Global Leaders for Global Teams: Leaders with Multicultural Experiences Communicate and Lead More Effectively, Especially in Multinational Teams

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Abstract. In an era of globalization, it is commonly assumed that multicultural experiences foster leadership effectiveness. However, little research has systematically tested this assumption. We develop a theoretical perspective that articulates how and when multicultural experiences increase leadership effectiveness. We hypothesize that broad multicultural experiences increase individuals' leadership effectiveness by developing their communication competence. Because communication competence is particularly important for leading teams that are more multinational, we further hypothesize that individuals with broader multicultural experiences are particularly effective when leading more versus less multinational teams. Four studies test our theory using mixed methods (field survey, archival panel, field experiments) and diverse populations (corporate managers, soccer managers, hackathon leaders) in different countries (Australia, Britain, China, America). In Study 1, corporate managers with broader multicultural experiences were rated as more effective leaders, an effect mediated by communication competence. Analyzing a 25-year archival panel of English Premier League soccer managers, Study 2 replicates the positive effect of broad multicultural experiences using a team performance measure of leadership effectiveness. Importantly, this effect was moderated by team national diversity: soccer managers with broader multicultural experiences were particularly effective when leading teams with greater national diversity. Study 3 (digital health hackathon) and Study 4 (COVID-19 policy hackathon) replicate these effects in two field experiments, in which individuals with varying levels of multicultural experiences were randomly assigned to lead hackathon teams that naturally varied in national diversity. Overall, our research suggests that broad multicultural experiences help leaders communicate more competently and lead more effectively, especially when leading multinational teams.

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The Jack Welch of the future cannot be like me. I spent my entire career in the United States. The next head of General Electric will be somebody who spent time in Bombay, in Hong Kong, in Buenos Aires. We have to send our best and brightest overseas and make sure they have the training that will allow them to be the global leaders who will make GE flourish in the future.
—Jack Welch, former chairman and CEO of General Electric

Because of the rise of globalization, individuals and organizations increasingly value and invest in multicultural experiences. In 2017, the global expatriate population reached an all-time high of 66.2 million (Finaccord 2018). As evidenced by headlines such as "How Studying Abroad Makes You A Better Leader" (Karabell 2016) and "How Living Abroad Prepares You for Leadership" (Pelos 2017), it is widely assumed that multicultural experiences foster leadership

effectiveness, which we define as a leader's ability to influence and guide others toward shared goals (Judge et al. 2002). For example, a study of the 100 largest publicly traded companies in Australia and Canada finds that about 80% of board members believed that international work experiences would be at least moderately important in CEO selection (Russell Reynolds 2010). Although the presumed link between multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness is echoed in theoretical work (Fitzsimmons 2013, Vora et al. 2019, Maddux et al. 2021), limited empirical research has tested this link systematically.

Past studies exploring the connection between multicultural experiences and leadership mostly take a macro-level, strategic resource approach focusing on *firm-level* outcomes (Roth 1995, Reuber and Fischer

1997, Daily et al. 2000, Carpenter et al. 2001). For example, Reuber and Fischer (1997) find that firms with leaders who had more multicultural experiences were more likely to develop foreign strategic partners and pursue internationalization. Similarly, Roth (1995) finds that, among medium-sized firms in global industries, CEO multicultural experience was positively related to income growth in companies with activities in multiple countries. Importantly, these studies adopt the resource-based view, which regards leaders with multicultural experiences as "a valuable, rare, and inimitable resource" that allows their firms to better realize "global inter- and intrafirm exchange and cooperation" (Carpenter et al. 2001, pp. 496–497). In other words, these studies view leaders' multicultural experiences as a *strategic resource* for the organization, neglecting the question of whether and how multicultural experiences shape *individuals' psychological processes* related to leadership effectiveness. This represents an important gap in knowledge, particularly given that leaders with multicultural experiences are no longer as rare a resource for organizations. Therefore, it is valuable to move beyond the macro, strategy-based view and examine whether multicultural experiences per se—rather than their strategic byproducts (e.g., foreign strategic partners)—are conducive to individuals' leadership effectiveness.

Building on experiential learning theory (ELT, Kolb 1984), which posits that individuals learn and grow from processing new and diverse experiences, we advance a micro, psychological perspective on the role of multicultural experiences for leadership effectiveness. We theorize that multicultural experiences can increase individuals' leadership effectiveness by developing their communication competence, which is defined as the ability to listen to others and express oneself competently (Spitzberg and Cupach 1984). We establish communication competence as a key mechanism through both mediation and moderation analyses. We propose that, because communication competence is particularly important for leading multinational teams, individuals with more extensive multicultural experiences are particularly effective when leading teams that are more multinational. To test our theoretical perspective, we conducted four complementary studies using mixed methods (field survey, archival panel, field experiments) and different populations (corporate managers, soccer managers, hackathon leaders) in different countries (Australia, Britain, China, America).

Two recent studies dovetail with our theoretical perspective. Using soccer data, Szymanski et al. (2019) find that multicultural leaders were more effective than monocultural leaders, especially in global (versus regional) competitive environments. This study adopts a strategic management perspective and focuses on the *macro* competitive environment by examining whether a tournament was global (World Cup) or regional.

Extending this study, our research adopts a micro, psychological perspective by examining the mechanism of communication competence and the team-level moderator of team national diversity. In another study, Lisak et al. (2016) find that leaders with high global identity were more likely to "foster team-shared innovation goals and motivate team members to adopt communication inclusion behavior" (p. 655), thereby enhancing innovation in multicultural teams. Analogous to our theorization about the moderating role of team national diversity, this study also finds that members' perceived team cultural diversity moderated the link between the leader's global identity and team innovation, such that this link was stronger when members perceived high (versus low) cultural diversity. In other words, Lisak et al. (2016) focus on the interplay between how leaders perceived their global identity and how team members perceived the team's cultural diversity. Complementing Lisak et al. (2016), our research focuses on the interplay between leaders' actual multicultural experiences and the team's actual cultural diversity.

The present research contributes to the literatures on multicultural experiences, multinational teams, and leadership development by systematically investigating how and when multicultural experiences foster individuals' leadership effectiveness. First, across four complementary studies, we test whether there is a consistent link between multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness. This extends the literature on the psychological consequences of multicultural experiences (Maddux et al. 2021); to date, this literature has mostly focused on how multicultural experiences influence *intrapersonal* outcomes, such as personality (Zimmermann and Neyer 2013, Niehoff et al. 2017), self-concept clarity (Adam et al. 2018a, b), humor (Lu et al. 2019), and creativity (Leung et al. 2008, Maddux and Galinsky 2009, Leung and Chiu 2010, Godart et al. 2015). By contrast, our research examines the effects of multicultural experiences on an important *interpersonal* outcome: leadership effectiveness. Thus, our studies demonstrate that multicultural experiences can benefit not only individuals themselves, but also the teams they lead—especially teams that are more multinational.

Second, we contribute to the literature on multicultural experiences by examining *which type* of multicultural experience is conducive to leadership effectiveness. Whereas the bulk of past research has focused simply on whether an individual has multicultural experiences or not, we distinguish between the number of foreign countries in which someone has lived or worked (i.e., breadth) and the duration of their time abroad (i.e., depth) (Maddux et al. 2021). By revealing that the breadth, but not the depth, of multicultural experiences predicts leadership effectiveness, we provide a more nuanced understanding of the effects of multicultural experiences. Third, to understand *how* broad multicultural experiences

foster leadership effectiveness, we examine communication competence as a mechanism. Consistent with experiential learning theory (Kolb 1984), our studies suggest that broad multicultural experiences are conducive to communication competence and thus leadership effectiveness, because these experiences enable individuals to learn from communicating with people from different backgrounds. Fourth, to understand *when* the link between multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness is stronger, we examine team national diversity as a moderator. In line with the literature on leader–team fit (Cole et al. 2013, Hu and Judge 2017), we provide evidence that leaders with multicultural experiences are particularly effective when leading more versus less multinational teams.

By identifying a novel, experiential predictor of leadership effectiveness, we also contribute to the literature on leadership development (Day and Dragoni 2015). Meta-analyses have examined predictors of leadership effectiveness, such as personality (Judge et al. 2002) and intelligence (Judge et al. 2004). Given the importance of leadership for teams and organizations, researchers and practitioners have long sought ways to train effective leaders (Connaughton et al. 2003, Dragoni et al. 2014). Leadership training is estimated to cost about $50 billion annually (Prokopeak 2018). Despite the prodigious resources spent on leadership training, few organizations have found such training to be effective (Gurdjian et al. 2014, Nelson 2016). In lieu of traditional leadership training programs focusing on workshop instruction, some scholars suggest that leadership effectiveness can be cultivated through diverse experiences and developmental challenges (DeRue and Wellman 2009, Seibert et al. 2017). As McCall (2004) notes, "The primary source of learning to lead … is experience" (p. 127). Consistent with this notion, the present research points to multicultural experiences as a developmental facilitator of leadership effectiveness.

