EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Creating Our Editorial Board Position Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

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The purpose of this editorial is to share our Editorial Board's Position Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and provide some of the background behind it, the process of creating it, and the journey from here.

Background

MIS Quarterly's (*MISQ*) mission is to help enhance and communicate the highest quality of knowledge in the IS academic community. To fulfill this mission, respect for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is vital. By DEI, we refer broadly to *MISQ*'s editorial policies and practices representing the diversity of the field, providing equitable access to all members of the field, making decisions without discrimination or bias, and ensuring that all scholars interacting with *MISQ* feel included and valued.[1]

Unfortunately, bias and discrimination has long been a part of science (Ceglie and Olivares 2012). Recent movements sparked around the world (including but not limited to #MeToo, #TimesUp, and #BlackLivesMatter), along with the inequities magnified by COVID-19, have made the ongoing DEI challenges we face in society ever-more salient (Choo et al. 2019; Leshnar 2020; Malisch et al. 2020; Payton et al., in press). Across the sciences, scholars are calling for a sea change in addressing DEI (Forrester 2020; Gibney 2016; Hofstra et al. 2020; Leuschner and Pinto 2021; Morgan et al. 2021; Nielsen, Bloch, and Schiebinger 2018; Woolston 2020).[2] IS scholars are making similar calls (Gupta et al. 2019; Payton et al., in press; Van Osch and Beath, in press; Windeler et al. 2020). With all these voices and all of this momentum, we need to make our Editorial Board's position clear.

DEI has been a theme in our editorials throughout this year. We emphasized the importance of DEI in our opening editorial (Burton-Jones 2021) and described in our September editorial how we were taking some specific steps to make a difference on DEI (Burton-Jones and Stein 2021). However, DEI was not the focus of either of these editorials; it is our focus here. We have written-up our Editorial Board Position Statement on DEI, have begun taking actions, and want to share the statement and our journey with you.

The Intent of the Position Statement

We have two primary purposes in writing our Position Statement:

1. To be transparent with the community about our Editorial Board's commitment to DEI. As discussed in our June 2021 editorial, transparency matters a great deal to us—being transparent about our commitments to DEI is thus important.
2. To communicate our specific goals on DEI and to enable the community to hold us accountable to them and help us achieve them.

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[1] We provide more detailed definitions later, specifically in the position statement.

[2] In addition to science-wide calls, we hear similar calls to address DEI within fields as wide-ranging as medicine (Silver 2019), biology (Espin et al. 2017), chemistry (Wilson-Kennedy et al. 2020), physics (Lazarova, 2021), neuroscience (Choudhury and Aggarwal, 2020), soil science (Carter et al. 2021), conservation (Giakoumi et al. 2021), astronomy (Kewley, 2019), archaeology (Heather-Sout, 2020), national security (Van Puyvelde and Curtis, 2016), political science (Dion et al. 2018), psychology (Buchanan et al., in press), economics (Card et al. 2020), sociology (Romero 2017), computer science (Dawson-Head et al. 2021), marketing (Veer et al. 2020), and operations (Newhouse and Brandeau, 2021).

It is not enough for editorial boards to simply *intend* to be diverse, equitable, and inclusive or to privately believe in DEI without publicly articulating it. We need to explicitly express our intentions, implement actions, hold ourselves responsible, and continually learn (Ballard et al. 2020; Fontanarosa et al. 2021). We have developed our DEI statement with these issues in mind.

Recognizing that our commitment to DEI is a journey, the position statement (we share later) is not fixed. It will evolve as we learn and as situations change. The *MISQ* Board's membership also rotates over time and our commitments will naturally evolve as a result of these editorial changes. We are sharing our first version in these editorial pages to signal its importance and to formalize the start of the journey. It will be a journey that all of us (editors, authors, reviewers, readers) will travel together.

The Process We Followed

The publication of this statement has been about a year in the making, with a concerted effort over the last six months. DEI was a priority throughout Arun Rai's term as EIC (2016-2020) as it was for Andrew when he was selected as incoming EIC. During the EIC transition, Andrew benefited from several meetings with Arun to discuss past and current DEI-related *MISQ* initiatives and brainstorm the potential for new initiatives. Rather than take any major actions straight away, it was considered best to consult the literature and stakeholders over the coming months to gauge the right approach.

Over the following months, Andrew read more of the DEI literature and examined DEI initiatives in other fields (e.g., in psychology, https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion, and finance, https://afajof.org/affect/). After reading this material and listening to stakeholders within the community from different parts of the world (especially those underserved), it became clear that an *MISQ* Editorial Board's DEI Position Statement is not only desired but required.

