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Leadership modes: Success strategies for multicultural teams

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Summary Organizing work in multicultural teams has gone from rhetoric to reality, leaving international organizations with challenging tasks and little strategic guidance. A wealth of multicultural team research reaches the conclusion that management matters, but less is known about team leadership. Drawing on recent leadership research, we focus on leadership modes and multicultural team composition. Two identified dimensions — 'focused versus distributed leadership' and 'vertical versus horizontal leadership' — are utilized to develop four leadership modes ('single', 'paired', 'rotated', and 'shared'). Multicultural team composition is examined in terms of 'faultlines' and 'status cues'. We formulate propositions predicting which team leadership mode will enhance team outcomes given different multicultural team composition and we argue that leadership modes should be an informed strategic choice.

Introduction

In organizations — whether private, public or humanitarian, national or international, virtual or co-located — working in teams is no longer 'the management fad of the month' but has become the contemporary '*modus operandi*'. Balancing global integration and local responsiveness is arguably the linchpin in multinational companies' international strategies. Culture is viewed as a critical localization force (Pudelko, Carr, & Henley, 2007) contributing to the complexities of doing business across national borders. Firms perceive multicultural teams as an attractive way of dealing with local specifics while achieving global coordination. These teams are at the 'heart of globalization' (Snow, Snell, Canney Davison, & Hambrick, 1996) and are expected to provide efficiencies, be the source of creative initiatives (Galbraith, 2000; McLeod & Lobel, 1992) and overall act as 'glue' across country and culture borders. The need for high-performance teams is a reality for many organizations (DiStefano & Maznevski, 2000; Ravlin, Thomas, & Ilsev, 2000) and expectations run high on multicultural teams to be successful.

Achieving desired outcomes in multicultural teams has however proved difficult (Butler, 2006; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Govindaran and Gupta (2001) found that only 18% of the 70 studied global teams were successful while as much as one-third were largely unsuccessful, with the rest finding it difficult to fulfil intended goals. This distribution is a fairly typical description of organizational outcomes of multicultural teams (e.g., Earley & Mosakowski, 2000). Multicultural teams vary in terms of diversity along a range of dimensions such as nationality, ethnicity, and religion (Marquardt & Horvath, 2001). In a recent comprehensive meta-analysis of 108 empirical studies of both intra- and cross-nationally diverse teams, Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, and Jonsen (2010) find that

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cultural diversity leads to process losses through decreased social integration and increased conflict but also to process gains from increased team creativity and member satisfaction. With this article Stahl et al. (2010) convincingly demonstrate the commonly professed resolution that process management matters (see, e.g., DiStefano & Maznevski, 2000). Management obviously matters but yet multicultural team research, in stark contrast to single-culture team research, is curiously silent on the topic of team leadership.

Burke et al. (2006) alert us to the need for specific 'team leadership' research, arguing that traditional leadership theories are often applied in team research ignoring the complexity and dynamics of managing a team instead of individuals. Such concern is of particular relevance for multicultural teams as culture increases the complexity by kind, not just in degree, resulting amongst other in different interpersonal dynamics.

Inspired by recent work to focus on leadership rather than leaders (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2009; Morgeson, DeRue, & Karam, 2010), we identify and outline leadership modes. We also draw on leadership research suggesting that leadership is becoming a shared phenomenon in organizations (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007). By using two leadership dimensions — 'focused versus distributed' leadership activities (specifically practices and functions) and 'vertical versus horizontal' leadership authority (specifically decision-making authority) based on work by Gibb (1954), Pearce and Sims (2002), and Carson, Tesluk, and Marrone (2007) — we identify and outline four leadership modes. We specifically examine (1) single leadership, (2) paired leadership, (3) rotated leadership, and (4) shared leadership as possible team leadership modes for multicultural teams. Instead of contrasting one extreme of the archetypical hierarchical authoritarian individual-based leadership with the archetypical truly contemporary collective leadership (where all team members are involved) and pushing for a one-best-leadership (as is common in the leadership discourse), we advocate for a contingency perspective.

Prior research has firmly established that team composition has an impact on team performance (Morgeson et al., 2010) and that team composition is often a given rather than a choice. Managing the 'cultural composition' of multicultural teams, as Butler (2006) argues, is critical to achieve positive team outcomes. Subsequently, Butler and Zander (2008) propose 'faultlines' (Lau & Murnighan, 1998) and 'status cues' (Berger, Webster, Ridgeway, & Rosenholtz, 1986) as two powerful theoretical approaches for understanding how team compositions underlies creativity in multicultural teams. In this conceptual article, we further these ideas and use faultlines and status cues to provide the theoretical underpinnings for our proposed choice of leadership modes.