Theory and Hypotheses

Building on experiential learning theory (Kolb 1984), we develop a theoretical perspective that identifies how and when multicultural experiences foster leadership effectiveness.

Communication Competence as a Mechanism Linking Multicultural Experiences and Leadership Effectiveness

The author and former presidential speechwriter James Humes once remarked, "The art of communication is the language of leadership." Research indicates that leaders "spend nearly 80 percent of their day engaged in some form of communication" (Brownell 1990, p. 401),

such as listening and talking to their subordinates, colleagues, and stakeholders (De Vries et al. 2010), articulating their visions and ideas, clarifying roles and expectations, and providing feedback (Yukl 2020). For example, Riggio et al. (2003) demonstrate that leaders with higher communication competence were rated as more effective leaders by their team members. Indeed, many theories of effective leadership (e.g., charismatic leadership) are based on the premise of communication competence (Flauto 1999).

Given the importance of communication competence for leadership effectiveness, we propose that multicultural experiences can enhance individuals' communication competence and, thus, their leadership effectiveness. This proposition is based on ELT (Kolb 1984, Kolb and Kolb 2005), which posits that individuals learn from processing new and diverse experiences. Unlike learning theories that view learning as behavioral or cognitive outcomes, ELT views learning as a developmental *process* (Ng et al. 2009), through which individuals experience and adapt to the world by "thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving" (Kolb and Kolb 2005, p. 194). A key implication of this theory is that contextualized learning from diverse experiences helps individuals navigate and communicate more effectively in their social worlds (Kolb 1984). The experience-based, holistic nature of ELT dovetails with the experiential diversity of multicultural experiences.

Multicultural experiences afford individuals opportunities to learn how to communicate with people from different backgrounds who possess different communication styles. When immersed in their home countries, individuals tend to interact with people from similar cultural backgrounds who share similar attitudes and behaviors. Thus, they are exposed to a relatively homogeneous repertoire of communication styles. For example, a Japanese individual who has never lived abroad may find it challenging to communicate with Americans whose communication styles are more direct and assertive (Lu et al. 2020). By contrast, multicultural experiences "instill new ways of learning and responding to stimuli because of sociocultural differences" (Carpenter et al. 2001, p. 496). A person who learns how to communicate with culturally different others is analogous to a musician who expands repertoire by learning new music styles (Thomas and Fitzsimmons 2008, Morris et al. 2014). Specifically, multicultural experiences expose individuals to the diverse beliefs, customs, norms, values, and communication frames of other cultures (Fitzsimmons 2013, Fitzsimmons et al. 2017, Lu et al. 2017a). For example, an American who has lived in East Asia is more likely to understand that "yes" can sometimes mean "no" when expressed by an East Asian. Importantly, such cultural learning often occurs implicitly

(similar to learning to ride a bicycle through associative learning) rather than explicitly (similar to learning the rules of a game; Savani et al. 2021). Although certain cultural knowledge about communication can be learned explicitly from books and social media (e.g., bowing in Japan), many communication patterns are implicit and contingent on a complex function of multiple cues (e.g., familiarity, age, status). Because cultural learning is a holistic process of adaptation (Kolb and Kolb 2005), multicultural experiences enable individuals to learn from communicating with people from diverse backgrounds.

Multicultural experiences also lead individuals to reflect on the assumptions that underlie interpersonal communication. Because communication in one's home country is largely based on habits and routines, individuals are less likely to pay attention to the process of communication or to frame communication in different ways (Reagans and McEvily 2003). In comparison, a foreign cultural environment is more likely to trigger meta-cognitive awareness and reflection (Adam et al. 2018b), which can lead individuals to "pay attention to internal assumptions, cognitions and emotions of oneself and of the person with whom one is communicating" (Bird and Mendenhall 2016, p. 120). When communicating with others, individuals with extensive multicultural experiences may be more likely to adapt and frame their communication in a language that a contact can understand (Reagans and McEvily 2003). They may also display more respect, patience, and sensitivity to others' feelings and needs and employ situationally appropriate words, vocal tones, body gestures, and facial expressions (Gudykunst et al. 1988, Ng et al. 2009). Based on this reasoning, we predict that multicultural experiences can foster communication competence, which is central to leadership effectiveness.

Breadth vs. Depth of Multicultural Experiences
Having theorized the link between multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness, it is important to discuss which type of multicultural experience is conducive to communication competence and, thus, leadership effectiveness. The structure–appraisal model of multicultural experiences (Maddux et al. 2021) distinguishes between the breadth and the depth of multicultural experiences: breadth is conceptualized as the number of foreign countries someone has experienced, whereas depth is conceptualized as the duration of one's time abroad (Cao et al. 2014, Godart et al. 2015, Lu et al. 2017b). The structure–appraisal model posits that breadth is more predictive of *interpersonal* variables (e.g., generalized trust) and that depth is more predictive of *intrapersonal* variables (e.g., personality, self-concept clarity, creativity). Maddux et al. (2021) note that "broad multicultural experiences

appear to affect interpersonal outcomes because they activate *comparative* processes, providing an increased tendency or ability to compare and contrast similar situations across different cultures, make relative judgments, and understand situations that involve interactions between two or more people" (italics in original). Consistent with this perspective, Cao et al. (2014) find that breadth but not depth increased generalized trust toward others. The researchers reason that these effects emerge because broad multicultural experiences provide more opportunities to engage with people from other cultural groups, thereby strengthening the belief that human nature is benevolent. Similarly, Lu et al. (2017b) find that breadth but not depth predicts moral relativism—the belief that morality is relative rather than absolute—because broad multicultural experiences expose individuals to a wider range of moral codes and norms.

In light of the structure–appraisal model of multicultural experiences (Maddux et al. 2021), we propose that the breadth, as compared with the depth, of multicultural experiences is a stronger predictor of communication competence and, thus, leadership effectiveness (two *interpersonal* variables). Compared with someone who has lived in only one foreign country for 10 years (i.e., a deep multicultural experience), a person who has lived in three different foreign countries over those same 10 years (i.e., a broad multicultural experience) is likely to have had more exposure to more *diverse* beliefs, norms, values, and communication frames. As Suutari and Mäkelä (2007) point out, "The most extensive learning of global competencies takes place during *wider-ranging* global careers, during which individuals go through *a number of* adjustment processes in *different* international positions and contexts" (p. 629). In sum, broad multicultural experiences may increase communication competence and, thus, leadership effectiveness by enabling contextualized learning from new and diverse experiences.

Hypothesis 1. *Broad multicultural experiences positively predict leadership effectiveness.*

Hypothesis 2. *Communication competence mediates the positive relationship between broad multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness.*

Moderation by Team National Diversity: An Additional Test of the Communication Competence Mechanism
To further establish communication competence as a mechanism linking multicultural experiences to leadership effectiveness, we examine the moderating role of team national diversity. If broad multicultural experiences indeed foster leadership effectiveness by developing communication competence, leaders with broad multicultural experiences should be particularly effective in

contexts in which the demands for leader communication competence are high.

One such context is multinational teams, which are increasingly common because of globalization (Neeley 2015, Wildman and Griffith 2015). Although multinational teams may share some of the challenges faced by multiracial teams (e.g., prejudice), multinational teams are particularly prone to *communication* challenges (Hinds et al. 2014, Haas and Cummings 2015). First, multinational teams often face language barriers that are absent in mononational teams. Second, multinational teams are more vulnerable to miscommunication because team members from different countries tend to have different beliefs, values, norms, and communication frames (Dahlin et al. 2005). As Wildman and Griffith (2015) note, multinational teams "often fail to realize their potential because communication and behaviors vary across cultures" (p. 15). Although multinational teams are likely to feature diverse cognitive styles and, thus, bear a higher potential for creativity, they may "have a harder time reaching a shared understanding of the team and task at hand because of the different approaches team members bring to the table" (Aggarwal and Woolley 2019, p. 1587). Third, nationality is a highly salient source of identity, often more so than other sources of identity (e.g., age, occupation, education; McPherson et al. 2001). Thus, team national diversity is likely to produce salient national ingroup–outgroup distinctions. According to social categorization theory, people tend to use salient characteristics, such as nationality, to categorize themselves and others into "us" versus "them" (van Knippenberg et al. 2004, Homan and Greer 2013). People are apt to trust and favor national ingroup members more than national outgroup members (Stahl et al. 2010). Consequently, national cliques are prone to emerge, creating communication problems and potentially jeopardizing team performance. These interrelated factors suggest that multinational teams may face particularly severe communication challenges, and therefore, would particularly benefit from leaders who are competent communicators.[1]

