

**The Dark Side of Going Abroad:  
Broad Foreign Experiences Increase Immoral Behavior**

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### Abstract

Due to the unprecedented pace of globalization, foreign experiences are increasingly common and valued. Past research has focused on the benefits of foreign experiences, including enhanced creativity and reduced intergroup bias. In contrast, the present work uncovers a potential downside of foreign experiences: increased immoral behavior. We propose that broad foreign experiences (i.e., experiences in multiple foreign countries) foster not only cognitive flexibility but also moral flexibility. Using multiple methods (longitudinal, correlational, and experimental), eight studies ( $N > 2200$ ) establish that broad foreign experiences can lead to immoral behavior by increasing moral relativism, or the belief that morality is relative rather than absolute. The relationship between broad foreign experiences and immoral behavior was robust across a variety of cultural populations (anglophone, francophone), life stages (high school students, university students, MBA students, middle-aged adults), and seven different measures of immorality. As individuals are exposed to diverse cultures, their moral compass may lose some of its precision.

*Keywords:* culture, foreign experiences, morality, unethical behavior, moral relativism

Public universities in the U.S. recorded 5.1 reports of alleged cheating for every 100 international students, versus one report per 100 domestic students.

— *Wall Street Journal* (June 5, 2016)

Due to the unprecedented pace of globalization, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is undoubtedly the most multicultural epoch of human history. As a result, foreign experiences are increasingly common and valued. Numerous managers not only take the initiative to immerse themselves in other cultures but also urge their employees to do the same. For instance, each year hundreds of executives and employees of Samsung, the South Korean multinational firm, are sent abroad (Khanna, Song, & Lee, 2011), “fully paid, to do nothing but travel, relax, and learn the language and soak up the culture” (Kim, 1996, p. 21). To meet such a high demand for individuals with diverse cultural experiences, governments and schools alike increasingly encourage students to participate in programs abroad (e.g., Ledwith & Seymour, 2001; Poets & Quant, 2011). For example, the European Commission spends billions of euros each year on the Erasmus program, which provides opportunities for millions of young Europeans to study, train, volunteer, and work abroad (European Commission, 2015). From 2000 to 2015, the number of international students worldwide soared from 2 million to 4.5 million, and it is expected to skyrocket to 7 to 8 million by 2025 (*The Economist*, 2016).

Despite the rising popularity of foreign experiences, the opening quote highlights a potential downside of foreign experiences: immoral behavior. Whereas prior work has focused on the bright sides of foreign experiences, including increased creativity and decreased outgroup bias, the current research explores whether these experiences also possess a dark side. Over the course of eight studies, we develop a theoretical model that articulates when and why foreign experiences can lead to immoral behavior.

### **The Bright Sides of Foreign Experiences**

The rising prevalence of foreign experiences has kindled substantial research interests in the consequences of foreign experiences (Cao, Galinsky, & Maddux, 2014; Leung & Chiu, 2010; Lu et al., 2016; Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008; Maddux & Galinsky, 2009; Tadmor, Galinsky, & Maddux, 2012; Tadmor, Hong, Chao, Wiruchnipawan, & Wang, 2012). One well-established finding is that foreign experiences can promote cognitive flexibility, or “the ability of individuals to restructure knowledge in multiple different ways depending on changing situational demands” (Gino & Ariely, 2012, p. 446). Ritter and colleagues (2012) proposed and found that diversifying experiences—defined as unusual events and situations that are actively experienced—“violate normality, break cognitive schemas, and promote a thinking style characterized by cognitive flexibility” (p. 964). Experiences abroad epitomize such experiences. In the short run, foreign experiences expose individuals to diverse assumptions, beliefs, values, conventions, and behaviors that predominate in different cultures, enabling them to integrate multiple perspectives on the same issue (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000; Tadmor et al., 2012; Tadmor, Hong, et al., 2012). In the long run, foreign experiences can increase individuals’ propensity to flexibly draw upon mental schemas and behavioral scripts from different cultures (Benet-Martinez, Lee, & Leu, 2006; Chiu & Hong, 2005; De Dreu, 2010).

As a result, foreign experiences lead individuals to become more creative (Franzoni, Scellato, & Stephan, 2014; Gordart, Maddux, Shipilov, & Galinsky, 2015; Hellmanzik, 2013; Leung & Chiu, 2010; Leung et al., 2008; Maddux & Galinsky, 2009; Saad, Damian, Benet-Martinez, Moons, & Robins, 2013), more trusting (Cao et al., 2014), and less biased towards outgroups (Tadmor, Hong, et al., 2012). Numerous studies on creativity have shown that exposure to different cultures empowers people to learn, connect, and combine seemingly disparate ideas, thereby generating novel and useful insights. For example, foreign experiences

can lead artists to create more valuable artwork (Hellmanzik, 2013), scientists to publish more impactful articles (Franzoni et al., 2014), and young professionals to engage in more entrepreneurial activities (Tadmor et al., 2012). In a similar vein, foreign experiences lower individuals' need for cognitive closure, which in turn reduces intergroup bias (e.g., stereotype endorsement, symbolic racialism, and discriminatory decision making; Tadmor, Hong, et al., 2012). Likewise, experiences in foreign cultures provide opportunities to engage with strangers from other cultural groups, thereby heightening an individual's generalized trust, or the belief that human nature is benevolent (Cao et al., 2014).

Across all these studies, foreign experiences resulted in positive outcomes, from enhanced creativity to reduced intergroup bias to higher generalized trust. In contrast, the present research casts caution on the widespread approbation of foreign experiences and suggests that a dark side may lurk in these experiences.

### **The Dark Side of Foreign Experiences**

One unexplored yet important possibility is that foreign experiences not only nurture cognitive flexibility, but also lead individuals to think and act in a morally flexible and relativist manner. In other words, while foreign experiences empower people to break mental rules, they may also drive people to bend moral rules, thereby increasing their tendency to behave immorally.

As the antithesis of moral absolutism, moral relativism dictates that "right" or "wrong" are relative because moral beliefs are the products of cultural histories (Harman, 1975). This inherent subjectivity of moral relativism involves more relaxed moral standards in general and thus greater leniency toward both one's own and others' transgressions. As Rai and Holyoak (2013) wrote, "the fact that relativism describes morality as subjective and culturally-historically

contingent, whereas absolutism describes morality as objective and universal [is what] makes individuals more likely to engage in immoral behaviors when exposed to moral relativism compared to moral absolutism” (p. 995). Indeed, the link between moral relativism and immoral behavior has been supported by empirical studies showing that even priming people with moral relativism increases their tendency to behave immorally. In one experiment, Rai and Holyoak (2013) found that participants who read a relativist definition of morality were more likely to cheat in a subsequent task than participants who read an absolutist definition of morality. As individuals are exposed to foreign cultures, they may come to appreciate that different cultures uphold different standards on the same moral issues, and consequently, to construe moral rules and principles as culturally relative rather than absolute.

Importantly, not all foreign experiences may induce moral relativism to the same degree. Here, we distinguish between *broad* foreign experiences (e.g., experiences in many different countries) and *deep* foreign experiences (e.g., extended stay in a single country). According to Kelley’s (1967) variance attribution theory, the *breadth* of experiences across different contexts is indispensable for forming generalized attitudes and beliefs. For example, Cao and colleagues (2014) found that generalized trust emerged from only broad (but not deep) foreign experiences. Applying this logic to the domain of morality, the more sets of moral codes individuals are exposed to, the more likely they are to develop the generalized, meta-ethical view of moral relativism. As a result, *broad* foreign experiences may shape individuals to become more flexible in the interpretation of moral rules and principles, and thus more apt to justify and dismiss immoral behaviors (Bandura, 1999; Jones, 1991; Rai & Holyoak, 2013). By comparison, *deep* foreign experiences expose individuals to fewer sets of moral codes, and thus may be less conducive to moral relativism and immoral behavior.