In the months following May 2021, we read other DEI statements as well as more of the literature on DEI to get a better understanding of the topic. We engaged in weekly meetings to discuss what we learned, received helpful advice from our managing editor (Emily Borra), and started the draft, paying close attention to two issues: (1) we would like to communicate our adopted definition of DEI as well as our overarching position (consistent with our stated purpose #1), and (2) we wanted to explicitly include action items and KPIs for these items, so that both we and our stakeholders can assess our progress on the action items (consistent with our purpose #2).

Once we were satisfied with the draft, we shared it with key individuals for critical feedback.[3] We are grateful to them for engaging with the material and providing invaluable advice. After incorporating their feedback and engaging in further revisions, we finalized the draft and shared it with the *MISQ* Policy Committee for review. With their endorsement, a revised version was distributed and discussed with the *MISQ* senior editors (SEs). We asked our SEs to provide written feedback and we engaged in meetings to enable open dialogue and the sharing of ideas. The revised position statement was then shared again for final review by the *MISQ* Policy Committee. After this, we considered the position statement to be final and ready to be shared with you in this editorial. It will also be posted on the *MISQ* website. As stated above, the position statement will naturally evolve over time. From this point on, the latest version will always be available on the *MISQ* website.

Some New and Ongoing Actions and the Journey Onward

We include our position statement verbatim below. As you will see, the statement specifies a range of actions. Some of these actions are new, others are currently in the process of being designed and implemented, and yet others are an enhancement of existing work. To clarify, we will briefly highlight two points.

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[3] This included members of our *MISQ* Policy Committee (Gautam Ray, De Liu, Rajiv Kohli, and Jason Bennett Thatcher) as well as other scholars in the IS field (Jane Fedorowicz, Eleanor Loiacono, Cynthia Beath, Jaime Windeler, and Jui Ramaprasad) and in neighboring fields (Adelaide Wilcox King and Kisha Lashley [Management], and Kai Li [Finance]) who are known for their expertise on different aspects of these issues.

One action item that we want to highlight—Action Item 2.1—is to create a dedicated role on the Editorial Board for a DEI director. As you will see from the author roles printed at the start of this editorial, we have taken this action already.[4, 5] Professor Saonee Sarker will be our inaugural director of DEI, commencing a two-year term from January 1, 2022. We will work closely together over the coming two years. While this action item (and role) is new, other action items in the statement are not entirely new but instead represent a formalization and/or enhancement of ongoing actions. We stress this because we do not want to create the impression that DEI has only become important to us now; it has always been important to us, and we are just articulating and deepening that commitment.

For instance, Action Item 1.1 encourages DEI-related submissions. This has been and remains a focus for us (Annestad et al. 2021; Majchrzak et al. 2016). Formalizing it in an action item just clarifies that focus even more. Likewise, Action Item 1.2 calls for the EIC to conduct ambassadorial work. This has long been a priority. Detmar Straub, *MISQ*'s 10th EIC, was especially known for it. The goal is to continue that tradition and find even better ways to engage in it. Action Item 2.2 calls for data-driven assessments for potential DEI-related biases. Again, rather than being a completely new practice, the goal is to formalize and improve our approach, while being mindful of the evolving literature (Card et al. 2020; Newhouse and Brandeau 2021). Finally, Action Item 2.3 calls for DEI-related workshops. We already offer author-development and reviewer-development workshops and we consider DEI-related issues in both of them. As outlined in the September editorial (Burton-Jones and Stein 2021), we are also starting a Scholarly Development Academy motivated in part by DEI. Once again, our goal in Action Item 2.3 is not to begin an entirely new initiative but rather to extend our portfolio of workshops strategically.

We could go on describing the relationship between each action item and our existing/past work, but the basic message would remain the same. Rather than reflect an entirely new set of beliefs or actions, the statement formalizes and deepens our DEI commitments, highlights initiatives within a holistic approach, and provides a way to hold us accountable. While we have already begun taking actions, we have many opportunities ahead. We invite you to read our position statement below, and we look forward to taking this journey with you.

MIS Quarterly Editorial Board Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Position Statement ▰

Introduction

The *MISQ* Editorial Board is committed to advancing the finest scholarship in the IS academic field. This commitment implies a simultaneous and consistent emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). That is, an appreciation of DEI is part of the Board's conception of scholarship.