Given that communication competence is particularly important for effectively leading multinational teams, we propose that the positive effect of broad multicultural experiences on leadership effectiveness is stronger for more (versus less) multinational teams. That is, although individuals with broader multicultural experiences may be more effective leaders in general (Hypothesis 1), they will be particularly effective when leading teams that are more multinational. Cognitively, leaders with broader multicultural experiences tend to be more knowledgeable about the different beliefs, customs, norms, and values of team members from different cultures (Haas 2006, Shakir and Lee 2017, Vora et al. 2019). The legendary soccer

manager Arsène Wenger, who coached in France, Japan, and Britain, once noted in an interview, "Being on time isn't the same for a Japanese man as it is for a Frenchman—when a Frenchman arrives five minutes late, he still thinks he is on time. In Japan, when it's five minutes before the set time he thinks he is too late …" (Cross 2013). Meta-cognitively, broad multicultural experiences may shape leaders to be more *mindful* of the cultural differences among team members and the aforementioned communication challenges faced by multinational teams (Fitzsimmons et al. 2011). Behaviorally, leaders with broader multicultural experiences may be especially adept at resolving communication challenges and facilitating teamwork in multinational teams. For example, they may repeat a strategy several times for the sake of nonnative speakers on the team, insist that team members take turns to talk, or adjust their communication style when communicating with different team members. Moreover, leaders with broader multicultural experiences may be more likely to engage in cultural brokerage in multinational teams and resolve cross-cultural conflicts among team members more effectively (Jang 2017). Hence, we propose that leaders with broader multicultural experiences are particularly effective when leading teams that are more multinational:

Hypothesis 3. *Team national diversity moderates the positive relationship between broad multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness such that this relationship is stronger for more (versus less) multinational teams.*

Overview of Studies

To test our theoretical perspective of how and when multicultural experiences predict leadership effectiveness, we conducted four complementary studies. In Study 1, we conducted a field survey of managers in an Australian company to test the link between broad multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness (Hypothesis 1). To answer the *how* question, Study 1 also tested whether communication competence mediated this link (Hypothesis 2). Study 2 analyzed a 25-year archival panel of soccer managers and replicated the link between broad multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness. This study used a team performance measure of leadership effectiveness and mitigated endogeneity concerns via instrumental variable analysis. To answer the *when* question, Study 2 also tested whether soccer managers with broader multicultural experiences were particularly effective when leading teams that were more multinational (Hypothesis 3). Study 3 provided further support for our theoretical perspective via a field experiment on multinational teams in a digital health hackathon, in which individuals with varying levels of multicultural experiences were randomly assigned to lead hackathon

teams that naturally varied in national diversity. In Study 4, we conducted another field experiment on multinational hackathon teams that produced policy proposals to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Study 4 tested our full theoretical model: individuals with broader multicultural experiences are more effective leaders (Hypothesis 1) partly because of their higher communication competence (Hypothesis 2), particularly when leading teams that are more multinational (Hypothesis 3).

One notable strength of our studies is that we measured leadership effectiveness with both survey ratings (Studies 1 and 4) and team performance (Studies 2–4). Although survey ratings (e.g., by teammates) are direct measures of leadership effectiveness, they "represent individuals' perceptions of leadership effectiveness" and "may be influenced by raters' implicit leadership theories" (Judge et al. 2002, p. 767). On the other hand, team performance measures of leadership effectiveness are more objective, but they are less direct and not always a perfect proxy for leadership effectiveness. Thus, assessing leadership effectiveness with complementary operationalizations helps triangulate our theoretical perspective and reduce common method bias.

Study 1: A Field Study of Corporate Managers

Study 1 tested our first two hypotheses via a field survey. First, we examined the link between broad multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness (Hypothesis 1). Second, we tested whether communication competence mediated this link (Hypothesis 2).

Participants

We conducted a field survey at a large Australian company that specialized in construction and engineering. Its executive team helped us distribute the survey via email to 133 full-time managers of two divisions (information and communication technology, people and culture). Recipients were informed that all responses would remain confidential, and no one from their company would be able to access individual responses. One hundred twenty of the managers (49.2% female; M_{age} = 40.07 years, SD = 9.12) voluntarily participated in the survey (response rate = 90.2%); five participants started the survey but did not finish. The managers had extensive leadership experiences with an average tenure of 6.93 years at the company (SD = 5.95).

Measures

Breadth and Depth of Manager Multicultural Experiences.
Following the literature (Godart et al. 2015, Lu et al. 2017b, Adam et al. 2018b), we operationalized *breadth* of multicultural experiences as the number of foreign countries in which a manager had lived (M = 1.16, SD = 1.42) and *depth* of multicultural experiences as the number of months a manager had lived abroad (converted into years; M = 4.57 years, SD = 7.36).

Leadership Effectiveness (Outcome). Each manager was rated on leadership effectiveness and communication competence by a randomly selected colleague in their division. On average, the rater and the target had worked together for 3.14 years (SD = 2.76). To measure leadership effectiveness, we used a six-item scale adapted from Giessner and van Knippenberg (2008). This measure has been used in past studies (Brands et al. 2015, Lanaj and Hollenbeck 2015). Example items include "X is a very good leader" and "X helps our team, project, and/or organization to achieve success" (1 = "strongly disagree," 7 = "strongly agree," α = 0.87). The presentation order of the six items was randomized.

Communication Competence (Mediator). To measure communication competence, we used eight items from the communication competence scale (Madlock 2008). Example items include "X is a good listener," "X expresses his/her ideas clearly," "X is easy to talk to," and "X writes in a way that is easy to understand" (1 = "strongly disagree," 7 = "strongly agree," α = 0.88). The presentation order of the eight items was randomized.

Importantly, the measures of leadership effectiveness and communication competence were counterbalanced across participants and separated by filler items. We performed various analyses to verify that the two measures represented two distinct constructs: an exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation revealed that the six leadership effectiveness items and the eight communication competence items clearly loaded onto two factors (Table 1). Moreover, a two-factor confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model not only fit the data well (χ^2 = 214.31, p < 0.001, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.94, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.93, Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR) = 0.04), but it also fit the data significantly better than a one-factor CFA model in which all 14 items indicated the same latent construct (χ^2 = 877.00, p < 0.001, CFI = 0.66, TLI = 0.60, SRMR = 0.18; $\Delta\chi^2$ = 662.69, p < 0.001).

Control Variables. The company provided detailed manager information, which served as control variables: age, gender, income brackets (in Australian dollars: 1 = "$50k~$100k," 2 = "$100k~$150k," 3 = "$150k~$200k," 4 = "$200k~$250k," 5 = "$250k+"), number of months worked at the firm (converted into years), and division (1 = people and culture, 0 = information and communication technology). Moreover, participants rated themselves on the Big Five personality dimensions (Gosling et al. 2003), which can be related to both multicultural experiences (Zimmermann and Neyer 2013, Niehoff et al. 2017) and leadership effectiveness (Judge et al. 2002).

Table 1. Study 1: Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation

		Factor 1 (Communication competence)	Factor 2 (Leadership effectiveness)
Communication competence scale	X is a good listener.	**0.92**	0.28
	X pays attention to what other people say to her/him.	**0.89**	0.34
	X typically gets right to the point.	**0.88**	0.36
	X is sensitive to others' needs of the moment.	**0.85**	0.33
	X is easy to talk to.	**0.89**	0.33
	X is easy to understand when s/he speaks.	**0.91**	0.26
	X writes in a way that is easy to understand.	**0.84**	0.32
	X expresses his/her ideas clearly.	**0.90**	0.31
Leadership effectiveness scale	X is a very good leader.	0.25	**0.89**
	X is an effective leader.	0.31	**0.91**
	X helps our team, project, and/or organization to achieve success.	0.37	**0.86**
	X makes good decisions.	0.35	**0.89**
	X teaches people how to improve.	0.21	**0.93**
	X encourages others to collaborate.	0.32	**0.88**

Note. Bold highlights the focal variables.

Results

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations are displayed in Table 2.

Leadership Effectiveness. To test the link between the breadth of multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness, Table 3 presents a progression of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models with additional control variables included at each step. In support of Hypothesis 1, breadth positively and significantly predicted leadership effectiveness (Model 1: $B = 0.28$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = 0.004$), whereas depth did not ($B = 0.01$, $SE = 0.02$, $p = 0.44$). The effect of breadth remained significant after controlling for depth (Model 2: $B = 0.34$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = 0.003$), the Big Five personality dimensions (Model 3: $B = 0.34$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = 0.002$), and the demographic and occupational control variables (Model 4: $B = 0.35$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = 0.002$).

Communication Competence. Breadth positively and significantly predicted communication competence ($B = 0.23$, $SE = 0.10$, $p = 0.020$), whereas depth did not ($B = 0.02$, $SE = 0.02$, $p = 0.40$). The effect of breadth on communication competence remained significant when controlling for depth ($B = 0.26$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = 0.026$), the Big Five personality dimensions ($B = 0.26$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = 0.028$), and the demographic and occupational control variables ($B = 0.25$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = 0.039$).

Mediation Analyses. In support of Hypothesis 2, communication competence significantly mediated the effect of breadth on leadership effectiveness (indirect effect = 0.12, $p = 0.008$, bootstrapped 95% confidence interval (CI) = 0.03, 0.27).