We draw on conceptual developments and empirical findings in both the leadership and team literatures to develop a model and propositions around the relationship between multicultural team composition and effective leadership modes. Our contribution is to propose specific leadership modes that are geared to bringing out the best in multicultural teams. They precede, facilitate, and at best lessen the burden of management by making the leadership mode (single, paired, rotated, and shared) based on the team composition (characterized by faultlines and status cues) a strategic choice at the outset. It is our contention that the team process will start off more smoothly and is more likely to facilitate team success when considering team leadership as a strategic choice.

The article is structured as follows: We will begin with discussing team leadership before identifying and outlining the four leadership modes (single, paired, rotated, and shared) by drawing on extant team research. We will then turn to faultlines and status cues when discussing multicultural team diversity and configuration. Subsequently, we develop propositions to determine which leadership modes could be more efficient for a given team composition and thus be predicted to lead to successful team outcomes. This is followed by a discussion about the model and its limitations before concluding the article.

Team leadership

Teams have proliferated in research and practice. Morgeson et al. (2010) report the results of a survey among high-level managers (Martin & Bal, 2006) stating that 91% agreed that teams are central to organizational success. Although team leadership has begun to receive attention, Morgeson et al. (2010) point out that this body of research is still far from any breakthroughs. They argue that more traditional views of leadership, which address leader-subordinate interaction instead of leader-team dynamics, are overrepresented and do not increase our understanding of team leadership. Morgeson et al. (2010) draw on functional leadership theory (McGrath, 1962) stating that whoever assumes responsibility for satisfying the teams' needs can be viewed as assuming a team leader role, and argue for the study of leadership rather than leaders.

Recent leadership research also echoes the need for theory-building to focus on leadership instead of leaders. For example, Crevani et al. (2009) propose to leave the preoccupation with leaders behind and discuss leadership as practices, process, and interaction. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) emphasise the need to explore everyday actions and interactions. They describe how in their interviews they found that "middle and senior managers gave accounts of their work in ways that are more in line with the mundane than with the grandiose and heroic leadership talk found, not only in the business press and among top-management, but also in the more academic literature" (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003, p. 1437). As another reflection of a more holistic and relational understanding, leadership has been conceptualised as a collective phenomenon in organizations (for reviews see, e.g., Avolio et al., 2009; Carson et al., 2007). Arguments are put forth that this will increase the problem-solving capacity to handle tasks that require broader competence while simultaneously reducing pressure on managerial workload (Crevani et al., 2009).

The idea of collective leadership in teams has been around for at least 50 years (Carson et al., 2007) referring to Gibb (1954, p. 884) who argued that "[l]eadership is probably best conceived as a group quality, as a set of functions which must be carried out by the group. This concept of 'distributed leadership' is an important one". Distributed leadership is seen as opposed to 'focused leadership' where leadership functions typically are concentrated in one individual.

Leadership can thus be seen as a 'batch' of activities (practices and functions) that can be more or less distributed among the team members.

To develop the notion of collective leadership, Carson et al. (2007) utilize Yukl's (1989) definition of leadership as influence, in particular having an influence on the group's goal formulation and motivation. To Carson et al. (2007) the source of influence can vary between single and multiple team members. The high end of this continuum is based on the number of team members with considerable influence while the low end is anchored in single leadership. Concepts such as team autonomy, self-management, and team empowerment, involving decision-making and other influential (e.g., motivation) aspects of leadership at the team level are seen by Carson et al. (2007) as capturing team phenomena that contribute to the establishment of collective leadership. Pearce and Sims (2002) differentiate collective leadership from what they refer to as 'vertical leadership'. Decision-making authority can reside in one or more individuals, and vertical leadership stems from above (an appointed or formal leader) while collective leadership stems from below (leadership is spread across the team members). The idea of decision-making authority being spread across team members fits nicely with Carson et al.'s (2007) conceptualization of collective leadership as multiple sources of influences. We will use 'horizontal' rather than 'collective' to capture the sharing of decision-making authority by two or more individuals (who do not have to hold work positions at the same horizontal level), rather than exercised by one individual (as in vertical decision-making authority).

