

FIELD PHILOSOPHY: EXPERIENCE, RELATIONSHIPS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL
ETHICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

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Experiential environmental philosophy, or field philosophy, is a type of fieldwork in the environmental humanities. It engages the intellectual content of environmental philosophy, while at the same time encourages participants to experience the physical dimension of this content by exploring the context of environmental learning as it is rooted in social, political, natural, and geographical place. While reflective of recent moves in environmental philosophical learning (Moore 2004d, Brady et al. 2004), it is an unstudied phenomenon. My dissertation contributes empirical work about the connection between a physical and an ethical relationship with the natural world to the anecdotal evidence provided by these environmental philosophy, as well as similar humanistic (Johnson & Frederickson 2000, Alagona & Simon 2010), field courses.

My work on field philosophy draws on a conception of ethics that assumes ethical inclusiveness is an emotional, as well as a rational, enterprise (Hume 2000, Smith 2010, Leopold 1949, Moore 2004). It responds to scholarship in environmental philosophy, feminist ethics, and experiential place-based education that suggests physical contact with the natural world enhances environmental learning by enabling connections to, and possibly the development of an empathetic relationship with, the natural world (Outdoor Philosophy, Preston 1999, UNT). In addition to educating for content, field philosophy aims to help students develop an awareness of the role of environmental ethics in environmental issues, as well as to cultivate an empathetic environmental ethic that might enable them to participate in environmental problem-solving.

In this dissertation I first ground field philosophy in the intellectual trajectory of environmental ethics as a meaningful area of study and education, then develop a historical framework for the ideas of environmental ethics to situate the feminist, relational ethics at the core of field philosophy as an emerging path. Using examples from the field philosophy course I developed and teach at Michigan State University¹, I describe how—through attention to relationships, emotion, and both the human and natural world—critical ecofeminism and the ethic of care (Warren 1990, Plumwood 1991, Russell & Bell 1996) serve the objectives and curriculum of field philosophy. Next I theorize a pedagogy for field philosophy from literature in environmental and experiential education, the ethic of care, and educational psychological research on emotional engagement. These theoretical chapters ground my empirical work on student learning and ethical development on the Isle Royale field philosophy course.

My methodology is grounded in a constructivist revision of grounded theory (Charmaz 2006). Using the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss 1969), I conducted a conventional qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon 2005) of three years of student writing data. I triangulated this data with a pre- and post-course survey and field notes, validated my codebook for inter-coder reliability, and both peer debriefed and memoed throughout my analysis. Results reveal a recurrent process of student learning and ethical development that begins with a dualistic view of environmental issues. Students transcend this lens through a reflective process of self-awareness, which enables them to develop authentic community. This social learning process can allow students to emotionally and cognitively engage the curriculum, which leads to a complex awareness, the transference of course ideas to new environments, a wider moral community, and greater responsibility for environmental action and change.

¹ Outdoor Philosophy: Wilderness Ethics in Isle Royale National Park, NSC 490/FW491

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CHAPTER 1

FIELD PHILOSOPHY: A MEANINGFUL FUTURE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS LEARNING

I. Introduction: The Past, Present, and Future of Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics emerged in the 1970s as a discipline to explore and articulate appropriate relationships with the natural world. Originally applying the tools of traditional philosophy to raise questions about broadening our moral obligations to a wider community of beings, the field has since expanded and shifted to new kinds of arguments, which include voices and ideas—for example, those of women, under-represented groups, and non-western cultures—traditionally excluded from philosophical dialogue. As the discipline has transitioned, though, the question of purpose, focus, and audience continues to emerge. What is the role of environmental ethics in wider environmental dialogue? What is its role in the larger field of philosophy? Should our arguments appeal primarily to other philosophers, to environmental academics, or to the public environmental dialogue? How do we best train students, and if we intend for students to appeal to all of these audiences, are we asking them to acquire too many skills or to wear too many hats? What is the future of the discipline in (and beyond) the academy and how do we prepare the next generation of scholars to find jobs, do good work, and participate in environmental dialogue in meaningful ways? A cursory examination of recent environmental ethics textbooks, anthologies, and textbook reviews, which describe both the aim and scope of the book at hand, as well as often how the author or editor views the purpose of the field, captures some of this dialogue.