Discussion

Using a field survey of corporate managers, Study 1 found that managers with broader multicultural

Table 2. Study 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Leadership effectiveness	5.52	1.46													
2. Communication competence	5.56	1.48	0.62**												
3. Foreign breadth	1.16	1.42	0.28**	0.23*											
4. Foreign depth, years	4.57	7.36	0.08	0.08	0.55**										
5. Openness to experience	5.37	1.10	0.16	0.07	0.02	−0.01									
6. Conscientiousness	5.98	1.05	0.15	0.15	−0.04	−0.01	0.45**								
7. Extraversion	4.51	1.67	0.28**	0.06	−0.05	−0.04	0.39**	0.24*							
8. Agreeableness	5.08	1.19	0.05	0.02	−0.05	−0.03	0.13	0.41**	0.07						
9. Emotional stability	5.51	1.17	0.09	0.03	0.03	0.13	0.45**	0.51**	0.31**	0.29**					
10. Age	40.07	9.12	0.07	0.06	0.10	0.21*	−0.11	0.04	−0.00	0.12	−0.04				
11. Gender (1 = male, 0 = female)	0.51	0.50	−0.11	−0.16	−0.04	0.03	0.02	−0.12	−0.16	−0.30**	−0.11	0.00			
12. Income bracket	2.19	1.15	0.03	0.01	−0.03	−0.09	0.22*	0.09	0.21*	−0.11	0.04	0.27**	0.16		
13. Tenure at firm, years	6.93	5.95	0.03	0.06	−0.01	−0.08	−0.02	0.15	0.06	0.16	0.02	0.39**	0.10	0.21*	
14. Division (1 = P&C, 0 = ICT)	0.47	0.50	0.15	0.12	−0.09	0.00	0.08	0.10	0.21*	0.10	0.04	0.02	−0.32**	0.13	−0.19*

Note. P&C, people and culture; ICT, information and communication technology.
*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$.

Table 3. Study 1: OLS Regressions Predicting Leadership Effectiveness

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Foreign breadth	**0.28** (0.09)**	**0.34** (0.11)**	**0.34** (0.11)**	**0.35** (0.11)**	**0.21* (0.10)**
Foreign depth, years		−0.02 (0.02)	−0.02 (0.02)	−0.02 (0.02)	−0.01 (0.02)
Communication competence					**0.52*** (0.08)**
Openness to experience			0.01 (0.15)	0.04 (0.16)	0.03 (0.13)
Conscientiousness			0.16 (0.16)	0.14 (0.16)	0.02 (0.14)
Extraversion			0.23** (0.09)	0.21* (0.09)	0.20** (0.08)
Agreeableness			0.001 (0.12)	−0.05 (0.14)	0.01 (0.11)
Emotional stability			−0.07 (0.14)	−0.08 (0.15)	−0.02 (0.13)
Age, years				0.004 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)
Gender (1 = male, 0 = female)				−0.11 (0.31)	0.09 (0.26)
Income bracket				−0.10 (0.14)	−0.08 (0.11)
Tenure at firm, years				0.01 (0.03)	0.002 (0.02)
Division (1 = P&C, 0 = ICT)				0.42 (0.30)	0.26 (0.25)
R^2	0.08	0.09	0.18	0.21	0.45
Overall F	8.86**	4.92**	3.02**	1.96*	5.58***

Notes. Unstandardized regression coefficients are displayed with standard errors in parentheses. Bold highlights the focal variables. P&C, people and culture; ICT, information and communication technology.

$^\dagger p < 0.10$; $^* p < 0.05$; $^{**} p < 0.01$; $^{***} p < 0.001$.

experiences were rated as more effective leaders (Hypothesis 1). Moreover, this effect was mediated by communication competence (Hypothesis 2). That is, managers with broader multicultural experiences were more effective leaders partly because they were better communicators.

Study 2: A 25-Year Archival Study of Multinational Soccer Teams

Study 2 extended Study 1 in five ways. First, Study 2 tested the link between broad multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness in another real-world setting: the English Premier League (EPL) of soccer. Second, although Study 1 used survey ratings of leadership effectiveness, Study 2 used the performance of soccer teams as a complementary measure of leadership effectiveness. Third, Study 2 aimed to strengthen causal inference for the link between leader multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness. As with most studies on multicultural experiences, Study 1 was correlational; understandably, it is infeasible to randomly assign individuals to live abroad versus domestically. To mitigate endogeneity concerns, Study 2 used instrumental variable analysis. Fourth, in addition to the main effect of soccer managers' multicultural experiences on leadership effectiveness (Hypothesis 1), Study 2 also examined whether team national diversity moderated this effect (Hypothesis 3). We predicted that soccer managers with broad multicultural experiences are particularly effective when leading teams that are more multinational, because communication competence is particularly important for leading multinational teams (as demonstrated by our exploratory survey of MBA students; see Endnote 1).

Finally, the team context of Study 2 enabled us to examine not only the soccer manager's multicultural experiences, but also the players' multicultural experiences. As demonstrated by Study 1, our theoretical perspective is that multicultural experiences foster the communication competence of individuals *in general*. Although multicultural experiences can also help non-leader team members to communicate competently, the communication competence of the leader is arguably more important because of the leader's pivotal role. In other words, although the positive effect of multicultural experiences on communication competence is not qualitatively different for the leader versus a teammate, such an effect is likely to be more consequential for the person in the leadership position.

The English Premier League as a Study Context

Established in 1992, the EPL consists of the 20 highest-ranked male soccer teams in England. Each season, which lasts from August to May, these teams compete to win the EPL championship and to avoid being ranked one of the three bottom teams (which are relegated to a lower league in the next season).

We chose the EPL as our study context for several reasons. First, compared with teams that are artificially composed for the purpose of research, EPL teams have a high degree of realism (Szymanski et al. 2019). EPL managers and players are typically contracted to work together for at least a year and often for many years. EPL managers play an indispensable role in their teams' success or failure. They are called "managers" rather than "coaches" because they have a wide range of managerial responsibilities beyond mere coaching (Kelly 2017). Second, the EPL provides a team performance measure of leadership effectiveness (win, draw, or loss). Third, the EPL is one of the most multinational team settings in the sports world (Poli et al. 2016). For example, in season 2015–2016,

foreign players accounted for more than 65% of all players. Fourth, for the purpose of hypothesis testing, the EPL features sufficient variance in all of our key variables: the multicultural experiences of soccer managers, team national diversity, and team performance. Finally, because the EPL is one of the most popular sports leagues in the world, detailed and reliable data are readily available for variables of interest.

Data Collection

We collected panel data for 25 seasons from 1992–1993 to 2016–2017 ($n = 506$). This data set contains 47 unique teams, 143 unique soccer managers, and 4,781 unique soccer players.[2] Manager and player demographics, team composition, and team performance data were sourced from the authoritative websites www.leaguemanagers.com, www.statbunker.com, and www.worldfootball.net. Additionally, we procured proprietary wage data from the British accounting firm Deloitte. Because the wage data were unavailable for some teams and seasons, the final sample size was 461.

Breadth and Depth of Manager Multicultural Experiences.

Consistent with the literature (Lu et al. 2017b, Adam et al. 2018b) and Study 1, we operationalized *manager foreign breadth* as the number of foreign countries in which a manager had worked before the start of a given season ($M = 0.54$, $SD = 0.99$) and *manager foreign depth* as the number of months a manager had worked abroad before the start of a given season (converted into years; $M = 1.64$ years, $SD = 3.79$).[3] Results were robust to using a binary operationalization of multicultural experiences instead.

Team National Diversity (Moderator).

To capture the national diversity of a team, we followed past studies (Dahlin et al. 2005, Kearney et al. 2009, Zoogah et al. 2011, Haas and Nüesch 2012, Jang 2017) and computed the widely used Blau's (1977) heterogeneity index: $(1 - \Sigma P_i^2)$, where P_i is the proportion of players from the ith country. A higher score on Blau's index indicates greater team national diversity ($M = 0.74$, $SD = 0.14$).

Leadership Effectiveness (as Measured by Team Performance).

In the EPL, a win = three points, a draw = one point, and a loss = zero point. To assess leadership effectiveness, we tallied each team's total points in each season. Because the number of matches each team played changed from 42 to 38 after season 1994–1995, the maximum points possible (i.e., if a team won every single match) changed from 126 to 114. To account for this change, we divided a team's total points by the maximum points possible in a given season. For example, in season 2016–2017, the champion Chelsea won 30 times, drew three times,

and lost five times, so its performance score was $(30 \times 3 + 3 \times 1 + 5 \times 0)/(38 \times 3) \approx 0.82$.

Control Variables. First, because elder managers might be more skilled and also have more coaching experiences abroad, we controlled for manager age in a given season ($M_{age} = 49.89$, $SD = 7.85$). Second, we controlled for the number of years a manager had worked in his birth country before the start of a given season (*manager domestic depth*), a manager's tenure at the manager's team before the start of a given season, and whether a manager was born in the United Kingdom.[4] Third, we controlled for the mean number of foreign countries in which the players had worked (*mean foreign breadth of players*), the mean number of years the players had worked abroad (*mean foreign depth of players*), and the mean number of years the players had worked domestically (*mean domestic depth of players*) before the start of a given season. Fourth, because wealthier teams have more financial resources to recruit better managers and players, we also controlled for inflation-adjusted annualized wage costs of managers and players (in year 2010, £10 million). Gender was not a control variable because all EPL managers are male.