MISQ is owned and operated by the Regents of the University of Minnesota. As a result, *MISQ* subscribes to the University of Minnesota's policies, including DEI policies. When *MISQ* Editorial Board members engage in editorial work for *MISQ*, they too are implicitly agreeing to abide by these principles.[6] However, these high-level policies do not get down to the level of detail of editorial work. This Editorial Board Position Statement is not a new policy but instead an articulation of how Editorial Board members will specifically live out those principles in our Editorial Board-related activities.

The position statement is structured as a set of action items and key performance indicators (KPIs). It will be updated periodically, with the latest version available on the *MISQ* website. In phrasing the action items and KPIs, we have tried to strike a balance between being sufficiently precise to offer direction and accountability while being sufficiently general to offer flexibility in application.

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[4] As EIC, I (Andrew) am thrilled that Saonee has taken on this role. Saonee has been a long-serving and award-winning member of our board, joining as an AE in 2014, receiving the Outstanding AE Award in 2015, and serving as SE since 2017. During our years on the *MISQ* Board, I have relied on her wise counsel many times. In addition to her years of editorial experience, Saonee brings a wealth of senior administrative experience from her university appointments that add to her understanding of DEI and her ability to lead and coordinate complex initiatives. I look forward to working closely with her in her new role.

[5] As the incoming DEI Director, I (Saonee) am honored to take on this new (and very important) role at *MISQ*. In the last few months, I have had the fortune to work closely with Andrew on the DEI Position Statement and in developing a roadmap for the different DEI-related action items. Andrew's passion and commitment to DEI has been an inspiration, and I look forward to our joint efforts on DEI at *MISQ* in the coming years.

[6] See, e.g., https://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/2019-09/policy_equity_diversity_equal_opportunity_and_affirmative_action.pdf; https://carlsonschool.umn.edu/about-us/diversity-equity-inclusion; https://eoaa.umn.edu/policies

The *MISQ* Editorial Board takes a scholarly approach to its DEI position, with due attention to the evolving literature on the topic. For brevity, we simply list our action items and KPIs first, but please read the material that follows for the scholarly background behind them.

Action Items and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

1. **IS scholarship-focused actions and KPIs**

   1.1 We will encourage submissions on DEI-related IS research topics, in both regular submissions and special issues, not in preference to any other topic but simply as a reflection of their importance in the IS field.

   - KPI: Submissions and publications on DEI-related IS research topics.

   1.2 The editor-in-chief, as the journal's primary ambassador, along with other members of the board where relevant, will participate in seminars and talks around the world (including in disadvantaged locations) to encourage and facilitate submissions.

   - KPI:
     - Submissions and publications from scholars around the world and specifically from those who belong to disadvantaged regions or groups.

   1.3 We will promote our published content (looking to increase the impact of our publications) without bias.

   - KPIs:
     - Promotion of research, including research on DEI-related topics.
     - Access to *MISQ* promotion in disadvantaged regions and groups.
     - Increase the impact of *MISQ* among non-English-speaking locales (e.g., promotion materials designed in local languages).

2. **IS scholar-focused actions and KPIs**

   2.1 *Roles:* The *MISQ* Editorial Board will include a dedicated role for a DEI director. The DEI director will be an SE-level appointment and will work with the *MISQ* EIC and collaboratively with a small workgroup of editorial board members (see Item 2.4) to uphold *MISQ*'s DEI-related policies/practices, as well as design and implement processes and practices, and set up and monitor KPIs. While the DEI director role will focus entirely on DEI, all other editorial board members will also be required to uphold our DEI standards.

   - KPIs:
     - Establishment and maintenance of the *MISQ* DEI director within the Editorial Board.
     - Inclusion of the DEI position statement in all AE and SE appointments as well as in reappointment letters and meetings.

   2.2 *Data-driven assessments:* We will conduct a baseline assessment and ongoing/periodic assessments of the following dimensions to check for and address potential DEI-related biases, being mindful of the complexities involved:

   - Author submissions: We will assess whether our authors reflect the diversity of the field
   - Board appointments: We will assess whether our editorial board members reflect the diversity of the field
   - Review processes: We will assess whether there are any signals of DEI-related biases in our editorial/review processes (e.g., due to gender, region, toward specific research topics or methodologies, etc.).
   - *MISQ*-organized workshops: We will assess whether participants in the workshops reflect the diversity of the field.

     - KPIs:
       - Reports of data-driven assessments will be available on the *MISQ* website.
       - Actions taken by the Editorial Board in response to the results of the data-driven assessments.

