CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN MANAGEMENT.
A STUDY OF GREEK-AUSTRALIAN MANAGERS

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Abstract

Research undertaken with a group of Australian-Greek managers explored the question: *How do Greek-Australian managers understand, define and articulate their ethno-cultural identity in a work context, and how does it impact on their management work?* Sub-questions to this broad question included: *How do we know that ethno-cultural identity has an impact on managers? What is the actual impact?* And, *how can the bicultural management experience be theorised?*

Indicators related to managers' ethno-cultural identity demonstrated the ways in which ethno-cultural identity impacted managers' work experiences and influenced individual managers' perceptions of, and responses to, organisational operations.

The research concluded that the ethno-cultural identity of the Greek-Australian managers impacted their management experience as they were confronted with the task of reconciling their professional role with their experience of biculturalism. The model of the *Dual Citizen Manager* was proposed for theorising the collective experiences of the study's bicultural managers.

Key words: bicultural manager, dual citizen manager, cultural diversity management

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The purpose of this study was to describe and discuss the experiences of Greek-Australian managers in order to further understandings of the experiences of bicultural managers. In discussions, the study used the term ethno-culture to refer to the culture of ethnicity, acknowledging that there are multiple cultures such as the cultures of women, people who have a disability, and people who are homosexual.

Research undertaken in the area of cross-cultural management (Hofstede 1980 and 1991; Maruyama 1994; Agor 1986; Rosen 2000; Joiner 2001; Elashmawi and Harris 1993; Elashmawi and Harris 1998; Elashmawi 2001); and research identifying the benefits of recognising, understanding and utilising ethnocentrically based behaviours and perceptions in organizations, has tended to concentrate on the identification of differences between nations and the categorization of behaviours. Other researchers, primarily from the USA and UK, (e.g. Bravette 1996; Davidson 1996; Muller 1998; Creed and Scully 2000) have written about the personal experiences of managers from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Some researchers have provided critical reflections about the inclusion of cultural diversity in management theory, and cross-cultural research approaches, (e.g. Nkomo 1992; Wong 1997 and 2001; Ofori-Dankwa and Tierman 2002). And others have examined cultural diversity in organisations broadly, some also arguing the social and economic imperatives of multicultural workforces, (e.g. Cox and Blake 1991; Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 2000; Trompenaars 1993; Cox 1994; Sinclair 1998; Kalantzis, Cope et al. 1992; Cope, Kalantzis et al. 1995; Cope and Kalantzis 1997; Cope, Kalantzis et al. 1997; Kalantzis 1995; Shaw 1995; Elashmawi and Harris 1998;).

Methods
The study recognised the importance of the social context, understandings, and the perceptions of the research participants and researcher. The data was completely reliant on the worldviews, expressions and articulations of the research participants and researcher.

Four female and five male managers participated in the study. Their ages ranged from early thirties to mid fifties. They were all employed in management roles in private industry, the public service sector or small privately owned businesses. They all spoke fluent English with variance in their Greek language proficiency but displaying Greek language conversational skills. All of the research participants had been educated in Australia and seven of the nine participants had a university education. Two of the participants had some primary or secondary education in Greece. Of the six married participants, three had non-Greek spouses. There was a geographical spread across Melbourne in terms of their place of work and residence. All considered themselves migrants or the children of migrants.

Focus groups and individual semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted. Focus groups were chosen as the primary source of data collection because of the opportunity for participants to elaborate on their experiences in the absence of available precise language and frameworks. Two groups of participants took part in the focus groups. Four focus group meetings were conducted for each group (eight meetings in total) in the form of a dinner party. This approach provided a relaxed environment for the research participants to engage in discussion within a non-threatening, culturally appropriate and lifestyle appropriate social setting.

Focus group meetings discussed the questions:

1. What is understood by the term ethno-cultural identity? What are some examples of how one may experience their ethno-cultural identity?

2. How is your ethnic identity defined in the different contexts e.g. home, work, politically, educationally, etc?

3. How is your ethnic identity defined in terms of the migration and settlement experience e.g. managing two cultures, emotional development associated with this complexity, growing up etc?

4. How do we understand, make sense of, our ethnic identity within a political framework of multiculturalism (where assimilation can be seen to be an inherent outcome - i.e. the paradox)?

