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**SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND  
INCLUSION ISSUES AND MOVING INTERNATIONAL  
BUSINESS RESEARCH FORWARD**

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## **SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI) ISSUES AND MOVING INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS RESEARCH FORWARD**

### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** This scene-setting viewpoint rounds up a two-part special issue focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in international business (IB). If the first part of the special issue focused on DEI blind spots and the juxtaposition between the DEI business case and the DEI social justice case, the second part critically discusses the social construction of DEI issues in IB settings and the role played by context in IB-DEI research.

**Design/methodology/approach:** We discuss critically five IB-DEI research areas cover by the papers in this special issue. The first three examine gender in specific national cultures (i.e., Japan) and professional settings (i.e., academia), and look at making work-integrated learning more inclusive. The latter two address two particular DEI blindspots: neurodiversity and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and other sexual orientation (LGBTQIA+) community. Underlying our critical discussion of the five IB-DEI research areas is the issue of their socially constructed nature.

**Findings:** Interrogating the social construction of DEI issues in IB settings calls for a shift from merely contextualising the local embeddedness of social identities and societal expectations/practices regarding DEI towards problematising power relations which reproduce structural barriers and social inequities that result in the exclusion (and sometimes oppression) of specific social identity groups. Such problematising, however, first requires stronger theorising of context and not merely contextualisation of existing DEI and IB theories.

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3 **Originality:** Our contribution lies in linking the social construction and context of IB-DEI,  
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5 underscoring the importance of both *etic* and *emic* research approaches. We offer a bird's-eye  
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7 view of how gender roles at work, women's voices in patriarchal professional settings, work-  
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9 integrated learning, neurodiversity and issues linked to the LGBTQIA+ community, opening  
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11 new avenues for IB-DEI theorising. Following positionality statements of the guest editors in  
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13 the first editorial connected to the first part of the special issue, the second viewpoint linked to  
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15 part two of the special issue provides positionality statements by lead authors from each of the  
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17 five papers in this special issue.  
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24 **Keywords:** *Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), Social construction, Context, Theorising*  
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26 *context, Positionality.*  
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## SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION ISSUES AND MOVING INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS RESEARCH FORWARD

### INTRODUCTION

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is one of the most contested, politicised and increasingly polarising fields of research within management studies (Follmer *et al.*, 2024).<sup>1</sup> Recently, powerful anti-DEI ideologies have contributed to the defunding and erosion of not just DEI activities but of fundamental social justice and humanity principles with many multinational enterprises (MNEs) making significant U-turns on DEI issues, prioritising utilitarian logics over more values-based perspectives, like, virtue (van Dijk *et al.*, 2012). While the United States have historically led the way in advancing DEI issues and research (Newburry *et al.*, 2022), the Trump administration has opened an ideological war on all things DEI (Ng *et al.*, 2025), declaring a plan to “end wasteful government spending on DEI Programs” (Trump Executive Order #14151). As a result, the “moral landscape” of DEI seems to be significantly “in flux” (Fitzsimmons *et al.*, 2023, p. 1402) – at least more than it has been in the last couple of decades since the 1980s (i.e., during the AIDS epidemic).

In spite of recent politically motivated shake-ups driven by ideology and identity politics (Catalano Weeks & Allen, 2023), DEI remains an important social and moral issue (Vangeli, 2025; Byrd and Sparkman, 2022). DEI issues impact the lives, livelihoods and lived experiences of individuals, social groups and organisations both globally and local (UN, 2025), giving marginalised social groups power, access and voice (Hellerstedt *et al.*, 2024).

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<sup>1</sup> We draw primarily on the American Psychological Association’s social identity-based understanding of diversity, which encompasses the idea of variety in work, organisational and community contexts related to race, ethnicity, culture, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, spirituality, disability, age, national origin, hair texture, immigration status, and language (APA, n.d.; also adopted by Fitzsimmons *et al.*, 2023). However, our understanding of DEI is based not merely on *variety* but equally on *disparity* (i.e., link to equity) and *separation* (i.e., linked to inclusion and voice), which stem from the work of Harrison and Klein (2007). We also understand DEI research as a specific type of institutional field, referring to a socially constructed area of common understanding in which multiple actors interact around a shared issue, and in doing so reproduce or change institutions (Zietsma *et al.*, 2017).

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3 Addressing the moral deficit in much of DEI and IB-DEI literature (Fitzsimmons *et al.*, 2023),  
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5 we respond to Vangeli's (2025) call in the first part of the double DEI special issue (Vol. 25  
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7 No. 1), where he called for a more socially just perspective on DEI that appropriately  
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9 problematises two central concepts in critical theory (Brookfield, 2014): *power* and *ideology*.

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12 We believe, IB-DEI researchers need to resist the politization of DEI issues,<sup>2</sup> which  
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weaponizes identity politics for political purposes to divide society and systematically exclude  
or oppress certain social groups (Catalano Weeks & Allen, 2023). IB-DEI researchers need to  
instead focus on virtue-based underpinnings of DEI (van Dijk *et al.*, 2012), which can lead to  
the fulfilment of DEI's core values and more effective implementation (Myeong, 2025).

Mainstream DEI research has for the most part not focused on contextualising “research  
within power imbalances between social groups or through the influence” of various historical  
and socio-cultural relationships, like, for example, postcolonial relationships (Fitzsimmons *et al.*,  
2023, p. 1414). This helps explain the pervasive moral deficit in most of mainstream DEI  
research (Fitzsimmons *et al.*, 2023). Our focus on the Bourdieu-inspired view of IB-DEI called  
for by Vangeli (2025) hinges on a “set of critical inquiries into power relations, especially the  
power to shape interpretations of the world and guide behavior” (*ibid.*, p. 29). Such inquiries,  
however, call for a *deep* understanding of the contextual features which socially structure the  
lived experiences of stigmatised, marginalised and (often) oppressed social groups, as well as  
reproduce systemic barriers that then lead to the systematic exclusion/oppression through loss  
of power, denied access and the silencing of voices (Hellerstedt *et al.*, 2024). Yet, deep  
understanding of context cannot be achieved through contextualisation alone. It can only be  
achieved through appropriate theorising *of* context (Bamberger, 2008). It is here that IB can

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<sup>22</sup> The politization of DEI, as a political strategy underpinned by identity politics to increase the saliency of DEI  
issues and frame them as political relevant (Hay, 2007), should not be equated with politics (Wiley, 2016), which  
in our case relates to the process of critically interrogating power and ideology as part of critical studies  
(Brookfield, 2014). Unfortunately, the latter has become increasingly politicized as part of a more general attack  
on science (Rekker, 2021).

lend itself particularly well because of its innate interest in and theoretical toolkit for probing into context (Michailova, 2011).

The purpose of our scene-setting viewpoint, which rounds the second part of a double DEI special issue (see Rašković *et al.*, 2025), is thus to catalyse critical thinking on the social construction of DEI issues (Zanoni *et al.*, 2010) in IB settings through a deeper engagement with *context* in which social inequalities and inequities get produced and reproduced by actors (Lamont *et al.*, 2014). We do this by critically engaging with the topics, issues and ideas offered by the five papers in part two of the special issue, which is why we have modelled this viewpoint after that by Rašković *et al.* (2025). Like the first one, the purpose of the second viewpoint has never been to summarise or distil the five papers. Instead, we wanted to critically engage with and interrogate the social construction of DEI issues in IB settings and the role played by context in IB-DEI research.

We begin by acknowledging the positionality of the lead or corresponding authors from each of the five papers included in the second part of the special issue. Their positionality statements are thus a continuation of the guest editors' own positionality statements in Rašković *et al.* (2025). These positionality statements were originally motivated by the works of Vangeli (2025) and Ofe-Grant and colleagues (2025). Differences in length, depth, or interpretations in the positionality statements, which are by their very nature deeply personal statements of vulnerability and critical reflexive scholarship (Rašković *et al.*, 2025), capture the salience of different social identity issues for each individual and reflect the unique lived experiences of each lead or corresponding author (Goundar, 2025).

Following the authors' positionality statements, we then critically engage with the topics, issue and ideas offered in the five papers through the lenses of social justice, social construction of differences and the role played by context. Next, we then highlight the importance of a socially much more nuanced type of IB-DEI research, one in which existing

theory is not merely contextualised, and context is theorised instead. This can, however, only happen through the critical discussion of social construction and IB's role in addressing DEI in context (Beugelsdijk *et al.*, 2025; Fitzsimmons *et al.*, 2023). We conclude our viewpoint by offering also some recommendations for engaging more critically with DEI issues. We also highlight some key future directions in IB-DEI research. These can in turn serve as whetstone to sharpen IB theory and make it more relevant for *all* of society not just certain groups (Rašković *et al.*, 2025).

### DEI POSITIONALITY STATEMENTS BY LEAD RESEARCHERS

Continuing from the guest editors' positionality statements declared in the first part of the special issue (see Rašković *et al.*, 2025), the second part continues with positionality statements of the lead or corresponding authors for each of the five papers in the special issue. Using the Jacobson and Mustafa's (2019) social identity map approach, which follows a three-tiered structure of important social identities (Tier 1), salient aspects of social identities impacting lived experiences (Tier 2) and specific details tied to social identity peculiarities (Tier 3), we approach positionality as the "declaration of researchers' standpoints in relation to their research subjects/objects and their worldviews" (Rašković *et al.*, 2025, p. 6). Thus, by their very nature, positionality statements are individually unique and deeply personal, reflecting the salience of specific social identities and their impact on the lived experiences of the people providing them (Jacobson and Mustafa, 2019; Goundar, 2025).

**Yingying Zhang-Zhang:** As a Chinese Spaniard currently living and working in Japan, my academic trajectory has been shaped by transnational mobility, linguistic adaptation, and the continual negotiation of belonging. These experiences have sharpened my awareness of how identity, culture, and strategy are constructed, contested, and reproduced within IB scholarship.

