Acknowledgments

THE CONTINUOUS LIFE

Great genius takes shape by contact with another great genius, but less by assimilation than by friction.
—HEINRICH HEINI

GIVEN the central claim of this book—that diversity produces benefits—I cannot both take credit for it and claim it to be as good as it could be. And, in fact, this book has been a joint effort. Over the past five years, I’ve presented bits and pieces of this book to a diverse set of audiences: undergraduates, academics, Wall Street investors, Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, health science researchers, government agency employees (some may even have been spies), human resource professionals, Fortune 500 diversity committee members, political activists, and even alumni at a University of Michigan family camp. Those presentations have led to brief comments, long emails, and even copies of books that I “had to read.” What I learned from those interactions has been folded into and improved this book.

Though what you’re reading consists entirely of my words, my editor, my wife, some graduate students, and more than a few friends have painstakingly rearranged them. Eric Ball, Jonathon Bendor, Scott de Marchi, Patrick Grim, Ken Kollman, Bill McKelvey, Jennifer Miller, Mike Ryall, Cosma Shalizi, Elizabeth Suhay, and Troy Tassier gave detailed comments on earlier drafts. The path from personal friend to personal hero is paved with red
pens. The oh-so-many other people who read parts of earlier versions or heard my ideas and provided comments ranging from adoring to critical include Daron Acemoglu, Susan Ballati, Jake Bowers, Aaron Bramson, Elizabeth Bruch, Dan Catlin, Rui de Figueiredo, Patricia Gurin, Erika Homann, Norman Johnson, John Ledyard, Michael Mauboussin, John Miller, Lester Monts, Katherine Phillips, Jeff Polzer, Cindy Rabe, Jim Surowiecki, Bill Tozier, Nick Valentino, Jennifer Watkins and Michael Wellman. Not included in this list are Mita Gibson and Howard Oishi, who run the Center for the Study of Complex Systems at the University of Michigan. Howard and Mita not only handled all of the administrative tasks associated with the writing of the book, they were valuable sounding boards for many of the ideas contained in it.

I have two academic homes: the University of Michigan and the Santa Fe Institute. One has Blimpy Burgers and one has mountains. At Michigan, I have had the opportunity to think on a regular basis with Rick Riolo, Michael Cohen, Bob Axelrod, Carl Simon, Mark Newman, Mercedes Pascual, and a young man named John Henry Holland—the so-called BACH group. Many of the ideas that follow are probably not my own, but belong more properly to BACH. For that, I promise to dedicate a portion of the proceeds to the stock of M&Ms. Many people at the Santa Fe Institute (SFI), especially Susan Ballati, Bill Miller, Ginger Richardson, and Geoffrey West, have nurtured and encouraged this work. SFI has been instrumental in pushing me out into what they call “the real world.” Pat Gurin, Julie Peterson, and Lester Monts have played a similar role at Michigan. I’m shy and unassuming, so being forced out of my shell proved good for me.

I also have four academic birthplaces: Middleville Thornapple Kellogg Schools, the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin, and Northwestern University. My Ph.D. advisor, Stan Reiter, once told me that the two most important decisions I’d ever make were who my parents were and when I was born. Choosing a good advisor falls not too far behind on that list. Stan offered his usual wisdom and guidance in the writing of the research papers that were the basis for this book. As is true with the BACH group,
where my ideas end and where his begin is a blur. Throughout my career, Stan has been an inspiration both as an intellect and as a human being. Among other contributions to my family, he and his wife, Nina, have provided wise counsel, sculpture, and yoga tapes.

Writing a book like this requires resources. The James S. McDonnell Foundation provided funding for this inquiry into the logic of diversity. Few foundations are as innovative and bold as the McDonnell Foundation. Without its support, the book would be just another collection of loose unfinished ideas floating around in my head and in folders on my computer. The University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching also provided a seed grant that led to the larger McDonnell Foundation grand. In addition, a National Science Foundation IGERT grant provided financial support for a community of bright, challenging graduate students, who kept me on my toes throughout the writing of this book. Even with all of these overlapping grants, Howard and Mita made sure that none of this money went to the BACH group’s M&Ms or to pay for any lunches for Carl Simon and me at Zanzibar.

