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From heterogeneity to inequality: The impact of nationality diversity on leadership in multinational teams

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ABSTRACT

This study distinguishes heterogeneity and inequality by exploring how nationality diversity influences leadership perceptions in multinational teams. Using two studies that assessed 105 (Study 1) and 40 (Study 2) teams comprising 4,120 and 2,180 dyads respectively, we find that nationality-based status influences leadership perceptions directly and indirectly through *competence* perceptions of higher-status peers. Nationality-based identity had no direct effect, but some evidence suggests an indirect effect on leadership that was mediated by *warmth* perceptions of culturally similar peers. These findings highlight nationality as a source of inequality beyond heterogeneity, elucidating the social perceptual paths that shape leadership in multinational contexts.

Nationality is a marker of social identity, shaping people's beliefs, values, and how they view the world. As workplaces continue to globalize and anti-globalism rises, there is pressing need to understand better how nationality diversity affects teamwork (Butler, 2006; Cramton & Hinds, 2014), collaboration (Hinds, Liu, & Lyon, 2011), and leadership (Zander, Mockaitis, & Butler, 2012; Zander & Romani, 2004), processes that are critical not only to team and organizational effectiveness, but equality and inclusion at work (Farndale, Biron, Briscoe, & Raghuram, 2015; Lazarova, Caligiuri, Collings, & De Cieri, 2023). Prevailing views focus on how nationality diversity triggers social category-based divisions, which constrain coordination, decrease social integration, and increase conflict in teams (Lin, Xu, & Xie, 2023; Ponomareva, Uman, Bodolica, & Wennberg, 2022; Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, & Jonsen, 2010a). Such research is important, but it reinforces limited consequences regarding nationality diversity as a form of heterogeneity (Fitzsimmons, Özbilgin, Thomas, & Nkomo, 2023). Few studies examine inequality effects that associate with nationality (e.g., Butler, 2006; Paunova, 2017; Cramton & Hinds, 2014; Hinds, Neely, & Cramton, 2014), suggesting that members of multinational teams are not just *different* in their identities, they are also unequal in status.

One of the most salient features of global work is the “multinational hierarchy that resides within a firm's boundary but across national

borders” (Zhou, 2015, p. 277), and thus examining the effects of nationality diversity as a source of inequality, in addition to heterogeneity, greatly enhances understanding of how fundamental interpersonal processes such as leadership operate in multinational contexts. Most studies that explore status-related consequences of nationality assess attributes such as language (Back & Piekkari, 2024; Boussebaa, Sinha, & Gabriel, 2014; Hinds et al., 2014), employee role status (local versus international or cosmopolitan; Farley, Dawson, Greenaway, Meade & Ibar, 2022; Haas, 2005), and the intersection of nationality and other characteristics such as gender, race, and ethnicity (Primecz, Mahadevan, & Romani, 2016), rather than direct effects of nationality itself as a status marker (Butler, 2006). The few studies that do assess nationality-based status have not included identity-related effects (Paunova, 2017), even though identity and status dynamics likely operate concurrently to shape emergent processes such as leadership in multinational teams (Fitzsimmons et al., 2023; Joshi & Knight, 2015).

We integrate social identity and status perspectives on nationality to address how nationality diversity in terms of heterogeneity and inequality (Blau, 1974; 1977) affects interpersonal leadership perceptions in multinational teams. Little is known about how nationality diversity shapes leadership in multinational contexts (Zander et al., 2012). One explanation is that nationality diversity has multiple and complex

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consequences on interpersonal dynamics in teams, which cannot be explained using either a social identity or status perspective alone. This study acknowledges and builds on the social identity view of nationality diversity in teams, but it extends it by including status. We thus investigate distinct social-cognitive paths that associate with dual conceptualizations of nationality that underlie leadership perceptions. By doing so, we offer more complete understanding of the role nationality diversity plays in shaping leadership in multinational teams.

We contribute to the literature by extending extant research on nationality and leadership in three ways. First, we demonstrate that nationality diversity can be conceptualized and operationalized as both heterogeneity and inequality (Blau, 1974; 1977), and further that the same social category produces identifiable diversity effects in teams (Harrison & Klein, 2007; Carton & Cummings, 2012). Since nationality diversity in teams has been conceptualized and measured either as a nominal difference or status marker, it has been linked to one type of social process—either the heterogeneity perspective that emphasizes processes such as social categorization, similarity-based attraction, and information variety (Stahl et al., 2010a; Stahl, Mäkelä, Zander, & Maznevski, 2010b), or the status perspective that emphasizes processes such as stratification, inequality, and power asymmetry (Butler, 2006; Earley, 1999; Paunova, 2017). By introducing a dual conceptualization of nationality as heterogeneity and inequality, we provide a more nuanced picture of nationality diversity and its complex effects on interpersonal outcomes in teams, demonstrating that conceptualization and measurement influence profoundly the phenomena researchers are able to see and therefore grasp (Harrison & Klein, 2007).

This study answers recent calls for greater focus on equality and inclusion aspects of nationality in international business research, borrowing from growing literature in the broader equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) domain (Fitzsimmons et al., 2023). We illustrate the importance of nationality-based status differences in shaping interpersonal leadership perceptions, which has significant implications not only for effective teamwork and organizational performance, but for fairness in career advancement and growth, distribution of power and influence in the organization, and promotion of ethical and inclusive organizational practices. We thus lay a foundation for future research on how formal and informal leadership hierarchies in organizations are affected by cultural and other nationality-derived disparities among individuals.

Second, this study illustrates two mechanisms through which nationality diversity affects leadership perceptions in teams—warmth perceptions toward those who are culturally similar and *competence* perceptions toward those with higher status. This study thus contributes to literature that applies the stereotype content model to multinational work contexts (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Johnson, Stevenson, & Letwin, 2018). Relatedly, we contribute to nascent literature on nationality bias during social evaluations (Tavoletti, Stephens, Taras, & Dong, 2022) while enriching well-established research on bias in leadership perceptions and evaluations (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). We specifically provide a direct test of extant assumptions that link individual country-of-origin (COO) effects with the content of nationality stereotypes—that is, those that result in perceptions of competence and warmth (Motsi & Park, 2020; Tavoletti et al., 2022).

Third, we contribute to literature on global leadership (Mendenhall, Reiche, Bird, & Osland, 2012) and leadership in global contexts (Lu, Swaab, & Galinsky, 2022; Steers, Sanchez-Runde, & Nardon, 2012) by introducing a dyadic perspective of how leadership perceptions are shaped by nationality differences between individuals. Multinational teams are expected to self-manage and generate solutions to a range of complex organizational issues, necessitating deeper understanding of how nationality differences affect leadership processes that allow multiple team members to take on leadership roles informally. Little is known about how leadership perceptions in multinational teams are influenced by nationality-based differences among team members (Zander et al., 2012). The current study builds on the relational view of leadership by showing that in multinational contexts, an individual's

leadership perception of a peer is shaped not only by the peer's nationality, but by relative (dis)similarity between their nationalities. Therefore, we assess the multifaceted ways in which nationality differences affect leadership processes during international collaborations and global work contexts.