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3 My positionality is grounded in multilingual and multicultural perspectives through which I  
4  
5 critically engage dominant narratives in global management research. My scholarly interests  
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7 lie at the intersection of internationalisation, strategy, people-centred inquiry, and sustainability  
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9 – domains I increasingly explore through the lens of diversity, equity, and the experiences of  
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11 underrepresented social groups. While my foundation is in international business and strategic  
12  
13 management, gendered management has become a central focus in my recent work, particularly  
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15 regarding leadership, visibility, and organisational dynamics. Such a focus complements my  
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17 interest in innovation within emerging markets, enabling me to examine how gender intersects  
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19 with strategic decision-making and institutional transformation. These questions are deeply  
20  
21 connected to my lived experience of navigating academic and professional contexts where  
22  
23 gender, language, and cultural nuance mediate authority, credibility, and access. Reflexivity  
24  
25 and inclusivity guide my methodological choices, as I aim to amplify voices that remain  
26  
27 peripheral to mainstream scholarship. In this sense, equality is not a secondary concern but a  
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29 foundational orientation – informing how I frame research questions, interpret data, and engage  
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31 with scholarly communities across borders. Through this orientation, I seek to advance a more  
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33 critical and inclusive understanding of IB, attuned to the gendered processes and social  
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35 constructions that shape organisational life across diverse contexts.  
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45 **Jane Menzies:** As a white woman growing up in multicultural Australia, I am a female  
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47 academic in the field of IB. My gendered experiences have significantly shaped my research  
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49 interests, teaching philosophy, and industry engagement. My work consistently explores  
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51 gender equity in global business contexts, including women's participation in international  
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53 assignments, which I examined as a PhD student. I am also interested in women's  
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55 entrepreneurship from an intersectional basis, and I have projects on women's entrepreneurship  
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57 in Asia, in the Pacific as well as Indigenous women entrepreneurs. My positionality as a  
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3 woman in academia drives my dedication to inclusive research practices, gender-sensitive  
4 curriculum design, ensuring that women are considered in selection processes, and mentorship  
5 of emerging scholars, particularly women and those from underrepresented backgrounds.  
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7 Through my involvement with University of Sunshine Coast's Indigenous and Transcultural  
8 Research Centre, I also engage with broader questions of intersectionality, recognising how  
9 gender intersects with culture and ethnicity status in shaping academic and professional  
10 experiences. I view my role not only as a researcher and educator but also as an advocate for  
11 equality and equity – working to ensure that academic and business environments are spaces  
12 where diverse voices are heard, valued, and empowered.  
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26 **Helene Wilkinson:** As a Pākehā (white) New Zealander, I was born out of wedlock, narrowly  
27 avoiding the adoption my grandmother had planned. Banished to the South Island to conceal  
28 her pregnancy, my 18-year-old mother quietly resisted, and I was raised by both parents.  
29 Having left school young, my mother worked hard in low-paid jobs. My father started a law  
30 degree but dropped out, settling into a local government role – a far cry from the legal career  
31 he'd envisioned. He often seemed angry about 'his lot' in life. My childhood was turbulent.  
32 Arguments and violence were common. My mother tried to leave many times, but with two  
33 young children and limited funds, we were never free for long. Our world shattered when, at  
34 16, my brother decided it was all too much. My father was never the same. None of us were –  
35 but mum and I found a way to move on. Years later, she divorced him and found happiness,  
36 including the unexpected joy of grandchildren. My educational path was unplanned. I drifted  
37 through various business-related studies before finding my way into academia. I had envisioned  
38 a future in hospitality, not education, but a different trajectory unfolded. I recall the pride in  
39 my father's face when I completed my Master of Commerce – he never lived to see me achieve  
40 a Doctor of Education. After 25 years in higher education, I've seen its inspiring potential and  
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3 its darker sides. At times, the emotional toll has strained relationships and tested my resilience.  
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5 Still, I've never lost my drive to support learners. My personal history deeply informs my  
6 professional identity: a commitment to equity, access, and the intersection of education and  
7 lived experience. I feel most at home in applied academic settings. I embrace the complexities  
8 of my background and remain motivated to help diverse students navigate their own unique,  
9 often messy and non-linear, pathways.  
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19 **Dana Ott:** As a white American female who grew up in a middle-class Midwestern household,  
20 I developed a deep curiosity about the world and the people "out there," while also feeling that  
21 life beyond Nebraska was distant and vast. Raised in a deeply religious Lutheran home that  
22 emphasised service, justice, forgiveness, and community, and in a culture where athletic  
23 prowess was highly valued, I learned early how cultural environments signal which traits are  
24 celebrated and which are marginalised. Summers on my grandparents' farms taught me  
25 humility, to cherish family, and to respect hard work. A transformative study abroad  
26 experience, not only fostered an awareness of cultural difference and a desire to understand it  
27 more fully but also opened new possibilities and led to self-initiated expatriation. These  
28 experiences, and the people around me, shaped my cultural lens and influenced my interest and  
29 understanding of learning through global mobility and developing cultural intelligence. My  
30 intercultural perspective has also been enriched by my husband, whose Indian heritage has  
31 offered ongoing opportunities to engage with cultural difference in intimate, reflexive ways,  
32 further shaping my outlook on belonging and identity. My passion for neuro inclusion stems  
33 from the impact of both personal and professional experiences and is reflected in my  
34 neurodiverse research collaborations and inclusive pedagogical practices.  
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3 **Matt Raskovic:** As a middle-class Caucasian male in my early 40s, born in socialist  
4 Yugoslavia (which later disintegrated due to the failure to sustain a supranational, multi-ethnic  
5 and multi-religious identity), I have always been drawn to social identity questions. My interest  
6 in social identity has led me to embrace economic sociology and focus on the non-market  
7 aspects of IB through the lenses of social identity theory, socio-cognitive theory and  
8 institutional theory. As a proud gay man who is both dyslexic and is dealing with the permanent  
9 effects of Bell's Palsy (i.e. a facial disability), I am particularly passionate about DEI issues  
10 and belonging. This passion has been shaped by my own search for belonging— first, as a child  
11 raised out of wedlock by a single mother who was a primary school teacher; later, as I  
12 reconciled my identity as a gay man; and more recently, as a first-generation immigrant to a  
13 country marred by colonization. Using social identity to explore human agency and intergroup  
14 dynamics, I am also interested in the origins and transformation of social structures and  
15 institutions, as well as the interplay between social structures and the agency of actors who  
16 inhabit, change and/or challenge them. While I began as a quantitative researcher, I am now  
17 primarily a qualitative researcher, drawn to critical reflexive research and postcolonial  
18 thinking. Through my Tongan partner and his family, I am also personally connected to the  
19 South Pacific and its peoples, which fuels my new-found interests in Indigenous worldviews  
20 and post-colonial studies.  
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#### 47 **ENGAGING (MORE) CRITICALLY WITH THE FIVE TOPICS IN THE SECOND** 48 **PART OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE** 49

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51 The five papers **in the second part** of the special issue explore a variety of topics. Each one of  
52 them illustrates the importance of understanding the social construction of DEI issues and their  
53 international nature – thus integrating local and global perspectives. Some of the authors, like  
54 Zhang-Zhang (2025) and Lofti Dehkharghani et al. (2025) explore perennial issues related to  
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gender. Wilkinson and Swati (2025) are also part of this group, focusing on inclusive education. Others, on the other hand, interrogate particular DEI blindspots related to neurodiversity (Ott *et al.*, 2025) and the LGBTQIA+ community (Rašković and Newburry, 2025).

Instead of providing summaries or distillations of the five papers, we have decided to more critically engage with the topics, issues and ideas in the tradition which *Critical Perspectives on International Business* are known for (Dörrenbächer and Gammelgaard, 2019). In doing so, we have asked the following question: *What role does context play in the social construction of DEI issues and what are the varied contextual factors relating to differences in country, gender, ability, sexual orientation and voice/silence?*

## THE GENDERED WORKPLACE AS A DOUBLE-LOOP SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

Zhang-Zhang's (2025) research responds to a contradicting phenomenon between Japan's economic development and (lack of) progress in addressing workplace gender equality. Her research, like other recent research (see Beugelsdijk *et al.*, 2025; Leone *et al.*, 2025), highlights the pertinent role of social construction and its influence on DEI concerns specifically in relation to workplace gender equality. For example, how micro-social norms rooted in institutional context compound deeply rooted gender stereotypes (Fitsimmons *et al.*, 2023).

Tensions between formal and informal institutions imply how unconscious micro-social norms (which put normative pressures on the society) reinforce a double gender loop (Zhang-Zhang, 2025). Such a double loop frames itself around the underlying social dynamics which fuel biases against women in the workplace, despite formal institutional aspirations to increase female labour participation and gender transparency. Beugelsdijk and colleagues (2025) attribute this conundrum to the tendency to approach global gender issues from a gender egalitarianism perspective, referring to "hierarchical status-based differences that conceive of women as inferior to men" (*ibid.*, p. 1). Such an approach views gender issues through a

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3 unidimensional and deterministic lens. It also assumes that modernisation and economic  
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5 development lead to automatic gender equality progress in which traditional norms, schemas  
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7 and institutional logics get somehow displaced by more secular worldviews, cultural values  
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9 and institutional logics.  
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12 The tug of war between Zhang-Zhang's (2025) two loops: on the one hand economic  
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14 development, formal institutions, and regulations that situate the country as a modern  
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16 developed country with high aspirations for female labour participation; and the other hand,  
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18 the historical and cultural context that maintains the gender inequality *status quo*, highlights  
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20 the imperative of context in addressing social justice issues linked to gender in a dynamic,  
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22 socially structured way (Vangeli, 2025). Beugelsdijk and colleagues (2025) emphasise the  
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24 imperative to consider more horizontal, non-hierarchical views towards gender inequality, like,  
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26 gender essentialism. Such an approach provides a more holistic way to theoretically deepen  
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28 and phenomenologically expand our understanding of gender (in)equality across countries and  
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30 socio-cultural contexts. In this way, societies can push towards equality, with appropriate  
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32 considerations for the unique differences between gender, acknowledging how gender could  
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34 influence workplace decisions or career choices.  
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40 For IB scholars, prior focus on positivist assumptions and hierarchical views on gender  
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42 have limited the interrogation of the complexity of issues surrounding women *in contexts*  
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44 (Beugeldijk *et al.*, 2025; Zhang-Zhang, 2025). The recent work by Beugelsdijk and colleagues  
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46 on global perspectives on gender inequalities provides further support to a growing number of  
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48 IB scholars leaning on sociological perspectives and social justice onto-epistemology to deepen  
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50 the theoretical interrogation of the phenomenon – recognising that cultural beliefs, norms,  
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52 schemas and world views play a considerate role in the way societies are formed and how they  
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54 exist.  
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3 MNEs have a key role to play in assuming the position of institution makers,  
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5 contributing to and sometimes driving or hindering the co-evolution of gender-relevant  
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7 institutional logics within the contexts that they operate in (Beugelsdijk *et al.*, 2025;  
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9 Fitsimmons *et al.*, 2023). Beugelsdijk (2022) argues that the MNEs' role as a firm at the nexus  
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11 of space and place necessitates that they "manage incompatible prescriptions from multiple  
12  
13 institutional logics" (*ibid.*, p. 2057). This means that MNEs exploit their agency and ability to  
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15 create pressures to address gender inequality through holistic considerations that are not linear  
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17 in nature, but considerate of social, political and economic conditions of the host countries they  
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19 operate in.  
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24 A social justice perspective requires that MNEs also consider power dynamics *in*  
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26 context (Fitzsimmons *et al.*, 2023; Vangeli, 2025). Only this can ensure that the translation of  
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28 DEI efforts is cognisant of the phenomenon of gender inequality and the local context,  
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30 employing "an iterative and generative process that reveals [and addresses] underlying control  
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32 and power positions" (Leone *et al.*, 2025, p. 848). For example, the case of Japan provides a  
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34 particularly rich, complex and somewhat paradoxical context where IB-driven acculturation  
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36 strategies become central. Zhang-Zhang (2025) provides a beautifully "thick" exploration of  
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38 the Japanese context, going beyond thick contextualisation and focusing on theorising context.  
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40 In doing so, she shows the full power of IB's potential to contribute to gender equality across  
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42 and within country borders.  
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## 49 **WOMEN'S SILENCE AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES: UNDERSTANDING**

### 50 **ACADEMIC WOMEN'S SILENCE**

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52 Lotfi Dehkharghani, Menzies, North-Samardzic and Casey's paper (2025) explores an  
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54 important aspect of gendered agency manifested through the concept of *voice*. They examine  
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56 it in a Polish academic context – which is a highly patriarchal country-industry nexus – thereby  
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3 pointing to the intersectionality of context. The impact of micro-social norms for example, like  
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5 the socialisation of boys versus girls growing up, has inculcated values of silence for the  
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7 woman and voice for the man. It points to the imposition of highly gendered micro-institutional  
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9 constraints in people's formative years, which then help reproduce specific types of gendered  
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11 institutional logics linked to family and gender roles. The work by Lotfi Dehkharghani and  
12  
13 colleagues' points to how macro-level institutional logics manifest themselves through micro-  
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15 institutional issues related to silence and a "sense of powerlessness" (*ibid.*, p. 6), where  
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17 women's diminished agency in Polish society manifests itself in their self-silencing.  
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22 The silenced voices limit the capability and power to speak about and address wide  
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24 ranging concerns (Milken *et al.*, 2003), which has particularly grave consequences for female  
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26 in Polish academia. In organisations, which includes universities, employee voice, defined as  
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28 "any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from an objectionable state of affairs,  
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30 whether through individual or collective petition" (Hirschman, 1970, p. 30), is an important  
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32 feature of justice and fairness. In the case of historically excluded populations, like those of  
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34 women, such silencing could present significant concerns for effective organisational  
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36 performance (Lavelle *et al.*, 2010). Lofti Dehkharghani et al. (2025) focus on the normative  
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38 expectations of women, which provide a festering ground in which micro-inequalities expand,  
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40 and different forms of silence persists. However, the injustice through silencing is not limited  
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42 only to women but also extends to other "competing claims" (Rawls 1976, p. 6). Visible and  
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44 invisible minorities including but not limited to ethnic and religious groups, members of  
45  
46 different races, the LGBTQIA+ community and neurodiverse people are equally silenced in  
47  
48 decision-making processes across a wide range of industries around the world (Syed, 2014).  
49  
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52  
53 The challenge for MNEs addressing DEI concerns then becomes how to navigate the  
54  
55 power dynamics and complexities of *home-host* country contexts (Leone *et al.*, 2025) when  
56  
57 creating DEI-considerate social spaces in which a wider group of employees are empowered,  
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3 not silenced – be that consciously or unconsciously. MNEs need to create and enable trust and  
4  
5 inclusivity where identities and voices are empowered without fear, allowing for the social  
6  
7 justice to take root (Syed, 2014). For IB-DEI scholars, exploring the phenomenon of employee  
8  
9 *voice* in the context of DEI is critical to understanding the process and actions that enable a just  
10  
11 workplace. The imposition of WEIRD perspectives<sup>3</sup> in host contexts perpetuates silencing of  
12  
13 voices that may be classed as aberrations to the way things are done, whereas these contexts  
14  
15 might have their own cultures and social structures. This again points to the existence of so-  
16  
17 called double loops discussed by Zhang-Zhang (2025).  
18  
19  
20