Summarizing and reflecting upon the content of *Ethics and the Environment: An Introduction*, Dale Jamieson (2008) writes: “What is the environment, and how does it figure in

an ethical life? Topics discussed [in this book] include the environment as an ethical question, human morality, meta-ethics, normative ethics, humans and other animals, the value of nature, and nature's future." Similarly, Andrew Brennan and Y.S. Lo (2011) describe the content of *Understanding Environmental Philosophy*, "Central ideas and concepts about environmental value, individual wellbeing, ecological holism and the metaphysics of nature set the stage for a discussion of how to establish moral rules and priorities, and whether it is possible to transcend human-centered views of the world." Both of these texts provide a theoretical and historical foundation of environmental ethics to ground learners in the kinds of arguments we make on behalf of particular relationships with the natural world. Alternatively, J. Baird Callicott reviews *Environmental Ethics: The Big Questions (Philosophy: The Big Questions)* (Keller 2010):

Environmental ethics emerged in the mid-1970s and has been exponentially growing in volume and scope ever since. As a new century and a new millennium dawn, environmental ethics is the philosophy of the future, looking outward to partner with social and life sciences, history, law, business, and literature to provide a synthesis instead of the finer and finer analysis of arcane 'puzzles' that characterized the inward-looking philosophy of the previous century.

Callicott describes the interdisciplinary present and potential of environmental ethics and frames it as a more meaningful direction than continued analysis of intricate theoretical questions. Arguing for a move beyond philosophy departments and journals into a wider readership and the practical realm, Callicott sees value in seeking collaborations that increase the likelihood of environmental ethics having a real impact in the world. In fact, this interdisciplinary goal reflects nearly all of the titles displayed on the Center for Environmental Philosophy's web-store for environmental ethics books (Center 2011). These books include: *The Liberation of Life* (Birch

and Cable, Jr.1998), co-written by a biologist and a philosopher; *Beyond Spaceship Earth: Environmental Ethics and the Solar System* (ed, Hargrove 1992), which includes essays by “experts from NASA, NOAA, and the U.S. Congress, engineers, ecologists, philosophers, writers, artists, and medical and legal authorities”; *The Beauty of Environment: A General Model for Environmental Aesthetics* (Sepanmaa 1993), which the site calls “the first comprehensive book on environmental aesthetics”; *Is It Too Late? A Theology of Ecology* (Cobb, Jr. 1995), “the first single-authored book-length environmental ethics text to deal with the ecological crisis” which is “written for the Christian lay public and other concerned citizens”; and *After Earth Day* (Oelschlaeger 1992), which includes essays on “conservation politics, environmental science, economics and the corporation, environmental philosophy and religion.” The message from this collection is that environmental ethics is an interdisciplinary, practically-minded field inclusive of multiple voices in its aim to describe and articulate appropriate human/nature relationships. In fact, only one book on the list, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics* (Hargrove 1989), also the oldest book in the group, adopts a theoretical argumentative approach to environmental ethics. As hydrologist and text book author Adrian Armstrong (2009) articulates in his book *Here for Our Children’s Children?: Why We Should Care for the Earth*: “There are two major issues in environmental ethics: The first asks whether the problems can be solved with current approaches, or require instead lifestyle changes for the whole of western civilization. The second issue concerns why the environment should be valued.”

This tension Armstrong articulates between the theoretical and the practical applications of environmental ethics permeates academic discussions in the field, as well. A recent article in *Ethics and Environment* (2007), which features short pieces by leading figures detailing their vision for the future of environmental philosophy and ethics, further clarifies the split. Some

scholars (Davion 2007, Jamieson 2007) agree with James Sterba (2007), who believes the future of environmental philosophy ought to, “[draw] on the resources of traditional normative philosophy to ground a demanding environmental ethics that will justify the kind of sacrifices that are needed to cope with our unsettling future” (146). Victoria Davion (2007) wonders if applied scholars will have anything to contribute to the field, even as collaborators on interdisciplinary projects, if not steeped in the historical and theoretical traditions of philosophy. Thus, she argues, this disciplinary approach, perhaps coupled with fieldwork, ought to be the focus of environmental philosophical education. Others (Rozzi 2007, Frodeman 2007, Minteer 2007, Norton 2007) align with Irena Klaver (2007), who explains, “Environmental philosophy is empirical philosophy dealing with big issues such as global warming, biodiversity, and sustainability, but always from concrete situations—questioning the ways we relate to the world, to the Earth” (129). This second group of scholars pushes for an empirical, interdisciplinary approach to environmental philosophy inclusive of fieldwork and practical experience in the issues we hope to address. The implication is that environmental philosophical education ought to embed students in these big environmental issues; the learning should be environmental as much as it is philosophical.