As a conservative econometric practice, our regression models also included (a) team fixed effects to control for any unobserved heterogeneity resulting from team-specific characteristics and (b) year fixed effects to control for any unobserved time-varying effects (e.g., trend, macroeconomic conditions).

Results

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations are displayed in Table 4.

The unit of analysis is the team-year in our fixed effects OLS panel regressions. To reduce multicollinearity, we mean-centered team national diversity, manager foreign breadth, manager foreign depth, and manager domestic depth. Low variance inflation factor statistics indicate that our models did not have multicollinearity problems. All regression results reported below include the control variables (Table 5).

Supporting Hypothesis 1 and replicating the results of Study 1, manager foreign breadth positively predicted leadership effectiveness as measured by team performance (Table 5, Model 1: $B = 0.018$, $SE = 0.006$, $p = 0.004$). By contrast, manager foreign depth ($B = 0.001$, $SE = 0.002$, $p = 0.41$) did not significantly predict team performance. The positive link between manager foreign breadth and team performance was robust when accounting for manager foreign depth and manager domestic depth (Table 5, Model 2: $B = 0.030$, $SE = 0.009$, $p = 0.001$); on average, as a manager worked in one additional foreign country, the performance of the manager's team increased by 0.030 unit, which is

Table 4. Study 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Leadership effectiveness (team performance)	0.46	0.14								
2. Manager foreign breadth	0.54	0.99	0.29**							
3. Team national diversity	0.74	0.14	0.11*	0.32**						
4. Wage, 10 million £	4.97	4.11	0.54**	0.41**	0.51**					
5. Manager age, years	49.89	7.85	0.25**	0.35**	0.25**	0.39**				
6. Manager born in United Kingdom (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.76	0.43	−0.38**	−0.54**	−0.32**	−0.49**	-0.05			
7. Manager tenure at team, years	2.91	4.27	0.40**	−0.04	0.10*	0.27**	0.41**	0.03		
8. Manager foreign depth, years	1.64	3.79	0.30**	0.83**	0.31**	0.45**	0.38**	−0.52**	0.16**	
9. Manager domestic depth, years	9.27	7.28	0.26**	−0.09*	0.09*	0.22**	0.72**	0.19**	0.53**	−0.11*

$^*p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$.

equivalent to winning an extra 3.42 points (or an extra 1.14 games). Such differences can be game changing. For example, in season 2018–2019, the champion Manchester City and the runner-up Liverpool differed by merely one point.

The positive link between manager foreign breadth and team performance was robust (Table 5, Model 3: $B = 0.030$, $SE = 0.009$, $p = 0.001$) when we further controlled for the players' multicultural experiences. Neither the mean foreign breadth nor the mean foreign depth of the players significantly predicted team performance (Table 5, Model 3: both $ps > 0.05$). Together, these results highlight the relative importance of the manager's (versus players') multicultural experiences.

Team national diversity did not have a significant main effect on team performance ($B = −0.014$, $SE = 0.062$, $p = 0.82$). Consistent with Hypothesis 3, team national diversity positively moderated the effect of manager foreign breadth on team performance (Table 5, Model 4: $B = 0.217$, $SE = 0.064$, $p < 0.001$), such that

managers with broader multicultural experiences were particularly effective when leading teams that were more multinational. To unpack this significant interaction effect, we performed simple slope analysis to examine the link between manager foreign breadth and team performance at three values of team national diversity: for teams high on national diversity (1 SD above the mean), manager foreign breadth positively and significantly predicted team performance ($B = 0.048$, $SE = 0.011$, $p < 0.001$); for teams moderate on national diversity (at the mean), manager foreign breadth positively and marginally significantly predicted team performance ($B = 0.018$, $SE = 0.010$, $p = 0.077$); for teams low on national diversity (1 SD below the mean), manager foreign breadth did not significantly predict team performance ($B = −0.012$, $SE = 0.016$, $p = 0.44$).

Robustness Checks. All fixed-effects regression results were robust without the control variables: the main effect of manager foreign breadth ($B = 0.022$,

Table 5. Study 2: Fixed-Effects OLS Regressions Predicting Leadership Effectiveness (as Measured by Team Performance)

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Manager foreign breadth	**0.018****	**(0.006)**	**0.030****	**(0.009)**	**0.030****	**(0.009)**	**0.018†**	**(0.010)**
Team national diversity							−0.007	(0.067)
Manager foreign breadth × Team national diversity							**0.217*****	**(0.064)**
Wages, 10 million £	0.014***	(0.002)	0.014***	(0.002)	0.014***	(0.002)	0.013***	(0.002)
Manager age, years	−0.002*	(0.001)	−0.005***	(0.001)	−0.005***	(0.001)	−0.006***	(0.001)
Manager born in United Kingdom (1 = yes, 0 = no)	−0.028†	(0.016)	−0.031†	(0.016)	−0.020	(0.017)	−0.028†	(0.017)
Manager tenure at team, years	0.005**	(0.002)	0.005**	(0.002)	0.004*	(0.002)	0.004*	(0.002)
Manager foreign depth, years			−0.001	(0.003)	−0.001	(0.003)	−0.003	(0.003)
Manager domestic depth, years			0.005**	(0.001)	0.005***	(0.001)	0.005***	(0.001)
Mean foreign breadth of players					0.081†	(0.041)	0.074†	(0.042)
Mean foreign depth of players, years					−0.001	(0.012)	0.0005	(0.012)
Mean domestic depth of players, years					0.0001	(0.006)	−0.0003	(0.006)
Team fixed effects	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Year fixed effects	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
R^2	0.66		0.67		0.68		0.69	
Overall F	10.46***		10.72***		10.51***		10.71***	

Notes. Unstandardized regression coefficients are displayed with standard errors in parentheses. Bold highlights the focal variables.
$^†p < 0.10$; $^*p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$.

$SE = 0.006$, $p < 0.001$), the main effect of team national diversity ($B = -0.008$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = 0.90$), and their interaction effect ($B = 0.16$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = 0.01$).

To examine whether the observed effects were driven by outlier managers, we calculated Cook's distance statistics (Godart et al. 2015). Results remained robust when we excluded outlier managers that had Cook's distance statistics higher than the threshold (computed by $4/N$, where N is the number of observations).

To mitigate potential endogeneity problems and strengthen causal inference, we conducted instrumental variable analysis (for details, see the supplemental materials). Consistent with the results of the fixed-effects OLS regressions, fixed-effects instrumental variable regressions revealed that manager foreign breadth positively predicted team performance, whether just controlling for team and year fixed effects ($B = 0.06$, $SE = 0.02$, $p < 0.001$; weak-instrument test $F = 49.83$, $p < 0.001$; Wu–Hausman test $F = 7.32$, $p = 0.007$) or further accounting for the other control variables ($B = 0.10$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = 0.006$; weak-instrument test $F = 19.07$, $p < 0.001$; Wu–Hausman test $F = 8.20$, $p = 0.004$).

Discussion
Study 2 supported our theoretical perspective via a 25-year archival panel of soccer managers. This study replicated the positive link between broad multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness (Hypothesis 1) using a team performance measure of leadership effectiveness. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, Study 2 revealed that managers with broader multicultural experiences were particularly effective when leading teams that were more multinational. This moderation result provides indirect support for communication competence as a mechanism linking broad multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness—given that leader communication competence is particularly important for teams that are more multinational (as demonstrated by our exploratory survey of MBA students; see Endnote 1).

Study 3: A Field Experiment of Multinational Hackathon Teams
Study 3 extended Study 2 in two ways. First, to strengthen causal inference for the hypothesized interaction effect between leader multicultural experiences and team national diversity (Hypothesis 3), we conducted a field experiment in which individuals with varying levels of multicultural experiences were randomly assigned to lead teams that naturally varied in team national diversity. Second, Study 3 tested our theoretical perspective in another real-world context of multinational teams: hackathon teams. Hackathon teams, which leverage diverse perspectives to foster ideas ("hacks") in a constrained time frame, are increasingly popular across different industries and countries.

Empirical Context and Hackathon Procedure
A two-day hackathon competition, sponsored by a reputable Chinese company, took place during an international master's degree program at a Chinese university. During the two days, participants worked intensively in teams to formulate and prototype business solutions to challenges in digital health.

Three weeks before the hackathon, participants completed a required survey as part of the registration process. Demographic questions included age, gender, multicultural experiences, and nationality. This culturally diverse sample (39.8% female; $M_{age} = 25.90$, $SD = 2.34$) consisted of 410 students from 40 countries (54.9% Chinese, 12.7% American, 5.9% Indian, 4.1% Korean, etc.).

