Research Colloquia
Presenting

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Department

“Heartsick for Country:
The Bicultural Experience of
Indigenous Employees”

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LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED!
RSVP by September 7, 2012
to
Margaret Williams 562-985-5307

Monday
September 10, 2012, CBA 204
12:00pm—1:30pm

ABSTRACT

This study explores individual and relational work processes of bicultural employees. The research context is Western Australia, where bicultural employees (with Aboriginal and European heritage) work in natural resource excavation firms. We explore the conflict faced by these individuals as they (individually) engage in identity integration, and (relationally) as they engage in interpersonal interactions with European-Australian coworkers. We gather rich qualitative data from interviews and ethnographic observations to understand how such conflicts are managed, the consequences of managing these conflicts, and how an individual's cultural value of relationship with nature orientation may moderate these processes. Our work gains new understanding of how an individual's mosaic of cultural influences may affect work interactions, as biculturals may suppress aspects of their identities to pursue work goals as they coordinate with others. Finally, we pose cultural intelligence as a possible mechanism for alleviating these tensions and facilitating monocultural-bicultural work interactions. These findings contribute to research on biculturalism and intercultural work processes, while providing greater awareness for managers on how to effectively leverage the strengths while managing the well-being of bicultural employees.