2.3 *Periodic workshops:* We will run a series of ongoing and ad hoc meetings during the year that will help address DEI-related issues. These could include:

- *Author-development workshops* to promote our openness to the field and to encourage authors from around the world and representing different research traditions and perspectives to engage with *MISQ*. We may expand the range of such initiatives over time to provide additional mentoring support to scholars located worldwide.

- *Reviewer-development workshops* to promote our openness to the field and to encourage reviewers from around the world to engage with *MISQ*.

- *"Train-the-trainer" type workshops* for our current editorial board members in how to avoid biases when screening and reviewing papers.

- *Townhalls* where we will invite scholars to share their own editorial or author-specific DEI journeys as well as provide a forum for all stakeholders to share their concerns, issues, and lend their voices.

- *Master classes* on methodological topics in which editorial board members share knowledge with each other, increasing the likelihood that editorial judgments will be consistent (due to greater shared knowledge) rather than idiosyncratic to the editor.

  - KPI:
    - Attendance in meetings and satisfaction with meetings as assessed through post-meeting reviews.

2.4 *Workgroups:* To help carry out their role, the DEI director will work with the EIC to form workgroups composed of potential authors from different regions, potential editorial board members, and current authors and editorial board members. These groups will be asked to identify DEI-related issues facing *MISQ* and potential actions to address them. The issues and action plans will be reviewed by the DEI director for potential support.

  - KPI:
    - Creation of workgroups, and relevant initiatives identified/started.

3. Broader institutional context-focused actions and KPIs

3.1 We will continually monitor and educate ourselves with emerging statements from our guiding institutions of science such as AACSB, the Committee for Publication Ethics, and the different national funding agencies (e.g., NSF, ARC, SSHRC, etc.), as well as with changes in governmental policies surrounding DEI from across the world.

  - KPI:
    - DEI Director's annual update to the Editorial Board (to include notable updates on changes in institutional expectations).

Scholarly Background to the Position Statement

In this section, we briefly introduce the literature on DEI that has influenced our position statement. Just as the position statement will evolve over time, our understanding of the literature will evolve as well. This section outlines our initial understanding.

This DEI statement pertains to *MISQ*'s editorial practices and the roles of our board members in those practices. In outlining our position statement surrounding DEI, we have striven to be proactive and encourage the "productive unpacking of taken-for-granted" ideas (Oleson 2000, p. 215) surrounding DEI and to help both the journal and our field move positively forward. We will hold ourselves accountable to this statement and we ask our field to hold us accountable to it too.

We begin with some definitions and clarifications based on our understanding of the literature.

Definitions and Clarifications

When defining the dimensions of DEI, an immediate ambiguity arises: do we mean variety in authors, editors, topics, or something else? As mentioned above, this DEI statement pertains to our editorial practices, including the work we review and publish, how we engage in those activities, our outreach in the community, and so on. We recognize that many definitions of DEI exist, that one

should not have a one-size-fits-all approach, and that the adopted definition needs to fit the mission and principles of *MISQ*. With that in mind, we define the three components of DEI as follows, based on common definitions elsewhere:

1. *Diversity* refers to differences among people, such as demographic differences, regional differences, and differences in belief systems, perspectives on research, among others.
2. *Equity* refers to people having access to all possible opportunities and resources without facing discrimination or bias.
3. *Inclusion* refers to people feeling valued and welcomed, being able to fully participate in activities, and knowing that their voices are heard.

As these definitions show, our conception of DEI focuses on people. These people can be stakeholders in our review processes (editors, authors, reviewers, etc.) as well as stakeholders in society who can be affected or informed by our review process through the research we conduct and publish. Because both groups are relevant, our DEI statement does not only focus on how our editorial and review process respects IS scholars but extends to DEI topics as well, because the latter provides a link to our broader stakeholders. That is, we assume that an inherent part of any field (including ours) is the presence of DEI-related biases that affect individuals in practice (e.g., employees or citizens). As a result, research on those topics that have implications for the larger IS discipline (whether academia or practice) are relevant topics for us to publish, just as much as any other IS-related topic (see Action Item 1.1).

Rather than treat the three components separately with different actions for each one, this statement focuses on the *latent concept* that underlies them. That is, our focus on each dimension of DEI in our scholarly work stems from a common underlying factor: our deep commitment to scholarly excellence, which we believe can only be achieved when we attend to (and ensure) DEI.

Commitments in Creating a DEI Position Statement

Based on our review of the literature, we stress the importance of making two commitments that underlie this *MISQ* DEI Position Statement.