Pearce and Sims' (2002) vertical leadership also adds a critical aspect to Carson et al.'s (2007) conceptualization of shared leadership. That leadership is formally appointed from above suggests that one person has a vertically-based decision-making authority. Even if more than one person should exercise leadership, only one at a time would have the authority to make decisions. Carson et al. (2007) point out that teams can rotate leadership by team members taking turns. Subsequently, in our terminology the allocation of decision-making in teams is a dimension that differs between vertical or horizontal authority.

At the centre of Gibb's (1954) distinction between distributed and focused leadership lie 'activities', a batch of leadership functions and practices to be carried out. We understand the core of Pearce and Sims' (2002) vertical leadership as the allocation of 'authority' and we choose to differentiate vertical from horizontal decision-making authority. By using these two leadership dimensions — activities ('distributed versus focused') and authority ('horizontal versus vertical') — we identify four leadership modes (single, paired, rotated, and shared), which we will discuss in more detail below (see Fig. 1).

Single leadership

In Cell 1 of Fig. 1 vertical authority meets focused activities which we refer to as 'single team leadership'. Decision-making authority is vertically appointed to one individual, and leadership practices and functions are focused on the same individual. Recent work on single team leadership in local contexts stands out as particularly interesting to consider for multicultural teams. Burke et al.'s (2006) meta-analysis of 50 empirical studies demonstrated that both task- and person-focused leader behaviours were related to team performance. Burke et al. (2006) proposed that in teams with high task interdependence and high demands on coordination, person-focused leadership behaviours (e.g., empowering including coaching, monitoring, feedback and participatory behaviours on part of the leader) were positively related to team performance outcomes such as team effectiveness and team learning.

The overwhelming challenge facing multicultural team leaders is that team members hold different culturally-based leadership expectations and preferences (Zander, 1997), particularly pertaining to the above-mentioned person-focused behaviours. For example, employees in some cultures prefer a directive style while others prefer a participative style. Where the team members have similar preferences for leadership style, such style is likely to be welcomed, but when preferences vary difficulties emerge. At best, common ground can be identified unless a power paradox surfaces (Maznevski & Zander, 2001). The essence of the paradox is that for some team members, leaders who delegate tasks and decision-making are seen as legitimate leaders. For other members (who prefer direction instead of delegation) leaders who empower team members lose their legitimacy as leaders. Thus, the power paradox places the team leader in a position where parts of the team question his/her legitimacy and authority for the same reasons that

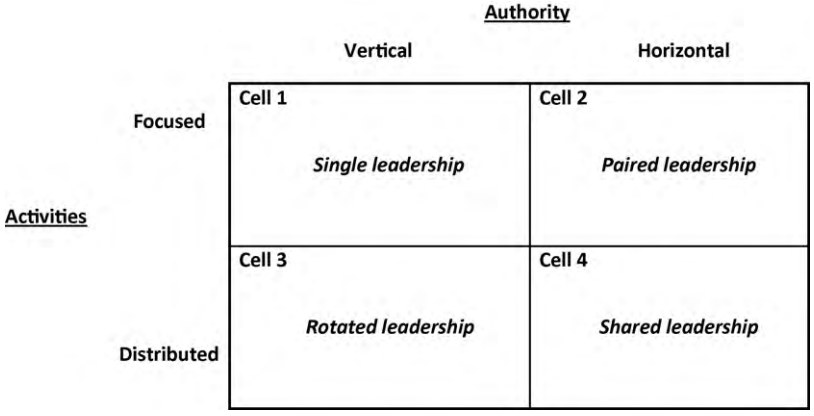

Figure 1 Typology of leadership modes.

make other team members give the leader the 'licence to lead' (Zander, 1997). Under these circumstances, the team leader will end up in a discretionary vacuum.