1. Theory & hypotheses

We ask how nationality-based similarities and disparities influence perceptions of leadership in multinational teams. Drawing from Lord and Smith (1998), we define leadership as a social perception, grounded in a social-cognitive psychological theory, that produces an influence increment for perceived leaders. Demographics such as gender, nationality, and race shape who is perceived as a leader and who acquires influence over a team. Although extant literature examines the role gender plays (Eagly et al., 1992), age (Walter & Scheibe, 2013), and race (Sackett & DuBois, 1991; Sy et al., 2010), the effects of nationality on leadership perceptions have received far less attention (Paunova, 2017). Nationality is one of the most salient facets of diversity in multinational teams (Hambrick, Davison, Snell, & Snow, 1998; Tavoletti et al., 2022), and thus it is more likely to shape the perceptions of others as leaders and the patterns of influence that arise among team members, in comparison to other social categories such as age or gender.

Nationality is particularly interesting because it is a great source of identity, and because of people's tendency to associate nationalism with ethnocentrism and xenophobia (i.e., preference for *us* and dislike of *them*; Ayub & Jehn, 2006; Kongshøj, 2019). However, nationality is also important to the reproduction of status inequalities, the primary status-determining demographic in multinational teams (Butler, 2006; Hughes, 1984). We draw from classic research on structural micro-sociology to theorize about how people are perceived as unequal and different in terms of their nationality, or how nationality produces a type of inequality in addition to heterogeneity in multinational teams (Blau, 1974; 1977; Fitzsimmons et al., 2023; Harrison & Klein, 2007; Paunova, 2020).

Blau (1974; 1977) argues that heterogeneity and inequality represent two generic forms of social differentiation, the horizontal and vertical axes of social structure, respectively. Heterogeneity (i.e., horizontal differentiation) refers to the distribution of a population among groups in terms of nominal parameters such as gender, race, and ethnicity, which are categorical groupings that have distinct boundaries and that lack an inherent rank ordering. Inequality (i.e., vertical differentiation) reflects status distribution of people in terms of graduated parameters such as education, income, and prestige (Blau, 1977), which are rank ordered and continuous. Nationality diversity, as a form of heterogeneity, reflects dissimilarities in cultural norms and values in a team, whereas, as a form of inequality, nationality diversity reflects disparities of socioeconomic resources and status among individuals.

This heterogeneity versus inequality distinction in the conceptualization of nationality diversity can be illustrated by comparing the notion of regional cultural clusters such as Latin America, the Middle East, and Southern Asia (Gupta, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002; Ronen & Shenkar, 2013) with notions of first/third world and developed/developing countries (Hettne, 1995; Wallerstein, 1974). The first set of concepts, which reflects the relative closeness or separation between individuals regarding values, norms, and beliefs is nominal (i.e., not inherently ordered in a hierarchy) and associates with social processes such as identification and homophily (Harrison & Klein, 2007). Individuals in the same cultural cluster are likely to share a similar nationality-based identity, in comparison to individuals in different cultural clusters. The second set of concepts, which clearly illustrates the global inequality in socioeconomic resources and opportunities, is rank-ordered and associates with social processes such as stratification (Blau, 1974; 1977).

1.1. Nationality-based identity and status differences and leadership perceptions

Nationality-based identity differences are rooted in individual cultural values and norms, shaping how people identify with their nationality as part of their self-identity. The effects of identity differences can be explained best using social identity and homophily perspectives, according to which people define themselves and others based on membership in demographic groups, relating to each other depending on this ingroup/outgroup categorization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Since people derive meaning and self-esteem from memberships in salient social categories, they view ingroup members (i.e., those who belong to the same social groups) positively, and they distance themselves from outgroup members (i.e., those who belong to different social groups). Self and others are perceived and treated in terms of ingroup or outgroup prototypes, rather than in terms of individuals with unique characteristics (Hogg, 2001). Social categorization of this kind shifts the basis of interpersonal liking from idiosyncratic attributes and shared personal history to shared membership in demographic subgroups (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003).

Much research demonstrates that effects of social identity and homophily extend to leadership and interpersonal leadership perceptions in groups (Hogg, 2001; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001; Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005; Sewell, Ballard, & Steffens, 2022). Through categorization and depersonalized social attraction, ingroup members are viewed as prototypical extensions of the self, and thus contributions from and opinions of these members are attributed greater value and importance. Communication from prototypical members is given more attention, and in ambiguous contexts, messages from prototypical members are given the benefit of doubt (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). These dynamics explain how social identity categories base interpersonal leadership preferences among team members who share a cultural background. Empirical evidence largely supports the role played by ingroup member prototypicality in leadership endorsement (Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001) and leader emergence (Fielding & Hogg, 1997). We argue that members of a multinational team view peers who belong to the same cultural cluster as representative of a positive group prototype, and thus they perceive such peers as more leader-like. Ingroup members who share a nationality-based identity are more liked and thus preferred as leaders, in comparison to outgroup members with a different nationality-based identity. Therefore:

Hypothesis 1. *Nationality-based identity differences associate with interpersonal leadership perceptions, such that leadership perceptions are greater when a target individual has the same nationality-based identity as a perceiving individual, rather than a different nationality-based identity.*

Status differences in a multinational team are based on an individual's relative standing in a nationality-based status hierarchy, which reflects disparities in socioeconomic development among countries. The effects of status differences can be explained best using status characteristics and social dominance perspectives, which illustrate how larger-scale social inequalities are reproduced and maintained in smaller groups (Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Sidanius, Pratto, van Laar, & Levin, 2004). These perspectives suggest that people perceive others who are dissimilar but higher in status as leaders, reinforcing implicit prejudices and stereotypes embedded in existing social hierarchies (Dasgupta, 2004; Mullen, Brown & Smith, 1992).