This second view has gained prominence in current disciplinary discussions. In the most recent (Fall 2011) newsletter of The International Society for Environmental Ethics (ISEE), which comments directly on the issue of *Ethics and the Environment* cited above, the editor, William Grove-Fanning, writes:

In a nutshell, the profession is healthy, it is evolving rapidly to meet new challenges, and it is incorporating new voices and approaches....[T]he increasing popularity of and new directions in environmental philosophy provide some assurance that specialists will be

well-positioned to land tenure-track jobs across academia. This is especially the case for those focused on emerging issues and willing to work interdisciplinarily in environmental studies programs. (2)

While the language about a ‘healthy’ field might read a bit like a platitude to assuage the insecurities of those who fear the relevance and marketability of their claimed profession—for what is a ‘healthy’ field, really, and how might we assess this? Surely not just with a proclamation—the idea is that interdisciplinary, problem-based scholarship in environmental ethics is the present and future path of the field. In a section entitled “Trends,” Grove-Fanning delineates the tension between a theoretical and a practical approach: “It is increasingly difficult to conceive of environmental ethics and philosophy as a unified field given that its boundaries are more fluid and its shape more amorphous than ever. This is primarily due to two factors—a greater variety of theoretical commitments and an increasing number of environmental problems.” That said, he concludes, “it is manifest that environmental philosophy is rapidly transforming into a problem-driven field with multiple centers of gravity that cut across traditional academic disciplines.” (3)

Still, theoretical single-authored papers still dominate environmental ethics and journals. Departments, for the most part, only support traditional philosophical scholarship and curriculum. Thus there might be a bit of a disconnect between the practice and the intention of the field, or perhaps Grove-Fanning’s hopeful account might be over-stating an emerging trend. We might just be in the midst of a process of re-definition and identity development, so we are not yet in a position to claim a distinct path. While theoretical approaches to environmental ethics and philosophy still dominate in academia, though, other opportunities outside humanities departments are surfacing for environmental philosophers. Michigan State University hired an

environmental ethicist in the Fisheries and Wildlife Department², and this move signals a growing interest in the environmental sciences to expose their students to ethics curriculum. It also raises new questions about how we might best approach environmental ethics curriculum in higher education: Should environmental ethicists be housed in these science departments to do this work, or will guest lectures and workshops suffice? What kind of ethical training do science students and scientists need, or do they think they need, and how would they know if they do not already have a background in environmental ethics? Should we, as environmental ethicists, act as tools for an end—to help the scientists best address the problems they work on—or should we be doing environmental philosophy for philosophy's (or the natural world's, and this complicates the question) sake? These questions demand we also devote serious thought to the role of environmental philosophy scholarship and environmental ethics teaching and learning. For collaborative work, direct engagement with scientists and in scientific issues, and conservation ethics writing as a process and a product will look different than the kinds of work traditionally expected from environmental philosophers. As well, if the classroom audience is no longer just philosophy students in philosophy departments, then the curriculum and methods might need to shift to meet the needs, interests, and goals of a growing and shifting group of learners.

The venues for environmental philosophy scholarship and practice are also shifting, if slowly. Groups like the Public Philosophy Network hold their own conferences, host workshops at traditional philosophical conferences, and support the dialogue and practice of philosophy in the public sphere, which includes environmental philosophy. This kind of work grows from a tension in the field not just about what the discipline should be, but also about whom an

² There may be other universities who have made similar hiring choices, but there is no data to capture the emerging trend.

environmental philosopher should be³. Callicott (1995), Andrew Light, and Avner De-Shalit (2003)⁴ agree that environmental philosophers should be activists, especially because “the original grounding intuition of environmental philosophy...was that philosophers should do it so as to make a contribution to the resolution of environmental problems in philosophical terms” (Light & De-Shalit 2003, 9). But they certainly disagree about what this activism should look like, and their disagreement further illuminates the tension in the field. Callicott (1995) explains:

All environmentalists should be activists, but activism can take a variety of forms. The way that environmental philosophers can be the most effective environmental activists is by doing environmental philosophyIn thinking, talking, and writing about environmental ethics, environmental philosophers already have their shoulders to the wheel, helping to reconfigure the prevailing cultural worldview and thus helping to push general practice in the direction of environmental responsibility. (34)

This view, even while arguing environmental philosophers ought to have a direct impact on the address of environmental problems, supports a fairly traditional approach to environmental philosophical scholarship. Light and De-Shalit (2003), on the other hand, disagree. Rather than start with the philosophical questions and argumentation, they argue, we ought to start with policy questions and environmental problems as they are manifest on the ground for environmentalists. They address Callicott’s points directly:

We are faced with a strange puzzle. One the one hand there is a common assumption in much philosophical work that there are two spheres of reasoning: one that is purely

³ See also: Keeling, Paul. (2011 Nov/Dec). Greening the gadfly. *Philosophy Now* 87. www.philosophynow.org.

⁴ Both Callicott and Light are prominent voices in environmental philosophy, while De-Shalit, Light’s co-author, is a professor of political science.

academic...and one that is practical....Such a distinction hinders the ability to make philosophy relevant to environmental activism...But on the other hand, attempts by environmental philosophers like Callicott to overcome this divide claim that the former kind of activity, philosophy, ought to be understood as activism proper. But such a view is similarly unhelpful. If it were true, all philosophical activity would be a form of activism.... While it is conceivable that eventually our theories of value could filter down to the broader environmental community and to policymakers, the importance of environmental problems warrants taking seriously a more practical and pragmatic set of tasks for the field that might make a more immediate contribution to the solution of these problems. (8-9)

Light's position at a public policy think tank demonstrates his commitment to this more practical approach to environmental philosophy—he is also a member of the executive committee of the Public Philosophy Network—and speaks to the broadening roles environmental philosophers can play in environmental dialogue.

While these new venues and opportunities are emerging, the issue—between a theoretical and practical disciplinary path, between a philosophical or problem-based approach, and between philosophers in academic humanities departments or in new and different venues—is far from settled. Thus Bill Throop (2007) recommends we split the difference, especially as we make sense of these tensions pedagogically:

[E]nvironmental philosophy should support a robust division of labor. Many new environmental philosophers should be recruited from cohorts trained primarily in core areas of philosophy....[and] many other new environmental philosophers will be trained in interdisciplinary environmental graduate programs or “applied” philosophy Ph.D.

programs where they will acquire the interdisciplinary expertise necessary to address practical problems and to effectively engage non-philosophical audiences. (148)

My intent here is not to come down one way or the other on which approach is better. Both are perhaps valuable ways to understand our obligations to the natural world; it is likely they complement each other for a broad education in the discipline. Without more empirical work to study the effectiveness of each approach—social scientific and philosophical work we ought to do if we care about these things—as well as some serious discussion both about our goals for the field and our learning objectives for students, we cannot compare them directly. For the sake of clarity, however, my project aligns more with Throop and finds value in both approaches. But as an empirical ethicist trained in a natural resources department and working in the practical realm of the discipline, I am interested in exposing students to the role of environmental ethics in environmental problem-solving and natural resource issues. I propose here a promising approach to environmental philosophical education toward this end.

II. Applied Environmental Ethics: The Role of Experience

If environmental philosophy is to have direct relevance in policy and decision-making, which I think it should, then it ought to reflect the scientific reality of the environment. Therefore we need to ground our students in this reality, as well as in the complex systems of the natural world about which we craft arguments and prescribe action. Other environmental fields—field biology, archeology, fisheries and wildlife, geography, environmental education—rely on fieldwork to learn the methods for and wider implications of the discipline. I argue that similar involvement with the natural world might be equally important for environmental philosophy, literature, and writing students to understand the context for and impact of their arguments, stories, metaphors, and prescriptions. Thus, I have been researching a field philosophy course I

developed and teach in Isle Royale National Park—a wilderness island in northwest Lake Superior, North America—for the last four years to understand the role of experience in place for student environmental philosophical learning.

