

**The Enviroculturalist Framework: Merging Ecological Sustainability with
Indigenous Resource Management**

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to improve our understanding of environmental conflicts in relation to differing cultural frames of reference. Several case studies have indicated that current environmentalist frameworks, especially those used in popular discourse, lack the means to fully integrate cultural values, and often reduce conflicts to simplistic ethical binaries: for example names such as “Earth First” clearly tell us that people, even indigenous populations, come second. This project uses contemporary whaling as a case study for the relationship between nature and culture and environmentalist/indigenous relationships.

This dissertation is a comparative multi-sited case study based on three groups involved with whales: the Makah Nation (an Native American community with federal permission to take whales), anti-whaling organizations (Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, the Humane Society of the United States, and In the Path of Giants, as well as the general public), and scientists at the Institute of Cetacean Research (a scientific community of Japanese whale researchers). Through fieldwork and analysis of historical material and statistical data, this study provides a critique of the noble savage trope and develops portraits of these groups using a variety of theoretical frameworks such as articulation theory and Haraway’s concept of natureculture, a view that strives to avoid the assumption of a nature/culture division as its starting point, but rather stresses the integration and mutual dependence of both natural and cultural components.

I focus on the multiple double binds that the Makah find themselves caught in as they seek to reaffirm their treaty rights— for example, their role as indigenous persons versus politicians, their use of traditional methods versus modern science and technology, as well as the pressures of other groups attempting to co-opt their cultural authority. Ultimately, the goal of the dissertation is to contribute to a new framework, which I have termed the “enviroculturalist framework,” that will avoid reduction to over-simplified dualisms, allowing researchers a fuller portrait and policy makers and activists better consideration of cultural dimensions when developing environmental policy that cuts across multiple cultures and conceptions of nature and the environment.