People who belong to high-status social categories exert greater influence in teams because they evoke greater performance expectations from peers. Group members might perceive that it is in their own interest to award leadership to members who hold higher status because referential beliefs about status characteristics suggest that high-status people are more capable than others (Fiske, 2010; Ridgeway, 1987). This reasoning is supported by Chan et al. (2011), who asked subjects

from 48 countries to rate the general competence of Americans. The wealth of a rater's country was found to predict ratings, with those from less wealthy countries rating Americans the highest (see also Tavoletti et al., 2022). People from more developed countries are expected to have received greater access to education, health, and other social resources that make them appear more equipped to lead a group (Pau-nova, 2017). Regardless of the relevance of national development to a task, people use implicit knowledge about the global order to form assumptions about others' worth and ability to contribute to a team task (Poppe & Linssen, 1999). Therefore:

Hypothesis 2. *Nationality-based status differences associate with interpersonal leadership perceptions, such that leadership perceptions are greater when a target individual has higher nationality-based status in comparison to a perceiving individual, rather than a lower nationality-based status.*

1.2. Mediation by warmth and competence perceptions

To assess how dual nationality-based differences affect leadership, we examine the fundamental social perceptions of warmth and competence as mediators of leadership perceptions. Nationality-based identity differences have important implications for perceptions of warmth. Warmth encompasses traits such as morality, trustworthiness, sincerity, and friendliness, which capture people's beliefs about benevolent intentions that an actor holds toward them (Fiske et al., 2002). Perceived warmth reflects the extent to which an individual trusts others' motives in relation to themselves, and it associates with interpersonal liking, empathy, and trust (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008).

According to social identity theory, people view those similar to themselves (i.e., people who look alike, think alike, and are easier to identify with, or ingroup members; Hogg, Hains, & Mason, 1998; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001) as more likeable than those dissimilar (i.e., outgroup members). Since ingroup members are viewed as prototypical extensions of oneself, they are preferred as potential collaborative partners, in comparison to outgroup members. Warmth perceptions translate into leadership perceptions because of positive expectations of reciprocal behaviors among ingroup members. Positive beliefs about people's intentions toward others and their ability to get along with peers represent important inputs to team members' decisions about who should be bestowed leadership in the team (Fiske et al., 1999; Hu, Zhang, Jiang, & Chen, 2019). Shifts in organizational leadership in recent decades toward teamwork, innovation, and collaboration have even elevated the role of warmth perceptions in leadership evaluations (Cuddy et al., 2008; Eagly & Carli, 2003).

Individuals perceived as warm are considered generous exchange partners and are sought for advice and help, which increases their social influence in groups (Flynn, 2003; Hu et al., 2019; Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008). Accordingly, communication from peers who share similar cultural backgrounds are given more attention, and their contributions and opinions are attributed greater value and importance due to positive perceptions of warmth (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). This, in turn, is reflected in positive perceptions of leadership, such that when two people share the same cultural identity, reciprocal leadership perceptions between them are higher than when they have distinct cultural identities (Hogg, 2001; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001). Therefore:

Hypothesis 3. *Nationality-based identity differences associate with interpersonal warmth perceptions, such that warmth perceptions are greater when a target individual has the same nationality-based identity as a perceiving individual, rather than a different nationality-based identity.*

Hypothesis 4. *Warmth perceptions mediate the effects of nationality-based identity differences on interpersonal leadership perceptions, such that leadership perceptions through warmth perceptions are greater when a target individual has the same nationality-based identity as a perceiving individual, rather than a different nationality-based identity.*

Competence perceptions convey information about superior knowledge, skills, and abilities (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007). Team members perceived as competent are evaluated more positively and are granted greater leadership opportunities in the team, especially absent additional information (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986). Competent members receive greater social support from peers, and they influence team decisions, in comparison to less competent members (Bunderson, 2003; van der Vegt, Bunderson, & Ossterhof, 2006). Empirically, competence perceptions associate positively with informal leader emergence in teams (DeRue, Nahrgang, & Ashford, 2015; McClean, Martin, Emich, & Woodruff, 2018; Zhang, Law, & Wang, 2020). Greater regional and national socioeconomic development, which result in stereotypes of members of some nationalities being more competent than others, translate into leadership influence in multinational teams (Jost, Kivetz, Rubini, Guermendi, & Mosso, 2005; Paunova, 2017; Tavoletti et al., 2022). We argue that nationality-based status differences shape competence and leadership perceptions among team members, such that team members who belong to higher-status nationalities are perceived as more competent and leader-like by peers, in comparison to team members from lower-status nationalities.

Hypothesis 5. *Nationality-based status differences associate with interpersonal competence perceptions, such that competence perceptions are greater when a target individual has higher nationality-based status in comparison to a perceiving individual, rather than lower nationality-based status.*

Hypothesis 6. *Competence perceptions mediate the effects of nationality-based status differences on interpersonal leadership perceptions, such that leadership perceptions through competence perceptions are greater when a target individual has higher nationality-based status in comparison to a perceiving individual, rather than lower nationality-based status.*

2. Methods

2.1. Overview of two studies

We conducted two studies, for which we collected data from distinct cohorts of multinational teams that comprised experienced professionals enrolled in a full-time MBA program at a European business school. The nature of the teamwork and course structure were similar for the teams involved in both studies, but there was no overlap between participants in Studies 1 and 2. In both studies, participants were assigned to fixed teams from the start of the program in a way that maximized team diversity in terms of gender, nationality, and professional background. Participants worked on a variety of team projects for multiple core courses over a period of three to four months, requiring them to collaborate intensively. Since participants remained with the same team across all courses, they commonly met daily to work on course preparation and team assignments that carried a substantial weight for the final grade that team members received individually. Thus, the teams in both studies were process and outcome interdependent. Study 1 tested hypotheses H1 and H2, which related to the main effects of nationality-based identity and status differences on leadership perceptions on a sample of 703 participants in 105 multinational teams. Study 2 tested hypotheses H3 through H6, pertaining to mediated effects of nationality-based identity and status differences on leadership perceptions, through warmth and competence perceptions, respectively, on a different sample of 308 participants in 40 multinational teams.

3. Study 1

3.1. Sample

During Study 1, we collected data from 703 participants of 73 nationalities who worked in 105 teams. All teams were highly diverse, with an average size of 7.71 team members ($SD = 0.57$, $\min = 6$, $\max = 9$). An

average of 7.24 nationalities were represented in each team. The average age of the participants was 30.19 years ($SD = 2.59$), and 23% were female. No leaders were assigned formally, and thus the teams were self-managed. Participants had no prior knowledge of each other, and they were given no explicit guidelines on how to structure their leadership.

We collected data using a multi-phase, multi-respondent, web-based survey. Respondents who did not complete the surveys were excluded from the dataset. At Time 1, one month before formation of the teams, we collected individual demographics, including age, gender, language, and nationality. Leadership ratings were collected at Time 2, approximately four months after Time 1 and immediately after delivery of an important team project. Participants were not only assured of the confidentiality of their responses, but provided with individualized feedback reports that could facilitate their leadership development. Since the social identity and status-organizing effects of surface-level attributes such as nationality are most prominent during initial stages of teamwork, we collected leadership ratings early in each team's tenure (Harrison, Price, Gavin & Florey, 2002; Kalish & Luria, 2016).