I developed the curriculum, learning objectives, and research goals by asking a series of questions that are rooted both in my experiences in the natural world as a student and as an educator of wilderness leadership courses, as well as in my research on ethics, ethical development, and environmental teaching and learning:

1. How do we know ourselves as moral beings?
2. What is the relationship between being a moral being and acting on behalf of environmental issues as an environmental citizen?
3. What is our responsibility as environmental ethicists, as environmental educators, and as environmental philosophical educators toward this end?
4. What do I expect my environmental ethics students to learn?
5. What do I hope students do with this learning and knowledge when the formal learning experience is finished?

My approach is rooted in a relational theory of morality. I believe that moral obligations to other beings, systems, and ideas arise from relationships (concrete or indirect) and the responsibilities these relationships entail. We learn to care for, about, and act on behalf of the beings, systems, and ideas we engage with attentiveness, respect, and moral consideration (Noddings 1984). We make empathetic leaps to more distant others through reflecting upon and understanding the dynamics of relationships in place and on the ground (Plumwood 1991). The relationship itself—between a *carer* and a *cared-for*—is a fluid entity worthy of attention and care. Moral action works for the flourishing of these relationships near and far. This relational theory of ethics and

ethical action differs from conventional ethical approaches that rely upon prescribed sets of rules, principles, or theoretical duty.

Consistently working toward the flourishing of relationships, though, reflects a virtuous intention. In this way, I nest care ethics within virtue ethics, which I then situate as a branch of Kantian deontological ethics. This does not mean care ethics are the same as Kantian ethics, or even virtue ethics as rooted in Aristotelian tradition. They are not linear, prescribed, or solely rational, as I understand Kantian ethics to be. In fact, the genesis of care ethics from Carol Gilligan's (1982) work on moral development arose in response to the Kantian, masculine approach to ethics being tested by Gilligan's colleague Lawrence Kohlberg when she realized Kohlberg's model did not reflect the experiences of their female research participants. As well, while related to virtue ethics, for caring is itself a virtue one might want to cultivate to live a moral life, care ethics differ from traditional virtue ethics in that goodness does not reside in the virtuous actions of a single moral agent. Rather, right action is determined by its impact on and in relationship with another. Since the relationship itself is an entity to develop, preserve, and act in response to, morality cannot be enacted alone. All of these ethical theories share a commitment to honoring good intentions and moral obligations, but they differ in how they locate the driving motivation for this commitment. Care-based ethics are driven by our relationships and our roles as relational others.

That said, obligations do arise and provide motivation within care-based relational ethics, though these obligations differ from Kantian duties in that they arise out of care and respect for a relational other, not from an anonymous or intellectual duty to right action. They are embodied obligations, emotionally and physically felt, as well as rationally understood. Thus to know, understand, and love the beings, systems, and ideas we build relationships with, we need to

engage them actively, to greet them with our senses, bodies, and emotions, as well as our minds. In this vein, then, moral education must honor both emotional and cognitive responses to the learning material, and in a field course, to the learning context or environment, as well. We use all kinds of evidence when developing and widening our moral community—childhood, modeling and mentors, literature, research, and academic ethics learning. Present experience is also an important kind of evidence. We ought to provide students access to this evidence as they question, shape, and shift their moral communities, especially if we hope they use this learning to better understand and act in response to their relational obligations in their daily lives. For experience in the present provides a practice ground to test and understand the implications of values-based action.

I believe an appropriate relationship with the natural world—as well as within the human community—is one guided by empathy, care, and attentiveness. These characteristics lie at the core of a care-based relational ethic. To be a moral being is, at a minimum, to strive consistently for these characteristics in all of one's relationships. Therefore, as an environmental philosophical educator, I aim to help students understand and articulate their values within relationships, then refine and re-define these values as they build new relationships, interrogate the concept of relationships and responsibility, and reflect upon what these values might look like in action. I hope to help students gain an awareness of the work required to maintain effective relationships and to understand how—and feel they are able—to enact this work. Environmental ethics has, since its inception, been an exercise of re-calibrating and widening the moral community based on ecological understanding and consistent argumentation. More inclusive approaches, such as Leopold's holistic Land Ethic, understand our social and ecological responsibilities as nested in relationships. It is in this lineage that I root the relational approach to environmental ethics at the core of my objectives for the field philosophy learning experience. The

goal is to learn about relationships and a wider moral community while simultaneously learning how to enact them.