In-depth interviews by Brett, Behfar, and Kern (2006) with leaders and members of multicultural teams support the power paradox reasoning. As key barriers to success, they identify differing attitudes towards hierarchy and authority, and conflicting norms for decision-making. Even in a student environment, the power paradox comes into play, as evident in Auer-Rizzi and Berry's (2000) videotapes of nationally mixed student teams who cannot decide on the appropriate degree of subordinate participation in decision-making when carrying out business-related exercises. Maznevski and Zander (2001) suggested a combination of individualizing, i.e. tailoring leadership to each team member as well as identifying common team norms to handle the power paradox. However, recent research has found that such individualized leadership attempts diminish group effectiveness while leading with the team in focus (e.g., with common team norms) has a positive effect through group member identification (Wu, Tsui, & Kinicki, 2010). Admittedly the studied groups were not multicultural. However, based on prior work it can be argued that differences across geographic, linguistic, and cultural borders in multicultural teams inhibit trust building and communication (Brett et al., 2006; Butler, 2004; DiStefano & Maznevski, 2000; Govindaran & Gupta, 2001). Moreover, the challenge of achieving social integration, cohesion and a common group identity is intensified. These results suggest the need for alternative leadership modes when the cultural team composition is such that there is a large risk of the power paradox occurring. However, single team leadership has the benefits of being accepted and commonly used. It is also cost and time efficient in terms of reducing coordination and communication needs.

Paired leadership

In Cell 2 of Fig. 1, we still find focused leadership activities, but combined with horizontal authority. In 'paired team leadership', leadership practices and functions are focused on two instead of one individual, who usually divide these between themselves. That both leaders have influence and decision-making authority could explain why paired team leadership has earlier appeared in the literature as 'co-leadership' (see, e.g., Heenan & Bennis, 1999; Johne & Harborne, 2003; Paré, Menzies, Fillion, & Brenner, 2008). Sally (2002) describes how the Roman Republic embraced a system of co-leadership for over four centuries before dictators assumed power. 'Co-leadership' can, and has, occasionally referred to more than two people (e.g., the Roman triumvirate) but we emphasize a dual leadership structure and label it 'paired leadership'.

Paired leadership seems to be a preferred leadership form in academia where we often experience two co-editors, two track chairs, or two project leaders. The paired leaders are in charge of what is often a culturally diverse and loosely coupled team of academics with a task to be finalized within a given time-period. Often the two leaders take on different activities that they carry out individually, but they share the responsibility involved in spearheading the group.

That 'it takes two' in new global companies to achieve organizational control (Troiano, 1999) has, despite less than smooth paths for joint CEOs, been argued to work if decision-making power and information is shared.[1] For example, to place two leaders at the helm has both functional and symbolic value in a merger (Sally, 2002). Most of the theoretical and empirical excursions around co-leadership are at the organizational level. Johne and Harborne (2003), however, found that single-led teams were less successful than those with paired leadership. As co-leadership involves enabling, participative and communicative leadership styles challenging traditional concepts of authority, these are probably more possible in enlightened and egalitarian organizational settings.

Rotated leadership

In Cell 3 of Fig. 1, distributed activities coincide with vertical authority suggesting 'rotated team leadership'. In this leadership mode, leadership function and practices are distributed to a smaller group of team members. The vertical leadership structure suggests that these team members do not share decision-making authority, instead it is shifted from one to another (Carson et al., 2007). Klein, Ziegert, Knight, and Xiao (2006) describe such a rotated de-individualized and delegated team leadership mode. Rotated team leadership differs from single team leadership in that the leadership functions and practices are distributed between a small number of senior and junior team members but decision-making authority shifts so that one individual at the time is in charge (even when the other/s in the smaller group are present).

This team leadership mode has been observed when studying extreme-action teams at a city trauma centre, where highly skilled team members cooperate to perform unpredictable and urgent tasks while coping with frequent changes in team composition. Klein et al. (2006) found that the shift of leadership was often carried out without verbal expression, similar to actors moving in and out according to carefully scripted roles, based on a well-established leadership hierarchy. The confidence in junior leaders' ability backed up by trust in senior members' ability to amend any mistakes made by juniors enabled the juniors to be the 'leader in charge'. Routines, traditions and values within the studied city trauma centre were found to enable this efficiently rotated and delegated leadership mode (Klein et al., 2006).

Rotating leadership in technology collaborations, specifically alternating decision control similar to the examples above, was recently found by Davies (2009) to lead to successful innovations in inter-firm partnerships. Davies (2009) forcefully argues that rotated team leadership supersedes the limited potential of single leadership and the lack of progress in cases of consensus-based shared leadership.

[1] A recent study of pigeons during flight demonstrated that paired leadership (and decision-making) resulted in more efficient navigation than single leadership (Biro, D., Sumpter, D. J. T., Meade, J., & Guilford, T. (2006). From compromise to leadership in pigeon homing. *Current Biology, 16* (21): 2123—2128. Thus, even the common notion of V-shaped bird flights with one leader has its successful exceptions.