3.2. Measures

Interpersonal leadership perceptions. We measured leadership perceptions using a sociometric (i.e., round-robin) measurement approach. First, each team member rated each of their peers using the General Leadership Impression (GLI) questionnaire from Cronshaw and Lord (1987). The questionnaire was confidential and included five items, including "To what extent does this individual fit your image of a leader?" ($\alpha = 0.95$). Participants assessed each of their team members on a 7-point scale that ranged from *not at all* to *very much*. Since the GLI has five items, we calculated an average of the five items and then used it as a directed measure of leadership perception between a perceiving and a target member. For example, for a directed measure from team member A to B, we considered the average rating from A given specifically about team member B on items such as "To what extent does this individual fit your image of a leader?" Thus, for each dyad in a team, we obtained two directed measures of interpersonal leadership perceptions (i.e., one in each direction).

Nationality-based identity difference. To operationalize identity-based differences in highly nationally heterogeneous teams, we assigned a cultural cluster to each participant based on their nationality, according to the GLOBE classification (Gupta et al., 2002; Gupta & Hanges, 2004). Since the original GLOBE study covers only 61 societies, when cluster classification was unavailable for a country, we used an extended classification that covers the entire world (Mensah & Chen, 2012; see also Ronen & Shenkar, 2013). All ten cultural clusters were represented in the sample, though not evenly, including Anglo Cultures (15%), Latin Europe (28%), Nordic Europe (1%), Germanic Europe (10%), Eastern Europe (4%), Latin America (15%), Sub-Saharan Africa (1%), the Middle East (3%), Southern Asia (1%), and Confucian Asia (12%). Identity-based differences for each dyad were coded as a 0/1 binary, depending on whether a target and perceiving team members in each dyad belonged to *same* (=0) or *different* (=1) cultural clusters. An average of 5.82 identity clusters ($SD = 0.90$) were represented in each team.

Nationality-based status difference. A degree of national development was assigned to each participant based on nationality. Since high-status nationalities are characterized by possessions of disproportionately large shares of positive social value (i.e., the material and symbols for which people strive, including health, wealth, education, and high social status), in comparison to low status nationalities (Sidanus & Pratto, 1999), the human development index (HDI) was used to operationalize national development or prestige. HDI includes not only a measure of a nation's wealth, but of its education and health, both of which are critical to positive social value. Categories of national development were assigned to each nationality according to the UNDP

(2009). Although the distribution skewed toward nations with greater development, all four categories of HDI were represented in the sample—low (1%), medium (15%), high (19%), and very high (65%) national development. We coded HDI categories to represent continuous differences in national status (Low = 1, Medium = 2, High = 3, Very High = 4).

Status ranks ranged from 1 to 4, such that at a maximum, there were four levels of status categories in a team. For each dyad in the team, we calculated nationality-based status difference (continuous) as the difference between the HDI category of the target team member and the HDI category of the perceiving team member, based on the direction of the leadership perception ratings. The status difference ranged from -3 to 3. Since both the magnitude and direction of status differences were important to testing the hypotheses, we operationalized this variable as the continuous difference in HDI categories. A negative value for the status difference of a dyad indicated that a target member belonged to a nationality with a lower HDI than a perceiving member, and a positive value indicated that a target member belonged to a nationality with a higher HDI. The magnitude of the difference indicated the size of the status gap between a target and perceiver.

3.3. Control variables

We controlled for binary language difference (i.e., native English speaker or not), binary gender difference (i.e., male or female), and continuous age differences in the dyad, since such differences commonly associate with interpersonal perceptions of competence, warmth, and leadership (Cuddy, Glick, & Beninger, 2011; Eagly et al., 1992; Paunova, 2017; Walter & Scheibe, 2013).¹

3.4. Analysis

Since the data were nested (i.e., dyads nested within teams), we assessed for intraclass correlations within teams prior to testing the hypotheses. Non-negligible intraclass correlations of leadership perceptions (ICC (1) = 0.08; log likelihood ratio = 204.04(1), $p < 0.01$) suggested a need to account for non-independence due to membership in the same teams, which can be addressed using hierarchical linear models (HLM; Bliese & Ployhart, 2002). We also checked for variance in leadership perceptions from third-level groups because students in each academic year were organized into different academic sections, and students in each academic section were further organized into teams. Therefore, membership in sections might influence lower-level (i.e., team and dyad) dynamics. However, analysis of variance suggested that membership in academic sections had negligible effects on interpersonal perceptions between members (ICC (1) = 0.02; loglikelihood ratio = 0.00(1), *n.s.*). Interrater reliability (ICC (K) = 0.79) was sufficiently high to justify use of the mean of raters' responses on leadership (Connolly & Ones, 2010; LeBreton & Senter, 2008). We tested the hypotheses using HLM (nlme package in R; Pinherio, Bates, & R Core Team, 2023).

3.5. Results of HLM analysis of interpersonal leadership perceptions

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics and correlations among variables in Study 1.

The first set of hypotheses focused on the effects of identity and status differences on interpersonal leadership perceptions in a team. Table 2 reports results for Study 1, the HLM analysis of identity and status differences on interpersonal leadership perceptions. H1 suggests that leadership perceptions associate negatively with nationality-based identity differences. Since no significant effect was found ($\beta = -0.02$; $SE = 0.08$; $p = 0.72$), H1 was not supported, as shown for Model 1,

¹ Cultural cluster membership correlated strongly with ethnicity, and cross-ethnic differences nearly entirely corresponded to cross-national differences.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics and correlations for study 1 variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1 Language Difference	0.36	0.48					
2 Gender Difference	0.00	0.63	0.00				
3 Age Difference	-0.03	3.47	0.00	-0.23			
4 Nationality-based Identity Difference	0.91	0.29	0.17	0.01	0.00		
5 Nationality-based Status Difference	0.00	1.16	0.00	-0.10	0.24	0.00	
6 Leadership Perceptions	4.59	1.4	0.03	-0.11	-0.01	0.01	0.08

Note: Unless otherwise noted, differences between target and perceiving members are categorical (0 = belongs to same category, 1= belongs to different category). 'Age Difference' and 'Nationality-based Status Difference' represent continuous differences between target and perceiving members.

Table 2.

H2 suggests that leadership perceptions associate with nationality-based status differences. Supporting the hypothesis, Model 2 in Table 2 shows that leadership perceptions associated positively with differences in nationality-based status ($\beta = 0.10$; $SE = 0.02$; $p = 0.00$). Model 3 shows that, when considered together, only nationality-based status differences had a significant effect on leadership perceptions ($\beta = 0.10$; $SE = 0.02$; $p = 0.00$), whereas nationality-based identity differences had no effect on leadership perceptions ($\beta = -0.03$; $SE = 0.08$; $p = 0.72$). Overall, results suggest that nationality-based status difference affected leadership perceptions, but whether members shared nationality-based identity category was irrelevant to leadership perceptions in multinational teams. To probe the (absence of a) relationship between nationality-based identity and leadership further, we conducted analyses with country-level differences between individuals, instead of cluster-level differences, finding no significant effect of identity difference on leadership perceptions.