5. How can you describe your ethno-cultural identity in the context of your workplaces?

6. What aspects of your ethnicity, culture and migration experience are manifested in the way that you work and relate to people e.g. delegation, relationships with colleagues, subordinates, seniors, women, men etc?

7. What aspects of your management style are connected to your experience /understanding/ definition of your ethno-cultural identity?

8. Who are you as managers? Why are you these people? Who are your heroes, role models?

9. How is management competence enhanced or hindered and is this at some level related to your ethno-cultural identity?

10. What do you (as managers), want to achieve for your organisation and for yourselves within your organisation?

11. What aspects or functions of your organisation encourages the development of your identity and how does this positively impact on your competence?

12. What aspects or functions or your organisation hinders the development of your ethno-cultural identity and how does this negatively impact on your competence?

After the third focus group meeting and prior to the fourth meeting, participants were provided with a summary of issues discussed in the first three meetings. At the fourth meeting the focus group commented on the accuracy of the data presented and extended the discussion on particular areas of interest or requiring further consideration.

More data was collected from individual interviews to extend knowledge gained from the focus groups. Four research participants were interviewed individually, two from each of the focus groups. They were two men and two women, which represented almost half the participants of each focus group. Individual interviews focused on the questions:

1. What are the particular characteristics of the organisations, which impact on the managers' ethno-cultural identity in terms of enhancing or hindering their competence as managers?

2. What organisational improvements or changes would impact positively on the ethno-cultural identity of the manager and how would this manifest in their performance?

Focus groups and individual interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Each transcript was individually named and page numbered, and paragraphs on each page were also numbered.

The learning journal reflected experiences of the research, including personal responses to the research questions and explored assumptions and worldviews. The learning journal was page numbered and paragraph numbered, and pages were also dated.

Data Analysis
The process of analysing the data involved thematic analysis to find core meanings or themes (Patton 2002; Minichiello 1995; Coffey and Atkinson 1996), consistent with inductive analysis (Patton 2002) and immersion/crystallisation (Crabtree and Miller 1992).

The data analysis process included reading and rereading the transcripts and journal, listening to the taped focus group discussions and individual interviews, coding the data, developing concepts and subcategories, and theorising.

Key phrases and terms used by the research participants to describe their experiences, feelings, skills and knowledge were identified, e.g. bilingual, multicultural, collective, individualistic, Greekness, belonging, engage, transact, secret, values, beliefs, rituals, culture split, acceptance, minority, identity, mainstream, and ethno-specific. These terms or phrases formed the codes or indexes for categorising the data (Patton 2002). In many instances the same data was categorised under several categories, as it was equally relevant to each of these categories.

Terms, phrases, and text that raised a specific idea or theme were highlighted with markers with written notes next to the highlighted section about their relevance to the research question. Themes were not excluded or judgements made about which themes should be included or not. All themes that emerged, regardless of their frequency, were included in the analysis. Sensitising concepts provided points of reference and direction, and the process involved 'examining how the concept is manifest and given meaning in a particular setting among a particular group of people' (Patton 2002, p.456).

Sub-categories with more detailed themes were also developed from the data, e.g. *Dual identity, feeling one's ethnic identity, unable to articulate ethnic identity*, as indicated in excerpt one below. This led to a 'dense nesting and overlapping' of the coded data (Coffey and Atkinson 1996, p.37). The data was then labeled which involved reorganising the data according to themes or concepts and condensing the data into 'analysable' units by creating categories with and from the data (Coffey and Atkinson 1996). Categories were judged according to internal homogeneity, i.e. the extent to which the data within a particular category held together; and external heterogeneity, i.e. the extent to which differences among categories were evident (Patton 2002).The data was then interrogated and systematically explored to generate meaning by identifying commonalities, differences, patterns and structures (Coffey and Atkinson 1996).

To explore the appropriateness of the coding system and whether any data had been lost, the themes that emerged from the preliminary coding were presented to the research participants for their feedback during the fourth focus group meeting (as described earlier). However, changes to the codes were not required as the research participants indicated that they accurately captured the issues.

The conclusions of the study that evolved from the data analysis can be regarded as substantive as they relate to a specific social context, however, the examination of the ideas generated from the research, with more formal ideas identified in the literature review, enabled me to conceptualise the themes of the study in a broader context (Glaser and Straus 1967).