Commitment to the Relationships between Field Relevance, Merit, and DEI

MISQ seeks to publish the finest IS scholarship. This requires a commitment to *field-relevance* (i.e., relevance to the IS field) and *merit* (i.e., the excellence of the scholarship). That is, for each paper we review, we ask: "Is this IS research, and does it meet the standards of the journal?" These commitments can reduce the degree of diversity, equity, and inclusion the journal can offer. That is, there may be limits to the diversity of work we support, limits to the resources we can offer for papers not deemed suitable for the journal, and limits to our ability to accept all papers.

However, in committing to DEI, we must be attentive to potential systemic biases in the perceptions of the individuals surrounding these dimensions of "field-relevance" and "merit." If an academic field is biased in favor of some scholars (e.g., based on location, school, race, etc.) or some forms of scholarship (e.g., contexts, genres), then perceptions of field-relevance and merit will themselves be biased. This is sometimes referred to as the "paradox of meritocracy" (Ben-Amar et al. 2021; Castilla and Benard 2010; Josten and Will 2020; Posselt 2014). Such biases tend to get "baked into" institutions, become part of the fabric of the field, and are likely to be continually reproduced over time.[7] This is one reason why we include DEI-related topics in our conception of relevant topics in our field (see Action Item 1.1).

Commitment to Proactivity and Evidence-Based Action

The *MISQ* Editorial Board has a responsibility to be mindful of DEI in all its interactions with scholars and with scholarship. Some of these interactions are inherently reactive in the sense that the journal receives numerous requests (e.g., a request to handle the submission of a particular manuscript) and must consider DEI in handling that request. However, if *MISQ* focuses its DEI efforts

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[7] Grubbs (2020, n.p.) gives a vivid illustration: "As the only Black member of division-chief search committees, I often heard colleagues remark that the Black candidate's CV was thinner than the White man's—fewer manuscripts, leadership positions, and grants—without acknowledging that the White man had been groomed, sponsored, and uplifted by people who looked like him throughout his 400-year head start."

only on the manuscripts it receives, this implies a *reactive* stance towards DEI. This can lead to the same problems as noted above because the papers we receive may be a function of existing biases and subjectivity baked into the fabric of the field. As a result, we must also take a *proactive* stance that stems from a desire to champion DEI. At the field level, we must actively look for ways that we can be more fair, equitable, and inclusive to our authors, for our readers, when selecting editors and reviewers, and when considering and assessing different research topics, contexts, and genres.

DEI is an active research area, and the application of DEI across organizations (Park and Liang 2020) and scientific fields is continuing to evolve (Bakken 2020; Clark and Horton 2019; Fontanarosa et al. 2021; Resar et al. 2019; Romer and Wolfers 2018; RSC 2021). Important discussions are continuing in our field too (Payton et al., in press; Windeler et al. 2020). The *MISQ* Editorial Board must take an evidence-based approach and continue to stay abreast of the latest thinking.

Scope of the Position Statement

In Figure 1 below, we highlight the domains and stakeholders that *MISQ's* position statement considers and reaffirm our commitment to DEI toward our identified stakeholders. In defining our domain categories, we sought inspiration from scholars such as Oleson (2000, p. 217) who highlight that "the nature of the research," the "relationship with whom research is done," the "characteristics and location of the researcher," and the "knowledge created in the research" process can all be subject to bias. In line with the above, specifically, we see three broad categories:

1. *Scholars*: Diverse authors, readers, editors, and reviewers
2. *Scholarship*: Research on DEI-related topics, and access to and impact of our research
3. *Institutional context*: Institutions in IS research, in the broader sciences, or in general society