Rotated team leadership is also advocated by Pearce (2004) as beneficial for knowledge work teams. These inter-firm teams naturally differ from within-firm teams, yet people interacting and engaging in innovative work (often from differing parts of international organizations) is also typical for intra-firm teams. Erez, Lepine, and Elms (2002) found that a somewhat similar rotating team leadership mode was related to higher levels of voice (speaking one's mind) and cooperation (quality of interaction among team members), and that these effects were associated with higher levels of team performance.

Shared leadership

In Cell 4 of Fig. 1 distributed activities join horizontal authority in the shared team leadership mode. In the literature on shared leadership, team members are argued to participate in a leadership process. In the shared team leadership we find in Cell 4, team members do not only participate but leadership actually stems from the group. Building a leadership capacity at the team level rests on team members interacting with the goal of accomplishing shared work, and the purpose of learning and developing together. Relationships among team members to enhance cooperation and resource exchange become particularly important as leadership is a property of the team, rather than an individual. As Carson et al. (2007) claimed, shared leadership builds on (and exceeds) many other collective leadership concepts such as self-managing teams, team autonomy, and team empowerment.

Day, Gronn, and Salas (2004) emphasize how relying on one individual leader limits effectiveness, particularly when dealing with complexities, while the team's collective leadership repertoire broadens and transcends the single mode of leadership. Shared leadership seems to work successfully across different types of organizations (profit, private and humanitarian forms) as long as work tasks are interrelated (Pearce, Manz, & Sims 2009). Pearce et al. (2009) argue that empirical evidence, such as high performing Fortune 500 companies organizing work in teams and practicing shared leadership, clearly demonstrate shared leadership's powerful performance impact.

Multicultural team compositions

Given that a strong relationship between team composition and team performance has been empirically established, putting a team together has been deemed as one of the most important functions for team leaders (Morgeson et al., 2010). Team leaders in global organizations are however often in charge of 'already composed' multicultural teams. Even when they are given the mandate to choose members, there are still capability, power and other considerations and expectations to fulfil when assembling a team for a specific task. 'Faultlines' and 'status characteristics' are two useful complementary theoretical approaches for examining multicultural team composition.

Faultlines

Lau and Murnighan's (1998) theorizing around group faultlines is influential in the area of team research. According to Lau and Murnighan (1998, 2005), a team's heterogeneity varies with the strength of so-called 'faultlines'. If team members fall into two subgroups with several aligned demographic characteristics, for example young British women and old Swedish men, then the faultline is strong. In other words, the team is less heterogeneous because three important attributes, age, ethnicity, and gender, align creating two strong subgroups. The number of subgroups and corresponding faultline strength depends on the alignment of individual attributes apparent to group members. The more demographic attributes of group members are correlated, the fewer the number of subgroups, the more homogeneous the subgroups, and the stronger the faultlines. When faultlines are strong, inter-subgroup power play and rivalry will surge. The fewer attributes which are correlated, the weaker are the faultlines. With weak faultlines comes greater heterogeneity and positive effects such as task focus and team member contributions to creativity (McLeod & Lobel, 1992; Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1993). We would argue that understanding the differential effects of intra-subgroup faultlines in a multicultural team should contribute to making an informed choice of team leadership mode, and we also contend that status cues should be taken into consideration.

Status cues

Berger et al. (1986) categorize status cues using two dimensions: indicative versus expressive and categorical versus task (see Fig. 2).

The first dimension distinguishes cues on the basis of how the cues are provided (see Fig. 2). Indicative cues are generally spoken and explicitly label a person. They are also assumed to be under the actor's control. "I did my PhD at London Business School", "I have been a Marketing Director for 20 years", "My father is a leading international lawyer", and "I am Catholic" are all examples of indicative cues which might be stated during team interactions. In contrast, expressive cues are exhibited during interaction and are assumed not to be under the actor's control. Examples include accents, volume of speech, skin colour, gender, and dress. Expressive cues are more powerful than indicative cues in instances where these directly conflict (e.g., shouting "I'm not angry") (see Berger et al., 1986), because of the assumed non-volitional nature of the expressive cues.

The second dimension distinguishes cues on the basis of the type of information the cue provides (see Fig. 2). Task cues provide information about performance in the immediate interaction situation and would include statements about direct experience with similar tasks like "I have been a Marketing Director for 20 years" where the team is dealing with a marketing problem or "I've not had any experience using Excel" where the team is putting together financial spreadsheets. Categorical cues give information about who this person is and would include aspects of the person such as accents and gender as well as statements such as "I am Catholic" and "My father is a leading international lawyer", none of which are directly relevant to, for example, a marketing or financial task. Categorical cues underlie the presentation of task cues (Bales, 1951, 1953; Berger et al., 1986), because their diffuse nature bestows or denies general competence.