I am less interested in students developing control of ethical or philosophical terminology or the nuances of specific arguments—apart from a basic exposure to the themes of environmental philosophy and ethics, the language for different kinds of value, and general historical perspectives of environmental ethical theories—than I am in the personal and community development that happens in the course of critical, well-structured experiential environmental learning. I am interested in engaging the concepts of responsibility, relationships, and community so that students can better articulate their role in the world, feel empowered to act in ways consistent with their values, and understand their actions have consequences for people and the land. I expect students to learn about and appreciate interconnectedness and systems in the natural world and in our relationship with it (Orr 1991). I hope they develop self-awareness and humility, embrace complexity, and understand what love and respect might mean within human-nonhuman relationships (Moore 2004). I believe camp chores, Leave No Trace camping and travel practices, and group dynamics are learning objectives and academic outcomes (Breunig et al. 2008). These are places where relationships develop and grow and I understand their role in the curriculum to be just as integral to student learning as the knowledge they develop about nature writing themes and the impact of metaphor in perceptions of the human/nature relationship.

III. Field Philosophy: Pedagogical Framework

So what does experiential environmental philosophy, or field philosophy, look like and how does it work? It is environmental philosophy outdoors, a return to earlier notions of philosophy when the discipline was rooted in an investigation of the natural world (Leopold

1949; Callicott 1989c, 1995). It is observing, interacting with, and analyzing place through literature, physical and emotional relationship, drawing, and scientific study. My expression of field philosophy⁵ is a higher education learning experience that includes environmental ethics, nature writing, ecology, aesthetics, traditional ecological knowledge, and natural and human history learning. I intentionally set out to create a place-based interdisciplinary emotion- and value-driven environmental field learning experience.

The ultimate goal for my version of field philosophy—derived from a problem-based approach to environmental ethics, the practical learning goals of experiential education, and a recent shift in the field of environmental ethics to more hands-on and physical experiences in the natural world to develop personal and community relationships with place, ecology, and each other—is transference of course content and learning to the students’ home lives, either intended or manifest. The goal of my field philosophy research is to understand if and how empathy for the natural world is developed, and then how this empathy might lead to a wider moral community. I have been conducting a qualitative content analysis of student writing from three years’ of the Isle Royale field course to observe what and who the students care about; how the objects of this care shift between pre-course writing, on-course journals, and post-course reflections; and what role experience plays in developing care, respect, love, and attentiveness for the learning community and nonhuman nature⁶. I recognize student learning and growth when students demonstrate an awareness and embrace of complexity, a willingness to inhabit grey zones of not knowing, and a less dualistic, more interconnected understanding of the human/nature relationship. This kind of awareness can allow students to start to work through

⁵ Michigan State University, NSC 490/FW 491, section 701. This is a 4-credit upper-level environmental humanities course. See Appendix A for the course syllabus.

⁶ Please see chapters 5 and 6 for this empirical work and a more developed methodology.

hard problems without backing away, to act with humility and also persistence in the face of complex challenges, and to value knowledge as a process and a journey, rather than an end-goal. In the student writing I look for shifts in how students conceive of their responsibility for action and relationships, as well as indications of a deepened relationship with the natural world.

On the course we approach place-based environmental issues through an ethical and ecological lens to explore complexity, then demonstrate how one place, Isle Royale National Park, fits into a wider conservation narrative by engaging related issues in different landscapes (introduced in the reading, through discussion, or by our guest educators). My hope is that students extend their understanding of place-based complexity, responsibility, and agency to all places and across environmental issues (Plumwood 1991). I intend to illuminate the important role ethical dialogue and argumentation play in contentious environmental problem-solving. This kind of interdisciplinary field philosophy is not meant to replace traditional environmental ethics curriculum. Rather it serves as a complement to a more theoretical approach, as well as a good and rigorous introduction for students from all fields, including but not limited to students who study science, environmental studies, or policy. For many of the students, this field philosophy curriculum will be the only environmental or ethics education they receive (or need, depending on their academic path) in their college career. Thus it is a broad and practically-focused environmental ethics learning experience that can serve them as citizens and community members in whatever field they pursue.