21 Yet, to explore such double loops, requires not just focusing on tensions and paradoxes  
22  
23 but also a multi-level interrogation of DEI *in* cultural contexts (Newbury *et al.*, 2022; Rašković  
24  
25 and Newbury, 2025). This in turn, however, requires sufficiently “powerful” theoretical  
26  
27 toolkits, which capture the DEI issue across multiple levels (of theorising). According to Lofti  
28  
29 *et al.* (2025), Bandura’s socio-cognitive theory of human agency is particularly well suited for  
30  
31 this, allowing IB-DEI researchers to explore human agency through individual, collective and  
32  
33 proxy agency – each of them being a triadic product of context/environment, social cognition  
34  
35 and normative behaviour.  
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## 42 DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN WORK-INTEGRATED 43 INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION: ACCESS VS. INCLUSION 44

45  
46 Wilkinson and Nagar’s (2025) viewpoint on work-integrated learning (WIL) DEI perspectives  
47  
48 addresses an overlooked research area within management education. Through its positive  
49  
50 impact on student employability (Jackson *et al.*, 2025), WIL plays an important part in  
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58  
59 <sup>3</sup> WEIRD refers to western, educated, industrialised, rich and democratic contexts, world views and lived  
60 experiences.

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2  
3 enhancing employability and the international career and social capital of graduates (Schworm  
4  
5 *et al.*, 2017).

6  
7 Driven by “embedding career-focused and work-based pedagogies” (Jackson *et al.*,  
8  
9 2025, p. 329), *inclusive* WIL refers to “a proactive, sustainable, and collaborative approach that  
10  
11 minimises barriers and enables student access to quality WIL experiences while respecting  
12  
13 individuality and life circumstances, preferences, capabilities, and expectations” (*ibid.*, p. 332).  
14  
15 In an IB education context, WIL can for example take on the role of job placements abroad or  
16  
17 at home (i.e., with foreign MNEs in the domestic market), on campus work-based pedagogy,  
18  
19 global study tours and immersion experiences, as well as virtual WIL (Kay *et al.*, 2019).

20  
21  
22 **Adapting a general OECD framework for inclusive pedagogy, Wilkinson and Nagar have**  
23  
24 **contextualised the framework in two different ways – in WIL and IB terms.** Their framework  
25  
26 acts as a roadmap for how IB educators can develop inclusive WIL experiences for IB students  
27  
28 built around the concept of intersectionality. In doing this, they also contribute to the Academy  
29  
30 of International Business’ (AIB) efforts to review and ensure IB curricula are fit for purpose  
31  
32 and prepare graduates for their careers (Kwok *et al.*, 2022).

33  
34  
35 Yet, the definition of inclusive WIL presented by Jackson and colleagues (2025) is not  
36  
37 entirely unproblematic. It conflates two issues of huge theoretical importance for DEI research:  
38  
39 *inclusion* and *access* (Garant-Jones *et al.*, 2024). Gidley and colleagues (2010) seem to  
40  
41 exclusively focus on an ex-post qualitative difference between access and inclusion. For them,  
42  
43 access refers to participation numbers, while inclusion “aims to enable all [...] to participate  
44  
45 fully in society with respect to their human dignity” (Gidley *et al.*, 2010, p. 132).

46  
47  
48 In our view, such a distinction needs more conceptual sensitivity and theoretical  
49  
50 probing into some of the structural issues and barriers preventing students to access WIL, which  
51  
52 is where the social construction of systematic barriers and structural inequalities comes in. It  
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also requires us to go beyond deficit thinking (Schuelka *et al.*, 2020). In this regard, Wilkinson and Nagar emphasise the importance of *stakeholders*, echoing Jackson and colleagues (2025).

By shining a light on WIL and making a case for how WIL experiences need to be driven by DEI principles to foster both access and inclusion, we hope that Wilkinson and Nagar's (2025) work can also influence research on how IB educators use and leverage short-term international study abroad programmes (e.g., Iskhakova and Bradly, 2023) and even global virtual experiences (e.g. Jordan *et al.*, 2024), which has so far not been framed in WIL terms nor integrated into mainstream DEI research but rather vice versa.

## NEURODIVERSITY AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS: A BIGGER PICTURE

In their viewpoint, Ott et al. (2025) highlight: "the worrying absence of discussions directly addressing neurodiversity in the latest attempts to position diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) more front and centre in the field of IB" (*ibid.*, p. 1). Indeed, neurodiversity is not just related to organisational dimensions such as international human resource management, but impacts individuals and groups beyond the organisation, which has implications for everything from recruitment to employee wellbeing and even social cohesion.

Neurodiversity is clearly an overlooked frontier of IB-DEI research (Rašković *et al.*, 2025). However, while it may at first glance seem a workplace issue, it is a much more relevant issue if examined in the context of a social ecology which sees neurodiversity as part of a natural human ecosystem serving a specific evolutionary purpose (Chapman, 2021). Studying neurodiversity can unlock new insights for a host of international human resource management (i.e., global talent management, stigma, inclusive HR and leadership practices and systems, belonging) and organisational issues (i.e., innovation, competitiveness, performance, corporate political activity, brand activism). Insights into the benefits to organisations have been the focus of existing neurodiversity research, rather than the *experience* of neurodiverse individuals

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2  
3 within those organisations. The experiences of neurodiverse individuals call for a better  
4 understanding of the social construction of their lived realities, highlighting a cognitive  
5  
6 dimension of context which IB research hasn't really examined.  
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9  
10 Such kinds of insights *are* extremely important, especially for organisations (Russo *et*  
11 *al.*, 2022), given that an estimated 15-20% of individuals are assumed to be neurodiverse  
12 globally (Ott *et al.*, 2025). This makes them a significant portion of the (global) workforce that  
13  
14 has been previously largely absent from organisational, management or even DEI research. We  
15 also acknowledge that as a series of spectrums, there is no singular experience or outcome that  
16  
17 can be applied across the neurodiverse workforce, complicating research. This lack of  
18  
19 singularity points to the need to better understand not just the social construction of diversity  
20 and differences, but also of lived experiences of various neurodiverse individuals and their  
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22 attendant groups.  
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31 However, there is *also* a bigger picture to incorporating neurodiversity into IB theory,  
32  
33 research and practice than just a DEI-inspired juxtaposition of the social justice and business  
34 cases for inclusion of neurodiverse individuals. It has to do with IB's onto-epistemology and  
35  
36 the politics of knowledge production. Addressing ableism, Brown and Leigh (2018) point to a  
37  
38 lack of presence, acknowledgement and visibility of neurodiverse academics (while learners  
39  
40 have been covered much better in the literature). They position this deficit not just in the context  
41  
42 of social justice, but in a much more fundamental context of questioning the Cartesian duality  
43  
44 between mind and body.  
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49  
50 This duality has important implications for embodiment and therefore knowledge  
51  
52 production – within academia/by academics (Brown and Leigh, 2020). For Brown and Leigh,  
53  
54 probing theoretically into the idea of embodiment (Leigh, 2018; Brown, 2021) is as much a  
55  
56 social as it is a political act (Brown and Leigh, 2020). It goes far beyond the medical and even  
57  
58 the social models related to ableism (Gillberg, 2020), including when it comes to neurodiversity  
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(Grummt, 2024; Srinivasan, 2025). While embodiment obviously focuses on the centrality of the human body and its impact on cognition via embodied cognition theory (Fincher-Kiefer, 2019), there doesn't seem to be an equivalent concept when it comes to the mind. Better understanding neurodiversity can help us better understand not just the variety of ways of thinking, understanding and seeing the world, which in turn translate into ways of *being* (Brown and Leigh, 2020; Gillberg, 2020), but also *knowing* (Fincher-Kiefer, 2019). It is also important to note that (and reflective of the complex nature of the group of conditions included and the differential effects experienced by those with neurodiverse conditions) many neurodiverse individuals do not identify as having a disability.

But what does this have to do with IB theory? **Let's take three simple examples: culture, strategic decisions (as part of strategy) and institutions.** These represent fundamental pillars of the IB discipline. The first helps us understand what drives differences in human behaviour and contextual differences that organisations, like the MNE, need to navigate across various kinds of places and spaces (Beugelsdijk, 2022). The second helps us understand how firms, especially MNEs, achieve superior market performance. The third helps us understand what constraints and enables social and economic behaviour.

If we approach culture as an independent variable, it does not only entail *values* and *norms*. It also includes mental *schemas* (Leung and Morris, 2015), which is where neurodiversity comes in. If we approach culture as a dependent variable on the other hand, we must problematise the notion of neurotypical as a positivist notion. In fact, neurodiversity is deeply socially and culturally constructed (Grummt, 2024). Ott et al. (2025) provide an excellent example of how autism is treated within indigenous Māori communities in New Zealand, where autism (Takiwātanga) is seen as people existing in their "own space and time" (Ott et al., 2025, p. 6). **Such an understanding of autism highlights the "incongruence" between a WEIRD, medicalised, understanding of neurodiversity (i.e., underscoring deficits and**

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2  
3 reduced agency) and an indigenous understanding of neurodiversity, which is more holistic and  
4  
5 strength based (Tupou *et al.*, 2025). It further opens up the space also for a spiritual  
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7 understanding of neurodiversity, where neurodiversity can become also a type of cultural  
8  
9 capital – in the Māori context, for example, a form of taonga (treasure). Such an understanding  
10  
11 allows us to also conceptualise neurodiversity not only in socio-relational terms but as part of  
12  
13 a natural social ecology (Chapman, 2021), which has huge implication for diversity studies  
14  
15 more generally by acknowledging the ecological value of niches (Chapman and Botha, 2023).  
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18  
19 Turning to the organisational level, and firm strategy, it becomes quite surprising how  
20  
21 IB scholars have overlooked the importance of neurodiversity when it comes to any decision-  
22  
23 making process involving human cognition (Niittymies and Pajunen, 2020), instead focusing  
24  
25 more on heuristics and bounded rationality (Maitland and Sammartino, 2015). Existing IB  
26  
27 studies seem to focus on managerial perceptions of uncertainty and sensemaking when making  
28  
29 decisions (Maitland and Sammartino, 2015) about market opportunities and entry modes,  
30  
31 simply acknowledging the role played by biases and perceptions in influencing decisions  
32  
33 (Kocoglu and Mithani, 2024).  
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38 The growing popularity of microfoundations theory within IB (see Santangelo *et al.*,  
39  
40 2024; Ambos *et al.*, 2025) should be reason enough for why IB scholars need to also  
41  
42 familiarise themselves better with neurodiversity. The viewpoint by Ott *et al.* (2025) lays out a  
43  
44 useful roadmap for IB scholars, especially the more management-oriented ones. We want to  
45  
46 amplify their call and extend it also to global strategy scholars under the banner of  
47  
48 microfoundations theory.  
49  
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51  
52 In terms of institutional theory, while the IB discipline has long acknowledged that  
53  
54 institutions are comprised of regulatory, normative and *cognitive* dimensions (Scott, 1995), the  
55  
56 cognitive dimension has received far less research and theoretical attention than the other two.  
57  
58 Using neurodiversity as a theoretical toolkit can help IB scholars unlock and theorise about the  
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3 cognitive microfoundations of institutional theory (Frödin, 2024), helping to advance micro-  
4  
5 institutional theory (Fellin and Foss, 2019) by integrating a neurodiversity toolkit into existing  
6  
7 microfoundations theory and its growing application within IB.  
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10 What is clear is that neurodiversity within IB and global strategy has been neglected,  
11  
12 despite its vast potential to better understand the social construction of lived realities of a large  
13  
14 group of people and its potential to expand or sharpen existing theory; for example, like our  
15  
16 understanding of the cognitive aspects of institutions – since people are not merely institution  
17  
18 takers. Moreover, like the other intersectional dimensions highlighted in this special issue, we  
19  
20 call for research within and beyond organisational walls and performance metrics to focus more  
21  
22 on social construction and social structuration of human behaviour more generally.  
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## 28 **CAN LGBTQIA+ RESEARCH SHARPEN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS THEORY?**