Writing a book also requires an editor. Mine, Tim Sullivan, was incredible (indeed!). He cut two hundred pages and personally rewrote most of those that remain. What had been a messy, complex tome, destined to be misunderstood by its twelve readers, Tim transformed into what you see. I had only to remove his many insertions of the word *indeed*.

The original manuscript was edited by Madeleine Adams, who corrected more punctuation errors in one month than most seventh grade teachers can claim in a lifetime. The final galley proofs were subject to the expert eye of Andrea Jones-Rooy, who spent three hours, twenty-six minutes, and fourteen seconds with me on the phone not only explaining the subtleties of subject-verb agreement but also helping me to tighten the prose and highlight the main points. My wife, Jenna, also read and edited the final version—more on her later.

While writing this book, I was coauthoring a book with John Miller of Carnegie Mellon University and SFI. John did most of the late heavy lifting on that project, allowing me the space to
finish this one. Both books benefited. I can only imagine how good this one might have been had he written it as well! Writing two books at the same time could spell the end of my days as an author of anything longer than fifty pages. For that reason, I’ll thank Christine Schad, my favorite grade school teacher, who still sends me postcards on her birthday (it’s also my birthday). Mrs. Schad (then Miss Harrison) taught me to say “good morning” in German and to begin each day with the chant “good better best, never let it rest ’til the good is better, and the better is best.” (This mantra was later expanded into book form with the title Good to Great.) So when Tim, my editor, said that draft number eleven was “better, and good enough,” let’s just say I wasn’t going to let it rest.

The listing of a single author on the title page causes me to feel equal parts shame and embarrassment. Lu Hong deserves equal billing for the bulk of this research. The parts of this book that are original belong as much to Lu as to me. For the two years I spent writing the core of the book, Lu was in Ann Arbor along with her husband, Tom Nohel, and their son, Jeremy, who at three knew more about rockets than I did at forty. My wife refers to Lu’s arrival as a psyche-preserving event for me. It was. I hope this book will become Lu’s and my second most remarkable achievement. Number one? We once couldn’t find Toronto by car from Syracuse. In our defense, Canada is big and it was dark out, really dark. And we missed Toronto only by seventy miles—less than 2 percent of the length of Canada. By golf standards, we left ourselves a tap in.

Many of the names that appear in the book are drawn from friends (yes, Rebecca and Arun, it’s you!) and family. My parents, Ray and Marilyn, and my sister Deb play starring roles. My other siblings, Brenda and Jeff, my many nieces and nephews, Noah, Carter, Maggie, Emily, Natalie, Cole, Katie, Joe, Rose, Brody, and Logan, and my mother-in-law, Karen, as well as most of my brothers- and sisters-in-law, Jeff, Mary, Joe, Rick, and Laura, also appear at various places in the book. It’s an odd way to say thanks, but it’s all I can do—it may not be to each according to his (or her) needs, but it is from me according to my abilities.
Hey, Orrie and Cooper! (I know—I’ve read Flat Stanley many times—“hay is for horses.”) Guess what? The completion of this book means more time for playing with LEGOos and Playmobil, more time for riding bikes and climbing trees, more time to work on our story about pirates, and more time to mix up a little baking powder and vinegar to make explosions in the backyard. In answer to your question, does my book contain pirates and knights? Of course it does. (There they were.) It even includes a dragon that breathes water instead of fire, which makes him no fun at dragon parties. And best of all, some sentences are written in snake crayon. So that only Owls and Coyotes can understand them. Cool, eh?

This book is dedicated to my wife, Jenna. During the time I’ve been writing this book, she wrote her own book on the design of robust federations. (It’s far more scholarly than this one.) She won a teaching award. And she found time to refine and clarify every single idea and model contained in this book (most have been subjected to her ear, eye, and pen several times). Her kindness, intelligence, and patience (especially her patience) have kept her three boys (Orrie, Cooper, and me) on a relatively even keel throughout this entire multiple-book-writing process. Without her, this book would have far less substance, gravity, and wisdom. And so would I.
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