Additional learning goals of this field philosophy course include the hope that students feel, by the end, that they have the skills, intellect, and creativity to not just recognize or appreciate complexity in environmental systems, issues and relationships, but to develop their own voice to address this complexity in the world. To overwhelm students would be a failure,

but to encourage them to retain a black and white worldview would be worse. These learning goals parallel the higher-level affective learning goals (personal investment in issues, internal locus of control, intention to act) of the responsible environmental behavior schema in environmental education (Hungerford and Volk 1989). They also mirror William Perry's ethical and intellectual developmental process for college-aged students (Perry 1968). The field philosophy pedagogy and course structure is informed by the ethic of care as framed in the philosophy of education (Noddings 1984, 1992, 2002a, 2002b, 2006), in that relationships and relationship-development are central to the learning environment and course content. Emotional reactions to content, experiences, and the learning community are encouraged alongside rational and intellectual responses. The course pedagogy is also tied closely to the ethic of care as it arises in ecofeminism (Plumwood 1991; Warren 1990, 2000), specifically in the conception of a politicized ethic of care articulated by Russell and Bell (1996). In this vein, the field philosophy pedagogy attends to power dynamics, the inclusion of multiple voices, and context as they apply to teaching and learning relationships, the curriculum, and course activities.

My conception of experiential education arises from John Dewey (1938) in the sense that I am interested in whole student learning, which attends not just to the student's intellectual development, but also to his or her emotional, social, and physical growth. It is student-centered learning (where the focus is on the learner and the learning process, rather than on teaching and the teaching process⁷), in which student curiosity is fostered and encouraged by an educator-guide, rather than a hierarchical expert. I view education as preparation for citizenship and believe experience plays an integral role in this kind of education. I also draw from David Kolb (1984) in the sense that my approach to experiential learning incorporates regular reflection as an

⁷ See Barr and Tagg 1995

integral element of the learning experience. While the references here are arguably a bit dated, Kolb's circular model of experience-reflection-abstract conceptualization-practice is still the central theory in the field. Others have done empirical work to further test his work, but no one has offered a robust alternative. Dewey's philosophy is relevant and impactful across time.

Community is central to everything we do on the field philosophy course, and our conception of community includes the biotic community as much as possible. Thinking of elements of the natural world as kin, or at least being exposed to worldviews that do this gracefully, is an important part of the curriculum. As Aldo Leopold (1949) wrote: "When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect" (viii). The idea is that we care about our communities and treat them in certain ways, different ways than we treat 'others' who are outside our communities (Goralnik & Nelson 2011). Thus in a course like this, if, as educators, we can impact the development of the learning community while gaining an understanding of what it means to be a member of a functional community, and if we understand our learning community as nested within the larger community of the natural world, thus including the natural world as an integral part of our learning experience and community, then we can potentially impact the broadening of students' moral community.

VI. Field Philosophy: The Curriculum

Interdisciplinary coursework is challenging both for students—who can be overwhelmed by the breadth of material or by the synthesis of multiple approaches—as well as the instructors, for we cannot be experts in everything we teach. But developing relationships in place and learning with and from experts in other fields both grows the curriculum and learning community, as well as models for the students the inclusion of multiple voices in environmental problem-solving and knowledge development. On the Isle Royale field philosophy course we

engage place-based ecology with researchers from the Isle Royale Wolf-Moose Project, whose approach to science emphasizes its ability to inspire wonder and awe (Vucetich 2011, Vucetich & Nelson 2013), a perspective that closely mirrors our own learning goals for place-based experiential learning. We follow moose trails and use radio telemetry equipment to track the movement of wolves, discuss the lives and behavior of the animals in different seasons and across time, and learn about the interconnectedness of different species, the landscape, and humans to develop empathy for the animals and the system that extends beyond our finite experience on the island. We also spend time on trail with the park ranger interpreters, who teach natural and human history as stories we can read in the land. After several years of working with our group, the rangers have developed these programs around our course objectives, for example by revising a straightforward plant walk to focus on the interrelationships between different plants, plants and animals, plants and the landscape, and plants, animals, and human land users. We not only look at individual plants or geological features. We taste, listen, and smell; we imagine what the land looked like in different historical periods and in different seasons. Pulling invasive species encourages a discussion about the language we use to describe nature, the ecological paradigms that have dictated what we perceive as good or bad in the landscape through time, and our responsibility in perpetuating or shifting the stories we tell about the natural world.

