

## **Bicultural Individuals in Organizations** Implications and Opportunity

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**ABSTRACT** Cross-cultural management research typically assumes that individuals have only one cultural profile. However, given the changing patterns in the world's workforce it is increasingly possible that more employees and managers will be bicultural. This special issue responds to the need to further our understanding of this emerging demographic in organizations. In this introductory article, we provide a brief review of what we know about bicultural individuals, point out some implications of our current knowledge for organizations, identify opportunities for further exploration of these topics, and introduce the articles in the special issue.

**KEY WORDS** • biculturals • boundary spanning • global leadership • global teams • multicultural identity

Ema Nishimoto, the sandy haired, hazel-eyed director of global alliances for a large Rio de Janeiro-based oil company was worried about how she'd come across in Saudi Arabia as a member of the negotiating team. Born to a Japanese-Brazilian father and Danish mother, she had spent her formative years in Brazil and Japan. Unlike her parents, she did not speak Japanese or Danish but was fluent in Portuguese and English. Equipped with an MBA from a leading European business school, she had successfully negotiated alliances around the world.

However, she was uncertain about this current challenge in Saudi Arabia, a country she knew little about. Much to her surprise, after just a few days she became the 'go-to' person for clarification on all sorts of issues, not only for her own team members but for the Saudis as well.

As in this case, the success of today's complex organizations is based increasingly on the transfer and sharing of information, knowledge, and practices of people-dependent