29  
30 The IB field is characterised by its theoretical exploration of the interfaces between place, space  
31  
32 and organisations (Beugelsdijk, 2022) – especially multinational enterprises (MNEs). Within  
33  
34 this trifecta, the concept of *space* most directly relates to context, not just as a way of  
35  
36 contextualising existing IB theories but also as a way of *theorising* context (Bamberger, 2008)  
37  
38 in the effort of challenging, extending and hopefully also building new theory (Crane *et al.*,  
39  
40 2015).  
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45 Beugelsdijk links the idea of *space* to socio-economic contexts, highlighting that “the  
46  
47 context in which a firm operates is a continuous space characterised by qualitative disjunctures  
48  
49 that distinguish one place from another (...) and can be found at every spatial level” (2022, p.  
50  
51 2053). He goes on by listing supranational regions, countries, sub-national regions, states, cities  
52  
53 and other forms of clusters as examples, which have clear borders and allow us to distinguish  
54  
55 between *insiders* and *outsiders*. Hence, the idea of *space* is unequivocally linked to the  
56  
57 mechanisms of social identification (Benko and Strohmeier, 1997). Social identification is  
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3 important also for understanding MNEs (Rašković and Takacs Haynes, 2021) and multi-level  
4  
5 strategy implementation (Šilenskytė and Smale, 2021).  
6  
7

8 The centrality of space in IB theory has given rise to an institutional fields' perspective  
9  
10 under the umbrella of institutional theory (Greenwood *et al.*, 2011), capturing systems of  
11  
12 common meaning and more frequent interactions with insider actors (Scott, 1995). At the  
13  
14 individual level, this would correspond to Bourdieu's notion of a socially experienced *habitus*  
15  
16 (Vangeli, 2025). Institutional fields have specific institutional logics which outline prescribing  
17  
18 principles that shape reality interpretations, prescribe appropriate behaviours and provide  
19  
20 formulas for defined success (Thornton, 2004), thus directly impacting the social construction  
21  
22 of lived experiences. While the majority of institutional logics explored within the IB literature  
23  
24 relates to *markets*, *states* and *democracy*, the incorporation of LGBTQIA+ perspectives  
25  
26 introduces the institutional logics of *family* which, despite being a central building block of  
27  
28 social life, has received virtually no theoretical or empirical attention within IB and IB policy  
29  
30 research apart from research on family firms (Arregle *et al.*, 2024).  
31  
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35 For example, while the institutional logic of family follows kinship and hereditary  
36  
37 principles in heteronormative contexts, the idea of a *chosen family* is more important within  
38  
39 LGBTQIA+ communities and emphasizes the importance of shared lived experiences  
40  
41 (Matarese *et al.*, 2023). In so-called Ballroom culture of the 1980s and 1990s, for example,  
42  
43 mentors of young LGBTQIA+ youth were usually referred to as *mothers* and LGBTQIA+  
44  
45 families often referred to as *houses* (Bailey, 2011).  
46  
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49 We believe that through incorporating LGBTQIA+ perspectives into existing IB  
50  
51 research, such perspectives can help enrich, extend and perhaps even advance various strands  
52  
53 of institutional theory, as well as research on stigma. Both of these areas call for bridging micro  
54  
55 and macro levels of theorising (Cowen *et al.*, 2022). Multi-level theorising is relatively new to  
56  
57 IB research. In terms of institutional theory, it has received new oxygen through growing  
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3 interest in and application of microfoundations theory within IB research (Santangelo *et al.*,  
4 2024; Ambos *et al.*, 2025). Santangelo *et al.* (2024), for example, outline three sets of questions  
5 which can facilitate linking microfoundational experiences to meso-level organisational  
6 outcomes and even macro-level outcomes. The three sets of questions are: *who-what* questions,  
7 the *when-where* questions and the *why-how* questions.  
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11  
12 Looking at the LGBTQIA+ community, the who-what questions can, for example, help  
13 link individual-level experiences and identities of members of the LGBTQIA+ community  
14 (i.e., the coming out experience, sense of identity conflict, discrimination experiences) with  
15 organisational-level processes (i.e., expatriation, innovation, creativity) and outcomes (i.e.,  
16 competitiveness, performance) through mechanisms linked to intersectionality.  
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21 Similarly, the when-where and why-how questions also offer useful lenses to  
22 understanding space- and time-based context and contingencies, as well as the causal and social  
23 mechanisms associated with LGBTQIA+ experiences shaping and driving specific IB activities  
24 and outcomes. Among the latter, *stigma*, would probably be a cornerstone issue (Aranda *et al.*,  
25 2023). Rašković's and Newburry's (2025) viewpoint offers a good overview of how individual-  
26 level stigma experiences of and within the LGBTQIA+ communities might influence  
27 organisational-level innovation, creativity and culture, as well as country-level outcomes  
28 linked to economic development and competitiveness. While the acknowledgement of stigma  
29 as a multi-level phenomenon is far from new (Zhang *et al.*, 2021), understanding multi-level  
30 mechanisms and cross-level outcomes of stigma in and linked to organisational-level contexts  
31 remains poorly understood to this day within management more widely (Mitchell *et al.*, 2025).  
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35  
36 The contested nature of LGBTQIA+ issues across different levels also brings an  
37 additional dimension into existing understanding of institutions, since the vast majority of  
38 studies of institutions do not consider competing institutional forces (Gardberg *et al.*, 2023).  
39 Thornton and Ocasio, for example, emphasise (2008, p. 101):  
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3 *The contradictions inherent in the differentiated set of institutional logics*  
4 *provide individuals, groups, and organizations with cultural resources for*  
5 *transforming individual identities, organizations, and society.*  
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10  
11 We believe such contradictory forces, which are in the case of LGBTQIA+ issues highly  
12 polarised and operate across different levels, also have direct bearing on the IB field's ability  
13 to understand and theorise the impact of social identification on economic behaviour through  
14 the mechanisms of so-called identity economics. It further has the potential to enrich the  
15 understanding of identity politics and its impact on MNEs and the global economy (Rašković  
16 and Takacs Haynes, 2021).  
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25 MNEs are not just organisational *spaces* where social identities play out and become  
26 constructed but are also becoming important socio-political actors shaping politics of identity  
27 and catalysing social change (Rašković and Takacs Haynes, 2021). An example would be  
28 companies, like, Chic-Fill-A taking a strong anti-LGBTQIA+ stance. On the other hand, most  
29 MNEs in the pharmaceutical, finance and IT sectors would focus on advancing LGBTQIA+  
30 causes in different foreign markets through a mixture of embassy and advocacy-type  
31 LGBTQIA+ models (Glasgow and Twaronite, 2019).  
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41 Integrating LGBTQIA+ voices, perspectives, experiences and issues into existing IB  
42 research can also help IB scholars, policymakers and practitioners better understand social  
43 movements (Tian, 2021) and socio-political risks (Lawton, 2023; Beugelsdijk, 2024) which are  
44 essential building blocks of MNEs' non-market strategies (Shirodkar *et al.*, 2024). Exploring  
45 LGBTQIA+ issues can also help in providing insights for stakeholder management theory and  
46 its intersection with global strategy, transnational governance and the issue of re-solving global  
47 wicked problems through IB activity (Rašković, 2022); especially in MNE global strategy  
48 contexts (Rašković, 2024).  
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3 By moving beyond the business case vs. social justice juxtaposition driving much of  
4  
5 mainstream DEI research, we believe LGBTQIA+ research can help integrate the social and  
6  
7 political aspects of an important IB research area. Here, it is again important to clearly  
8  
9 distinguish between the political nature of DEI and LGBTQIA+ advocacy, not to be confused  
10  
11 with the politization of LGBTQIA+ issues as a form of weaponizing identity. At a theoretical  
12  
13 level, the sharpening of IB research through LGBTQIA+ topics can strengthen our  
14  
15 understanding of diversity as a form of distance (Doh, 2021), provide a more nuanced  
16  
17 understanding of foreignness and the liability of foreignness (Lu *et al.*, 2022), as well as help  
18  
19 us explore the processes of *othering* (Henry and Leroy-Dyer, 2025) which arise from various  
20  
21 forms of social categorisation across place and space (Beugelsdijk, 2022) where the idea of the  
22  
23 *other* becomes socially constructed by those in positions of power and authority.  
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### 31 **WAYS OF MOVING FORWARD FOR IB-DEI RESEARCH**

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33 Within business and management studies, research on DEI has mostly been in the function of  
34  
35 organisational performance emphasising its business case (Fitzsimmons *et al.*, 2023). Though  
36  
37 relevant, such myopic perspectives disconnect research fields from the actual socially-  
38  
39 constructed realities and lived experiences of people and social groups.  
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42  
43 Whether in relation to age, gender, religion, sexuality, identity, race, ethnicity,  
44  
45 (dis)ability or neurological profiles, social construction is important for transcending our  
46  
47 understanding of diversity as a mere form of distance from a standard (Doh, 2021). Instead of  
48  
49 the linear, deterministic way of exploring DEI in relation to business performance, multi-level  
50  
51 perspectives on DEI can allow us to interrogate social justice issues that DEI brings to the fore,  
52  
53 through a deeper interrogation of lived experiences and the forces that structure them within  
54  
55 teams, organisations, societies, countries, regions and global cities (Newburry *et al.*, 2022).  
56  
57 Zhang-Zhang's (2025) interrogation of the gender double loop highlights the strong influence  
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3 of culture on stereotypes, micro-social norms around women and other historically excluded  
4  
5 populations, emphasising the importance of an integration of both *etic* and *emic* approaches in  
6  
7 IB-DEI interrogations (Jakobsen *et al.*, 2018). Instead of outside interrogations of others, IB-  
8  
9 DEI research needs to more carefully explore the construction and social structuration of lived  
10  
11 experiences of key stakeholder groups, as well as the underlying methodologies and theories  
12  
13 used to understand them. The first step in this process is a thicker understanding of context and  
14  
15 a move from contextualising theories to theorising context where applicable (Bamberger,  
16  
17 2008).

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21 Understanding context and its implication for IB is an ongoing conversation in the IB  
22  
23 field and though significant progress has been made, certain issues, and levels of  
24  
25 contextualising seem to have made more progress than others (Michailova, 2011). We propose  
26  
27 that IB-DEI interrogations must recognise contexts “as something that is multifaceted and that  
28  
29 both influences and is influenced by the phenomenon under investigation” (Michailova, 2011,  
30  
31 p.130). This implies that our understanding of differences and diversity must be informed by  
32  
33 two-way influences, recursive logics and multidimensional co-determinants. In this way,  
34  
35 microfoundational interrogations of DEI in IB, necessitate innovative research methods that  
36  
37 are not deterministic (Beugelsdijk *et al.*, 2025), positivist (Zhang-Zhang, 2025) nor ought they  
38  
39 be determined by outsiders (Jakobsen *et al.*, 2018). This should, however, not come at the  
40  
41 expense of rigour, transparency or parsimony.