Data
The research generated data on:
- How Greek-Australian managers understand, define and articulate their ethno-cultural identity.
- Recognising culturally exclusive experiences
- What is considered Greek-Australian Identity. This included discussion about assumptions of homogeneity, how ethno-cultural identity is validated, distinguishing ethno-cultural identity from minority identity, confusing ethno-cultural identity with class, and embracing Greek culture.
- What it's like being a Greek-Australian manager. This included discussions about game playing, identifying relationship boundaries, work contexts, stereotypes, perceptions and barriers faced, management approaches and skills, working to an Anglo-Australian management model, professional disciplines and values, managing change, and social and interpersonal skills.
- Experiences of building relationships with colleagues
- Experiences of 'collective' and 'individualistic' contexts. This included comparing organisational with family life, using tools, having vision and drive, and exercising power and control.
- Experiences of ethno-cultural diversity in organizations and multiculturalism in practice.

Findings
The research data indicated that cultural diversity impacted the management experience through: *emotional expressions, behaviours, experiences, knowledge* and *skills*. Key areas that influenced managers' practice related to their perceptions of and responses to their organisation's operations, which were informed by their experiences of:

1. **Organisational belongingness**
2. **Negotiating two cultures – Australian (individualistic) and Greek (collectivist)**
3. **Exercising power, control and choice**
4. **Managing interpersonal relationships**
5. **Managing change**

1. Organisational belongingness
The study identified that for Greek-Australian managers subtle factors, which impinge on them, need to be considered, not just covert physical differences, e.g. one manager who migrated to Australia at three years of age, was educated in an Australian University, was

married to a non-Greek and had occupied senior management positions in the Victorian Public Service, stated that not being able to engage in the vernacular was a hindrance. That is, not being able to pick up cultural subtleties or cues communicated through language because of his socialisation within his family and the Greek community. '... *whatever the context, whatever the situation, your own ethnicity is always an issue, more or less. . It's your shadow'* (Focus Group 19/5/98, p.8).

The discussion of organisational belongingness identified two contrary situations. Firstly, managers were being excluded (directly or indirectly) or excluding themselves (directly or indirectly) from the organisational culture; and secondly, managers were exercising power and control to try to change the organisational culture in accordance with their own values. The managers were confronted with issues of organisation belongingness, however, they also had opportunities to exist both inside and outside the social process of their organisation, and cross boundaries, which could inform both their responses and understandings of situations Cox (1996).

2. Negotiating two cultures

The managers experienced an additional workload related to negotiating their biculturalism within their workplace day-to-day, as demonstrated by the following quotation '*...I'm desperately trying to introduce concepts that might generate some awareness,... and I find that everyone keeps pushing me out and saying stop being a Greek mother* (Focus Group 2/3/98, p.5).

The 'extra work' was identified in terms of what individual managers had to do in response to their perceived cultural barriers, i.e. the extra personal development work and in some cases initiatives that could improve their credibility and bridge the cultural assumption that interfered with their management role. For example, the managers recognized that they had more barriers to overcome, whether they be language or culture related. They stated that every transaction with a non-Greek included a dimension that was about dispelling assumptions about them, and this required more work on their part. '*... The question is how to use that sort of strength, the uniqueness to create a positive impression to minimize the discounting and devaluing'* (Focus Group 2/3/98 p.10).

3. Managing collectivist and individualistic cultures

Generalisations about individualistic and collectivist cultures presented an interesting conundrum, as Greek culture is characterised collectivist whereas Australian culture is characterised as individualistic (according to Hofstede's 1980 research).

Most of the managers were educated in Australia thereby absorbing individualistic principles through their education whilst also learning the principles of collectivity through their immediate and extended family. Principles of collectivity were identified by the managers as enhancing their skills and ability to manage in the context of developing relationships and establishing rapport with employees and colleagues, e.g. *'There is an Anglo predisposition, if I can call it that; the individual is separate to the rest of the world. All of this stuff about professional consciousness and guilt and accountability...it cuts across so many things. Whereas Greeks... see themselves and how they are interconnected in relationships, being the sum of. ...It's reflected in so many ways. It's based on the assumption, It's about what others expect of you* (Focus Group 8/9/97, p.11).

Exercising Power, Control and Choice
Two considerations in the discussion of power exerted by the managers emerged:

1. Although the managers sometimes considered they were disempowered by their ethno-cultural identity, they also experienced personal power resulting from being part of a culture that is not available to others and exercising choice to accept or reject specific aspects of Greek and Australian cultures as required.

