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Introduction

Social movements such as #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter have elevated demands on all types of international organizations (e.g., multinational enterprises (MNEs), international entrepreneurial ventures, international governmental, non-governmental and not-for-profits) to address systemic sexism, racism, and other forms of discrimination against underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. In some instances, these demands have been accompanied by calls for decolonizing the practices and powers of international organizations to influence the economies and social well-being of host nations (e.g. #decolonization). International organizations must respond to increasing pressures to support equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) consistently across countries, while also respecting local norms and institutional differences. In addition, the unique characteristics of international organizations may provide opportunities to lead in creating environments around the globe that work for everyone.

Challenges and relevance of EDI for international organizations

Domestically, firms may be able to tailor EDI programs to national contexts. However, international organizations face the additional challenge that societal contexts and expectations for the inclusion of underrepresented groups manifest differently across countries. For example, an international organization's attempt to offer global support to LGBTQ+ employees risks inadvertently 'outing' them in countries where homosexuality is still criminalized, such as Cameroon, Singapore and Nigeria (Stonewall, 2021). There are marked differences in how diversity is interpreted, even among culturally and geographically close countries such as Britain, France and Germany. While diversity management in Britain draws on the historical discourse of multiculturalism, republican ideals of equality are fundamental in France, and instrumental discourse of integration is common in Germany (Tatli, Vassilopoulou, Ariss & Özbilgin, 2012). Thus, both cultural and institutional differences add to the challenges of implementing consistent EDI practices internationally. In this complex setting, international organizations need to navigate rising global pressures for equality and social justice, regional demands and local dynamics of EDI.

The uneven nature of diversity practices of international organizations extend across their global value chains, where they must engage with multiple stakeholders in different regulatory and institutional systems. Uneven EDI interventions expose international organizations to social, economic, environmental and political risk. In particular, countries where regulatory measures are weak or ceremonial and the EDI discourses are poorly developed, international organizations may be unwittingly internalizing local biases and discriminatory practices (Kusku, Aracı & Özbilgin, 2021).

The inclusion of underrepresented and historically disadvantaged groups is especially relevant for international organizations that compete based on knowledge flow (Doz, Santos & Williamson, 2001; Al Ariss, Cascio & Paauwe, 2014), or operate in countries with colonial histories (Jack, 2015). For example, knowledge flows are affected by MNEs' gendered reproductions of power and politics (Koveshnikov, Tienari & Piekkari, 2019). Fair treatment of all individuals is a grand challenge for the future of international business and requires engaging multiple stakeholder groups across levels and disciplines (Buckley, Doh & Benischke, 2017; Nkomo, Bell, Roberts, Joshi & Thatcher, 2019).

International business (IB) has traditionally addressed the value of cultural or national diversity within organizations (Leung, Bhagat, Buchan, Erez & Gibson, 2005; 2011). However, it has failed to keep pace with the environmental power shift toward inclusion of underrepresented groups for two reasons. First, IB research has long considered culture to be the primary focus of diversity, with much less consideration for other sources of diversity, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, indigeneity, religion, class and physical abilities (Barnard & Mamabolo, 2021; Fitzsimmons, Baggs, & Brannen, 2020; Jonsen, Maznevski & Schneider, 2011) and for other EDI actors such as algorithmic systems and biodiversity. As a result, there is limited understanding of how these other sources of diversity shape the barriers experienced by members of these groups in international business operations. At the same time, there has been inadequate attention as to how cultural diversity intersects with other forms of diversity to influence EDI policies and practices (see Tasheva & Hillman, 2019 for an example of cross-level diversity interactions). Second, the diversity literature and resultant managerial implications continue to be dominated by North American perspectives, which have largely had domestic rather than an international focus (Jonsen et al., 2011; Nishii & Özbilgin, 2007; Nkomo et al., 2019; Özbilgin, 2014). Thus, the cross-national transfer of US-centric diversity programs may be incongruent with the societal context of another country (e.g. Farndale, Biron, Briscoe & Raghuram, 2015), while a completely localized approach might fail to speak truth to power and fail to combat local taboos and systemic inequalities. Thus, the diversity literature within IB must transcend its focus on cultural diversity and take on an intersectional character, which includes consideration of multiple categories of diversity (Crenshaw, 2017). In addition, the focus on EDI within IB must consider the unique characteristics of international organizations, which have long been leveraged to advantage the organizations themselves. These same characteristics might also be examined in light of the opportunity they provide to promote EDI on a global scale.