Type of information provided

How cues are provided	Task	Categorical
Indicative	**Cell 1** "I just happen to know how to do this." "I am confident of my abilities here." "I have had a great deal of previous experience with this type of problem." "I have the ability in general to solve problems" weak/weak combination of status cues; **consistent expectations**	**Cell 2** Diploma, licenses, and certificates Obvious symbols of wealth, poverty, educational attainment, status position "I am a Harvard PhD." "I am a mathematician." "I am a Chicano. weak/strong combination of status cues **inconsistent expectations**
Expressive	**Cell 3** Eye contact and duration Speech speed and loudness Speech fluency or hesitancy Choice of head of table Maintaining minority position strong/weak combination of status cues **inconsistent expectations**	**Cell 4** Ethnic or regional dialect Grammar, word usage, phonology Speech styles which are race specific, gender specific, or ethnic specific Skin color or facial features which are race, gender, or ethnic specific strong/strong combination of cues; **consistent expectations**

Figure 2 Typology of status cues in problem-solving groups (adapted from Berger et al., 1986, p. 7).

Status cues have been found to play a powerful role in short-lived teams; members have little else on which to evaluate each other (Kelsey, 1998). Research has also shown that similar status-organizing processes are prevalent in permanent research and development teams (Cohen & Zhou, 1991). These status cues can be consistent (Cell 1 and 4 in Fig. 2) or inconsistent (Cell 2 and 3 in Fig. 2) in the expectations they create. More inconsistent expectations by salient status characteristics (e.g., a female doctor and a male nurse), lead to more egalitarian situations, while consistent expectations will lead to more hierarchical groups. We argue that the implications of consistent versus inconsistent status cues based on the team's multicultural composition will also contribute to making an informed choice of team leadership mode.

Conceptual model and propositions

As the team member composition in a multicultural team often is given, and concomitantly the cultural constellation of the team, we propose that the degree of strength of faultlines and the degree of consistency in expectations based on status cues can be used to predict leadership challenges and subsequently inform a strategic choice of leadership mode (see Fig. 3).

In Cell 1 of Fig. 3 the cultural composition is characterised by strong faultlines and culturally consistent status cue expectations. When faultlines are strong, inter-subgroup power play and rivalry, instead of collaborative efforts, can easily come to characterise work in the team. Consistent status cue expectations lead to more hierarchical groups strengthening a single leader's position and ability to handle such faultline-based power play. In teams with this particular composition, we expect single leadership to remain the best option, as attempts to share leadership could further polarise two strong subgroups and invoke the power paradox. Rotated leadership will be questioned at best but most probably ignored when anyone less senior from 'the other' subgroup takes charge of the team.

Status Cues Expectations

Faultlines	Consistent	Inconsistent
Strong	**Cell 1** *Single team leadership*	**Cell 2** *Paired team leadership*
Weak	**Cell 3** *Rotated team leadership*	**Cell 4** *Shared team leadership*

Figure 3 Team leadership modes based on team composition.

Proposition 1. *In multicultural teams with strong faultlines and consistent status cue expectations 'single team leadership' will lead to a smoother start of team work and increase the potential for successful outcomes.*

In Cell 2 of Fig. 3, faultlines are strong suggesting polarized conflict but in comparison with Cell 1 the status cue expectations are inconsistent. As earlier discussed, inconsistent status cues are associated with a more egalitarian work context leading us to propose that 'paired leadership' would be effective. Any polarized conflict will be stopped before it has a chance to develop as there are two leaders, both with authority, acting out their roles together. Leadership activities are focused on the two leaders. The egalitarian setting enables dividing up the decision-making authority between the two as equals (horizontal authority), which is associated with efficient co-leadership. This leadership mode could avoid that a power paradox occurs, if the two leaders are chosen from each of the strong groups.