In light of the above reasoning, we propound the following model (Figure 1). Overall, we propose that foreign experiences increase immoral behavior. More specifically, we predict the breadth of foreign experiences to be a stronger predictor of immoral behavior than the depth of foreign experiences, because breadth more than depth facilitates moral relativism, which in turn drives immoral behavior (Rai & Holyoak, 2013).

### **Overview of the Present Research**

The present research examines the possibility that foreign experiences increase immoral behavior by inducing moral relativism. To test this potential dark side of foreign experiences, we conducted eight studies employing mixed methodologies (longitudinal, correlational, and experimental), diverse cultural samples (e.g., anglophone, francophone) across different life stages (e.g., high school students, university students, MBA students, middle-aged adults), as well as seven measures of immorality. Throughout the paper, we adopt the widely accepted definition of immoral behavior as acts that are “either illegal or morally unacceptable to the larger community” (Jones, 1991, p. 367). The behavioral measures of immorality in our studies involved lying and cheating, both of which are morally unacceptable to the larger community.

Our first set of studies tested whether foreign experiences could increase immoral behavior. Using a longitudinal design, Study 1 provided initial evidence that individuals are more likely to behave immorally after living abroad. To seek causal evidence for the relationship between foreign experiences and immoral behavior, Study 2 employed an experimental method and showed that reflecting on one’s foreign experiences (vs. non-foreign experiences) could temporarily increase immoral behavior.

Building upon the first two studies, we next scrutinized which particular aspect of foreign experiences was most conducive to immoral behavior. Studies 3 to 5 offered correlational and

experimental evidence that it is the breadth (rather than the depth) of foreign experiences that is predictive of immoral behavior. Finally, in Studies 6 to 8, we explored the underlying mechanism of moral relativism: broad foreign experiences increase moral relativism, which in turn increases immoral behavior.

### **Theoretical Contributions**

The current work offers several theoretical contributions. It is the first to unveil a dark side of foreign experiences in the form of increased immorality. As a result, we provide a more nuanced understanding of the ramifications of going abroad. Second, whereas past research has largely focused on the *consequences* of moral relativism (e.g., immoral behavior), we identify the breadth of cultural experiences as an important *antecedent* of moral relativism. Third, we underscore the importance of differentiating between broad and deep foreign experiences by showing that it is the breadth of foreign experiences that facilitates moral relativism and thus increases immoral behavior.

### **Methodological Considerations**

Importantly, the current studies address one alternative explanation for the proposed effect of foreign experiences on immoral behavior: it is the moral environment of a country—whether home or foreign—that drives a person's tendency to behave immorally. For example, Fisman and Miguel (2007) found that diplomats from highly corrupt countries (as measured by Corruption Perception Index, or CPI; Transparency International, 2013) accumulated significantly more unpaid parking violations in Manhattan. To rule out the possibility that foreign experiences increase immoral behavior only if people visit countries perceived as less moral than their home country, we collected detailed information on the countries that participants had visited. We then coded for (a) the CPI, which estimates the level of corruption in



a given country (Transparency International, 2013), and (b) the Crime Index, which estimates the level of crime in a given country (Numbeo, 2013). Where possible, for each participant we controlled for: (1) the CPI of home country, (2) the mean CPI of visited foreign countries, (3) the CI of home country, and (4) the mean CI of visited foreign countries. In addition, we computed the difference between (1) and (2) as a measure of how much more/less corrupt the home country is perceived as relative to the visited foreign countries, as well as the difference between (3) and (4) as a measure of how much more/less crime the home country has relative to the visited foreign countries.

Below we report all the studies that we have conducted on the relationship between foreign experiences and immorality. In each study, we report all the measures that we used to assess foreign experiences and immorality.

### **Study 1: Living Abroad Increases Immoral Behavior**

To examine whether individuals would be more likely to behave immorally after living abroad, we conducted a three-phase longitudinal study. In particular, we compared the likelihood of cheating behavior before and after students had studied abroad.

#### **Method**

**Participants and design.** A total of 215 French or French-speaking students (73.0% female;  $M_{age}$  at first participation = 17.48,  $SD_{age}$  = 1.16) participated in our study for a chance to win an iPad3. They were high-school students who spent six months (48%) or 12 months (52%) in a foreign country (Argentina, Australia, Canada, Japan, India, New Zealand, Spain, or the United States) as part of a study abroad program. The longitudinal study consisted of three phases: one month before participants departed to their destination country (Phase 1), six months after they arrived in their destination country (Phase 2), and 12 months after they arrived in their

destination country (Phase 3). All three phases were conducted online in French. For the purpose of data analysis, we excluded seven participants who attempted any given study phase more than once, as well as 27 cases of incomplete data.

**The anagram measure of immoral behavior.** At each study phase, after completing several filler questions (e.g., satisfaction with host family, satisfaction with the program), participants were offered an opportunity to win an iPad3 by completing an optional anagram task, which presented them with a series of nine anagrams to solve in nine minutes (Wiltermuth, 2011). Participants were told that each anagram they solved would increase their odds of winning by 10% but that they must solve the anagrams *in order* from the beginning. No actual answer was required; participants were simply instructed to check an anagram as “solved” (versus “unsolved”) to indicate that they had solved it. Unbeknownst to the participants, the fourth anagram was always impossible to solve. Therefore, any participant who claimed to have solved more than the first three anagrams was coded as having cheated to increase their odds of winning an iPad (0 = no cheating, 1 = cheating).

**Control variables.** Consistent with past research (e.g., Cao et al., 2014), we assessed participants’ age, gender, and self-rated Big Five personality traits (i.e., openness to experiences, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability; Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003) as pertinent individual-level control variables. In addition, to control for the differences in moral environments between home country and destination country, for each participant we coded (1) the CPI of home country, (2) the CPI of destination country, (3) the CI of home country, (4) the CI of destination country, (5) the difference between (1) and (2) as a measure of how much more/less corrupted the home country is perceived as relative to the

destination country, and (6) the difference between (3) and (4) as a measure of how much more/less iniquitous the home country is perceived as relative to the destination country.

## Results

Overall, 30.1% of participants cheated at Phase 1, whereas 46.1% cheated at Phase 2 and 47.7% cheated at Phase 3. Chi-square tests showed that compared to Phase 1, cheating rate was significantly higher at Phase 2 ( $\chi^2[1, N = 159] = 4.29, p = .038$ ) and at Phase 3 ( $\chi^2[1, N = 171] = 5.56, p = .018$ ). These results remained substantively unchanged when we included the individual-level control variables and any of the country-level control variables in logistic regressions (all  $p$ 's < .05). Importantly, there was no significant difference in cheating rate between Phase 2 and Phase 3 ( $\chi^2[1, N = 164] = .05, p = .83$ ), suggesting that living abroad in the same foreign country for an extra six months did not further increase the tendency to behave immorally.