Action Items

Sensitivity to the literature is also important in shaping our action items. The action items presented earlier reflect our values and commitment to DEI (discussed above). Lather's (1993) ideas have framed our thinking surrounding the action items. Lather specifically recommends that in order to seek legitimacy and gain credibility with respect to the inclusion of different groups, it is important to satisfy the "*problems of representation*," *seek* out differences, *emphasize and uphold multiplicity of perspectives*, and *engage in reflexivity* (Oleson 2000, p. 231). For example, in an effort to avoid problems of representation, one of our action items involves teaching senior editors how to avoid biases when screening papers. Manuscript screening is often the first hurdle authors face when they submit to the journal and we recognize that there can be biases in this process. In line with some of the work that has been done on removing bias from resume screening (e.g., Derous and Ryan 2019), we aim to design and hold similar workshops for our board members.
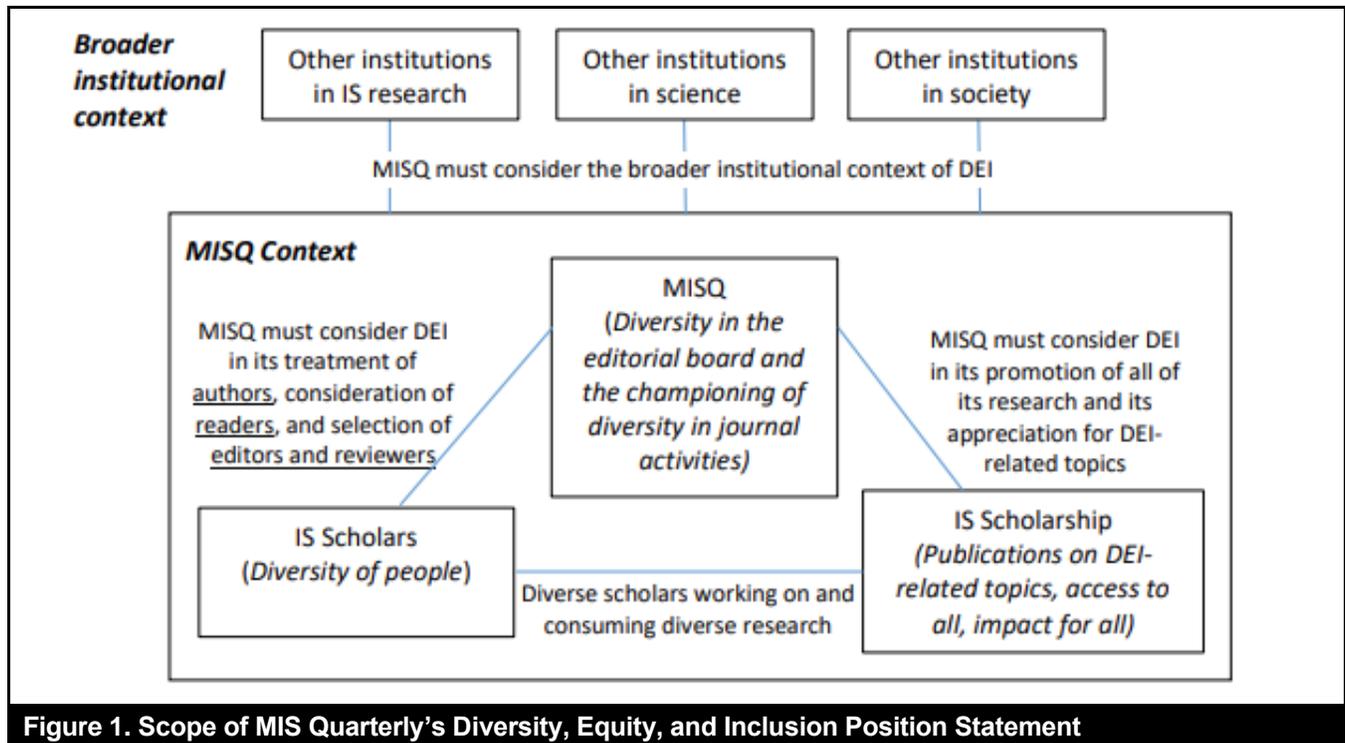
Figure 1. Scope of MIS Quarterly's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Position Statement

Conclusion

We would like to conclude by reiterating that DEI is not just about the "numbers."[8] A single-minded focus on certain numbers can either perpetuate[9] other forms of inequity or give a false sense of satisfaction that *MISQ* has the "diversity it needs." This is a journey and an evolving process and we will constantly strive to create (and improve upon) DEI in all our practices. It is important for us to learn, monitor, as well as make positive strides forward and we invite our community to help us in that journey.

Additional DEI Resources for Readers (which have also informed this position statement)

- American Psychological Association's DEI policy (https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion)
- https://www.nature.com/nature-portfolio/for-authors/nature-research-journals
- https://diversity.umich.edu/about/defining-dei/
- https://www.fordfoundation.org/about/people/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/

Acknowledgments

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[8] https://gdo.aom.org/viewdocument/dean-di-letter-3-25-21?CommunityKey=6cd4291a-ff9f-41df-ba69-72a8121d992eandtab=librarydocuments
[9] https://journals.plos.org/plosbiology/article?id=10.1371/journal.pbio.3001102

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