Proposition 2. *In multicultural teams where faultlines are strong and status cue expectations inconsistent 'paired team leadership' will lead to a smoother start of team work and increase the potential for successful outcomes.*

In Cell 3 in Fig. 3, faultlines are weak with greater heterogeneity leading to positive effects such as a task focus and facilitating team member contributions to creativity, and the status cue expectations are consistent (implying a more hierarchical team setting). This is the type of team context where rotated leadership can be used to its full potential. The hierarchical setting will allow seamless exchange between senior and junior leaders. With a focus on the task and creativity, the junior leaders are comfortable in their roles. If problems occur, the senior leaders will step in as expected based on the status cues and help sort things out.

Proposition 3. *In multicultural teams where faultlines are weak and status cue expectations are consistent 'rotated team leadership' will lead to a smoother start of team work and increase the potential for successful outcomes.*

In Cell 4 of Fig. 3, faultlines are weak, producing team heterogeneity. Together with inconsistent status cue expectations through salient status characteristics (e.g., a female doctor working with a male nurse), the team setting becomes more egalitarian, laying the ground for effective shared leadership. Members will not be diverted from the task at hand by faultline-based inter-subgroup power play or by hierarchical structures. Instead, heterogeneous teams can fully benefit from shared leadership in this egalitarian setting. Members will contribute with their varied perspectives, knowledge, and organizational behaviour.

Proposition 4. *In multicultural teams characterized by weak faultlines and inconsistent status cue expectations 'shared team leadership' will lead to a smoother start of team work and increase the potential for successful outcomes.*

Discussion and limitations

Prominent scholars have made the point that shared leadership, despite the positive press it has received, is not the new silver leadership bullet, but that leadership must be situated and tailored to the circumstances. It is increasingly professed that some form of shared leadership may be beneficial when agility, creativity and flexibility are required. These are requirements owing to the impact of globalization and are typical arguments put forth also in support of using multicultural teams. We find the discussion surrounding the benefits of shared leadership interesting, but choose to advocate a contingency perspective in this paper. Specifically, we propose that the choice of leadership mode (not leader) for a multicultural team could benefit from being based on a multicultural team's composition properties, specifically faultlines and status cues.

Importantly, we are not proposing a rigid 'fit' or contingency argument but the idea that an informed choice of team leadership mode would start off the multicultural team with a higher probability of success, and less need of later managerial intervention. When the team process takes off, and the chosen leadership mode is seen as legitimate, whichever mode had been chosen (single, paired, rotated or shared team leadership), it is possible for those exercising leadership to further develop team leadership in accordance with the needs of the team, as well as the strategic and operational demands of the multinational firm. In this way, the model builds on an initial fit argument, but importantly it is not proposed to be used in a static or rigid way but remain open to the dynamics of multicultural team processes.

One limitation with respect to multicultural teams is that the preference for, and tolerance of, team leadership modes featuring more than one leader varies across countries. The use of single leadership is in many countries and cultures a tested and tried, often implicitly assumed, leadership mode. Attempts to introduce other leadership modes may be perceived negatively and have an opposite effect on the team process. Multinational companies' longstanding attempts to introduce matrix leadership structures, with two leaders to report to, have been notoriously difficult to implement and in many firms have been abandoned. In parallel, it is highly likely that a preference for, or less tolerance of, leadership modes featuring more than one individual will result in similar (and serious) problems in multicultural teams residing in multinational companies.

Another limitation in our paper is that we do not address leadership styles, i.e. the content of the leadership activities and decision-making forms. There is substantial leadership research displaying variation in leadership perceptions, ideals, and preferences across countries and cultures (see, e.g., House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Zander, 1997). In multicultural teams these may even out or even be complementary. However, there is a distinct risk that the power paradox, discussed earlier in our paper, surfaces when some team members question the style legitimacy, and subsequently the leader's authority for the same reasons that make other team members give the leader the

'licence to lead' (Zander, 1997). Maznevski and Zander (2001) suggested that multicultural team leaders could use a combination of individualized leadership and common team norms to handle the power paradox. Similarly, Earley and Mosakowski (2000) refer to the hybrid culture that such teams need to develop. There is however empirical evidence that challenges the viability of individualized leadership, and consequently single team leadership. In our Proposition 2, we outlined the possibility that a paired leadership mode in particular could curb the emergence of a power paradox.

A third complicating limitation is that the theoretical underpinnings of our model can vary in salience and meaning across cultures. Specifically, the definition of status cues and their relative importance may be subject to culture-bound interpretations. This may also be the case for each specified leadership mode, where for instance the meaning of shared leadership may vary across countries and cultures and could be subject to local contextualization.

