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### To a Different Canoe: A Study of Cultural Pragmatics and Continuity (2006)

Based on a study of the Puget Salish peoples of Washington State, this thesis explores an alternative view of cultural dynamics and practices. Adopting a relational  perspective, according to which nature and culture are merged and not separate, a notion of cultural pragmatics is proposed to assist in this exploration. This notion refers to the unfolding and enfolding of relationships during people's practical engagement with the world. Through it the boundary between 'change', continuity' and 'tradition' dissolves. As a result, 'contemporary traditional' Puget Salish peoples, though necessarily differing because of differing contexts, are continuing the ideas and practices of their aboriginal  ancestors. Moreover, the supposed adoption and assimilation of Euro-American goods and practices is recontextualized as the practical synthesis of these introductions within continuing Puget Salish culture and practices.

In the first chapter I explore the notions of 'tradition', change' and 'continuity' contrasting the views afforded by the relational perspective and the genealogical model.  Determining the 'authenticity' of an individual, group or practice is an issue that the latter view is forced to discuss through the peculiar relationship between the past and the present in the model. In chapter 2, I explore the aboriginal Puget Salish 'culture', illustrating not only aboriginal pragmatic interactions and practices, but also how the relational perspective provides an alternative understanding of this culture. Three significant examples I discuss in this chapter are salmon fishing, canoes and stories, as they have continued to be important aspects of Puget Salish peoples' lives. Chapter 3 focuses on the period of time in which Euro-Americans drastically altered and expanded the lives and world of the Puget Salish. In my examination of the time between initial contact and into the reservation period I consider the events and interactions in which Puget Salish peoples are seen as active, creative participants instead of being passive  victims of colonization. This chapter also begins to more fully explore how 'continuity' is not the faithful replication, generation after generation, of a body of cultural knowledge and practices, but is a process in which 'change' and 'tradition' are enfolded into each other. This continuity leads into the final chapter in which I focus on the period following up to the contemporary, in which salmon, canoes and stories take on new importance as  markers of cultural identity and strength. These examples further illustrate the contrast between the relational perspective and the genealogical model through a discussion of invented traditions, commoditization and authenticity.

The principle conclusions of the thesis are as follows: The genealogical model, common in anthropological thought, is based on the separation of nature from culture. This separation problematizes cultural dynamics, disjoining the past from the present, and creates the situation in which determinations of continuity and change are accomplished  by comparing the past with the contemporary. The relational perspective, on the other hand, considers nature and culture inextricably bound and focuses on individuals dwelling within a field of relationships. Framed by the view afforded by the relational perspective and the notion of cultural pragmatics, 'change' becomes not a process in which something becomes different, but of snapshots taken during a continuing process of unfolding interactions. Thus, 'change' and 'continuity', conceived of as distinct in the genealogical model, are one and the same through the unfolding and enfolding of people's practical engagement in the world.