Guidance for authors
Submissions should make a clear and novel theoretical contribution, but may build on any theoretical lens. We are particularly interested in work that draws on perspectives beyond the IB literature, including anthropology, sociology, economics, political science, public policy, law and psychology. Both theoretical and empirical contributions are welcome. Cross-level or longitudinal empirical contributions are particularly welcome.

Illustrative Topics

This special issue will highlight research on many sources of equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion within international organizations. This could include (but is not limited to) diversity within individuals, diversity within work teams, firms and institutions, the societal context of EDI, and how they each influence international organizations. The following list is not exhaustive, but provides some examples of potential topics:

1. Expanding EDI in IB beyond cultural diversity
   ● How does the double-edged sword of being different affect individuals in international organizations?
   ● Can individuals use agency to redefine themselves within international organizations? How do institutions facilitate or block this process?
   ● What are the effects of individuals endorsing or suppressing their own multiple identities or sources of diversity?
   ● What are strategic approaches to international career management that build upon different aspects of self?
   ● How does the new deal between workforce diversity and algorithmic fairness and biodiversity manifest? How do we theorize the role of IB in capturing this new deal?

2. Antecedents (diffusion or resistance to EDI)
   ● How do EDI initiatives transfer across institutional and cultural contexts in which international organizations operate (in which direction do they transfer?)
   ● Can international organizations draw on their unique characteristics to be agents of change with respect to EDI (What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing so?)
   ● When and why does resistance against EDI initiatives occur? How do international organizations respond to this resistance?
   ● How can international organizations address tensions between rising discourses of nationalism that emphasize local identities and interests and the incorporation of migrant populations?
   ● When and how do international organizations lead the way towards social equality and justice?
   ● How does varying legitimacy across diversity categories (e.g. LGBTQ+ compared to gender) explain and merit different responses from international organizations?
   ● Are social movements influencing lasting changes for EDI in international organizations, or are changes fleeting?

3. EDI implementation process
   ● What explains varying results of diversity-oriented interventions in international organizations?
   ● When and how do colleagues impose EDI categories on each other in the context of the international firm?
   ● How and why do the interpersonal dynamics within teams change when international teams become more demographically diverse?
   ● How do the various aspects of diversity within teams interact to allow team level phenomenon to emerge?
   ● How do international organizations balance global integration with local responsiveness in EDI approaches?

- How do MNEs implement EDI across well regulated and poorly regulated environments?

4. Outcomes (personal, organizational, and country levels)
   - How can EDI initiatives be a competitive advantage for international organizations?
   - What happens when status shifts between demographic groups in international organizations, such as a historically privileged group that no longer enjoys that privilege?
   - Are there examples of international organizations that weaponize diversity against their employees? When and why does this occur?
   - How do the EDI practices of international organizations reinforce or disrupt the racial and gendered international division of labor?
   - Are algorithmic approaches to people management helping or hurting equality among employees in international organizations (e.g. people analytics)

Submission Process and Suggested Deadlines

Submissions should be prepared using the [JWB Guide for Authors](#). Manuscripts should be submitted online via the Journal of World Business submission system and will subject to the JWB double-blind review process. Submissions open August 22, 2022; submissions due September 5, 2022. Please select "SI: EDI in IB" in the "Article Type" section of the submission process.

Pre-submission webinars / panels

We plan to offer several formal opportunities for researchers to talk to the editorial team prior to submitting a manuscript. We will offer panel proposals at AIB and AOM conferences to showcase EDI research in IB and encourage submissions. We will also offer a webinar several months prior to the submission deadline, where potential authors will have the opportunity to ask us questions about their manuscripts.

R&R Workshop

Authors of papers that receive a first round revise and resubmit will be invited to a workshop at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada that will help them further develop their papers. Not only will this workshop strengthen the individual papers submitted to this special issue, but it will also develop the field by bringing together researchers who approach the topic from different starting points, and may therefore not have other opportunities to meet.

Post-publication Panel

We will submit a panel to highlight the final selected papers at the AIB conference. Again, the intent is to bring together researchers working in this space, and highlight the value of published papers from this special issue.

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[1] Equality is a human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, diversity refers to the distribution of differences (Harrison & Klein, 2007), and inclusion refers to employees feeling accepted and valued in the workplace (Roberson, 2006). We adopt the term equality over equity because the former is based on more objective distributive justice concerns and is prevalent internationally, while the latter is mainly based on subjective fairness arguments (Bronfenbrenner, 1973).