



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Edward Dee

Will defend his prospectus

Mother Earth Father Sky: A theoretical Framework and Meanings of Nature, Land, and Sustainability Using the Diné Lifeway Paradigm

Abstract

In the Diné (Navajo) worldview, the vital concept for understanding the whole is found in the phrase *Sa'ah Naaghai Bik'eh Hozhó*, or simply *Hózhó*. *Hózhó* is dynamic in Navajo spirituality and philosophy. Navajos use this concept to express happiness, beauty, and harmony with the land and all life forms. The theoretical framework underlying this research assumes there are commonalities between Navajo ways of knowing and Western sustainability science, which views systems as socio-ecological in nature and aims to understand how they can be made more resilient and sustainable. The proposed research explores what these commonalities are. The Diné people have always believed that all life forms are connected to something that is larger than humanity and that it is sacred. By revisiting the beginning, Diné creation narrative (*Hahjeenah*) offers a fundamental focal point for clues and possible solutions to explore sustainability science and to conceptualize a Diné framework for sustainability. The symbolism of a Navajo Hogan, initially constructed at the Place of Emergence, and the Beauty-Way sandpainting drawn on the ground inside a Hogan, offers Diné epistemological knowledge that provides insight toward *Hózhó*. I will identify the commonalities with varying relationships in belief systems, lived experienced, history, philosophy, and creation stories found in archival research and literature reviews, to answer the following pivotal questions: (1) What are some of the correlating and diverging features of the Diné paradigm to that of the Social-Ecological Systems (SEs) framework that explores relationships as interdependent ecological and social systems? (2) How can these shared features of the Diné paradigm contribute to a Mother Earth Father Sky (MEFS) sustainability framework? A MEFS framework could serve as a tool to explore the nexus of Western sustainability science and Diné traditional knowledge system for solutions-oriented methodology in Navajo government, tribal natural

resources management, development of sustainable transitions, and in climate-change research.

Friday, April 22, 2016
11:00 AM
Wrigley Hall, Room 401
ASU Tempe campus

Faculty, students, and the general public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Paul Hirt (Chair), Arizona State University
Professor Rebecca Tsosie (Member), Arizona State University
Professor Simon Ortiz (Member), Arizona State University
Dr. Manley A. Begay, Jr. (Member), Northern Arizona University
Dr. Raymond Austin (Member), University of Arizona