4. Study 2

4.1. Sample

Study 2 tested H3 through H6 on a sample of 308 MBA students from 55 countries who worked in 40 teams for a period of nine months. Teams were highly diverse, with an average size of 7.7 team members ($SD = 1.02$; min = 5; max = 9). An average of 6.95 nationalities were represented in each team. The average age of participants was 30.9 years ($SD = 2.43$), and 25% were female. We collected data using a multi-phase, multi-respondent, web-based survey. Unlike Study 1, which used two timepoints, Study 2 used three, offering time-separated measures of the mediators (i.e., warmth and competence perceptions) and outcome (i.e., leadership perceptions).

At Time 1, one month before formation of teams, individual demographics were collected from the program administration, with participants' consent, including age, gender, language, and nationality. Warmth and competence ratings were collected at Time 2, four months after Time 1 and immediately after delivery an important team project. Leadership ratings were collected at Time 3, approximately one month after Time 2. To ensure a satisfactory response rate, participants were not only assured of the confidentiality of their responses, but were provided with individualized feedback reports that could facilitate their leadership development. Although the teams worked together for nine months, we collected warmth, competence, and leadership ratings early during the teams' tenure. We used this approach because social and status-organizing effects of surface-level attributes, such as nationality, are most pronounced during initial stages of teamwork (Harrison et al., 2002; Kalish & Luria, 2016).

Table 2
Study 1 results of multilevel HLM analysis: interpersonal perceptions of leadership.

	Leadership Perceptions								
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	β	SE	p	β	SE	p	β	SE	p
Level 2 (Teams)									
Intercept	4.58**	0.08	0.00	4.56**	0.05	0.00	4.58**	0.08	0.00
Level 1 (Dyads)									
Language Difference	0.11*	0.05	0.02	0.11*	0.05	0.02	0.11*	0.05	0.02
Gender Difference	-0.28**	0.03	0.00	-0.27**	0.34	0.00	-0.27**	0.03	0.00
Age Difference	-0.02**	0.01	0.00	-0.03**	0.01	0.00	-0.03**	0.01	0.00
Nationality-based Identity Difference	-0.02	0.08	0.72				-0.03	0.08	0.72
Nationality-based Status Difference				0.10**	0.02	0.00	0.10**	0.02	0.00
AIC	14274.38			14247.53			14252.74		
BIC	14318.64			14291.79			14303.32		

Note: $n = 4120$ dyads in 105 teams. Parameter estimates representing tests of hypotheses are indicated in bold.

* = $p < .05$;

** = $p < .01$. Smaller values of AIC and BIC indicate better model fit for each outcome network. Unless otherwise noted, differences between target and perceiving members are categorical (0 = belongs to same category, 1 = belongs to different category). 'Age Difference' and 'Nationality-based Status Difference' represent continuous differences between target and perceiving members.

4.2. Measures

Interpersonal leadership perceptions. Like in Study 1, we measured leadership perceptions following a sociometric (i.e., round-robin) measurement approach using the GLI (Cronshaw & Lord, 1987). For each dyad in the team, we obtained two directed measures of interpersonal leadership perceptions (i.e., one in each direction).

Competence perceptions. Competence perceptions between teammates were assessed using a sociometric (i.e., round-robin) item: "As viewed by you, how competent is this team member?" Participants rated each of their team members' competence using a 7-point scale that ranged from *not at all* to *very much*.

Warmth perceptions. Warmth perceptions between teammates were assessed using the a sociometric (i.e., round-robin) item: "As viewed by you, how warm is this team member?" Participants rated each of their team members' warmth using a 7-point scale that ranged from *not at all* to *very much*.

Nationality-based identity difference. Like in Study 1, we operationalized nationality-based identity differences as a binary variable (0/1), according to the extended version of the GLOBE classification (Gupta et al., 2002; Gupta & Hanges, 2004; Mensah & Chen, 2012; Ronen & Shenkar, 2013). All ten cultural clusters were represented in the sample, though not evenly, including Anglo Cultures (16%), Latin Europe (26%), Nordic Europe (2%), Germanic Europe (4%), Eastern Europe (3%), Latin America (23%), Sub-Sahara Africa (1%), the Middle East (4%), Southern Asia (7%), and Confucian Asia (14%). Nationality-based identity difference for each dyad was coded as a 0/1 binary, depending on whether the target and perceiving team members in each dyad belonged to same (=0) or different (=1) cultural clusters. An average of 5.2 identity clusters ($SD = 0.91$) were represented in each team.

Nationality-based status difference. Like in Study 1, we assigned HDI categories to each nationality (UNDP, 2009). Although the distribution skewed toward nations with greater development, all four categories of HDI were represented in the sample, including low (1%), medium (6%), high (26%), and very high (67%) national development. The status difference ranged from -3 to 3. The magnitude and direction of status difference was again important, so we used this continuous nationality-based status difference measure.

4.3. Control variables

We again controlled for language, gender, and age differences in the dyad. Differences between target and perceiving members were categorical (0 = belongs to same category, 1 = belongs to different category),

except the continuous age difference.

4.4. Analysis

Since data were nested, we followed the same procedure as in Study 1, uncovering non-negligible intraclass correlations of leadership perceptions arising from membership in the same teams ($ICC(1) = 0.08$; log likelihood ratio = 116(1), $p < 0.01$), and thus the need to account for non-independence of data using HLM (Bliese & Ployhart, 2002). As in Study 1, there was no effect of 3rd-level group membership, due to teams being organized across academic sections. We tested the hypotheses using HLM (nlme package in R; Pinheiro, Bates, & R Core Team, 2023), and mediation analysis (mediate package in R; Tingley, Yamamoto, Hirose, Keele, & Imai, 2014). Interrater reliability ($ICC(K) = 0.83$) was sufficiently high to justify use of the mean of raters' responses for leadership perceptions (Connelly & Ones, 2010; LeBreton & Senter, 2008).

Intraclass correlations for warmth ($ICC(1) = 0.07$; log likelihood ratio = 98(1), $p < 0.01$) and competence ($ICC(1) = 0.08$; log likelihood ratio = 114(1), $p < 0.01$) suggested a need to account for membership in teams, and thus we conducted multilevel mediation analysis during Study 2. The interrater reliabilities for warmth ($ICC(K) = 0.81$) and competence ($ICC(K) = 0.83$) were sufficient to justify use of the mean of raters' responses (Connelly & Ones, 2010; LeBreton & Senter, 2008).

4.5. Results of HLM analysis

Table 3 summarizes descriptive statistics and correlations of variables in Study 2.

