rosinski & Company, he is also a professor at BBT University in Tokyo and intervenes at HEC Paris, at Henley Business School and at the University of Cambridge. Philippe has received numerous awards including the Thinkers50 Marshall Goldsmith Leading Global Coaches Award, and has been listed among the Global Gurus Coaching Top 30.

philrosinski.com

REFERENCES

Allport, G. (1954). *The nature of prejudice.* Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Banaji, M., & Greenwald, A. (2013). *Blindspot: Hidden biases of good people.* New York: Delacorte Press.

Bliss, T., & Lomo, T. (1973). Long-lasting Potentiation of Synaptic Transmission in the Dentate Area of the Anaesthetized Rabbit following Simulation of the Perforant Path. *The Journal of Physiology*, 232, 331-356.

Bohm, David. *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. London-Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul (edition Routledge Classics 2002), 1980.

Cook, I. (2021). Who is Driving the Great Resignation? *Harvard Business Review, September*.

De Smet, A., Dowling, B., Mugayar-Baldocchi, M., & Schaninger, B. (2021). 'Great Attrition' or 'Great Attraction'? The choice is yours. *McKinsey Quarterly, September*.

Gazzaniga, M., Ivry, R., & Mangun, G. (2019). *Cognitive Neuroscience: The Biology of the Mind*. New York: WW Norton & Co.

Harrison, D., & Klein, K. (2007). What's the difference? Diversity constructs as separation, variety, or disparity in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 32, 1199-1228.

Hebb, D. (1949). *The Organization of Behavior: A Neuropsychological Theory*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Herbes-Sommers, C., Strain, T., & Smith, L. (Directors). (2003). *Race: The Power of an Illusion* [Film].

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences, 2d ed.*, Sage Publications.

Klein, K. (2017). Does Gender Diversity on Boards Really Boost Company Performance? *Knowledge@Wharton*, 18 May.

Latané , B., & Darley, J. (1970). *The unresponsive bystander: Why doesn't he help?* New York: Appleton-Century Crofts.

McKay, S., & Smith, S. (2021). Towards a Neuroscience-Informed Coaching Practice: Opportunities and Limitations. In W.-A. Smith, I. Boniwell, & S. Green, *Positive Psychology Coaching in the Workplace* (pp. 399-416). Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland AG.

Meyer, B. (2017). Team Diversity - A Review of the Literature. In E. Salas, R. Rico, & J. Passmore, *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of the Psychology of Team Working and Collaborative Processes* (pp. 151-175). John Wiley & Sons.

Milgram, S. (1974). *Obedience to authority*. New York: Harper and Row.

Milken Institute School of Public Health. (2020, November 5). *Equity vs. Equality: What's the Difference?* Accessed via https://onlinepublichealth.gwu.edu/resources/equity-vs-equality/

Morin, Edgar. *Introduction à la Pensée Complexe*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2005.

Myers, D., & Twenge, J. (2019). *Social Psychology 13th ed*. New York: Mc Graw Hill.

Plous, S. (2020). Social Psychology. *Coursera*.

Rosinski, P. (2003). *Coaching Across Cultures*. London and Yarmouth, ME: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Rosinski, P. (2010). *Global Coaching*. London and Boston, MA: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Rosinski, P. (2018). *The Cultural Orientations Framework (COF)* - new version. https://www.cofassessment.com/

Rosinski, P. (2019). Delivering value through cross-cultural team coaching. In J. Passmore, B. Underhill, & M. Goldsmith, *Mastering Executive Coaching* (pp. 130-159). Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Schopenhauer, A. (2004). Religion: A Dialogue. *In The Essays of Arthur Schopenhauer (originally published in 'Parerga and Paralipomena' in 1851).* The Project Gutenberg eBook.

Sunstein, C., & Hastie, R. (2015). Wiser - *Getting beyond groupthink to make groups smarter*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing.

Tajfel, H. (1970). Experiments in intergroup discrimination. *Scientific American*, 223(5), 96-102.

Talbot, Michael. *The Holographic Universe*. London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991.

Thomas, A. (Director). (2005). *Middle Sexes: Defining He and She* [Film].

Wilder, D. (1986). Social categorization: Implications for creation and reduction of intergroup bias. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 19, 291-355.