As a robustness check, we performed repeated-measures logistic regressions on participants who had completed *at least two phases* of the study (i.e., 60 participants had completed both Phases 1 and 2, 72 participants had completed both Phases 1 and 3, and 65 participants had completed both Phases 2 and 3). Replicating the results above, the likelihood of cheating at Phase 2 (Wald Chi-Square = 8.66,  $p = .003$ ) or Phase 3 (Wald Chi-Square = 7.78,  $p = .005$ ) was significantly higher than at Phase 1; these results persisted when we accounted for the individual-level control variables and any of the country-level control variables (all  $p$ 's < .052). Again, there was no significant difference in the likelihood of cheating between Phases 2 and 3 (Wald Chi-Square = .43,  $p = .51$ ).

As a further robustness check, we performed repeated-measures logistic regressions on participants who had completed *all three phases* of the study ( $N = 49$ ). Replicating the results

above, the likelihood of cheating at Phase 2 (Wald Chi-Square = 11.079,  $p = .001$ ) or Phase 3 (Wald Chi-Square = 9.52,  $p = .002$ ) was significantly higher than at Phase 1; these results remained reliable when we accounted for the individual-level control variables and any of the country-level control variables (all  $p$ 's < .05). Once again, there was no significant difference in the likelihood of cheating between Phases 2 and 3 (Wald Chi-Square = .08,  $p = .78$ ).

## **Discussion**

Using a longitudinal design, Study 1 found that individuals were more apt to behave unethically after living abroad. In particular, high-school students were more likely to cheat on the nine-anagram task after living in a foreign country for either six or twelve months. Importantly, living in the same foreign country for an extra six months did not further increase the likelihood of cheating (from Phase 2 to Phase 3), suggesting that the depth of foreign experiences had less effect on immoral behavior. In addition, the effect of foreign experiences on cheating did not depend on the perceived morality of either home or destination country.

### **Study 2: Reflecting on Foreign Experiences Increases Immoral Behavior**

To seek causal evidence for the relationship between foreign experiences and immoral behavior, Study 2 employed an experimental method to examine whether reflecting on one's foreign experiences (vs. non-foreign experiences) would temporarily increase immoral behavior. The dynamic constructivist approach to culture and cognition (Hong, Ip, Chiu, Morris, & Menon, 2001; Hong et al., 2000) suggests that when different cultural experiences are cognitively available to a person, their relative accessibility determines which type of experience will have a greater influence on subsequent thoughts and behaviors. Indeed, many studies have demonstrated that past foreign experiences can be reactivated by having people recall and describe them in detail (e.g., Cao et al., 2014; Maddux, Adam, & Galinsky, 2010; Maddux & Galinsky, 2009). For

example, when priming individuals—all of whom had previously lived abroad—to recall and write about either an experience of living abroad or an experience of living in their hometown, Maddux and Galinsky (2009, Study 3) found that the former group temporarily exhibited higher creativity than did the latter group.

## Method

**Participants.** For a compensation of \$20, a total of 171 students (46.8% female;  $M_{age} = 21.16$ ,  $SD_{age} = 2.60$ ) from a large northeastern university in the United States participated in a one-hour session that included multiple studies (the current experiment was the first one completed). To ensure that foreign experiences were cognitively accessible, participants qualified for the session only if they reported having visited at least one foreign country before. On average, the participants had spent 22.6 months abroad ( $SD = 26.9$ ).

**Design.** Participants were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions in a between-subjects design: foreign experience condition, home experience condition, or control condition.

**Manipulation of foreign (vs. non-foreign) experiences.** In the *foreign experience* condition, participants were asked to recall and write about a day in a foreign country that they had visited. In the *home experience* condition, participants were asked to recall and write about a day in their hometown. Finally, in the *control* condition, participants were asked to recall and write about what happened the last time they went to the supermarket (see Maddux et al., 2010; Maddux & Galinsky, 2009). In each condition, participants had five minutes to complete the essay.

**The die-roll measure of immoral behavior.** Upon completing the priming task, participants performed a second, separate task that ostensibly assessed their “luck,” but in reality

measured cheating (Gino & Ariely, 2012; Shalvi, Dana, Handgraaf, & De Dreu, 2011; Shalvi, Eldar, & Bereby-Meyer, 2012). The task instructed them to roll a die and self-report the outcome, which we explained would determine the amount of bonus payment they would receive (i.e., \$1 for 1, \$2 for 2, ... \$6 for 6). If reflecting on a foreign experience (vs. a non-foreign experience) increased immoral behavior, then the average self-reported die-roll outcome would be significantly higher in the *foreign experience* condition than in the other two conditions.

## Results

As predicted, participants in the foreign experience condition reported a significantly higher mean dice-roll outcome ( $M = 5.25$ ,  $SD = .93$ ) than both those in the home experience condition ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ;  $t[114] = 3.13$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $d = .58$ ) and those in the control condition ( $M = 4.62$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ;  $t[113] = 2.86$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $d = .53$ ; omnibus one-way ANOVA:  $F[2, 168] = 5.38$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .06$ , Figure 3).

## Discussion

Using an experimental design, Study 2 offered causal evidence for the relationship between foreign experiences and immoral behavior. Sampling a different population in terms of culture and age (i.e., American university students) and using a different operationalization of immoral behavior (i.e., dice-roll task), Study 2 replicated the findings of Study 1.

### Study 3: Broad Foreign Experiences Predict Immoral Behavior

Using a combination of longitudinal and experimental designs, the first two studies found that foreign experiences increased immoral behavior. Nevertheless, they did not directly examine which specific aspect of foreign experiences was conducive to immoral behavior. We have theorized that it is *broad* rather than *deep* foreign experiences that increase immoral behavior. In support of our theory, Study 1 found that living in the same foreign country for an extra six

months did not further increase the likelihood of cheating. However, Studies 1 and 2 neither measured nor manipulated the *breadth* of foreign experiences. To address this issue, the next set of studies examined whether it is the breadth rather than the depth of foreign experiences that is conducive to immoral behavior.

## Method

**Participants.** We recruited 611 francophone volunteers (86% female;  $M_{age} = 35.75$ ,  $SD_{age} = 12.77$ ) as part of a large online survey on well-being. The opportunity to participate in this survey was advertised during the *France 2* television series “Leurs Secrets du Bonheur” (“Their Secrets of Happiness”)—a French television program aired in the winter of 2012. A link to the online survey was placed on the program’s website. We provided participants with no financial compensation but with feedback about their well-being once the study was completed.

**Breadth of foreign experiences.** Participants indicated the countries that they had visited from a list of the 50 most visited countries compiled by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2008). Following past research (Cao et al., 2014), we operationalized breadth of foreign experiences as the number of foreign countries that participants had visited ( $M = 8.35$ ,  $SD = 5.56$ ).

**The computer-glitch measure of immoral behavior.** As an ostensible measure of general knowledge, participants completed a set of ten multiple-choice trivia questions (e.g., What is the world’s smallest ocean?). Adopting Vohs and Schooler (2008)’s computer-glitch cheating paradigm, we informed participants that the online program had a glitch such that the correct answer for each trivia question would appear on the screen unless they pressed the spacebar right after the question appeared. Participants were also told that although we would not know whether they had pressed the spacebar or not, they should be honest and answer the

questions on their own. In actuality, the program automatically recorded the number of times the spacebar was pressed. Following prior research (e.g., Vohs & Schooler, 2008; von Hippel, Lakin, & Shakarchi, 2005), we operationalized cheating as the number of times a participant *failed* to press the space bar and, as a result, allowed the correct answer to appear ( $M = 1.86$ ,  $SD = 3.25$ ).