Table 4 reports results pertaining to H3 through H6. H3 suggests that interpersonal warmth perceptions associate with nationality-based identity difference (similarity). Shown in Model 1, Table 4, H3 was not supported since no association ($\beta = -0.12$; $SE = 0.08$; $p = 0.13$) was found between warmth perceptions and dyadic differences in nationality-based identity (coded 0 = target and perceiver belong to the same cultural cluster; 1 = target and perceiver belong to different cultural clusters). Thus, warmth perceptions do not appear to vary between a pair of team members who share a nationality-based identity and those who do not. Shown in Model 4, leadership perceptions associated positively with perceptions of warmth ($\beta = 0.23$; $SE = 0.02$; $p = 0.00$). As Table 5 reports, no mediation by perceptions of warmth between nationality-based identity difference and leadership perceptions was found (H4) ($\beta = -0.04$; $CI = -0.10:0.01$; $p = 0.13$), even though the effect was in the expected direction and approaching significance.

To explore this further, we conducted supplementary analysis,

Table 3
Descriptive statistics and correlations for study 2 variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Language Difference	0	0.6							
2 Gender Difference	0.42	0.49	-0.01						
3 Age Difference	-0.01	3.5	0.16	0.00					
5 Nationality-based Identity Difference	0.89	0.31	-0.01	0.03	0.00				
5 Nationality-based Status Difference	-0.01	0.91	-0.1	0.00	-0.16	0.00			
6 Warmth Perceptions	5.93	1.20	-0.05	0.05	0.04	-0.03	-0.03		
7 Competence Perceptions	6.08	0.99	0.00	0.03	0.02	-0.01	0.05	0.33	
8 Leadership Perceptions	5.08	1.26	0.02	-0.01	0.00	-0.02	0.05	0.36	0.48

Note: Unless otherwise noted, differences between target and perceiving members are categorical (0 = belongs to same category, 1= belongs to different category). 'Age Difference' and 'Nationality-based Status Difference' represent continuous differences between target and perceiving members.

Table 4
Study 2 results of multilevel HLM analysis: interpersonal perceptions of competence, warmth, and leadership.

	Warmth Perceptions			Competence Perceptions			Leadership Perceptions					
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	β	SE	p	β	SE	p	β	SE	p	B	SE	p
Level 2 (Teams)												
Intercept	5.98	0.09	0.00	6.07	0.08	0.00	5.05	0.1	0.00	0.62	0.19	0.00
Level 1 (Dyads)												
Language Difference	-0.12	0.04	0.01	0.00	0.03	0.96	0.03	0.04	0.44	0.06	0.04	0.11
Gender Difference	0.11	0.05	0.04	0.06	0.04	0.19	-0.03	0.05	0.62	-0.08	0.05	0.08
Age Difference	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.08	0.00	0.01	0.68	-0.01	0.01	0.40
Nationality-based Identity Difference	-0.12	0.08	0.13	-0.04	0.07	0.57	-0.05	0.08	0.52	-0.01	0.07	0.91
Nationality-based Status Difference	-0.04	0.03	0.20	0.06*	0.02	0.01	0.07*	0.03	0.02	0.05	0.03	0.05
Warmth Perceptions										0.23**	0.02	0.00
Competence Perceptions										0.50**	0.02	0.00
AIC	6914.07			6098.80			7129.15			6496.22		
BIC	6959.54			6144.27			7174.62			6553.06		

Note: n = 2180 dyads in 40 teams. Parameter estimates representing tests of hypotheses are indicated in bold. * = p < .05
** = p < .01. Smaller values of AIC and BIC indicate better model fit for each outcome network. Unless otherwise noted, differences between target and perceiving members are categorical (0 = belongs to same category, 1= belongs to different category). 'Age Difference' and 'Nationality-based Status Difference' represent continuous differences between target and perceiving members.

Table 5
Study 2 results of multilevel mediation analysis: interpersonal leadership perceptions.

	Leadership Perceptions			
	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value
Nationality-based Identity Difference → Warmth Perceptions	-0.04	-0.10	0.01	0.13
Nationality-based Status Difference → Competence Perceptions	0.03*	0.01	0.06	0.01

Note: n = 2180 dyads in 40 teams. 'Nationality-based Identity Difference' is categorical (0 = belongs to same category, 1= belongs to different category). 'Nationality-based Status Difference' represents continuous differences between target and perceiving members.

during which we controlled for a binary (0/1) status difference, parallel to the operationalization of nationality-based identity difference. By replacing the continuous status difference measure, the intention was to account for homophily arising from shared nationality-based status. Accordingly, nationality-based status difference (0/1) as a binary variable captured whether the target and perceiving team members in each dyad belonged to same (=0) or different (=1) national HDI categories, respectively. Any non-zero value for status difference was coded 1, indicating that the target and perceiving members of the dyad belonged to distinct HDI categories, regardless of the direction and magnitude of status difference. This allowed us to control more directly for social affinity that arose from individuals who shared nationality-based status category, in addition to a nationality-based cultural category. Such

ingroup bias is particularly salient among high-status members (cf. Joshi & Knight, 2015; Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992).

Suggesting support for H3, results reported in Table 6 show that, after controlling for difference in nationality-based status (binary), a negative association between nationality-based identity and warmth perceptions was found ($\beta = -0.16$; $SE=0.08$; $p = 0.04$). H4 was also supported, with warmth perceptions mediating the effects of nationality-based identity difference on leadership ($\beta = -0.06$; $CI= -0.12:0.00$; $p = 0.04$). Nationality-based status difference (0/1) had a positive effect on warmth perceptions ($\beta = 0.13$; $SE=0.05$; $p = 0.02$), suggesting that status similarity decreased perceptions of interpersonal warmth among team members.

H5 suggests that interpersonal competence perceptions associate with nationality-based status differences. Supporting the hypothesis, results reported in Model 2, Table 4 show that competence perceptions associated positively with differences in nationality-based status ($\beta = 0.06$; $SE = 0.02$; $p = 0.01$). Shown in Model 4, leadership perceptions associated positively with competence perceptions ($\beta = 0.50$; $SE = 0.02$; $p = 0.00$). Supporting H6, results reported in Table 5 show that competence perceptions mediated the effects of status differences on leadership perceptions ($\beta = 0.03$; $CI= 0.01:0.06$; $p = 0.00$).

5. Discussion

Using a dual conceptualization of nationality diversity as both heterogeneity and inequality, this study examines the effects of dyadic nationality-based identity and status differences on interpersonal leadership perceptions in multinational teams. Results suggest that nationality-based identity and status differences affect interpersonal leadership perceptions in teams uniquely and through different social

Table 6

Supplementary multilevel HLM analysis: interpersonal perceptions of warmth and leadership with nationality-based status difference (0/1) as control.

