I. Sociology of the Environment

A. All societies/cultures understand and define the natural world in different ways.

B. Different understandings of the natural world lead to

various cultures having different:

1. relationships to the natural world.

2. experiences with the natural world.

3. practices toward the natural world.

C. In sum: every society has a dominant world view

regarding the natural world aka the environment

D. As a way of explaining this contrast the traditional Navajo

world view with the dominant world view of Western and

American society.

E. Traditional Navajo

1. Natural world is sacred, or holy place.

a. Dinetah, sacred land

b. Four sacred mountains

2. The earth is a living breathing entity in an

animate world.

3. All beings whether animal, bird, insect, plant have:

a. a spirit

b. controls power

c. teaches a lesson

d. and has its place in the community

e. being human means finding one’s place in the community

5. Hozho, or the beauty way of life.

a. K'e

b. humility

c. harmony

d. respect for all living things

6. This relationship is the primary and most important

relationship for the culture/society.

7. Above is reflected in cultural and religious practices.

a. corn and the prayer at sunrise

b. shape of homes or hogans

c. relationships with animals

i. creations stories

ii. moral stories

iii. hunting

F. Western culture

1. Human beings are "lords of the earth"

a. qualitative difference between humans

and other beings, i.e. soul or reason

b. hierarchical: humans at top

c. power to shape the world and create their own destiny

i. science discovers the laws of nature

ii. technology transforms discovery

into power over nature

d. they have the power to predict and control

the consequences of their transformations

2. Natural world exists as "standing reserve," or a

resource

a. waiting to be transformed into a commodity.

b. waiting to be adapted as a source of power

c. private property

d. profit

3. Natural world has no inherent value, and

non-human beings have no inherent or intrinsic value.

4. Cultures which don't recognize the truth of the

above, like the Navajo, are "primitive," 'backward."

II. Influences on Western society's world view.

A. Christianity

1. sacred texts

2. Church doctrine

3. Church as dominate institution

4. Puritans

5. manifest destiny

B. Science

1. world is matter in motion which follows laws of cause and effect

2. laws are discoverable

3. world as calculable, predictable, controllable

4. through science and technology humans are no longer subject to

the forces of nature but control nature, dominate nature

C. Capitalism

1. nature is raw material waiting to be transformed into

Products for the market place

2. nature is raw material waiting to become the source of

Energy that drives the marketplace

3. nature is raw material waiting to become the infrastructure of

The marketplace

4. nature has no inherent value, innate value, it is exchange value

(but even for socialism, nature has no inherent value, it has use value)

a. nature is $ as private property

b. profit

5. nature as sink and garbage dump

6. Human beings become defined by the marketplace

I. Yup'ik Eskimos

A. Rich coastal environment of Nelson Island

B. they view animals as nonhuman persons

C. Tradionally viewed the relationship between humans and

animals as collective reciprocity

1. animals gave themselves to the hunter in response

a. to the hunter's respectful treatment of them

as persons in their own right

i. respect is understood as both love and fear

ii. takar (to be shy of, respectful for,

intimidated by

b. as humans animals also had souls

i. sould is life force

ii. stays close to body for time after death

iii. before it goes to extraterrestial realm

for rebirth

2. both animals and humans participate in a cycle of

birth and rebirth

a. cycle was contingent on right action and thought

b. by both self and others

3. also in the past inanimate objects were thought to

have souls

B. Both animals and humans possess a awareness or consciousness which allow them control over their own destiny

1. experience through life is a key in controlling one's

destiny

2. from experience comes understanding for both

animals and humans of an elaborate set of rules

a. for living

b. which define action between humans and

humans and non-humans

3. especially important

a. rules for hunting were rules of respect that if

not followed would mean the animals would not

give themselves to the hunter

C. Animals and humans

1. some believe animals are humans in disguise

a. speak, marry, live in sod houses

b. take part in material culture

2. some believe animals are transformed humans i.e. the wolverine and descended from humans

3. animals take human form the wolf, but give itself

away by bone crunching

4. animals act like humans

a. playing dancing

b. mice cleaning house in spring

c. sensibilities