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47 IB-DEI research, like research in multi-cultural contexts, needs to be considerate of the  
48  
49 kind of primary data being collected, especially given the tacit nature of the knowledge held  
50  
51 by individuals who might have over the years been excluded, silenced or disregarded. Pluralism  
52  
53 and nuanced research designs enable a deeper interrogation of the narratives and lived realities  
54  
55 that surround DEI *in context* (Fitzsimmons *et al.*, 2023). Jakobsen and colleagues (2018)  
56  
57 recommend nuanced primary data collection methods that lend themselves to the ethnographic  
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3 traditions of so-called thick descriptions, accounting for the complexity of the context to be  
4  
5 interrogated and effectively understood. They argue that in such studies, “it is the sum of the  
6  
7 parts in that context that makes us capable of understanding the role of the individual part in  
8  
9 that context” (p. 255). In addition to the kind of primary data collected, IB-DEI research ought  
10  
11 to consider reflective inclusive enquiry designs that empower those being studied and should  
12  
13 be guided by both the co-creative principles of culturally appropriate research methodologies  
14  
15 (Ofe-Grant *et al.*, 2025), as well as the moral imperatives of not merely studying others but  
16  
17 engaging with them as partners in research and in the function of empowering them (Henry  
18  
19 and Leroy-Dyer, 2025). Such approaches also require sensitivity to the researchers’  
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IB research needs to opt for research methods that conduct research *with* and *for*, instead of *on*, which has been typically the case (Rašković *et al.*, 2025). This can, for example, imply engaging in co-creative research designs that employ more narrative pictogram data collection and analysis to better unearth the complexity of interrogated issues (Jakobsen *et al.*, 2018). We recommend that IB-DEI researchers should engage in the practice of integrating reflective positionality statements to not just unearth potential biases and choices as researchers (Rašković *et al.*, 2025), but also to become more aware of the socially constructed realities and phenomena they have experienced and approach in their research. A growing number of IB phenomena and issues bare characteristics of so-called wicked problems where the definition, labelling and operationalising of issues and phenomena is in itself part of the problems’ wickedness, narrowing down possible ways of resolving them (Rašković, 2024).

## CONCLUSION

Though IB-DEI research has been particularly criticised for its narrow focus on the business case for DEI (Fitzsimmons *et al.*, 2023), its lack of interest in the moral imperatives (van Dijk

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3 *et al.*, 2012) and social justice considerations (Vangeli, 2025), the contributions in the second  
4 part of special issue challenge us to interrogate the role of context in DEI perennial issues like  
5 gender in the workplace (Zhang Zhang, 2025), access to work-integrated learning (Wilkinson  
6 and Nagar, 2025) and voice (Lofti Dehkharghani *et al.*, 2025). DEI blindspots related to  
7 neurodiversity (Ott *et al.*, 2025) and LGBTQIA+ (Rašković and Newbury, 2025) are also  
8 conscientiously interrogated, highlighting the pressing role of space and place in social issues  
9 of difference and the interplay between power, access, and voice (Hellerstedt *et al.*, 2024).

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19 We believe the IB discipline in general and the IB-DEI field of research in particular  
20 need to move away from WEIRD-centric perspectives (i.e., perspectives focused on western,  
21 educated, industrialised, rich and democratic contexts), often leading to prioritising  
22 demographically-dependent DEI. They also need to more deeply theoretically engage with the  
23 role context plays in the social structuration and performativity of DEI issues (Fitzsimmons *et*  
24 *al.*, 2023; Rašković *et al.*, 2025). For IB researchers, this means internalising context in their  
25 conceptual frameworks, moving contextual characteristics from simple control variables and  
26 moderators, to more complex mediators and sometimes even dependent variables.  
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38 The five papers in the second part of our DEI double special issue, along with our  
39 critical discussions and recommendations for future research underscore the need to better  
40 theorise context (Bamberger, 2008; Michailova, 2011), which can only happen when we start  
41 to unpack the social construction and structuration of issues, problems and phenomena as part  
42 of a critically engaged IB research (Cairns, 2019; Dörrenbächer and Gammelgaard, 2019).  
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49 We close this two-part special issue on DEI with a challenge to the IB discipline to not  
50 only adopt a stronger social justice perspective (Vangeli, 2025) but also to better ground it in  
51 empathy, which comes in different forms – as moral empathy, an affective empathy, a cognitive  
52 empathy and a behavioural empathy (Licsandru *et al.*, 2025). The capacity to see the others'  
53 point of view and consider their perspectives and lived experiences is one of the antidotes  
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3 against the wickedness of the the times we live in and the world which we occupy and also  
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5 reproduce (Rašković, 2024).  
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7 We are also cognisant of the fact that when we chose to interrogate DEI in IB, we had  
8  
9 no idea that our conclusions would come at what can only be described as an inflection point  
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11 for social justice and fairness across society globally. Recent global news highlights not just  
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13 increased tensions and the neglect of a wide range of perspectives but of eroding social  
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15 cohesion and fractured global society marred by identity politics. The idea of Huntington's  
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17 clashing civilisations, till recently believed to be an outdated notion, seems to again be  
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19 increasingly relevant, with DEI issues displacing religion as a source of clashes. We hope that  
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21 the contributions in both issues spur critical and relevant scholarship within both the IB-DEI  
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23 and the IB fields of study.  
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28 Lastly, we would also like to express our gratitude to the Editor-in-Chief, Professor  
29  
30 Rudolf Sinkovics, for his steadfast support to critically engage with IB-DEI issues and  
31  
32 questions. The special issue would also not be possible without the contributing authors, the  
33  
34 reviewers, and mentors in the initial paper development workshops, and would be pointless  
35  
36 without intrigued readers, challenged to critically engage with IB-DEI and play their part in  
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38 co-creating a more just world powered by critical thinking agency.  
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Reviewer comment	Response	Pages & Notes
<b>Editor comments</b>		
<p>We have now obtained input from two committed reviewers. Reviewer 1 makes very good points which I wish you can consider in further revising the contribution, following a brief digestion period. Please provide a response to the reviewing team (use an attachment rather than the ScholarOne online form, so that this is downloadable with the revised paper). I may not send this out again, if you manage to respond appropriately. Thank you for your work. If you need more time, this is OK, but let me know in advance, and it may lead to a re-scheduling of the special issue, pushing this back by one issue. However, that is not a problem at this stage</p>	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to review and resubmit our manuscript, which is Part 2 of a two-part double DEI special issue in <i>Critical Perspectives on International Business</i>. We have carefully gone through yours and the reviewer's comments and have revised the document using track changes. We would also like to emphasise that this scene-setting viewpoint has been modelled directly after the Rašković <i>et al.</i> (2025) viewpoint in Part 1 of the double DEI special issue. Hence, this is not a 'typical' editorial where one mostly summarizes or distils the individual contributions to the special issue. Instead, we problematise and much more critically engage with the topics, issues and the idea presented in the papers that make up Part 2 of the special issue.</p> <p>We would also like to draw your attention to Reviewer 1's comment on the included positionality statements. While we have more explicitly clarified in our revision that these are positionality statements of lead or corresponding authors, and not that of the guest editors, the reviewer still assumes that this has somehow compromised the double-blind peer review process. They might mistakenly assume that some of these papers might still be in the late stages of the review processes. However, this is not the case. Since <i>all</i> of the five papers have already been published as "early cite", the</p>	

	<p>integrity of the double-blind peer review process has been maintained completely intact. Nonetheless, since we did make it more explicit that the positionality statements in this viewpoint should be seen as an extension of the guest editors' positionality statements in Part 1 of the special issue (i.e., Rašković et al., 2025), this may hint to the reviewer who the authors of this viewpoint are. Given the "Minor R&amp;R" decision, and as you have yourself indicated, this issue needs to be kept in mind should you chose to send the revised manuscript back to Reviewer 1 for further review.</p> <p>In this document we detail the changes made based on the reviewer comments, as well as the rationale behind them. Thank you for your steadfast support and constructive feedback.</p>	
<b>Reviewer Comments</b>		
<b>Reviewer 1</b>		
<p>Your paper needs to be more explicitly positioned as a distillation of the five papers appearing in the special issue. I appreciate that you intend to make an original contribution, and you draw on Vangeli in this regard. However, your intent to review the five contributions in the light of a specific Bourdieu-inspired framing of the problem of inequality to draw larger conclusions about moving forward in IB research and that takes too long to establish.</p>	<p>Dear reviewer, in our revision, starting with the Abstract, but also in the revised Introduction, we have now more clearly indicated that this is <i>not</i> meant to be a 'traditional' editorial which would summarise and distil the five papers that make up part two of the double special issue. Just like the scene-setting viewpoint in part one of the double DEI special issue (see Rašković et al., 2025), the purpose of this viewpoint was to critically engage with the ideas and topics that the five papers discuss, not to distil or summarise the five papers. This was done in</p>	<p>Abstract: Purpose section (lines 1-6)</p> <p>Introduction: bottom of p. 4 and top of p. 5.</p> <p>Example of added clarification (pp. 4-5): <i>"The purpose of this scene-setting viewpoint, which rounds up Part 2 of the double DEI special issue (see also Rašković et al., 2025), is thus to catalyse critical thinking on the social construction of DEI issues (Zanoni et al., 2010) in IB settings through a deeper engagement with context in which social inequalities and inequities get produced and</i></p>

	<p>discuss with the handling Editor-in-Chief of the journal. To round up the two-part special issue, it is thus imperative that the scene-setting viewpoints that make up part one and part two of the double DEI special issue are similar in their nature, structure and writing styles.</p> <p>We have taken on board your point around the dragged-out nature of our Introduction (i.e., your comment around taking “too long to establish”). As you will see, we have <i>significantly</i> streamlined the Introduction, cutting its length by almost half. We also need to underscore that while this viewpoint is motivated by Vangeli’s (2025) call for a Bourdieusian perspective on IB-DEI, our intent has never been to interrogate Bourdieu’s perspectives on ethics. Rather, we simply want to draw on them to craft a critical socially engaged research agenda for IB-DEI. This has now been made more explicit in the Introduction, and we can now, in hindsight, see the issues with our original Introduction.</p>	<p><i>reproduced by actors (Lamont et al., 2014). We do this by critically engaging with the topics, issues and ideas offered by the five papers in Part 2 of the special issue. In this regard, we follow a similar scene-setting viewpoint by Rašković et al. (2025), which rounded up Part 1 of the double DEI special issue. However, like the first one, the purpose of the second viewpoint is not to summarise or distil the five papers but instead critically engage with and interrogate the social construction of DEI issues in IB settings and the role played by context in IB-DEI research.”</i></p>
<p>Your use of 'DEI' is imprecise. DEI is introduced as an area of research, then couched in terms of public policy and then corporate strategy. What is DEI to you? You insist it should be depoliticised, and yet it seems from the perspective of a social movement to be inherently political. Vangeli characterises Bourdieu's work as critical inquiry into power relations - how is this</p>	<p>Thank you for pointing out the “imprecise” use of DEI terminology in our paper. To clarify our understanding of DEI, we have provided a definition of DEI, which we included as a footnote at the bottom of the first page of the Introduction.</p> <p>As for the comment regarding the depoliticisation of DEI vs. the inherently political nature of inquiring into power</p>	<p>Page 3 (first page of the Introduction)</p> <p>Our understanding of DEI: “<i>We primarily draw on American Psychological Association’s social identity-based understanding of diversity, which encompasses the idea of variety in work, organisational and community contexts related to race, ethnicity, culture, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual</i></p>

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depoliticised?

relations, we addressed this point in the following way. First, we operationalised the idea of politization of DEI as the “the weaponisation of identity politics for political purposes to divide society and systematically exclude or oppress certain social groups” (Catalano Weeks & Allen, 2023). We then further made an explicit distinction between the politization of DEI issues (as increasing the saliency of and framing of social identity issues as political issue; see Hay, 2007) and politics (see Wiley, 2016).

*orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, spirituality, disability, age, national origin, hair texture, immigration status, and language (APA, n.d.), also adopted by Fitzsimmons et al. (2023). However, our understanding of DEI is based on not merely sensitivity to variety but equally to issues of disparity (i.e., link to equity) and separation (i.e., linked to inclusion and voice) stemming from the work of Harrison and Klein (2007). In this regard, we understand DEI research as a specific type of institutional field, which refers to a socially constructed area of common understanding in which multiple actors interact around a shared issue, and in doing so reproduce or change institutions (Zietsma et al., 2017).”*

Distinction between politization of DEI issues and the political nature of interrogating power and ideology as part of critical management theory on p. 4: *“In this regard, politization of DEI, as a political strategy underpinned by identity politics to increase the saliency of DEI issues and frame them as political relevant (Hay, 2007), should not be equated with politics (Wiley, 2016), which in our case relates to the process of critically interrogating power and ideology as part of critical studies (Brookfield, 2014). Unfortunately, the latter has become increasingly politicized as part of a more general attack on science (Rekker, 2021).”*

Positionality statements put a big hole in the double-blind review process. I appreciate the

Thank you for raising this point. First of all, we would like to clarify that the positionality

Abstract (last paragraph): *“Following positionality statements of the guest editors*

<p>motivation and the candour, but I must remain anonymous. You each take a different approach to establishing your positions - perhaps that is inevitable, but there is also an asymmetry: does an author's omission of personal trauma, family status, religious upbringing, or sexual orientation mean these things are not relevant in their particular case?</p>	<p>statements are not our own (as the authors of this scene-setting viewpoint), but in fact those of a lead or a corresponding author from each of the five papers included in the special issue. As all the five papers have already been accepted and are already available in CPOIB through "Early cite" the integrity of the double-blind review process has not been compromised in any way. To further avoid any confusion with regards to whose positionality statements have been included and <i>why</i> they have been included, we have made this even more explicitly clear in both the revised Abstract and Introduction.</p> <p>With regards to the diversity of social identities invoked and the heterogeneity of the positionality statements, it is a longstanding critical reflexivity practice that individuals should not be forced to disclose any parts of their social identities in their positionality statements they do not feel comfortable sharing (Robertson <i>et al.</i>, 2020). The omission of specific issues, like, personal trauma, family status, religious upbringing or sexual orientation, usually means the issue is not as salient and has not been invoked in accordance with the social identity map methodology by Jacobson and Mustafa (2019), which we used.</p>	<p><i>in Part 1, this viewpoint in Part 2 of the special issue also provides positionality statements by lead authors from each of the five papers in this special issue."</i></p> <p>Introduction (p. 5): "<i>We begin our viewpoint by acknowledging the positionality of the lead or corresponding authors from each of the five papers included in Part 2 of the DEI double special issue. Their positionality statements should be seen as a continuation of the guest editors' own positionality statements in Part 1 (Vol. 21, No. 1) and were motivated by the works of Vangeli (2025) and Ofe-Grant and colleagues (2025). Differences in length, depth, or interpretations in the positionality statements, which are by their very nature deeply personal statements of vulnerability and critical reflexive scholarship (Rašković et al., 2025), capture the salience of different social identity issues for each individual and reflect the unique lived experiences of each lead or corresponding author (Goundar, 2025)."</i></p>
<p>The weakest aspect of the paper is the walk-through of the submissions to the special issue. This feels too unstructured and ad libitum. The reader should be presented with</p>	<p>Thank you for this valuable comment which strikes at the core of how this viewpoint was envisaged and also subsequently discussed with the Editor-in-Chief as part of concluding</p>	<p>Engaging critically with the five topics in the special issue (p. 11): "<i>Instead of providing summaries or distillations of the five papers, which is usually part of a traditional editorial,</i></p>

<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46</p> <p>a tighter extraction of key insights from the collective of papers, rather than what feels like an extemporaneous exploration. Setting a clearer set of issues or questions in advance, that allows for a more symmetrical and disciplined review of the papers would be more efficient.</p> <p>You can reverse-engineer these - the reader does not need to wander about with you looking for inspiration. In that way too, we can see how the different papers illuminate some of the important ground and where there remain issues that remain undiscussed.</p>	<p>a two-part double DEI special issue. The motivation, structure and style of writing of this viewpoint directly mirror the viewpoint by Rašković <i>et al.</i> (2025), which rounded up Part 1 of the special issue. Thus, while we are mindful of your comments, we also need to take into consideration the continuity with Part 1 of the special issue. Structuring this viewpoint significantly differently would thus in our opinion provide an imbalance.</p> <p>In our revision of the Introduction, we hopefully made it now clearer what the motivating idea and precise logic of the viewpoint is, and how it represents a direct continuation of a similar viewpoint by Rašković <i>et al.</i> (2025) rounding up Part 1 of the special issue.</p> <p>We believe the interrogation of the social construction of DEI issues, which was the core purpose of this viewpoint, can only be achieved through a robust and multifaceted critical engagement with the topics, issues and ideas covered by the five papers in the special issue. Hence, distilling the five papers to short summaries and key issues would not allow us to critically engage and problematise the ideas presented by the authors in the tradition of critical management scholarship that CPolB is known for.</p> <p>However, to provide more clarity to the reader, we have more explicitly stated our guiding research question, which has guided</p>	<p><i>we have decided to critically engage with the topics, issues and ideas covered in the five papers in-line with both the critical management studies tradition for which Critical Perspectives on International Business are known (Dörrenbächer and Gammelgaard, 2019) and also to maintain continuity with Part 1 of the special issue (see Rašković et al., 2025). In doing so, we have asked the following question: What role does context play in the social construction of DEI and explore varied contextual factors as they relate to differences in country, gender, ability, sexual orientation and voice/silence? Through our critical interrogation and problematisation of related DEI issues, we then highlight opportunities for IB-DEI scholarship and practice”</i></p>
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	<p>our critical engagement with and interrogation of the five papers, namely:  <i>What role does context play in the social construction of DEI issues and what are the varied contextual factors relating to differences in country, gender, ability, sexual orientation and voice/silence?</i></p> <p>We hope this question provides more structure through which we interrogate the papers in the special issues, as we highlight the importance of context for the social construction of DEI.</p>	
<p>An unusual omission from your references is van Dijk, H., van Engen, M. &amp; Paauwe, J. Reframing the Business Case for Diversity: A Values and Virtues Perspective. <i>J Bus Ethics</i> 111, 73–84 (2012).  <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-012-1434-z">https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-012-1434-z</a></p>	<p>Thank you for the recommendation to van Dijk et al (2012) their positions on the business case for diversity is important to our discussion of ethical views of DEI issues in IB, in particular as it relates to the delineation between deontological and utilitarian perspectives, and the value of a virtue ethics perspective for its consideration for context. We have tightened this position in our discussion of the disparities between the business case for diversity and our call for a more context- focused perspective towards diversity in International Business. As you will see, we now refer to this seminal piece of work already in the opening paragraph of the Introduction and in the conclusion section.</p>	<p>Introduction (p.3): <i>“Recently, powerful anti-DEI ideologies have contributed to the defunding and erosion of not just DEI activities but of fundamental social justice and humanity principles with many multinational enterprises making significant U-turns on DEI issues, prioritising utilitarian logics over more value-based perspectives like virtue (van Dijk et al., 2012)”</i></p> <p>Introduction (p 4): <i>“Instead, we need to defend a virtue-based position towards DEI (van Dijk et al., 2012) which can lead to the fulfilment of DEI’s core values and more effective implementation (Myeong, 2025).”</i></p> <p>Conclusion (p 28): <i>Though IB-DEI research has been particularly criticised for its narrow focus on the business case for DEI (Fitzsimmons et al., 2023), ignoring moral imperatives (van Dijk et al., 2012) and social justice considerations (Vangeli, 2025), the</i></p>

		<p><i>contributions in this special issue deepens our understanding of DEI in perennial issues like gender in the workplace (Zhang Zhang, 2025), access to work-integrated learning (Wilkinson and Nagar, 2025) and voice (Lofti Dehkharghani et al., 2025).</i></p>
<p>Over-dependent on a single inspiration (Vangeli) paper, which I think closes doors on other forms of insight. Bourdieu not an 'ethicist' (and impatient with philosophers, which makes the appeal to Rawls a little awkward</p>	<p>The Vangeli (2025) was published in Part 1 of the double DEI special issue, which is why we have used it as a bridge between the two parts of the special issue. Furthermore, we have drawn on the Vangeli paper because of the identified lack of addressing moral issues in the review of DEI issues in IB journals by Fitzsimmons <i>et al.</i> (2023, p. 1417), which Vangeli was the first among IB scholars to operationalise through a Bourdieusian framework. We would also like to highlight that adopting a specific philosophical perspective is not uncommon in critical management studies, as recently discussed by Spicer and Alvesson (2025) in their review of critical management studies within <i>Journal of Management Studies</i> (Vol. 62 No. 1, pp. 446-483).</p> <p>Because Bourdieu's framework is unknown to a vast majority of IB scholars, we thought it would be useful to draw on Vangeli's work, as it can further transcend the utilitarian vs. deontological dichotomy discussed already by van Dijk <i>et al.</i> (2012). While we have indeed referenced the paper many times, we do not believe we have drawn exclusively on this paper. In fact, we have also drawn heavily on two seminal DEI review/overview papers in IB contexts (i.e., Fitzsimmons <i>et</i></p>	

	<p><i>al.</i>, 2023; Newburry <i>et al.</i> 2022) and have furthermore incorporated key ideas around the conceptualisation of diversity (Harrison and Klein, 2007) and the utilitarian vs. deontological perspectives on DEI (van Dijk <i>et al.</i>, 2012).</p> <p>With regards to your comment about Rawls, we acknowledge the ‘irony’ and have thus decided to not refer to Rawls’ work.</p>	
<p>Do the conclusions adequately tie together the other elements of the paper?: Yes, the wrap-up is effective, but believe might be more so.</p>	<p>We have now revised the conclusion and structured it into two parts: a close for the paper, and also a close to the double special issue.</p> <p>In the first part, we have better focused our conclusions on the crux of the paper explicitly showing how the contributions in issue have interrogated DEI in varied contexts. We emphasise the contributions of the papers in the issue and summarise the relevance of context, which has been the focus of the paper’s social construction and social justice perspective.</p> <p>Given that the Conclusion is not only about this paper, but also more broadly about the IB DEI double special issue, we also close off the double special issue and invite IB DEI scholars to critically engage in the complexity and nuances that context presents in our understanding of DEI</p>	<p><i>Conclusion (p. 28): “Though IB-DEI research has been particularly criticised for its narrow focus on the business case for DEI (Fitzsimmons <i>et al.</i>, 2023), its lack of interest in the moral imperatives (van Dijk <i>et al.</i>, 2012) and social justice considerations (Vangeli, 2025), the contributions in the second part of special issue challenge us to interrogate the role of context in DEI perennial issues like gender in the workplace (Zhang Zhang, 2025), access to work-integrated learning (Wilkinson and Nagar, 2025) and voice (Lofti Dehkharghani <i>et al.</i>, 2025). DEI blindspots related to neurodiversity (Ott <i>et al.</i>, 2025) and LGBTQIA+ (Rašković and Newbury, 2025) are also conscientiously interrogated, highlighting the pressing role of space and place in social issues of difference and the interplay between power, access, and voice (Hellerstedt <i>et al.</i>, 2024). We believe the IB discipline in general and the IB-DEI field of research in particular need to move away from WEIRD-centric perspectives (i.e., perspectives focused on western, educated,</i></p>