2. In many situations was a key motivator for the managers wielding power was to do with advocating for the migrant community in general or the Greek-Australian community more specifically.

The managers had a comprehensive understanding of social, political and educational systems, and other social processes that shape Australian society and organisations, and a corresponding appreciation of the boundaries of their personal power, which paradoxically was empowering in itself, e.g. *'... you are always going to be seen as someone who is going to be raising problems and criticising rather than being part of the management structure with others'* (Focus Group 2/3/98 p.4, 5). The managers understood the boundaries of their personal power and *worked with it* to achieve their desired outcomes, e.g.:

(a) They were already occupying positions of formal power through their status within the organisation. Nevertheless, individual managers expressed that in the context of their industry they still pondered how they might utilise their unique experiences to create positive impressions about their cultural diversity and to minimise the discounting and devaluing of individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds that was occurring within their organisations. The managers identified structural issues, attitudes and presumptions present within industries that impacted on their power.

(b) They demonstrated theoretical knowledge and skills in analysing and responding to situations. They used their knowledge to influence organisational decision-making highlighted in instances such as the recruitment of new workers, where they included criteria and interview questions to assess individuals' attitudes and abilities on cultural diversity issues. They gave examples of how they selectively used information to influence outcomes directly related to cultural diversity issues affecting their area of work. The managers reported how they synthesised their cultural knowledge and expertise with their management status and experience to wield power.

(c) They used their formal authority in manipulative ways to create realities for other members of the organisation and to control the situation by sometimes demeaning their colleagues or subordinates through references to their culture.

4. Managing Interpersonal Relationships
The development of strong interpersonal relationships with colleagues and staff was considered very important and reflected on, e.g. *'...There is not a lot of room for discretion in terms of roles...delegation,...relationships, I think that it did make a difference (being Greek)'* (Focus Group 8/9/97, p.4, 5).

The managers were confident that they had well-developed interpersonal skills which they utilised to their benefit, e.g. they spoke about how by being tactile (attributed to their culture) they engaged their colleagues in powerful ways; and how they established rapport with colleagues, which assisted them to stay in touch with the organisational culture. Many

believed that their interpersonal skills were better developed than their Anglo-Australian colleagues as a result of their ethno-culture and the migration experience. They considered this as a specific competence, directly related to their family and community experiences, and the Greek culture.

5. Managing Change

One of the strongest themes emerging from the study was the belief by the managers that they were good at managing change within their organisations and adapting to new situations, compared with their Anglo-Australian colleagues. They attributed this to their life experiences as migrants and/or members of a migrant community, confronted with settlement issues, dealing with two cultures and competing environments, e.g. '...*for people who have to deal with two cultures, competing environment systems, they have to do a lot more integration a lot more adaptation from the families, primary family or the new family or whatever so they go through a lot of adaptations, there is an adaptation at work, how you integrate accept different people, because even organisations are multicultural...to a large extent that sort of background assist to understand your people and yourself and how you interact and how you make decisions and to see things that might affect you or might help. You can put yourself better in the shoes of others*' (Focus Group 2/3/98, p.8).

The Dual Citizen Manager Model
The Dual Citizen Manager Model (figure 2 overleaf) was proposed as a metaphor for describing how the development of a dual citizen manager profile might inform management theory, practice and research. The Dual Manager Citizen Model proposes an integration of dualities that might help individual managers from cultural minority *and majority groups* to reflect on who they are as managers and what they do; but also to reflect on how they engage with their organisation. The Model enables us to conceptualise the bicultural manager in the context of multicultural society and organisational culture, and to contemplate his/her respective contributions, competencies and limitations. The Model balances the strengths and limitations of managers from culturally diverse backgrounds, revealing some of their power as well as the challenges they face; and possibly provides opportunity for bicultural managers to utilise the Model as a point of reference for discussing management from a cultural perspective within mainstream discussions.