Participants were randomly assigned to 82 five-person hackathon teams, which naturally varied in team national diversity. As part of the program's diversity initiative, each team had at least one non-Chinese participant. Moreover, one person in each team was randomly selected as the team leader, whose responsibilities included communicating with the hackathon organizer, coordinating team members, dividing tasks, and finalizing decisions.

At 9:00 a.m. on day 1, the program director and a senior director of the sponsoring company welcomed the participants. They then unveiled the hackathon's topic and announced the randomly selected leader of each team. Thereafter, the teams dispersed to work in their designated space for the next two days. The event organizer provided office supplies (e.g., mobile whiteboards, markers, papers, sticky notes), and participants brought their own laptops.

At 2:00 p.m. on day 2, team leaders drew numbers that determined the presentation order. The 82 teams were randomly divided into seven classrooms. In each room, a panel of two judges evaluated each team based on the feasibility, novelty, and marketability of its idea and the cogency and professionalism of its presentation. Each judging panel consisted of one senior manager from the sponsoring company and one professor from the university. Each team presented its business ideas within a five-minute time frame (plus a one-minute Q&A). At the end of all presentations, the two judges conferred and selected the top two teams in their room to enter the final stage of the hackathon competition. The 14 finalist teams then delivered their presentations in an auditorium, after which the judges voted for a winner and a runner-up.

Measures

Breadth and Depth of Leader Multicultural Experiences. Consistent with Studies 1 and 2, we operationalized *leader foreign breadth* as the number of foreign countries in which the leader had lived, and *leader foreign depth* as the number of months the leader had lived abroad (converted into years). As a result of random assignment, leader foreign breadth ($M = 1.05$, $SD = 0.93$) and leader foreign depth ($M = 1.89$ years, $SD = 3.50$) varied naturally.

Leadership Effectiveness (Outcome). Leadership effectiveness was operationalized as whether a team proceeded to the final stage of the competition (1 = yes, 0 = no).

Team National Diversity (Moderator). As in Study 2, we operationalized team national diversity with Blau's (1977) heterogeneity index. As a result of the random assignment, team national diversity varied naturally ($M = 0.56$, $SD = 0.14$).

Control Variables. Similar to the prior studies, we controlled for leader gender, age (years), and whether the leader was Chinese (1 = yes, 0 = no). Moreover, we controlled for the mean number of foreign countries in which nonleader team members had lived (*mean foreign breadth of teammates*) and the mean number of years nonleader team members had lived abroad (*mean foreign depth of teammates*).

Results

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations are displayed in Online Table S1.

To reduce potential multicollinearity, we mean-centered team national diversity, leader foreign breadth, and leader foreign depth. Leveraging the random variations in (a) leader multicultural experiences and (b) team national diversity, we estimated logistic regressions predicting leadership effectiveness (as operationalized by whether a team successfully proceeded to the final stage). All regression results reported below include the control variables (Online Table S2).

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, leader foreign breadth positively predicted team success (Online Table S2, Model 1: $B = 1.12$, $SE = 0.40$, Wald $z = 2.77$, $p = 0.006$). By contrast, leader foreign depth did not significantly predict team success ($B = -0.32$, $SE = 0.23$, Wald $z = -1.40$, $p = 0.16$). Consistent with Study 2, neither the mean breadth nor the mean depth of nonleader team members' multicultural experiences significantly predicted team performance (Online Table S2). These results highlight the relative importance of the leader's multicultural experiences.

Consistent with Study 2, team national diversity did not have a significant main effect on team success ($B = 2.81$, $SE = 2.57$, Wald $z = 1.09$, $p = 0.27$). Consistent with Hypothesis 3, team national diversity positively moderated the effect of leader foreign breadth on team success (Online Table S2, Model 2: $B = 12.96$, $SE = 4.36$, Wald $z = 2.97$, $p = 0.003$) such that leaders with broader multicultural experiences were particularly effective when leading teams that were more multinational. To unpack this significant interaction effect, we performed simple slope analysis to examine the effect of leader foreign breadth on team success at three values of team national diversity: when team national diversity was high (1 SD above the mean), leader foreign breadth positively predicted team success ($B = 3.48$, $SE = 1.05$, Wald $z = 3.32$, $p < 0.001$); when team national diversity was moderate (at the mean), leader foreign breadth significantly but less strongly predicted team success ($B = 1.63$, $SE = 0.65$, Wald $z = 2.52$, $p = 0.012$); when team national diversity was low (1 SD below the mean), leader foreign breadth did not significantly predict team success ($B = -0.21$, $SE = 0.71$, Wald $z = -0.30$, $p = 0.77$).

Robustness Checks. Results were robust without the control variables: the main effect of leader foreign breadth ($B = 0.79$, $SE = 0.32$, Wald $z = 2.48$, $p = 0.01$), the main effect of team national diversity ($B = 1.48$, $SE = 2.15$, Wald $z = 0.69$, $p = 0.49$), and their interaction effect ($B = 9.83$, $SE = 3.35$, Wald $z = 2.93$, $p = 0.003$).

Discussion

Leveraging the natural variances in both leader multicultural experiences and team national diversity, Study 3 provided further support for our theoretical perspective via a field experiment of multinational hackathon teams. Consistent with Studies 1 and 2, the breadth of leader multicultural experiences positively predicted leadership effectiveness: teams that were randomly assigned leaders with broader multicultural experiences were more likely to enter the final stage of the competition (Hypothesis 1). Moreover, team national diversity moderated this effect, such that leaders with broader multicultural experiences were particularly effective when leading teams that were more multinational (Hypothesis 3).

Study 4: Testing the Full Model in a Field Experiment of Multinational Hackathon Teams

Study 4 had four aims. First, we conducted a preregistered, large-scale field experiment on multinational hackathon teams to test our full theoretical model: individuals with broader multicultural experiences are more effective leaders (Hypothesis 1) partly

because of their higher communication competence (Hypothesis 2), particularly when leading teams with greater national diversity (Hypothesis 3). Second, we assessed leadership effectiveness with both survey ratings (as in Study 1) and team performance (as in Studies 2 and 3). Third, whereas Study 3 used a binary measure of leadership effectiveness (i.e., whether a team made it to the final stage), Study 4 used a continuous measure that was more nuanced. Fourth, whereas Studies 2 and 3 investigated in-person multinational teams, Study 4 examined the generalizability of our theoretical perspective by investigating virtual multinational teams (Jarvenpaa and Leidner 1999, Gibson and Gibbs 2006, Connaughton and Shuffler 2007). This study was preregistered at https://aspredicted.org/cn699.pdf.

Empirical Context

A two-day COVID-19 policy hackathon sponsored by two U.S. universities and several companies took place online over Zoom. Its theme was leveraging diverse perspectives and backgrounds to produce meaningful policy proposals to combat the COVID-19 crisis (Pennycook et al. 2020). The hackathon had four tracks: *public health* ("As the global economy reopens, how can we ensure that COVID-19 does not return?"), *firms and workers* ("Facing widespread economic hardships and exacerbated inequalities, how can we promote equality and economic empowerment in a time of crisis?"), *trade and immigration* ("How can we better manage the flow of people and goods in a world emerging from lockdown?"), and *financial policy* ("What actions should governments and banks around the world take to work towards a functional economy in the COVID-19 era and beyond?"). Participation was free and open to anyone over the age of 18. The hackathon was advertised via university newsletters, email listservs, and social media.

Hackathon Procedure

Three weeks before the hackathon, participants completed a required survey as part of the registration process. Participants indicated their multicultural experiences, nationality, English fluency, age, gender, preferred hackathon track, and why they were interested in the hackathon. The final sample consisted of 754 participants (50.3% female; age range: 18–45) from 57 countries (34.7% Americans).

Based on participants' preferred hackathon tracks, we randomly assigned them to 168 teams of four or five people (54 teams in public health, 44 teams in firms and workers, 38 teams in trade and immigration, 32 teams in financial policy). One person in each team was randomly selected as the team leader, whose responsibilities included communicating with the hackathon organizer, coordinating team members,

dividing tasks, finalizing decisions, and submitting policy proposal. For data analyses, we excluded four teams that had fewer than three people because of absences.

The day before the hackathon (Friday), participants were informed of their randomly assigned team leader and teammates. The leader coordinated the initial communications within the team. On the hackathon website, we posted videos and tutorials about how to draft policy proposals for any interested participants.

At 8:00 a.m. Pacific Time on day 1 (Saturday), we welcomed the participants on Zoom and unveiled the prompt of each hackathon track. Thereafter, the teams dispersed to work on their policy proposal over the next two days.

By 2:00 p.m. Pacific Time on day 2 (Sunday), all teams were required to submit their 1,000-word policy proposals (plus references and diagrams). Each proposal was then reviewed and scored by a judge.

At 2:15 p.m. Pacific Time, a short survey was sent to nonleader participants. As detailed below, team members rated their leader on leadership effectiveness and communication competence. The display order of these two measures was randomized across participants and separated by filler items.

At 5:30 p.m. Pacific Time, the winning teams (with the highest judge scores) were announced. The four hackathon tracks each had three winning teams, each of which received a $500 award. Each team briefly presented their policy proposals at the closing ceremony on Zoom. The winning policy proposals were featured on social media.