		<p><i>industrialised, rich and democratic contexts), often leading to prioritising demographically-dependent DEI. They also need to more deeply theoretically engage with the role context plays in the social structuration and performativity of DEI issues (Fitzsimmons et al., 2023; Rašković et al., 2025). For IB researchers, this means internalising context in their conceptual frameworks, moving contextual characteristics from simple control variables and moderators, to more complex mediators and sometimes even dependent variables.”</i></p>
Reviewer 2		
<p>What a refreshing and timely read! I enjoyed reading this article from start to finish, which I hope conveys just how insightful and engaging it is. I have only a few minor suggestions that should take no more than an hour to implement. Otherwise, I absolutely hope that this piece is published soon. All the best, and congratulations on being brave, courageous, and forward-thinking in tackling such an important IB-DEI topic.</p>	<p>Thank you for your positive comments</p>	
<p>Yes, the paper provides new and significant insights into gender roles, work-integrated learning, neurodiversity, and LGBTQIA+ experiences, offering much-needed updates to IB-DEI theorising. These contributions address important gaps and reflect contemporary, globalised perspectives that</p>	<p>Thank you for your positive comments</p>	

<p>strengthen the relevance and originality of the work.</p>		
<p>Yes. The paper demonstrates a strong command of the relevant IB and DEI literature and draws on an appropriate and contemporary range of sources. One suggestion relates to the discussion of Maori on page 20, line 38. It would benefit from including the recent work of Tupou et al., (2025), which highlights autism as both spiritual and taonga (treasure). This would strengthen the cultural contrast and further illustrate differences between Indigenous and WEIRD understandings of neurodiversity. Additionally, while Bailey (2011) is cited, it is unclear why this outdated conceptualisation of 'family' is being used to explain LGBT contexts in 2025. Clarifying the rationale for including this source would improve coherence. Other literature selections are well chosen and contribute meaningfully to the manuscript</p>	<p>Thank you for your positive comments</p> <p>Thank you for the recommendation to Tupou et al (2025), which we were not aware of. Their point on incongruence between western and non-western understandings of neurodiversity was particularly appealing to us and we further built on their work to highlight how neurodiversity should be seen as part of a natural social ecology (Chapman, 2021), which in turn raises also theoretical implication for diversity research more broadly through the importance of so-called ecological niches (Chapman and Botha, 2023). Thank you for drawing our attention to this important work.</p> <p>With regards to your comment regarding Bailey (2011), it is a seminal piece of academic research in the LGBTQIA+ and feminism space, which theorizes the gender and family system in Ballroom culture. However, we do see your point around the potentially outdated nature of core concepts of Ballroom culture, which probably peaked in the late 1980s and mostly disappeared by the 1990s. For this reason, we highlighted the idea of a “chosen family” by drawing on the more recent work of Matarese <i>et al.</i> (2023) and provided the Ballroom culture example more as a historical illustration around gender and family institutional logics.</p>	<p>Neurodiversity comment and incorporation of Tupou <i>et al.</i> (2025) on p. 20</p> <p>LGBTQIA+ comment and reference to Bailey (2011) on p. 23. Added a newer reference related to the idea of “chosen families” by Matarese, M., Greeno, E., Weeks, A., Lorthridge, J., Hammond, P., &amp; Deinhart, S. (2023), “Building Connections Between Chosen Family and Kin: A Culturally Adapted Program for LGBTQ+ Children, Youth, and Their Families”, <i>Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services</i>, Vol. 105 No. 1, pp. 81-93.</p>

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<p>Absolutely, this paper opens up a huge potential for IB-DEO theorising which I found to be fantastic and highly interesting</p>	<p>Thank you for your positive comments, we hope to stir up newer and more context relevant debates</p>	
<p>The paper communicates its arguments clearly and uses language appropriate for the journal's readership. However, pages 23 - 25 become quite dense and contains heavy jargon, which affects readability when compared with the following section. Simplifying or streamlining these pages would improve clarity. Additionally, on page 20, line 8, the text introduces "three simple examples: culture, individual decision-making, and institutions" but then refers to them as "culture, strategy, and institutions". This inconsistency is confusing and should be clarified. Lastly, Ofe-Grant et al., 2025 is missing in the reference list and is misspelled on page 28 as 'Ofe grant' - please amend.</p>	<p>With regards to your comment regarding the three example of "culture, individual decision-making, and institutions" on p. 19, line 8, we have re-phrased this section to refer to "culture, strategic decisions and institutions". In this context, "strategic decisions" encapsulate not only firm-level strategies but also the micro-foundations of individual decision-making within the growing body of strategy literature (where the idea of micro-foundations of strategy has really taken off).</p> <p>Ofe-Grant reference and misspelling corrected</p>	<p>pp. 23-25</p> <p>p. 20</p> <p>pp. 27, 39</p>

[Response to the Editor](#)

[Thank you for the opportunity to review and resubmit our manuscript, which is Part 2 of a two-part double DEI special issue in Critical Perspectives on International Business.](#)

[We have carefully gone through your and the reviewers' comments and have revised the document using track changes. We would also like to emphasise that this scene-setting viewpoint has been modelled directly after the Rašković et al. \(2025\) viewpoint in Part 1 of the double DEI special issue. Hence, this is not a 'typical' editorial where one mostly summarises or distils the individual contributions to the special issue. Instead, we problematise and much more critically engage with the topics, issues and the idea presented in the papers that make up Part 2 of the special issue.](#)

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5 We would also like to draw your attention to Reviewer 1's comment on the included positionality statements. While we have more explicitly  
6 clarified in our revision that these are positionality statements of lead or corresponding authors, and not that of the guest editors, the reviewer  
7 still assumes that this has somehow compromised the double-blind peer review process. They might mistakenly assume that some of these  
8 papers might still be in the late stages of the review process. However, this is not the case. Since all of the five papers have already been  
9 published as "early cite", the integrity of the double-blind peer review process has been maintained completely intact. Nonetheless, since we  
10 did make it more explicit that the positionality statements in this viewpoint should be seen as an extension of the guest editors' positionality  
11 statements in Part 1 of the special issue (i.e., Rašković et al., 2025), this may hint to the reviewer who the authors of this viewpoint are. Given  
12 the "Minor R&R" decision, and as you have yourself indicated, this issue needs to be kept in mind should you choose to send the revised  
13 manuscript back to Reviewer 1 for further review.  
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18 Below, we detail the changes made based on the reviewer comments, as well as the rationale behind them.

19 Thank you for your steadfast support and constructive feedback.  
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#### 22 23 Response to Reviewer 1

24 Thank you for your comments.  
25

26 To organise our responses to your insightful comments, we structure our responses into seven responses to address each review comment  
27 raised and follow them up with specific page numbers and excerpts from the manuscript. We hope that this addresses the issues raised  
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#### 30 31 Response1

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35 Dear reviewer, Thank you for your comments. In our revision, starting with the Abstract, but also in the revised Introduction, we have now more  
36 clearly indicated that this is not meant to be a 'traditional' editorial which would summarise and distil the five papers that make up part two of  
37 the double special issue. Just like the scene-setting viewpoint in part one of the double DEI special issue (see Rašković et al., 2025), the  
38 purpose of this viewpoint was to critically engage with the ideas and topics that the five papers discuss, not to distil or summarise the five  
39 papers. This was done in discussion with the handling Editor-in-Chief of the journal. To round up the two-part special issue, it is thus imperative  
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3 [that the scene-setting viewpoints that make up part one and part two of the double DEI special issue are similar in their nature, structure and](#)  
4 [writing styles.](#)  
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8 [We have taken on board your point around the dragged-out nature of our Introduction \(i.e., your comment around taking “too long to establish”\).](#)  
9 [As you will see, we have significantly streamlined the Introduction, cutting its length by almost half. We also need to underscore that while this](#)  
10 [viewpoint is motivated by Vangeli’s \(2025\) call for a Bourdieusian perspective on IB-DEI, our intent has never been to interrogate Bourdieu’s](#)  
11 [perspectives on ethics. Rather, we simply want to draw on them to craft a critical, socially engaged research agenda for IB-DEI. This has now](#)  
12 [been made more explicit in the Introduction, and we can now, in hindsight, see the issues with our original Introduction.](#)  
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16 [Specific Pages and excerpts](#)  
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20 [Abstract: Purpose section \(lines 1-6\)](#)  
21

22  
23 [Introduction: bottom of p. 4 and top of p. 5.](#)  
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26

27 [Example of added clarification \(pp. 4-5\): “The purpose of this scene-setting viewpoint, which rounds up Part 2 of the double DEI special issue](#)  
28 [\(see also Rašković et al., 2025\), is thus to catalyse critical thinking on the social construction of DEI issues \(Zanoni et al., 2010\) in IB settings](#)  
29 [through a deeper engagement with context in which social inequalities and inequities get produced and reproduced by actors \(Lamont et al.,](#)  
30 [2014\). We do this by critically engaging with the topics, issues and ideas offered by the five papers in Part 2 of the special issue. In this regard,](#)  
31 [we follow a similar scene-setting viewpoint by Rašković et al. \(2025\), which rounded up Part 1 of the double DEI special issue. However, like](#)  
32 [the first one, the purpose of the second viewpoint is not to summarise or distil the five papers but instead critically engage with and interrogate](#)  
33 [the social construction of DEI issues in IB settings and the role played by context in IB-DEI research.”](#)  
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37 [Response 2](#)  
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3 Thank you for pointing out the “imprecise” use of DEI terminology in our paper. To clarify our understanding of DEI, we have provided a  
4 definition of DEI, based on the American Psychological Association which we included as a footnote at the bottom of the first page of the  
5 Introduction.

6  
7 Regarding the comment on the depoliticisation of DEI vs. the inherently political nature of inquiring into power relations, we addressed this point  
8 in the following way. First, we operationalised the idea of politicisation of DEI as “the weaponisation of identity politics for political purposes to  
9 divide society and systematically exclude or oppress certain social groups” (Catalano, Weeks & Allen, 2023). We then further made an explicit  
10 distinction between the politicisation of DEI issues (as increasing the saliency of and framing of social identity issues as political issues; see  
11 Hay, 2007) and politics (see Wiley, 2016).

### 12 13 14 15 Specific pages and excerpts

#### 16 Page 3 (first page of the Introduction)

17  
18 Our understanding of DEI: “We primarily draw on American Psychological Association’s social identity-based understanding of diversity, which  
19 encompasses the idea of variety in work, organisational and community contexts related to race, ethnicity, culture, gender, gender identity and  
20 expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, spirituality, disability, age, national origin, hair texture, immigration status, and  
21 language (APA, n.d.), also adopted by Fitzsimmons et al. (2023). However, our understanding of DEI is based not merely on sensitivity to  
22 variety but equally to issues of disparity (i.e., link to equity) and separation (i.e., linked to inclusion and voice) stemming from the work of  
23 Harrison and Klein (2007). In this regard, we understand DEI research as a specific type of institutional field, which refers to a socially  
24 constructed area of common understanding in which multiple actors interact around a shared issue, and in doing so reproduce or change  
25 institutions (Zietsma et al., 2017).”

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30 Distinction between politicisation of DEI issues and the political nature of interrogating power and ideology as part of critical management  
31 theory on p. 4: “In this regard, politicisation of DEI, as a political strategy underpinned by identity politics to increase the saliency of DEI issues  
32 and frame them as politically relevant (Hay, 2007), should not be equated with politics (Wiley, 2016), which in our case relates to the process of  
33 critically interrogating power and ideology as part of critical studies (Brookfield, 2014). Unfortunately, the latter has become increasingly  
34 politicised as part of a more general attack on science (Rekker, 2021).”

#### 35 36 37 38 39 Response 3

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3 Thank you for raising the point on positionality statements. First of all, we would like to clarify that the positionality statements are not our own  
4 (as the authors of this scene-setting viewpoint), but in fact those of a lead or a corresponding author from each of the five papers included in  
5 the special issue. As all five papers have already been accepted and are already available in CPoIB through “Early cite”, the integrity of the  
6 double-blind review process has not been compromised in any way. To further avoid any confusion regarding whose positionality statements  
7 have been included and why they have been included, we have made this even more explicitly clear in both the revised Abstract and  
8 Introduction.