An important question, and a possible fourth limitation, is to address whether managers at large can perform their best in all of these leadership modes. Perhaps some are more suited for, and interested in, one of the leadership modes but not in the other modes. Related to this is whether managers can be involved in more than one leadership mode at the same time or even sequentially. In this paper, we have not discussed leaders but leadership but we would like to highlight that making leadership mode choices based on multicultural team composition also requires international human resource management activities in terms of identifying managers, who on top of having the right expertise are also capable and interested in working in paired and rotated leadership modes. Whereas the single leadership mode most often does not need any specific human resource management activities — after all, in most countries this is business as usual — working together in a pair or in a rotating leadership mode may indeed pose challenges.

Finally, our model does not presuppose the necessary experience and skills for team members to take on a shared leadership mode. An important question is of course how team members, who are not used to carrying out leadership activities or having the authority to make decisions, can suddenly take on these tasks if the choice of leadership mode depends on them. Sirman (2008) advocates that collaborative leadership is a sound solution to complex problems, and argues that leadership needs to change and evolve for organizations to be flexible and survive. Her solution for making this happen is to assist leaders who work shoulder to shoulder with the team members to identify the best strategies and how to implement them. Pearce (2004) talks about combining a single leadership mode with a shared leadership mode, with the purpose of developing shared leadership in 'knowledge work' teams. Both of these suggestions stem from work on single-culture teams, and it is a simple task to point out the difficulties in carrying out something similar in multicultural teams. However, working with socialization in times of leadership mode transition in multicultural teams poses an interesting opportunity.

Concluding reflections

By drawing on the recent leadership and team literature, we have turned our attention to the function of leadership, not the properties of leaders, when developing our four team leadership modes (single, paired, rotated, and shared). To avoid falling into the 'culture-free trap' and assuming universal applicability of leadership research on teams, we have used two theoretical approaches (faultlines and status cues) for mapping cultural team composition in a generalized way. As a first attempt to come to grips with the complexity posed by multicultural team composition, we propose that an informed strategic choice of team leadership mode should be contingent on team composition. The team leadership modes differ based on focused and distributed leadership in terms of activities (e.g., functions and practices) as well as on vertical and horizontal allocation of the decision-making authority.

For multinational companies to effectively tackle multicultural team leadership challenges, management matters. Just as teams are often 'composed' based on expertise (and possibly on other communication, fairness or political considerations), so too are the leadership possibilities restricted to individual managers already in relevant positions or available for selection. At the same time, we believe that informed team leadership includes a strategic choice of leadership mode. It is our contention that the probability of success increases when the multicultural team composition with respect to faultlines and status cues is taken into account. Our novel contribution to international management in general, and multicultural team research in particular, is to propose four leadership modes to choose between and formulate propositions for when to choose which mode. We offer alternatives for managing the challenges associated with multicultural team leadership, such as the power paradox, leveraging creativity and innovativeness in situations with polarized power play, as well as bringing out the best in teams characterized by hierarchical patterns.

Our propositions for the choice of team leadership mode can be helpful both when deciding on the leadership of planned long-term project teams as well as of so-called 'Cheetah teams' (Engwall & Svensson, 2004). The Cheetah teams are an extreme form of temporary organization, often launched ad hoc to deal with critical problems. By examining team composition in terms of faultlines and status cues, a team leadership mode with a high probability of succeeding can be chosen. Apart from high-performance demands placed on teams in general, the fact that Cheetah teams are put together to deal with unanticipated and urgent problems increases the need for better leadership. In these cases, the chosen team leadership mode must also work well immediately, as there is less time for learning.

In the face of limited empirical evidence of positive outcomes (with most results pointing towards problems and unrealized objectives) in planned multicultural teams with varying complex and interdependent tasks at hand, the choice of team leadership mode becomes a high priority. We are aware of how critical leaders at all levels are for successful strategy implementation (O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, Lapiz, & Self, 2010). We propose that deciding on the appropriate team leadership mode to start the team process on a positive note and invoke virtuous circles is a vital strategic choice.

In sum, we have tried to outline the relationship between multicultural team composition and team leadership modes with the aim of bringing out the best in multicultural teams

and increase the potential for successful and/or creative organizational outcomes. Teams are frequently formed to address multifaceted issues, solve complex problems, and generate creative solutions as members are generally chosen based on their specific skills and competencies. Therefore, the fact that highly competent teams are in search of the proper leadership rather than the other way around should guide successful strategies in multinational companies.

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