**Control variables.** Since well-travelled individuals might differ from less peripatetic individuals in important ways, we also assessed the following control variables: age, gender, education, monthly household income, socioeconomic status (MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status; Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000), subjective happiness (Subjective Happiness Scale;  $\alpha = .85$ ; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), life satisfaction (Satisfaction with Life Scale;  $\alpha = .89$ ; Diener, Emmons, Larsens, & Griffin, 1985), self-esteem (Single-Item Self-Esteem Scale; Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001), and Big Five personality traits (Gosling et al., 2003).

As in Study 1, to control for the differences in moral environments between home country and visited countries, for each participant we coded (1) the CPI of home country, (2) the mean CPI of all visited countries, (3) the CI of home country, (4) the mean CI of all visited country, (5) the difference between (1) and (2) as a measure of how much more/less corrupted the home country is perceived as relative to the visited countries, and (6) the difference between (3) and (4) as a measure of how much more/less iniquitous the home country is perceived as relative to the visited countries.

## Results

A Poisson regression revealed that the more countries participants had visited, the more they cheated on the trivia questions (Table 1 Model 1:  $B = .04$ ,  $SE = .004$ ,  $p < .001$ )—even



though there was no monetary incentive for this cheating behavior.<sup>1</sup> The breadth of foreign experiences remained a significant predictor of cheating after accounting for age, gender, socioeconomic status, education, self-esteem, subjective happiness, life satisfaction, and self-rated Big Five personality traits (Table 1 Model 2:  $B = .04$ ,  $SE = .006$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As in Study 1, this effect remained significant after further accounting for any of the country-level control variables (all  $p$ 's  $< .001$ ), such as the difference in CPI between home and visited countries and the difference in CI between home and visited countries (Table 1 Model 3). Because over 25% of participants did not disclose their monthly household income, we added it as a control variable to the Poisson regression model only on the last step; the effect of breadth still persisted (Table 1 Model 4:  $B = .03$ ,  $SE = .007$ ,  $p < .001$ ) in spite of a substantial reduction in  $N$  and thus lower statistical power. Moreover, there was no significant quadratic relationship between breadth and cheating ( $B = .0003$ ,  $SE = .0003$ ,  $p = .32$ ).

To scrutinize the robustness of the relationship between breadth and cheating, we conducted casewise diagnostics but there was no outlier more than three standard deviations from the mean cheating score.

## Discussion

Consistent with our central hypothesis, Study 3 identified the breadth of foreign experiences as a critical predictor of immoral behavior. Using a sample of yet another population (francophone adults) and another widely used measure of immoral behavior (the computer-glitch task), we found that the more countries individuals had visited, the more often they cheated—even in the absence of any financial incentives. This effect remained significant even when accounting for a broad range of individual differences and the perceived morality of home and

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<sup>1</sup> We performed Poisson regressions because cheating was operationalized as *the number of times* a participant failed to press the space bar (i.e., a count variable). OLS regressions (whether log-transformed or not) yielded very similar results (all  $p$ 's  $< .05$ ).

visited foreign countries.

#### **Study 4: Broad (but not Deep) Foreign Experiences Predict Immoral Intentions**

While Study 3 provided evidence that broad foreign experiences predict immoral behavior, it did not directly compare the effect of breadth versus depth. To address this shortcoming, Study 4 assessed both the breadth and depth of foreign experiences.

#### **Method**

**Participants.** A cohort of 551 first-year MBA students (37.7% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 27.52$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 2.14$ ) from a top international MBA program (located in the United States) participated in the current study. Among them, 54.6% self-identified as White, 23.2% as Asian, 6.7% as Hispanic/Latino, 4.4% as Black/African American, and the rest as Other. In this culturally diverse sample, 41.9% were born outside the United States in 52 different countries. The majority of the participants (77.5%) had resided in at least one foreign country.

**Breadth and depth of foreign experiences.** Participants reported the breadth (i.e., the number of countries they had lived in abroad;  $M = 1.66$ ,  $SD = 1.79$ ) and the depth (i.e., the number of months they had lived abroad;  $M = 34.36$ ,  $SD = 54.53$ ) of their foreign experiences. Not surprisingly, the breadth and depth of foreign experiences were significantly and positively correlated,  $r = .43$ ,  $p < .001$ .

**The SINS measure of immoral intentions.** Before measuring breadth and depth, we assessed immoral intentions with the widely used Self-Reported Inappropriate Negotiation Strategies (SINS) scale (Hershfield, Cohen, & Thompson, 2012; Kilduff, Galinsky, Gallo, & Reade, in press; Pierce, Kilduff, Galinsky, & Sivanathan, 2013). Participants indicated the extent to which they were willing to engage in immoral negotiation tactics (e.g., “intentionally misrepresenting factual information in order to support your negotiating arguments or position”;

1 = “definitely would not use”, 7 = “definitely would be willing to use”;  $\alpha = .73$ ).

**Control variables.** As in Studies 1 and 3, we controlled for individual-level demographic variables (age, gender, ethnicity, biculturalism, U.S. born) and personality variables. This time, the MBA participants not only assessed themselves on the Big Five personality traits, but also had at least four classmates and four colleagues do the same, thus yielding the more reliable “360” personality ratings. For each participant, we averaged the ratings on each of the five personality traits. Moreover, because well-travelled participants might feel superior and more entitled to immoral intentions and acts, we also assessed feelings of superiority with an eight-item “better-than-average” (BTA) effect measure that instructed participants to rate themselves on eight dimensions (e.g., intelligence, physical attractiveness, decision making abilities) relative to their classmates (Alicke, Klotz, Breitenbecher, Yurak, & Vredenburg, 1995). We averaged the responses to the eight items to create a standardized measure of BTA. Since all participants were studying in the United States at the time of participation, we computed (1) the difference in CPI between home country and the United States, and (2) the difference in CI between home country and the United States to control the perceived morality of each participant’s home country.

## Results

As predicted, the breadth of foreign experiences alone significantly predicted the SINS score (Table 2 Model 1:  $B = .06$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p = .001$ ). The depth of foreign experiences also significantly predicted the SINS score (Table 2 Model 2:  $B = .001$ ,  $SE = .001$ ,  $p = .031$ ). However, when we included both into a simultaneous OLS regression, only breadth remained significant (Table 2 Model 3:  $B = .06$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p = .011$ ) but not depth ( $B = .001$ ,  $SE = .001$ ,  $p = .39$ ). The effect of breadth persisted when accounting for the individual-level control variables (Table 2 Model 4:  $B = .06$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p = .006$ ) and any of the country-level control variables (all

$p$ 's < .02), such as the difference in CPI between home and visited countries and the difference in CI between home and visited countries (Table 2 Model 5). There was no significant quadratic relationship between breadth and the SINS score ( $B = -.00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p = .46$ ), nor between depth and the SINS score ( $B = .00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p = .94$ ). The (mean-centered) interaction term of breadth and depth was not significant either ( $B = .00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p = .36$ ).

To further test the robustness of the relationship between the breadth of foreign experiences and the SINS score, we conducted casewise diagnostics and identified two outliers that were three standard deviations away from the mean SINS score. In the full model that included all the control variables, the effect of breadth remained significant even after excluding those two outliers from the regression ( $B = .05$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p = .008$ ). In addition, we applied log transformation for both depth and breadth to decrease skewness; breadth still significantly predicted the SINS score in the full model ( $B = .59$ ,  $SE = .21$ ,  $p = .005$ ).