The Dual Citizen Manager Model contemplates: firstly how the dual citizen manager might conceptualise their position and role within their organisation, i.e. their **ways of thinking;** and secondly, what the dual citizen manager might contribute to their managerial role, including strengths as well as any weaknesses or limitations they may bring to the position, i.e. their **managerial attributes.** In general the Dual Citizen Manager Model is characterised by managers' perceptions of themselves and their organisations, and their attributes, which can result in the following roles and functions:

Possessing Exclusive Knowledge—the capacity to exist both inside and outside the organisational social process, crossing organisational cultural boundaries, can inform management practice and one's perspective of the operations of their organisation. The dual citizen manager may perceive themselves as possessing exclusive knowledge in their organisation, and of having opportunities to analyse organisational situations from a greater number of perspectives.
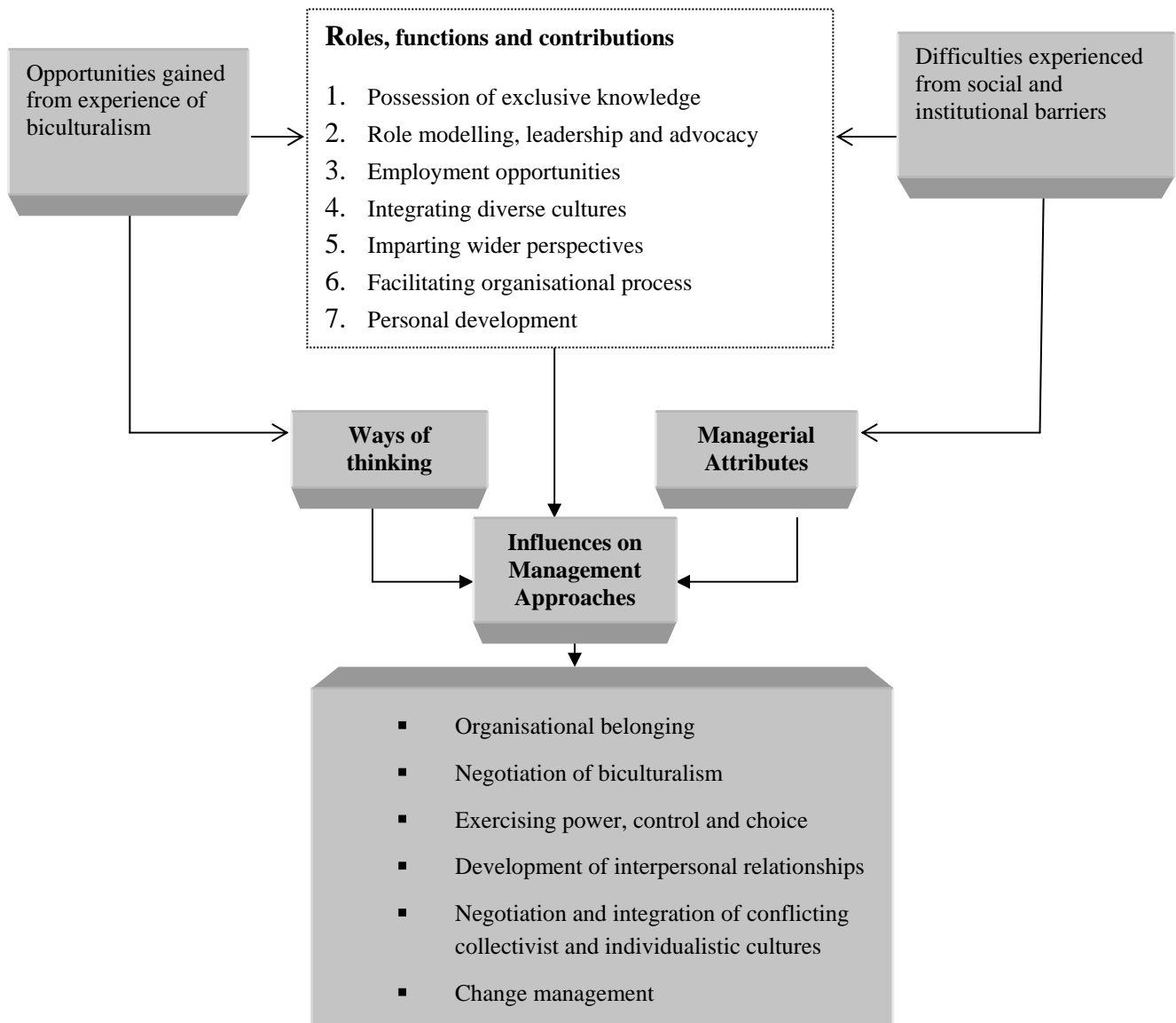
Role Modelling, Leadership and Advocacy—the opportunity to further develop one's ethno-cultural profile and to freely operate within the culture of origin within the organisation, can benefit organisational functions. Dual citizen managers can have a role in empowering themselves and other members of their organisations, which can leads to reduced time and energy spent on guarding against their marginalisation or stigmatisation.