Measures[5]

Breadth and Depth of Leader Multicultural Experiences. Consistent with Studies 1–3, we operationalized *leader foreign breadth* as the number of foreign countries in which the leader had lived, and *leader foreign depth* as the number of months the leader had lived abroad (converted into years). As a result of random assignment, leader foreign breadth ($M = 0.70$, $SD = 0.92$) and leader foreign depth ($M = 1.77$ years, $SD = 3.59$) varied naturally. Results were robust when we used a binary operationalization of multicultural experiences instead.

Leadership Effectiveness (Outcome). Leadership effectiveness was measured in two complementary ways. First, we used subjective ratings by team members, who rated their leader on two items (Giessner and van Knippenberg 2008): "Our leader was a very effective leader" and "Our leader helped our team achieve success" (1 = "strongly disagree," 7 = "strongly agree," $\alpha = 0.95$).

Second, we also assessed leadership effectiveness with the score of each team's policy proposal, which

was scored on five dimensions: impact, argument support, potential for success, creativity, and presentation. We carefully explained to the judges how to score each dimension on a scale of 0 to 10 (0~2 = little to no fulfillment of desired qualities; 3~5 = proposal attempts to cover some qualities but incomplete; 6~8 = proposal sufficiently embodies desired qualities; 9~10 = exemplary). Scores on the five dimensions were aggregated for each policy proposal on a scale of 0 to 50. Because the judges might differ in their leniency (e.g., judge X consistently gave high scores while judge Y consistently gave low scores), we standardized the scores within each judge.

Leader Communication Competence (Mediator). As in Study 1, leader communication competence was measured with three items adapted from the communication competence scale (Madlock 2008): "Our leader communicated in a way that was easy to understand," "Our leader was a good listener," "Our leader expressed his/her ideas clearly" (1 = "strongly disagree," 7 = "strongly agree," $\alpha = 0.96$).

Team National Diversity (Moderator). As in Studies 2 and 3, we operationalized team national diversity with Blau's (1977) heterogeneity index. As a result of random assignment, team national diversity varied naturally ($M = 0.33$, $SD = 0.29$).

Control Variables. Similar to the prior studies, we controlled for leader age (years), gender, English fluency (1 = elementary proficiency, 5 = native or bilingual proficiency), and whether the leader was American (1 = yes, 0 = no). Moreover, we controlled for the mean number of foreign countries in which nonleader team members had lived (*mean foreign breadth of teammates*) and the mean number of years nonleader team members had lived abroad (*mean foreign depth of teammates*). Finally, we controlled for track fixed effects to account for any unobserved heterogeneity because of track-specific characteristics.

Results

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations are displayed in Online Table S3.

To reduce potential multicollinearity, we mean-centered team national diversity, leader foreign breadth, and leader foreign depth. Leveraging the random variations in leader multicultural experiences and team national diversity, we estimated OLS regressions predicting (a) teammate-rated leadership effectiveness and (b) the team performance measure of leadership effectiveness.

Leadership Effectiveness. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, leader foreign breadth positively predicted teammate-

rated leadership effectiveness ($B = 0.38$, $SE = 0.14$, $p = 0.007$); this effect remained significant when controlling for leader foreign depth ($B = 0.34$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = 0.038$) and the control variables (Online Table S4, Model 1: $B = 0.33$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = 0.04$). Similarly, leader foreign breadth positively predicted the team performance measure of leadership effectiveness ($B = 0.25$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = 0.002$); this effect remained significant when controlling for leader foreign depth ($B = 0.25$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = 0.008$) and the control variables (Online Table S5, Model 1: $B = 0.25$, $SE = 0.10$, $p = 0.012$). Consistent with Studies 2 and 3, neither the mean breadth nor the mean depth of nonleader team members' multicultural experiences was significant (Online Tables S4 and S5). These results highlight the relative importance of the leader's multicultural experiences.

Consistent with Studies 2 and 3, team national diversity did not have a significant main effect on teammate-rated leadership effectiveness or the team performance measure of leadership effectiveness (both ps > 0.05). Consistent with Hypothesis 3, team national diversity positively moderated the effect of leader foreign breadth on teammate-rated leadership effectiveness, such that leaders with broader multicultural experiences were particularly effective when leading teams that were more multinational (Online Table S4, Model 2: $B = 0.94$, $SE = 0.49$, $p = 0.056$). Likewise, team national diversity positively moderated the effect of leader foreign breadth on the team performance measure of leadership effectiveness (Online Table S5, Model 2: $B = 0.68$, $SE = 0.30$, $p = 0.02$).

Leader Communication Competence. Consistent with Study 1, leader foreign breadth positively predicted leader communication competence ($B = 0.36$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = 0.005$). This effect was robust when controlling for leader foreign depth ($B = 0.33$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = 0.028$) and the control variables (Online Table S6, Model 1: $B = 0.31$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = 0.04$).

Team national diversity positively moderated the effect of leader foreign breadth on leader communication competence ($B = 0.92$, $SE = 0.43$, $p = 0.03$) such that leaders with broader multicultural experiences were rated as particularly competent communicators when leading teams that were more multinational. This effect was robust when accounting for the control variables (Online Table S6, Model 2: $B = 0.96$, $SE = 0.45$, $p = 0.03$).

Mediation Analyses. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, leader communication competence significantly mediated the effect of leader foreign breadth on teammate-rated leadership effectiveness (indirect effect = 0.36, $p < 0.001$, bootstrapped 95% CI = 0.17, 0.55). Moreover, this indirect effect was significantly larger when team national diversity was high versus when team national

diversity was low (difference in indirect effect = 0.53, p = 0.004, bootstrapped 95% CI = 0.14, 1.11).

Similarly, leader communication competence significantly mediated the effect of leader foreign breadth on the team performance measure of leadership effectiveness (indirect effect = 0.06, $p < 0.001$, bootstrapped 95% CI = 0.02, 0.12). Moreover, this indirect effect was significantly larger when team national diversity was high versus when team national diversity was low (difference in indirect effect = 0.076, p = 0.04, bootstrapped 95% CI = 0.01, 0.20).

Discussion

Study 4 provides evidence for our full theoretical model via a preregistered field experiment on multinational hackathon team leaders. Both leader multicultural experiences and team national diversity varied naturally, and we measured leadership effectiveness with both teammate ratings and team performance. Consistent with Hypotheses 1 and 2, leaders with broader multicultural experiences were rated as more effective leaders, and their teams produced better policy proposals partly because of their higher communication competence. Moreover, team national diversity moderated this effect such that leaders with broader multicultural experiences were particularly effective when leading teams that were more multinational (Hypothesis 3).

General Discussion

The present research examined how and when multicultural experiences predict leadership effectiveness across four complementary studies using mixed methods (field survey, archival panel, field experiments), different populations (corporate managers, soccer managers, hackathon leaders) in different countries (Australia, Britain, China, America), and both survey measures and team-performance measures of leadership effectiveness. Using a field survey, Study 1 reveals that corporate managers with broader multicultural experiences were rated as more effective leaders (Hypothesis 1) partly because of their higher communication competence (Hypothesis 2). Analyzing a 25-year archival panel of soccer managers, Study 2 provides evidence that soccer managers with broader multicultural experiences were more effective leaders (as measured by team performance). Moreover, soccer managers with broader multicultural experiences were particularly effective when leading teams that were more versus less multinational (Hypothesis 3)—consistent with the notion that leader communication competence is particularly important for teams with greater national diversity (as demonstrated by our exploratory survey of MBA students; see Endnote 1). Study 2 also utilizes instrumental variable analysis to strengthen causal inference. Studies 3 and 4 replicate these effects in two large-scale field experiments, in which individuals with varying levels of multicultural experience were randomly assigned to lead hackathon teams that naturally varied in national diversity. Overall, the present research reveals a robust link between broad multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness and uses both mediation and moderation analyses to establish communication competence as a mechanism.

Notably, across Studies 2–4, it was the leader's multicultural experiences—not nonleader team members' multicultural experiences—that uniquely predicted team performance. In Studies 3 and 4, individuals with broader multicultural experiences, when *randomly assigned* to be team leaders, led more effectively because of their higher communication competence. By contrast, nonleader team members' multicultural experiences did not significantly predict team performance. Taken together, these results underscore the relative importance of the multicultural experiences of the *leader*, whose communication competence is likely to be more consequential for team performance.

Theoretical Contributions

The current work advances and integrates the literatures on multicultural experiences, leadership development, and multinational teams. First, we tested the widely-held yet underexamined link between multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness. Whereas past research has mostly adopted a macro, resource-based view of multicultural experiences as a *strategic resource for the firm* (Roth 1995, Daily et al. 2000, Carpenter et al. 2001), the present research advances a micro, psychological perspective on the link between multicultural experiences and individuals' leadership effectiveness. To answer the *how* question, we identified communication competence as a key mechanism. To answer the *when* question, we identified team national diversity as a contextual moderator such that leaders with multicultural experiences are particularly effective when leading teams that are more multinational. In other words, we find that global leaders are particularly effective when leading global teams. Additionally, we answer the question of *which type* of multicultural experience is more conducive to leadership effectiveness: by revealing that the breadth but not the depth of multicultural experiences predicts leadership effectiveness, we advance the literature on multicultural experiences through a more nuanced understanding of the effects of multicultural experiences (Maddux et al. 2021).