## **Discussion**

Using a culturally diverse sample of MBA students, Study 4 contrasted the effect of broad versus deep foreign experiences. The results established that breadth (i.e., the number of foreign countries lived in) more than depth (i.e., the length of time lived abroad) positively predicted participants' immoral intentions.

### **Study 5: Reflecting on Broad (vs. Deep) Foreign Experiences Increases Immoral Behavior**

To provide further causal evidence for the relationship between broad foreign experiences and immoral behavior, Study 5 contrasted the effect of breadth versus depth in an experimental design. Similar to Study 2, we randomly assigned participants to recall either a broad or deep foreign experience and subsequently assessed both their immoral intentions and behaviors (e.g., Cao et al., 2014).

To measure immoral intentions, Study 5 employed the moral acceptability scale (Lammers et al., 2010). Importantly, this measure assesses an individual's attitude towards not only his or her own moral transgressions, but also others' moral transgressions in general. Therefore, it enabled us to test whether broad foreign experiences affect “moral hypocrisy”—a phenomenon whereby people are harsher about others' immoral behaviors than about their own (Lammers et al., 2010; Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2007, 2008)—or whether broad foreign experiences lower moral standards in general. Based on our theory, we predicted that reflecting on broad foreign experiences would lead to less harsh judgments towards *both* one's own *and* others' moral transgressions. That is, we expected broad foreign experiences to increase moral leniency, but not moral hypocrisy. Such a finding would provide additional evidence for our proposition that broad foreign experiences induce the generalized view of morality as relativistic.

## Method

**Participants.** A total of 154 participants (56.2% female;  $M_{age} = 32.01$ ,  $SD_{age} = 9.75$ ) from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) completed Study 5 in exchange for \$0.35. Participants qualified for the study only if they were located in the United States (98.0% of them considered the U.S. their home country). To ensure high-quality participation, we required participants to have completed more than 100 “HITs” (i.e., Human Intelligence Tasks) on MTurk before and to have an approval rate above 98% for those studies. In addition, they had to have traveled abroad previously in order to participate in the study. Among them, 79.1% self-identified as White, 7.8% as Asian, 3.9% as Hispanic/Latino, 4.6% as Black/African American, and the rest as Other. We excluded one participant who failed our manipulation check (see below).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Among the 154 participants who completed the study, 72 participants were randomly assigned to the *breadth* condition and 82 participants the *depth* condition. In addition, 79 MTurk participants started but voluntarily dropped out of the study. Among them, 43 were in the breadth condition and 36 in the depth condition. A chi-square test

**Experimental design.** We randomly assigned participants to one of two experimental conditions in a between-subjects design: breadth vs. depth.

**Manipulation of broad and deep foreign experiences.** At the beginning of the study, participants were instructed to write about a travel experience in as much detail as they could within five minutes. In the breadth condition, they described a personal experience that had involved *at least two foreign countries*; we asked them what they saw, did, and thought about in *those different foreign countries*. In the depth condition, they described a personal experience during which they had spent a significant amount of time in *one foreign country*; we asked them what they saw, did, and thought about *that foreign country* (Cao et al., 2014, Study 4). We then asked them to specify the number of countries their trip had involved as a manipulation check. We excluded one participant whose answer did not match the number of countries described in their essay.

**Measures of immoral behavior and intentions.** Next, participants completed both a measure of immoral behavior and a measure of immoral intentions (counterbalanced). We assessed immoral behavior with another commonly used anagram task (Kilduff et al., in press; Pierce et al., 2013). We instructed participants to try to solve four anagrams (“CRKO,” “LABEVE,” “DSLIE,” and “FTOEER”) in two minutes, with the incentive of a bonus for every anagram they solved correctly. The first and third anagrams were easily solvable as each had two solutions (“ROCK,” “CORK”; “IDLES,” “SLIDE”), whereas the second and fourth anagrams had no solution. Therefore, in keeping with previous studies (Kilduff et al., in press; Pierce et al., 2013), those who claimed to have solved “LABEVE” or “FTOEER” were coded as having cheated.

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revealed that the attrition rates of the two conditions were not significantly different,  $\chi^2(1, N = 233) = 1.23, p = .27$ , suggesting that our effect was not driven by differential attrition rates across the two conditions.

We measured immoral intentions by having participants indicate the acceptability of eight moral transgressions (e.g., “riding the train without paying the fare”; 1 = “fully unacceptable”, 7 = “fully acceptable”): four for themselves ( $\alpha = .73$ ) and four for people in general ( $\alpha = .78$ ) (Lammers et al., 2010). The order of the eight questions was randomized. The acceptability rating of self’s own transgressions and that of others’ transgressions were positively correlated ( $r = .65, p < .001$ ).

## Results

Participants in the *breadth* condition were significantly more likely to cheat on the anagram task than did those in the *depth* condition,  $\chi^2(1, N = 153) = 5.26, p = .022$ . Specifically, 19 of the 71 participants in the *breadth* condition (26.8%) over-reported their performance on the anagram task, while only 10 of the 82 participants in the *depth* condition (12.2%) did so.

For the measure of immoral intentions, we conducted a 2 (condition: breadth vs. depth) X 2 (acceptability ratings of moral transgressions: self vs. others) mixed-model ANOVA with within-subjects on the second factor. Two significant main effects emerged (Figure 4). First, participants in the *breadth* condition ( $M = 3.83, SE = .13$ ) were more likely to deem moral transgressions acceptable than those in the *depth* condition ( $M = 3.31, SE = .13$ ),  $F(1, 151) = 7.94, p = .005$ . Second, in line with previous studies (Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2007, 2008), participants also displayed “moral hypocrisy”, whereby they were harsher about others’ moral transgressions ( $M = 3.24, SE = .10$ ) than about their own ( $M = 3.90, SE = .10$ ),  $F(1, 151) = 57.93, p < .001$ . Importantly, there was no significant (mean-centered) interaction between experimental condition (breadth vs. depth) and target (self vs. other),  $F(1, 151) < .01, p = .95$ , suggesting that reflecting on broad foreign experiences increased moral leniency but did not increase moral hypocrisy.

## Discussion

Study 5 provided experimental evidence that compared to the depth of foreign experiences, breadth is a stronger predictor of immoral intentions and behavior. Specifically, compared to participants who reflected on a deep foreign experience, participants who reflected on a broad foreign experience was significantly more likely to cheat on the four-anagram task and also more accepting of moral transgressions. Furthermore, in line with our proposition that broad foreign experiences increase moral relativism, results from the moral acceptability measure indicate that broad foreign experiences increased moral leniency for *both self and* others.

### **Study 6: Broad (but not Deep) Foreign Experiences Predict Moral Relativism**

The first set of studies provided consistent evidence that broad—but not deep—foreign experiences increase immoral behavior. Our core theoretical framework proposes that this relationship exists because broad foreign experiences increase moral relativism, and moral relativism in turn increases immoral behavior. To test for this underlying mechanism, Study 6 directly measured moral relativism.

## Method

**Participants and design.** A total of 199 MTurk participants (42.7% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 33.72$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 11.45$ ) completed Study 6 in exchange for \$0.25. As in Study 5, participants qualified only if they were located in the United States (99.0% of them considered the U.S. their home country), had completed more than 100 HITs on MTurk before, and had an approval rate above 98% for those studies. Among them, 68.3% self-identified as White, 15.1% as Asian, 8.0% as Hispanic/Latino, 6.5% as Black/African American, and the rest as Other.