The dual citizen manager who has the opportunity to develop their ethno-cultural profile within their organisation is likely to have a stronger sense of belonging to their organisation, and influence on the organisational culture. This process will enable the manager to contribute to the development of the organisation or business by role modelling and leading the organisation to further utilise the diverse attributes of its workforce, and to identify alternative and possibly improved ways of operating or doing business.

Employment Opportunities—in the Australian context, utilising biculturalism to choose to work in mainstream or ethno-specific organizations. In the public sector, the dual citizen manager can have the option of working in an ethnic organisation (ethno-specific or ethno-generic), acknowledging that this can include ethno-specific organisations for larger communities such as the Greek community, though it may not apply to smaller, less well established communities, e.g. Eritrean. In the private sector this option is also available within larger communities, e.g. within the Greek community in Australia there are many business, e.g. banks, radio stations, retail stores, importers/exporters, ranging in size from international organisations to small family businesses, that comprise predominantly Greek background managers and staff.

Integrating Diverse Cultures—embracing selected elements of both cultures, to selectively utilise more than one cultural frame of reference, to advantage management practice whether one is operating in a mainstream or ethno-specific organisation. This means that only those elements of the respective culture that are of benefit within a given situation are utilised. For example, experience of collectivist and individualistic mindsets and corresponding behaviours may inform managers' approaches to team building, decision-making processes, and performance issues. And knowledge and experience of adaptation issues can inform change management initiatives.

FIGURE I
The Dual Citizen Management Model

Roles, functions and contributions

1. Possession of exclusive knowledge
2. Role modelling, leadership and advocacy
3. Employment opportunities
4. Integrating diverse cultures
5. Imparting wider perspectives
6. Facilitating organisational process
7. Personal development

Opportunities gained from experience of biculturalism

Difficulties experienced from social and institutional barriers

Ways of thinking

Managerial Attributes

Influences on Management Approaches

- Organisational belonging
- Negotiation of biculturalism
- Exercising power, control and choice
- Development of interpersonal relationships
- Negotiation and integration of conflicting collectivist and individualistic cultures
- Change management

Imparting Wider Perspectives—the benefits of an Anglo-Australian education and/or professional development, and the experience of migration and ethno-culture can inform management practice. This can be a resource to the organisation as managers impart their wider perspectives to bridge cultural gaps, and facilitate organisational development, business marketing, problem solving and human resource management approaches.

Facilitating Organisational Processes—developing organisational cultures and processes that reflect a valuing of workforce cultural diversity can result in organisational systems that capitalise on the contributions that a diverse workforce can make to an organisation. Dual citizen managers may be important facilitators of such processes by utilising their management knowledge of organisational systems and their experience of negotiating (sometimes conflicting) cultural values to develop processes specific to their organisation. Through such initiatives dual citizen managers can contribute to the development of

organisational systems that integrate useful cultural knowledge and experience with other organisational functions.

Personal Development—undergoing additional personal development work related to biculturalism and/or migration/minority status. This personal work may contribute to management development particularly as it relates to understandings of organisational culture and interpersonal skills, and organisational policies and procedures. In particular, managers' experiences may inform understandings about organisational multiple identities and their impact on the organisation and its workforce.

Conclusion

The exploration of Greek-Australian managers' experiences has informed understandings of cultural diversity issues in organisations; proposed a functional explanation of ethno-culture, and proposed the Dual Citizen Manager Model as a way of re-conceptualising the bicultural manager.

The Model may assist individual managers to reflect on their practice and to further develop their understanding of how their ethno-cultural background contributes to their management behaviour. Academics, trainers and consultants may use the model to facilitate learning among their students, clients and colleagues about ethno-cultural dimensions impacting management behaviour.

Future research can include the use of the Dual Citizen Manager Model as a tool to inform studies of other bicultural groups, i.e. the components of the model as identified in figure 2, may be used to undertake research with bicultural managers with ethnicities other than Australian-Greek and with non-managers, or for other cultural groups, e.g. women, people with disabilities. The Model may also be used to demonstrate culturally appropriate conceptualisations in management theory development, i.e. developing management theory that is responsive and valuing of cultural diversity.

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