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12 With regards to the diversity of social identities invoked and the heterogeneity of the positionality statements, it is a longstanding critical  
13 reflexivity practice that individuals should not be forced to disclose any parts of their social identities in their positionality statements that they do  
14 not feel comfortable sharing (Robertson et al., 2020). The omission of specific issues, like personal trauma, family status, religious upbringing  
15 or sexual orientation, usually means the issue is not as salient and has not been invoked in accordance with the social identity map  
16 methodology by Jacobson and Mustafa (2019), which we used.

#### 17 18 19 20 21 Specific pages and excerpts

22 Abstract (last paragraph): “Following positionality statements of the guest editors in Part 1, this viewpoint in Part 2 of the special issue also  
23 provides positionality statements by lead authors from each of the five papers in this special issue.”

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27 Introduction (p. 5): “We begin our viewpoint by acknowledging the positionality of the lead or corresponding authors from each of the five  
28 papers included in Part 2 of the DEI double special issue. Their positionality statements should be seen as a continuation of the guest editors’  
29 own positionality statements in Part 1 (Vol. 21, No. 1) and were motivated by the works of Vangeli (2025) and Ofe-Grant and colleagues (2025).  
30 Differences in length, depth, or interpretations in the positionality statements, which are by their very nature deeply personal statements of  
31 vulnerability and critical reflexive scholarship (Rašković et al., 2025), capture the salience of different social identity issues for each individual  
32 and reflect the unique lived experiences of each lead or corresponding author (Goundar, 2025).”

#### 33 34 35 36 37 Response 4

38 Thank you for this valuable comment, which strikes at the core of how this viewpoint was envisaged and also subsequently discussed with the  
39 Editor-in-Chief as part of concluding a two-part double DEI special issue. The motivation, structure and style of writing of this viewpoint directly

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3 mirror the viewpoint by Rašković et al. (2025), which rounded up Part 1 of the special issue. Thus, while we are mindful of your comments, we  
4 also need to take into consideration the continuity with Part 1 of the special issue. Structuring this viewpoint significantly differently would, in our  
5 opinion, provide an imbalance.  
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9 In our revision of the Introduction, we hopefully made it now clearer what the motivating idea and precise logic of the viewpoint are, and how it  
10 represents a direct continuation of a similar viewpoint by Rašković et al. (2025), rounding up Part 1 of the special issue.  
11

12 We believe the interrogation of the social construction of DEI issues, which was the core purpose of this viewpoint, can only be achieved  
13 through a robust and multifaceted critical engagement with the topics, issues and ideas covered by the five papers in the special issue. Hence,  
14 distilling the five papers to short summaries and key issues would not allow us to critically engage and problematise the ideas presented by the  
15 authors in the tradition of critical management scholarship that CPOIB is known for. However, to provide more clarity to the reader, we have  
16 more explicitly stated our guiding research question, which has guided our critical engagement with and interrogation of the five papers,  
17 namely: What role does context play in the social construction of DEI issues and what are the varied contextual factors relating to differences in  
18 country, gender, ability, sexual orientation and voice/silence?  
19

20 We hope this question provides more structure through which we interrogate the papers in the special issues, as we highlight the importance of  
21 context for the social construction of DEI.  
22

### 23 24 25 Specific pages and Excerpts 26

27 Engaging critically with the five topics in the special issue (p. 11): “Instead of providing summaries or distillations of the five papers, which is  
28 usually part of a traditional editorial, we have decided to critically engage with the topics, issues and ideas covered in the five papers in-line with  
29 both the critical management studies tradition for which Critical Perspectives on International Business are known (Dörrenbächer and  
30 Gammelgaard, 2019) and also to maintain continuity with Part 1 of the special issue (see Rašković et al., 2025). In doing so, we have asked the  
31 following question: What role does context play in the social construction of DEI and explore varied contextual factors as they relate to  
32 differences in country, gender, ability, sexual orientation and voice/silence? Through our critical interrogation and problematisation of related  
33 DEI issues, we then highlight opportunities for IB-DEI scholarship and practice”  
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### 39 Response 5 40 41 42 43 44 45 46

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3 Thank you for the recommendation to van Dijk et al (2012). Their positions on the business case for diversity are important to our discussion of  
4 ethical views of DEI issues in IB, in particular as it relates to the delineation between deontological and utilitarian perspectives, and the value of  
5 a virtue ethics perspective for its consideration of context. We have tightened this position in our discussion of the disparities between the  
6 business case for diversity and our call for a more context- focused perspective towards diversity in International Business. As you will see, we  
7 now refer to this seminal piece of work already in the opening paragraph of the Introduction and in the conclusion section.  
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### 10 11 Specific pages and Excerpts

12  
13 Introduction (p.3): “Recently, powerful anti-DEI ideologies have contributed to the defunding and erosion of not just DEI activities but of  
14 fundamental social justice and humanity principles with many multinational enterprises making significant U-turns on DEI issues, prioritising  
15 utilitarian logics over more value-based perspectives like virtue (van Dijk et al., 2012)”  
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19 Introduction (p 4): “Instead, we need to defend a virtue-based position towards DEI (van Dijk et al., 2012) which can lead to the fulfilment of  
20 DEI’s core values and more effective implementation (Myeong, 2025).”  
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23  
24 Conclusion (p 28): Though IB-DEI research has been particularly criticised for its narrow focus on the business case for DEI (Fitzsimmons et  
25 al., 2023), ignoring moral imperatives (van Dijk et al., 2012) and social justice considerations (Vangeli, 2025), the contributions in this special  
26 issue deepen our understanding of DEI in perennial issues like gender in the workplace (Zhang Zhang, 2025), access to work-integrated  
27 learning (Wilkinson and Nagar, 2025) and voice (Lofti Dehkharghani et al., 2025).  
28

### 29 30 Response 6

31  
32 The Vangeli (2025) was published in Part 1 of the double DEI special issue, which is why we have used it as a bridge between the two parts of  
33 the special issue. Furthermore, we have drawn on the Vangeli paper because of the identified lack of addressing moral issues in the review of  
34 DEI issues in IB journals by Fitzsimmons et al. (2023, p. 1417), which Vangeli was the first among IB scholars to operationalise through a  
35 Bourdieusian framework. We would also like to highlight that adopting a specific philosophical perspective is not uncommon in critical  
36 management studies, as recently discussed by Spicer and Alvesson (2025) in their review of critical management studies within the Journal of  
37 Management Studies (Vol. 62 No. 1, pp. 446-483). Because Bourdieu’s framework is unknown to a vast majority of IB scholars, we thought it  
38 would be useful to draw on Vangeli’s work, as it can further transcend the utilitarian vs. deontological dichotomy discussed already by van Dijk  
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3 et al. (2012). While we have indeed referenced the paper many times, we do not believe we have drawn exclusively on this paper. In fact, we  
4 have also drawn heavily on two seminal DEI review/overview papers in IB contexts (i.e., Fitzsimmons et al., 2023; Newburry et al., 2022) and  
5 have furthermore incorporated key ideas around the conceptualisation of diversity (Harrison and Klein, 2007) and the utilitarian vs.  
6 deontological perspectives on DEI (van Dijk et al., 2012). With regards to your comment about Rawls, we acknowledge the ‘irony’ and have  
7 thus decided not refer to Rawls’ work  
8  
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### 10 11 Response 7

12  
13 Thank you for your feedback on the conclusion section. We have now revised the conclusion and structured it into two parts: a conclusion for  
14 the paper and a conclusion for the double special issue.

15  
16 In the first part, we have focused our conclusions more closely on the crux of the paper, explicitly showing how the contributions in the issue  
17 have interrogated DEI in various contexts. We emphasise the contributions of the papers in the issue and summarise the relevance of context,  
18 which has been the focus of the paper’s social construction and social justice perspective.

19  
20 Given that the Conclusion is not only about this paper, but also more broadly about the IB DEI double special issue, we also close off the  
21 double special issue and invite IB DEI scholars to critically engage in the complexity and nuances that context presents in our understanding of  
22 DEI  
23

### 24 25 26 Specific pages and Excerpts

27  
28 Conclusion (p. 28): “Though IB-DEI research has been particularly criticised for its narrow focus on the business case for DEI (Fitzsimmons et  
29 al., 2023), its lack of interest in the moral imperatives (van Dijk et al., 2012) and social justice considerations (Vangeli, 2025), the contributions  
30 in the second part of special issue challenge us to interrogate the role of context in DEI perennial issues like gender in the workplace (Zhang  
31 Zhang, 2025), access to work-integrated learning (Wilkinson and Nagar, 2025) and voice (Lofti Dehkharghani et al., 2025). DEI blindspots  
32 related to neurodiversity (Ott et al., 2025) and LGBTQIA+ (Rašković and Newbury, 2025) are also conscientiously interrogated, highlighting the  
33 pressing role of space and place in social issues of difference and the interplay between power, access, and voice (Hellerstedt et al., 2024). We  
34 believe the IB discipline in general and the IB-DEI field of research in particular need to move away from WEIRD-centric perspectives (i.e.,  
35 perspectives focused on western, educated, industrialised, rich and democratic contexts), often leading to prioritising demographically-  
36 dependent DEI. They also need to more deeply theoretically engage with the role context plays in the social structuration and performativity of  
37 DEI issues (Fitzsimmons et al., 2023; Rašković et al., 2025). For IB researchers, this means internalising context in their conceptual  
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3 frameworks, moving contextual characteristics from simple control variables and moderators, to more complex mediators and sometimes even  
4 dependent variables.”  
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8 Response to reviewer 2  
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10 Thank you for your positive comments. We hope to stir up newer and more context-relevant debates.

11 To organise our responses to your insightful comments, we structure our responses into two responses to address each review comment  
12 raised and follow them up with specific page numbers and excerpts from the manuscript. We hope that this addresses the issues raised.  
13

14 Response 1  
15

16 Thank you for the recommendation to Tupou et al (2025), which we were not aware of. Their point on incongruence between western and non-  
17 western understandings of neurodiversity was particularly appealing to us and we further built on their work to highlight how neurodiversity  
18 should be seen as part of a natural social ecology (Chapman, 2021), which in turn raises also theoretical implication for diversity research more  
19 broadly through the importance of so-called ecological niches (Chapman and Botha, 2023). Thank you for drawing our attention to this  
20 important work.  
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23  
24 With regards to your comment regarding Bailey (2011), it is a seminal piece of academic research in the LGBTQIA+ and feminism space, which  
25 theorises the gender and family system in Ballroom culture. However, we do see your point around the potentially outdated nature of core  
26 concepts of Ballroom culture, which probably peaked in the late 1980s and mostly disappeared by the 1990s. For this reason, we highlighted  
27 the idea of a “chosen family” by drawing on the more recent work of Matarese et al. (2023) and provided the Ballroom culture example more as  
28 a historical illustration around gender and family institutional logics  
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32 Specific pages and excerpts  
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34 Neurodiversity comment and incorporation of Tupou et al. (2025) on p. 20  
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37  
38 LGBTQIA+ comment and reference to Bailey (2011) on p. 23. Added a newer reference related to the idea of “chosen families” by Matarese,  
39 M., Greeno, E., Weeks, A., Lorthridge, J., Hammond, P., & Deinhart, S. (2023), “Building Connections Between Chosen Family and Kin: A  
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3 [Culturally Adapted Program for LGBTQ+ Children, Youth, and Their Families”, Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social](#)  
4 [Services, Vol. 105 No. 1, pp. 81-93.](#)  
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8 [Response 2](#)  
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10 [With regards to your comment regarding the three examples of “culture, individual decision-making, and institutions” on p. 19, line 8, we have](#)  
11 [re-phrased this section to refer to “culture, strategic decisions and institutions”. In this context, “strategic decisions” encapsulate not only firm-](#)  
12 [level strategies but also the micro-foundations of individual decision-making within the growing body of strategy literature \(where the idea of](#)  
13 [micro-foundations of strategy has really taken off\).](#)  
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17 [We also included the Ofe-Grant reference and corrected the misspelling.](#)  
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