We counterbalanced whether participants responded first to the independent variables of broad and deep foreign experiences or to the dependent variable of moral relativism.

**Breadth and depth of foreign experiences.** Participants reported the breadth (i.e., the number of foreign countries they had visited;  $M = 2.89$ ,  $SD = 3.41$ ) and the depth (i.e., the number of months that they had spent abroad;  $M = 2.35$ ,  $SD = 2.43$ ) of their foreign experiences.<sup>3</sup> Not surprisingly, the breadth and depth of foreign experiences were significantly and positively correlated,  $r = .21$ ,  $p = .004$ .

**Moral relativism.** To measure moral relativism, we adapted six items from the Ethics Position Questionnaire (Forsyth, 1980). In randomized order, participants indicated how much they agreed with statements such as “Moral rules are relative rather than absolute” on a seven-point scale (1 = “completely disagree”, 7 = “completely agree”;  $\alpha = .80$ ).

**Control variables.** At the end of the survey, demographic details (age, gender, ethnicity, education level, biculturalism, number of languages spoken fluently) and the Big Five personality traits (Gosling et al., 2003) were collected.

## Results

Consistent with our theory, the breadth of foreign experiences alone significantly predicted moral relativism (Table 3 Model 1:  $B = .06$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p = .004$ ). The depth of foreign experiences also marginally predicted moral relativism (Table 3 Model 2:  $B = .05$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $p = .076$ ). However, when we included both into a simultaneous OLS regression, only breadth remained significant (Table 3 Model 3:  $B = .06$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p = .022$ ) but not depth (Table 3 Model 3:  $B = .001$ ,  $SE = .001$ ,  $p = .89$ ). This effect of breadth persisted when accounting for the control

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<sup>3</sup> In addition to the 199 participants who completed our study, 14 MTurk participants started but did not complete the entire survey. Among them, 11 answered the questions about breadth and depth, and the other three participants dropped out before these two questions. Those 11 participants did not differ in breadth ( $t[208] = 1.14$ ,  $p = .26$ ) or depth ( $t[208] = 1.24$ ,  $p = .22$ ) from the 199 participants who completed the entire survey, suggesting that our effect was not driven by those who self-selected to finish the entire survey.

variables (Table 3 Model 4:  $B = .06$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p = .008$ ). There was no significant quadratic relationship between breadth and moral relativism ( $B = .00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p = .97$ ), nor between depth and moral relativism ( $B = -.01$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p = .12$ ). We also explored the (mean-centered) interaction term of breadth and depth, but it was not significant ( $B = -.00$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $p = .80$ ).

To scrutinize the robustness of the relationship between the breadth of foreign experiences and moral relativism, we conducted casewise diagnostics and identified one outlier that was three standard deviations away from the mean moral relativism score. In the full model, the effect of breadth held even after we excluded this outlier from the regression ( $B = .06$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p = .007$ ). In addition, we applied log transformation for both depth and breadth to decrease skewness; breadth (but not depth) still significantly predicted moral relativism ( $B = .62$ ,  $SE = .31$ ,  $p = .04$ ).

## **Discussion**

Consistent with our theoretical framework (Figure 1), the breadth of foreign experiences positively predicted moral relativism. The more countries the participants had visited, the more likely they were to judge morality as relative rather than absolute. In contrast, the depth of foreign experiences was not a reliable predictor of moral relativism.

### **Study 7: Correlational Evidence that Moral Relativism Mediates the Relationship between**

#### **Breadth and Immorality**

Studies 7 and 8 directly tested our full theoretical model: whether broad foreign experiences increase immorality because they increase moral relativism. Study 7 used a correlational design to examine whether moral relativism mediates the relationship between broad foreign experiences and immorality.

## **Method**

**Participants.** A different cohort of 202 first-year MBA students (34.2% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 27.74$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 2.40$ ) from the same international MBA program (located in the United States) participated in the current study. Among them, 49.5% self-identified as White, 25.7% as Asian, 10.9% as Hispanic/Latino, 1.0% as Black/African American, and the rest as Other. In this culturally diverse sample, 67.3% of the participants were born outside the United States in 41 different countries.

**Breadth and depth of foreign experiences.** Participants reported the breadth (i.e., the number of countries they had lived in abroad;  $Mean = 2.24$ ,  $SD = 1.68$ ) and the depth (i.e., total number of months they had lived abroad;  $Mean = 45.32$ ,  $SD = 59.81$ ) of their foreign experiences. Not surprisingly, the breadth and depth of foreign experiences were significantly and positively correlated,  $r = .34$ ,  $p < .001$ .

**Immoral intentions and moral relativism.** Before responding to the breadth and depth questions, participants completed a measure of immoral intentions and a measure of moral relativism. To measure immoral intentions, we used a five-item SINS scale as in Study 4 ( $\alpha = .72$ ); to measure moral relativism, we used the same six-item scale in Study 6 ( $\alpha = .73$ ). These two measures were counterbalanced.

**Control variables.** As in Study 4, we assessed age, gender, ethnicity, U.S. born, biculturalism, 360-assessed Big Five personality traits, the better-than-average measure, the difference in CPI between the home country and the United States, and the difference in CI between the home country and the United States.

## Results

Replicating our previous studies, the breadth of foreign experiences positively predicted the SINS—whether alone (Table 4 Model 1:  $B = .07$ ,  $SE = .04$ ,  $p = .049$ ) or in the full model that

included all the control variables (Table 4 Model 3:  $B = .09$ ,  $SE = .04$ ,  $p = .034$ ). In contrast, the depth did not predict the SINS—whether alone (Table 4 Model 2:  $B = .00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p = .96$ ) or in the full model (Table 4 Model 3:  $B = -.00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p = .17$ ). Similar to Study 4, there was no significant quadratic relationship between breadth and the SINS score ( $B = -.01$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p = .68$ ). The (mean-centered) interaction term of breadth and depth was not significant either ( $B = .00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p = .86$ ).

Replicating Study 6, breadth positively predicted moral relativism—whether alone ( $B = .11$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $p = .029$ ) or in the full model ( $B = .12$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p = .04$ ). In contrast, depth did not predict moral relativism—whether alone ( $B = .00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p = .98$ ) or in the full model ( $B = -.00$ ,  $SE = .00$ ,  $p = .53$ ). Similar to Study 6, there was no significant quadratic relationship between breadth and moral relativism ( $B = .02$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p = .34$ ).

When entered into a simultaneous OLS regression, moral relativism emerged as a significant predictor of the mean SINS score (Table 4 Model 4:  $B = .15$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p = .007$ ), while the direct effect of broad foreign experiences was substantially reduced (Table 4 Model 4:  $B = .07$ ,  $SE = .04$ ,  $p = .11$ ). A bootstrapping analysis with 5,000 iterations further substantiated the mediating effect of moral relativism, as the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval for the indirect effect did not include zero [.0201, .0375] (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

## Discussion

Using another culturally diverse set of MBA data, Study 7 fully replicated the findings of previous studies: the breadth of foreign experiences positively predicted immorality and positively predicted moral relativism. More importantly, this study established the mediating effect of moral relativism in explaining the relationship between broad foreign experiences and immorality, thus supporting our full theoretical model (Figure 1).