	Warmth Perceptions			Leadership Perceptions						
	<i>Model 1</i>			<i>Model 3</i>			<i>Model 4</i>			
	β	SE	p	β	SE	p	β	SE	p	
Level 2 (Teams)										
Intercept	5.95	0.09	0.00	5.06	0.1	0.00	2.93	0.16	0.00	
Level 1 (Dyads)										
Language Difference	-0.11	0.04	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.55	0.07	0.04	0.11	
Gender Difference	0.11	0.05	0.03	-0.03	0.05	0.62	-0.06	0.05	0.19	
Age Difference	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.95	-0.01	0.01	0.44	
Nationality-based Identity Difference (0/1)	-0.17*	0.08	0.04	-0.05	0.09	0.59	0.01	0.08	0.89	
Nationality-based Status Difference (0/1)	0.13*	0.05	0.02	-0.02	0.06	0.72	-0.07	0.05	0.21	
Warmth Perceptions							0.36**	0.02	0.00	
AIC	6908.58			7129.15			6875.32			
BIC	6954.06			7174.62			6926.48			

Note: $n = 2180$ dyads in 40 teams. Parameter estimates representing tests of hypotheses are indicated in bold. * = $p < .05$

** = $p < .01$. Smaller values of AIC and BIC indicate better model fit for each outcome network. All differences between target and perceiving members, with the exception of 'Age Difference', are categorical (0 = belongs to same category, 1 = belongs to different category).

perception paths. We theorize that people who share a nationality-based identity perceive each other as leaders (Study 1), in part because they perceive each other as warm (Study 2), finding limited support. Contrary to expectations, we found no direct effect of shared nationality-based identity on leadership perceptions (Studies 1 and 2). However, when controlling for shared status category membership, we found that shared identity category membership affects perceptions of warmth and, indirectly, leadership. We expected status-based affinity, but we found the opposite, suggesting what might be status-based competition. Thus, future research should assess social identities and perceptions in multinational contexts to account for status.

We consistently found that peers perceived people with higher nationality-based status to be leaders, irrespective of their nationality-based identities (Study 1), and that greater perceptions of competence mediated the effect (Study 2). Unlike identity differences, nationality-based status differences had direct and indirect effects (through competence perceptions) on leadership (Studies 1 and 2), suggesting that the overall effect of nationality-based identity differences was partially muted when considered with nationality-based status differences. Results thus imply that status dynamics (i.e., inequality) in multinational teams play a more direct and pronounced role in team leadership in comparison to identity dynamics (i.e., heterogeneity).

Extant research underscores cultural identities in shaping leadership perceptions in multinational contexts (Han & Beyerlein, 2016; Stahl & Maznevski, 2021), but current results suggest that cultural homogeneity and interpersonal similarity are instrumental only in shaping leadership to the extent that they generate interpersonal liking, which is not independent of status differences. This weak identity effect might be attributed to the fact that social identities based on cultural clusters do not carry the same import as social identities based on country of origin. Our operationalization of nationality-based identities, which uses cultural groups, might fail to capture the positive effects of shared national belonging fully. Notable, however, is that robustness checks using country-level similarities and differences within dyads did not yield significant results.

Results of this study suggest that status cues related to nationality are more accessible as a basis of social and leadership perceptions in multinational teams in comparison to cultural (dis)similarities. People appear to rely more heavily on competence-signaling attributes in comparison to warmth-signaling attributes when bestowing leadership in teams, at least during initial stages of teamwork. This corroborates findings from extant research on leader emergence more broadly, which shows that the effects of agentic characteristics that signal individual competence are more salient early during a team's interactions, whereas the effects of communal characteristics related to warmth are less obvious initially but become stronger over time (Gerpott et al., 2019;

Hardy & van Vugt, 2006). Research also suggests that initial impressions of leadership persist and are reinforced over time (Magee & Galinsky, 2008), making nationality-based status affect informal leadership in multinational contexts. The current study unpacks the empirical distinction of nationality as a source of identity and status differences, demonstrating that multinational teams cultivate leadership dynamics that accord with upward preferences for high-status members (i.e., perpetuating inequality). Lateral preferences for ingroup members (i.e., promoting homogeneity) remain important, but they might be conditioned by status competition.

5.1. Theoretical implications

This study contributes to research on leadership and both diversity and inequality in international business. We underscore concurrent yet distinct effects of nationality as a source of heterogeneity and inequality in multinational teams, giving rise to identity and status dynamics. Results suggest that these two mechanisms sometimes operate concurrently, highlighting the need to account for and distinguish their effects. Although differences in values and worldviews that result from nationality diversity have been studied extensively (Behfar et al, 2006; Hinds et al., 2014), inherent inequalities in development among nations, and their implications to multinational teams, have received less attention since an early study from Butler (2006) nearly two decades ago. Although that study focuses on how status dynamics that relate to nationality contribute to formation of shared team identities, the current study explores distinct yet parallel ways that status and identity dynamics operate, through mediation by competence and warmth perceptions. Researchers acknowledge that the same diversity attribute is a source of both heterogeneity and inequality (Harrison & Klein, 2007), but limited empirical evidence supports such concurrent effects. By delineating distinct yet simultaneous operation of nationality as heterogeneity and inequality, the current study provides a more complete conceptualization of diversity attributes (Blau, 1974; 1977; Carton & Cummings, 2012; Harrison & Klein, 2007).

By demonstrating that nationality represents a symbolic resource that is entwined with status and power (Levina & Vaast, 2008), the current study integrates the fields of diversity and international business. International business researchers have called for more theoretical and empirical research on the role power asymmetries and inequality play in global work (Adler & Aycan, 2018; Fitzsimmons et al., 2023; Hinds et al., 2011; Jack, Calás, Nkomo, & Peltonen, 2008). Current results show, for example, that when considered simultaneously, the status effects of nationality on leadership dominate identity effects, further suggesting that the influence of status dynamics that relate to nationality differences outweigh the more commonly studied dynamics of identity,

homophily, and homosocial reproduction in determining leadership in teams. Overlooking the status and inequality that associate with nationality diversity might be a critical omission in the advancement of research on global leadership and multinational collaborations. Moving beyond viewing nationality solely as a cultural identifier, this study contributes to literature on EDI in international business.

We introduce warmth and competence as mediators through which nationality diversity affects leadership in multinational teams, demonstrating that two forms of nationality-based differences give rise to divergent types of social perceptions that then shape leadership. We thus bring together literature on global leadership, stereotypes in interpersonal perceptions, team diversity, and international business. Although extensive research links leadership perceptions and diversity (Badura, Grijalva, Newman, Yan, & Jeon, 2018; Mitchell & Coyle, 2019), limited research explores divergent effects of a single diversity attribute. We show that since nationality carries multiple meanings and can be construed in multiple ways, especially as sources of cultural similarities and status differentials, nationality disparities lead to multiple socio-cognitive dynamics in multinational teams.