Second, by identifying a novel, experiential predictor of leadership effectiveness, we add insights to the literature on leadership development (Day and Dragoni 2015). This is a valuable contribution because

the leadership literature has predominantly examined how individual characteristics such as personality (Judge et al. 2002) and intelligence (Judge et al. 2004) predict leadership effectiveness. The present research points to multicultural experiences—in particular, broad multicultural experiences—as a complement to traditional leadership training programs (Seibert et al. 2017). Building on experiential learning theory (Kolb 1984), our studies demonstrate that leadership effectiveness can be cultivated through developmental challenges and diverse experiences that facilitate communication competence (Caligiuri 2006, DeRue and Wellman 2009).

Third, we contribute to the growing literature on team national diversity. As Jang (2017) notes, "Despite its increasing prevalence and importance, national diversity has received little attention in the management literature" (p. 994). In fact, so few studies have examined team national diversity that Bell et al. (2011) did not include it as a variable in their meta-analysis on team diversity and team performance. The limited literature on the effects of team national diversity on team performance has been beset by conflicting results, with some studies finding positive effects (Nielsen and Nielsen 2013), some negative effects (Haas and Nüesch 2012), and others null effects (Kilduff et al. 2000, Kearney et al. 2009).

Given these mixed findings about team national diversity, we conducted additional analyses to reinterpret the interaction effect between leader multicultural experiences and team national diversity on team performance. Specifically, we reexamined team national diversity as the *predictor* and leader multicultural experiences as the *moderator*. If we had only examined the main effect of team national diversity (without considering leader multicultural experiences), then it would appear that team national diversity had null effects on team performance in Studies 2–4. However, when we considered the moderation by leader multicultural experiences, team national diversity positively predicted team performance when the breadth of leader multicultural experiences was high, but negatively predicted team performance when the breadth of leader multicultural experiences was low. By providing evidence for both the positive and negative effects of team national diversity on team performance, these analyses highlight the double-edged nature of team national diversity (Ancona and Caldwell 1992, van Knippenberg et al. 2004): whether team national diversity is an asset or a liability likely depends on the leader's ability to maximize its strengths and minimize its weaknesses (Woolley 2009, Galinsky et al. 2015, Homan et al. 2020). Our studies suggest that broad multicultural experiences can enable leaders to leverage the benefits and mitigate the drawbacks of team national diversity. In revealing that global teams perform at their best under global leaders, we augment the literature on leader–team fit (Cole et al. 2013, Hu and Judge 2017).

Practical Implications

Because of the rise of globalization, individuals and organizations increasingly value and invest in multicultural experiences. However, multicultural experiences are expensive. The present research lends support to the common belief that multicultural experiences foster leadership effectiveness (Karabell 2016, Pelos 2017). Notably, our studies consistently found that the breadth (but not the depth) of multicultural experiences predicted leadership effectiveness via communication competence. This finding suggests that organizations should ensure that expatriates are exposed to a broad set of experiences. For example, when structuring international assignments, organizations should consider exposing their employees to a range of foreign postings (e.g., global rotation programs) rather than one lengthy foreign posting (Suutari and Mäkelä 2007). Similarly, individuals may consider pursuing multinational educational programs (e.g., global MBA) that allow them to engage with different cultures.

Just as individuals' multicultural experiences are increasingly prevalent, so are multinational teams. The present research examined three multinational team contexts with high ecological validity and real-world consequences. Across these contexts, we provide evidence that multinational teams perform better when led by leaders with broad multicultural experiences. Walter Mazzarri, an Italian soccer manager who had only led Italian teams, was hired in July 2016 to manage Watford, a highly multinational team in the EPL. However, because of his allegedly poor communication skills, Watford was almost relegated in season 2016–2017, and Mazzarri was discharged at the end of the season (Burnton 2017). Such anecdotes suggest that assigning a person who lacks multicultural experiences to lead a multinational team may have negative ramifications.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current research has several limitations that provide opportunities for future research. First, although our research focuses on communication competence as a key mediator for the link between multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness, other mediators may also be at play. For example, a recent study of 61 global leaders (Neeley and Reiche 2021) finds that leaders with more multicultural experiences had higher job performance ratings (based on financial and growth goals) and were promoted to higher executive levels. Additionally, this study finds that leaders with more multicultural experiences were more likely to enact downward deference, or "a practice of

lowering oneself to be equal to that of lower power workers." Although Neeley and Reiche's (2021) study does not focus on leadership effectiveness, downward deference could be another mechanism linking multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness.

Second, although our studies focus on team *national* diversity as the moderator for the link between multicultural experiences and leadership effectiveness, future research could explore other moderators. In particular, our findings about multinational teams may apply to other types of teams vulnerable to communication issues. For example, team *occupational* diversity might also be a moderator because team members from different occupational backgrounds may communicate about a task differently and face communication challenges as a result (Milliken and Martins 1996). Therefore, leaders who are competent communicators may be particularly effective in teams high in occupational diversity.

Third, future research could explore other experiential predictors of communication competence and leadership effectiveness beyond multicultural experiences. Building on experiential learning theory (Kolb 1984), our theoretical perspective suggests that other experiences that provide opportunities to communicate with people from different backgrounds may foster communication competence and leadership effectiveness. For instance, work experiences in diverse industries (e.g., finance, technology) or diverse functions (e.g., operations, marketing) may enable individuals to communicate more competently and lead more effectively.

Finally, although the current studies provide consistent evidence that individuals with broader multicultural experiences tend to be more effective leaders, some studies find that multicultural experiences had a neutral or even negative impact on employees' leadership progression (Stahl et al. 2002). For example, one study finds that, among those CEOs who had worked abroad, the more multicultural experiences they had amassed, the *longer* it took them to reach the top (Hamori and Koyuncu 2011). To help understand this puzzle, we make the critical distinction between leadership *effectiveness* and leadership *selection* (Lu 2018). Whereas leadership effectiveness refers to a leader's ability to influence and guide others toward shared goals *when in the leadership position*, leadership selection refers to whether a person is selected as a leader by others, who often "have only limited information about his/her performance" (Judge et al. 2002, p. 767). We speculate that, although multicultural experiences can increase an individual's leadership effectiveness, these experiences might also decrease the individual's likelihood of being selected as a leader by *national ingroup members* because they now perceive the individual as less similar to themselves (Hogg 2001). In other words, although multicultural experiences can transform an individual into a "global leader," such experiences may also render the individual a "cultural outsider" in the eyes of the individual's national ingroup (Lu 2018).

Conclusion

Integrating the literatures on culture, diversity, leadership, teams, and communications, the present research reveals that, as individuals gain broader multicultural experiences, they communicate more competently and lead more effectively, especially when leading multinational teams. Overall, the current findings demonstrate that global leaders guide global teams to victory.

Endnotes

[1] To examine whether leader communication competence is particularly important for effectively leading multinational teams, we conducted a survey of 128 MBA students (25% female; M_{age} = 29.00 years, SD = 3.10) with extensive experience of working in both multinational teams and mononational teams. Each participant ranked the relative importance of five key leadership qualities (1 = "most important" to 5 = "least important") for effectively leading multinational teams and mononational teams, respectively; these two questions were counterbalanced across participants. Based on previous studies (IBM 2010), we selected the following five leadership qualities: analytic competence, communication competence, creativity, dedication, and integrity (display order randomized). Analyses revealed that communication competence was ranked the most important for leading multinational teams (M_{rank} = 1.50, SD = .75) and was ranked as significantly more important for multinational teams than for mononational teams (M_{rank} = 2.17, SD = 1.21; Wilcoxon signed-rank test: Z = −4.95, p < 0.001).

[2] Although 20 teams compete in the EPL *each season*, the data set contains 47 unique teams because of team promotion and relegation.

[3] By "foreign country," we mean a country that is different from a given manager's birth country. Results were similar when we used nationality (instead of birth country).

[4] We treated the four regions of the United Kingdom—England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales—as the same country for two reasons. First, the four regions have similar soccer cultures (e.g., Swansea City is Welsh but plays in the EPL). Second, our instrumental variable involves the GDP per capita of birth country, but reliable data are available only for the United Kingdom rather than for *each* of its four regions.

[5] For exploratory purposes, we also measured leader perspective taking with two items adapted from Grant and Berry (2011): "Our leader frequently tried to take other people's perspectives" and "Our leader made an effort to see the world through others' eyes." The breadth of leader multicultural experiences did not

significantly predict perspective taking, whether alone ($B = 0.04$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = 0.71$) or with the control variables ($B = 0.09$, $SE = 0.17$, $p = 0.59$).

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