### **Study 8: Experimental Evidence that Moral Relativism Mediates the Effect of Breadth on Immorality**

To further corroborate the mediating role of moral relativism, Study 8 tested the full theoretical model with an experimental design. Similar to Study 5, we randomly assigned participants to reflect on either a broad or deep foreign experience and subsequently measured their cheating behavior as well as their moral relativism. Because broad foreign experiences are more conducive to moral relativism than are deep foreign experiences, we expected participants in the breadth condition to temporarily exhibit higher moral relativism and thus more cheating behavior.

Moreover, Study 8 extended Study 7 by comparing moral relativism with two other potential mediators: creativity and sensation seeking. Given that foreign experiences can enhance creativity (e.g., Maddux & Galinsky, 2009), and that creativity can be positively associated with immoral behavior (Gino & Ariely, 2012; Gino & Wiltermuth, 2014), it is possible that creativity also contributes to our proposed effect. Similarly, foreign experiences may shape individuals to become more sensation-seeking, which may in turn lead them to behave more immorally (DeAndrea, Carpenter, Shulman, & Levine, 2009).

#### **Method**

**Participants.** For a base compensation of \$5, a total of 117 participants (51.3% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 25.31$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 6.05$ ) from a different large northeastern university completed Study 8. Participants passed the prescreen of this lab study only if they had visited at least two foreign countries before ( $M = 9.31$ ,  $SD = 8.00$ ); on average, they had spent 36.62 months abroad ( $SD = 48.88$ ). 59.0% of the participants listed the U.S as their home country, and the rest represented 22 foreign countries. Among the 117 participants, 40.2% self-identified as White, 37.6% as Asian,

9.4% as Black/African American, 5.1% as Hispanic/Latino, and the rest as Other. For the purpose of data analysis, we excluded six participants because one happened to be a friend of the experimenter, two did not attend to the task (e.g., talking on the phone during the task), and three failed to follow the instruction and counted the number of solved matrices in front of the experimenter (see below).

**Experimental design.** We randomly assigned participants to one of two experimental conditions in a between-subjects design: breadth vs. depth.

**Manipulation of broad and deep foreign experiences.** As in Study 5, participants were instructed to write about a foreign experience in as much detail as they could on a computer within five minutes. In the breadth condition, they described a personal experience that had involved *at least two foreign countries*; we asked them what they saw, did, and thought about in *those different foreign countries*. In the depth condition, they described a personal experience during which they had spent a significant amount of time in *one foreign country*; we asked them what they saw, did, and thought about *that foreign country* (Cao et al., 2014, Study 4).

**Measure of immoral behavior.** Next, participants performed a number-search matrix task (developed by Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008; see also Gino & Ariely, 2012; Gino & Wiltermuth, 2014; Vincent, Emich, & Goncalo, 2013). Participants received a worksheet with 20 matrices of 12 three-digit numbers (e.g., 4.81); in each matrix, two numbers formed a unique pair that summed to 10 (e.g., 4.81 and 5.19). Participants had five minutes to solve as many pairs as possible and were told that they would receive \$0.50 for each correctly identified pair. After the five minutes had elapsed, each participant was instructed to count the number of solved matrices, fold the worksheet, and throw it in a recycling box that contained other participants' worksheets—all in the absence of the experimenter. Although there appeared to be no identifier

on the worksheet—thus allowing participants to feel anonymous and to over-report their performance—the last number of the last matrix on each sheet in fact uniquely corresponded with participant ID (Gino & Ariely, 2012). Therefore, we were able to compare actual to reported performance.

**Potential mediators.** Next, participants completed measures of the three potential mediators aforementioned: moral relativism, creativity, and sensation seeking (all counterbalanced). To assess moral relativism, we employed the same scale used in Studies 6 and 7 (e.g., “Moral rules are relative rather than absolute”,  $\alpha = .71$ ). For creativity, we adopted the widely used Remote Associates Test (RAT; Mednick, 1962), which presents three cue words and asks the subject to conceive a fourth word that is associated with each of the three words (e.g., chocolate, fortune, tin  $\rightarrow$  cookie). Participants had three minutes to solve ten RAT problems and their creativity was operationalized as the number of RATs solved correctly. For sensation seeking, we adopted the eight-item measure developed by Hoyle and colleagues (2002). Sample items include “I like wild parties” and “I prefer friends who are excitingly unpredictable” ( $\alpha = .77$ ).

## Results

**Cheating behavior.** As predicted, participants in the *breadth* condition were significantly more likely to cheat on the matrix task than did those in the *depth* condition,  $\chi^2(1, N = 109) = 5.77, p = .016$ . More specifically, participants in the *breadth* condition ( $M = 1.77, SD = 4.35$ ) over-reported significantly more matrices than did those in the *depth* condition ( $M = 0.38, SD = 1.67$ ),  $t(107) = 2.24, p = .027$ .<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> We excluded two participants who reported *fewer* matrices than they had actually solved: one participant *under-reported* 3 matrices and the other 4 matrices. Including these two participants did not substantively alter our results,  $t(109) = 2.22, p = .028$ .

**Moral relativism.** In support of our theory, participants in the *breadth* condition ( $M = 5.08$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ) exhibited marginally higher level of moral relativism than did those in the *depth* condition ( $M = 4.79$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ),  $t(107) = 1.78$ ,  $p = .077$ .

**Creativity.** Although participants in the *breadth* condition ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ) tended to solve fewer RATs than did those in the *depth* condition ( $M = 3.04$ ,  $SD = 1.94$ ), this difference was not statistically significant,  $t(107) = -1.43$ ,  $p = .16$ .

**Sensation seeking.** The *breadth* condition ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ) did not differ from the *depth* condition ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ) in terms of sensation seeking,  $t(107) = -.57$ ,  $p = .57$ .

**Mediation analyses.** Consistent with the prior studies, a bootstrapping analysis with 5,000 iterations revealed that moral relativism mediated the effect of experimental condition on cheating behavior, as the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval for the indirect effect did not include zero [.0248, .6543] (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). In contrast, neither creativity nor sensation seeking emerged as significant mediators (95% bias-corrected  $CI_{\text{creativity}} = [-.2109, .3821]$ , 95% bias-corrected  $CI_{\text{sensation seeking}} = [-.3980, .0578]$ ).

## Discussion

Study 8 provided a causal replication of the full mediation model from Study 7 by experimentally manipulating a focus on the breadth versus depth of foreign experiences. The breadth of foreign experiences facilitated cheating behavior by heightening moral relativism. Moreover, Study 8 further underscored the mediating role of moral relativism by revealing that neither creativity nor sensation seeking emerged as significant mediators.

### General Discussion

Over the past decade, an increasing amount of empirical research has highlighted the benefits of going abroad. In contrast, the present research casts caution on the widespread



approbation of foreign experiences by identifying an important dark side—increased immoral behavior. The effect of broad foreign experiences on immoral behavior was robust across eight studies that used different research methodologies (longitudinal, correlational, and experimental), cultural samples (e.g., anglophone, francophone), life stages (e.g., high school students, university students, MBA students, middle-aged adults), and seven widely accepted measures of immorality.

Using a combination of longitudinal and experimental designs, the first two studies found that foreign experiences increased immoral behavior. Extending these two studies, Studies 3 to 5 offered both correlational and experimental evidence that it is the breadth (rather than the depth) of foreign experiences that is predictive of increased immoral behavior. Finally, Studies 6 to 8 supported our complete theoretical model (Figure 1) by establishing the mediating role of moral relativism in explaining the relationship between broad foreign experiences and immoral behavior.