We contribute to research on leadership in multinational teams by assessing how people's perceptions of peers as leaders is affected by relative (dis)similarities in nationality. Results highlight that, in multinational teams, nationalities with higher status confer a distinct leadership advantage (Paunova, 2017). Since interpersonal leadership perceptions serve as micro-level processes through which collective leadership patterns and power hierarchies emerge in multinational teams, these findings have implications beyond individual outcomes. Most extant research focuses on individual differences that associates with informal leadership (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; Judge, Colbert, & Ilies, 2004; Lord, de Vader, & Alliger, 1986), but we bring into focus an important aspect of a team's situational context—its nationality diversity and associated dyadic processes that shape informal leadership. Thus, we offer a multi-level, context-driven, relational perspective of leadership in multinational teams.

5.2. Practical implications

This study's findings have several practical implications for both individuals and managers in multinational organizations. Given the prevalence of multinational teams in organizations (Connaughton & Shuffler, 2007; Zander et al., 2012), and the tendency for most work teams to fragment along demographic differences and similarities (Carton & Cummings, 2012), managers and organizations are advised to be attentive to both the identity and status dynamics of nationality that commonly develop in multinational teams. When teams are culturally and nationally diverse, managers should note how the composition of their multinational teams affect interpersonal dynamics. Diversity is not necessarily synonymous with equality or inclusion, unless organizations make a strategic choice to do that (Fitzsimmons et al., 2023). Fostering a climate of inclusion is a moral imperative, potentially affecting both majority and minority groups in organizations (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2004). Since nationality categories trigger interpersonal dynamics with implications for likeability, competition, and leadership, managers should minimize development of nationality-based social fragmentation in teams. Managerial interventions, such as promoting a shared team identity (see Butler, 2006; Earley & Mosakowski, 2000), greatly reduce undesirable consequences of nationality diversity.

Members of global teams need to be (made) aware of biases in their judgments of warmth and competence of in peers across nationalities. As results of this study suggest, warmth perceptions are higher among culturally similar members, but competence perceptions flow steadily from low- to high-status members. Increased awareness of such biases helps members move beyond surface-level impressions and encourage peers to engage more deeply with each other, based on accurate information about capabilities, expertise, and skills. This further facilitates more effective information-sharing and collaboration that is not

hampered by nationality-based differences. To boost awareness and drive meaningful change, anti-bias and diversity training help, but it must be coupled with other EDI initiatives (Kalev, Dobbin & Kelly, 2006; Carter, Onyeador, & Lewis, 2020). In this way, managers foster more fluid collaboration in multinational teams.

Global managers should be cognizant of the implications of status inequalities related to employees' and peers' nationality, and the negative effects they have on leadership. Nationalities favor some members when they take on leadership roles and do so more often, which unfairly prevents others from engaging in leadership in teams. If leadership perceptions are formed according to nationality, some concrete directions for practice would be to prepare members to work against stereotypes, while promoting leadership opportunities among lower-status members. A better understanding of identity and status dynamics aids managers when counterbalancing demographic effects and improving workplace inclusion, which is particularly relevant in research that assesses what modes of leadership are most effective in multinational teams (Zander & Butler, 2010). Extant research points to a variety of leadership strategies and modes in multinational teams, which have varying degrees of effectiveness that depend on team context (Zander & Butler, 2010; Zander et al., 2012). Promoting nationality-based heterogeneity and equality simultaneously informs the strategic choice of leadership in teams. For example, when nationality-based status and identity cues are strong and consistent (e.g., in heterogeneous teams that are likely to be or become unequal), teams benefit from a single leader or rotating leaders, rather than collective (i. e., paired or shared) team leadership.

5.3. Limitations and future directions

We collected data from participants who were enrolled in a business administration program, and thus generalizability of results are limited. The composition of the teams, participants' professional experiences, and the nature of their collaboration and social interactions were nevertheless similar to those in multinational teams in an organization, where highly qualified professionals with diverse skills and national backgrounds cooperate intensively to achieve common goals, with real stakes and within a specific timeframe. Teams in educational contexts engage in collaboration and collective knowledge work (Lewis, 2004), and they thus share many characteristics of multinational (Connaughton & Shuffler, 2007; Kogut & Zander, 1993) and self-managed (Hooker & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003) teams in other domains. We are confident that current findings are not unique to this context, but we encourage future research to replicate and extend this study to others.

Nationality and ethnicity related closely in the sample. Future research should disentangle distinct effects of race, ethnicity, and nationality, particularly in highly heterogeneous and global contexts (Song, 2009). Future research should also investigate intersectional effects of nationality with other demographics, such as gender, age, and race. Especially interesting would be assessing the complex ways individuals negotiate the identity and status differences that emanate from multiple demographic categories in multinational teams and organizations (Adib & Guerrier, 2003).

Our approach to leadership perceptions uses a largely static, versus dynamic, perspective. Recent advances in the field suggest that leadership emergence is dynamic, and thus people emerge as leaders and lose leadership status over time (Aime, Humphrey, DeRue, & Paul, 2014; Gerpott, Lehmann-Willenbrock, Voelpel, Van Vugt, 2019). By assessing leadership perceptions at a single point in time, this study does not account for how these shift as teams pass through stages of their lifecycle. For example, the effects of warmth perceptions might become more prominent during later stages of teamwork, and that of competence perceptions on leadership might attenuate over time (Hardy & Van Vugt, 2006; Bendersky & Shah, 2013).

Since the timing of the outcome measure coincided with delivery of an important team project, it is possible that leadership perceptions

were affected by observed behaviors or abilities, in addition to nationality. Our measurement timing likely offers a conservative test of effects of nationality diversity on interpersonal perceptions, and thus demonstrate that they persist even after intense interactions among members. We encourage future research to examine how paths of social perceptions that link nationality and leadership persist, shift, or weaken over time as teams have extended interactions and members gain more information about each other's skills, capabilities, and knowledge. We focus on how team members perceive nationality-based differences in peers, but we did not consider factors such as cultural intelligence, cultural identity distinct from national identity, or global experience. We recommend that future research incorporate these additional layers of differences when investigating interpersonal dynamics in global and multinational contexts.

6. Conclusion

Nationality is a salient social category in contemporary global work contexts. We assess the effects of nationality as a source of inequality, in addition to heterogeneity, giving rise to palpable yet nuanced consequences for leadership outcomes in multinational teams. We show that nationality diversity affects implicit judgments about one's warmth and competence, and that they shape interpersonal interactions with implications for equality and inclusion. This study thus directs attention to multiple effects of nationality as a relevant social category for leadership in teams and organizations, and more broadly to EDI in international business.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Gouri Mohan: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation.
Minna Paunova: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Project administration, Methodology, Conceptualization.
Yih-Teen Lee: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Resources, Methodology, Conceptualization.

Declarations of competing interest

None.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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