It is noteworthy that foreign experiences remained a positive predictor of immoral behavior after controlling for the Corruption Perception Index and the Crime Index of both the home country and the visited foreign countries. This suggests that the reported effects did not stem from visiting countries that were perceived as less moral than one's home country. Instead, being exposed to a breadth of moral codes appears to be the key factor in predicting immoral behavior.

In light of the recent finding that social class positively predicts immoral behavior (Dubois, Rucker, & Galinsky, 2015; Piff, Stancato, Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012), one may wonder whether social class offers an alternative explanation for our results (i.e., higher-class individuals both have broader foreign experiences and behave more immorally).

Social class is typically operationalized as a combination of two components: education and income (Anderson, Kraus, Galinsky, & Keltner, 2012). In Study 3, we explicitly controlled for socioeconomic status, education, and income. In Study 6, we explicitly controlled for education. In our MBA studies (Studies 4 & 7), we implicitly controlled for education (as all participants were in the same advanced degree program) and for income (as the majority of the MBA participants had held jobs that placed them in the upper echelon of most income measures). Similarly, the within-subject longitudinal design of Study 1 implicitly controlled for education and income. Finally, our experimental studies (Studies 2, 5, & 8) randomly assigned participants to condition, thereby equalizing any pre-existing differences in social class. For these reasons, we believe that social class is not a viable alternative explanation for the current findings.

As revealed by Study 8, creativity did not significantly mediate the effect of broad foreign experiences on unethical behavior. This is consistent with past findings that compared to the breadth of foreign experiences, the depth is a stronger predictor of enhanced creativity (Godart et al., 2015; Maddux & Galinsky, 2009). For example, a study of the world's top fashion houses found that the number of years (i.e., depth) fashion directors had worked abroad was more predictive of their fashion lines' creativity than was the number of foreign countries (i.e., breadth) they had worked in (Godart et al., 2015). On the other hand, the present findings suggest that immoral behavior emerged more from the breadth than the depth of foreign experiences because moral relativism is predicated on having experiences across a number of different foreign countries.

Finally, we acknowledge that although the effect of broad foreign experiences on immoral behavior was significant and robust across all of our studies, the effect sizes were not large. However, it is noteworthy that our phenomenon of interest is robust across 8 studies with

different research methods, cultural populations, life stages, and measures of immorality. As Prentice and Miller (1992) pointed out, replicating a small effect across different situations and stimuli can be just as “impressive” as having a large effect.

### **Theoretical Contributions**

The present research is the first to examine the relationship between two increasingly prominent constructs in social science research: foreign experiences and morality. Past research has almost exclusively focused on the bright sides of foreign experiences (e.g., increased creativity, elevated generalized trust, reduced intergroup bias). By unveiling a potential dark side of foreign experiences in the form of increased immorality, we present a more balanced view of the ramifications of such experiences. At the same time, we uncover a new antecedent of immoral behavior.

This work contributes to research on moral relativism by identifying one of its roots. While past research has centered on the *consequences* of moral relativism (e.g., immoral behavior; Rai & Holyoak, 2013), we establish one important *antecedent* of moral relativism: the breadth of cultural experiences. Indeed, philosophers have long surmised that the meta-ethical worldview of moral relativism emerges from appreciating the differences in moral beliefs upheld by different cultures (Harman, 1975). By lending empirical support to this surmise, our research connects the fields of moral psychology and moral philosophy.

By demonstrating that broad rather than deep foreign experiences foster immorality, we add to the still incipient literature that compares the effects of breadth versus depth on important psychological outcomes (Cao et al., 2014; Godart et al., 2015). Interestingly, while broad foreign experiences can lead to immorality via heightened moral relativism, they have been shown to also increase generalized trust (Cao et al., 2014). At first blush, it may seem counterintuitive that

broad foreign experiences shape people to become more trusting yet less trustworthy (i.e., more unethical). However, the propensity to be trusting and the propensity to be trustworthy are actually two distinct constructs (see Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007, for a review). Trust is a person's inclination to believe that others will cooperate with and not take advantage of him or her, whereas trustworthiness is a person's willingness to act favorably towards and not take advantage of others. In support of this dissociation between trust and trustworthiness, cross-cultural studies have found that variance in trust is mainly explained by expectation of reciprocity, whereas variance in trustworthiness is accounted for by other factors such as kindness (Ashraf, Bohnet, & Piankov, 2006). Although trust and trustworthiness can go in tandem, research in game theory shows that a meaningful percentage of people trust others to act altruistically, while failing to do so themselves, and vice versa (e.g., McCabe, Rassenti, & Smith, 1996). In fact, Deutsch (1960) used the term "exploitative orientation" to describe individuals who are trusting but not trustworthy. Empirically, trusting and trustworthiness are not influenced by the same factors. For instance, higher scores on Machiavellianism do not predict how trusting one is in a one-shot constituent game but clearly predicts how trustworthy one is (Gunnthorsdottir, McCabe, & Smith, 2002). Similarly, "attending the same church predicts trusting, but not trustworthy behavior" (Karlan, 2005, p.1694). Moreover, Kosfeld et al. (2005) revealed that the intake of oxytocin led individuals to behave more trustingly, but not more trustworthily. Extending these previous findings that trust and trustworthiness are influenced by different factors, our results demonstrate that the *same* factor (i.e., broad foreign experiences) can have opposite effects on these two distinct constructs.

### **Practical Implications**

Due to the rise of globalization, the world is “flatter” than ever before (Friedman, 2005). Consequently, the society is placing an increasingly high value on individuals with foreign experiences. Schools encourage students to study abroad to discover insights into other cultures. Companies send employees abroad to develop new perspectives. Organizations boast about the diverse foreign experiences of their members to attract even more global talents. While foreign experiences can indeed foster creativity and innovation, education and business practitioners should be aware of the hidden pitfall in the form of increased immorality. We propose that one way to counteract the potential toll of moral relativism on ethical behavior is committing to values and codes of conduct. It will be incumbent of multicultural organizations and individuals to establish and enforce moral standards that are *absolute* (Young & Durwin, 2012). For example, organizations could resort to severe punishments if their members cross a firmly espoused moral line. This way, individuals will be cognizant of the terrain wherein they should not travel, without diluting their creative energy.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

As the first investigation into the relationship between broad foreign experiences and immorality, the current research is subject to several limitations which offer exciting avenues for future research. To start, all of our seven measures of immorality occurred during the studies themselves. Future studies could examine whether broad foreign experiences indeed increase naturally occurring moral transgressions (e.g., unpaid parking tickets, fraud, stealing, academic misconducts, romantic infidelities), which may be more serious and consequential.

Across our studies, while the depth of foreign experiences was positively correlated with the breadth, we never found a significant effect for depth when controlling for breadth, nor a significant interaction between the two variables. One question that merits further investigation

is the role of depth in the development of moral relativism. We suggest that a threshold level of depth is indispensable to familiarize an individual with each culture's moral beliefs. Therefore, we speculate that very brief experiences abroad—even if they occur across multiple countries—may be unlikely to change people's meta-ethical worldview or influence their tendency to behave immorally. After all, a passenger transferring at Beijing's airport is unlikely to have much exposure to the moral norms and values of the Chinese society.

### **Conclusion**

While foreign experiences can elevate people to new heights of creativity, they can also pull people down into the depths of immorality. The person who has broad foreign experiences may be a more creative thinker, but not necessarily a more moral one.

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