The students all teach short mini-lessons (10-25 minutes) on a question or curiosity they develop and research while on the island, filtered through their previous interests and learning. The students' voices—as well as their knowledge—are valuable contributions to the group's learning. In another exercise each group member interprets a natural, human, or geological feature from a particular stretch of trail by researching scientific or place-based information

about it, then pairing that information with a quotation from our course readings or literature from the ranger station that captures the literary or philosophical essence of the feature as the student perceives it. This simultaneous literary and scientific interpretation encourages the blending of disciplinary boundaries and emphasizes the multiple ways we come to know places and the natural world. Our collective voices, tied together in place by our collaborative interpretation, tell a bigger story of this trail than any of us do individually. We cannot all be experts, thus we need to rely on each other for aggregate strength in skills and knowledge, both to address current environmental issues and to live in the world appropriately. These are all elements of the field philosophy curriculum.

V. Field Philosophy: The Logistics

So how does this field experience function as academic environmental philosophical learning? Our readings, while not all reflective of what one might consider the environmental ethics canon⁸, cover common themes in environmental philosophical discussions: what is, and who or what belongs in, a moral community; different conceptions of the human/nature relationship; types of value and how they apply to wilderness; animal welfare in the wilderness context; constructions and conceptions of nature; and ethical dimensions of environmental issues. Students spend six weeks reading and responding to a course pack and a book (Moore 2004) before we meet for the ferry to Isle Royale (this yields 20-30 single-space pages of

⁸ A few of the readings are from what one might consider the environmental ethics canon, including Lynn White Jr. (1967) and Leopold (1949), and a few others are written by environmental philosophers, including Kathleen Dean Moore (2004a, 2004b, 2004c), Michael P. Nelson (1998), Nelson et al. (2011), and Freya Mathews (1991b). Several more are written by scientists or historians writing in a philosophical style, including William Cronon (1995, 2003), Ramachandra Guha (2008), Garrett Hardin (1968), Robin Kimmerer (2011), Leopold (1925), Rolf Peterson (2008), and John Vucetich (2011). Finally, several of the articles are representative of the philosophical nature writing tradition, including Edward Abbey (1968), Ralph Waldo Emerson (1903), John Muir (1998), and Henry David Thoreau (2007).

rhetorical writing per student), so their time on the island can be devoted to the exploration of place and in-place ideas. They also complete a final project, due 2-3 weeks after we leave the island. This assignment asks the students to demonstrate what they learned in the reading filtered through their experience on the island in a voice that inspires them; I encourage creative work that allows the students to best express their learning. In the past I have received paintings, poetry, photographic and textual natural history guides, nonfiction essays, children's books, songs, interpretation pamphlets, and cookbooks (often paired with a short reflective interpretation that explains the student's creative choices to root the project in course reading).

While we only spend seven days on the island, this 4-credit upper-level course includes: 12 three-hour 'classes', most of which incorporate individual, partner, and group activities; 3 lessons with guest educators (wolf/moose project, field biology, natural resource ethics); 3 ranger-led trail hikes (flora and fauna, human history, invasive management); and low-impact backcountry camping and travel curriculum. In addition to their pre-course writing, students create 25-50 (depending on the student) pages of handwritten on-course work (creative and expository writing, daily reflections, drawings, class notes and activities, research).

Demographically, the course has included predominantly science students (zoology, human biology, fisheries and wildlife, microbiology, animal science), as well as several social science (psychology, anthropology, political science, environmental studies), and humanities students (English; history, sociology, and philosophy of science (HPS)). The course size has fluctuated between 11 students and 2 instructors (2009) and 6 students, one instructor and a TA (current). We⁹ enacted this change after the data revealed students in the larger group were not learning as thoroughly as we hoped. This observation, coupled with our own experiences in the

⁹ In 2008 and 2009 I co-taught the course with Dr. Michael P. Nelson.

field with each of the groups, led us to believe that the group size consequentially impacts the students' ability to form an effective community (paper in process).

VI. Field Philosophy: Context

Traditionally the exploration of the ideas of our course has been an indoor exercise, confined within the walls of universities where scholars and students explore our obligations to the natural world theoretically. Often these discussions do not include practical or personal experience in the natural world to understand the context in which these discussions manifest. But there are exceptions, and it is these exceptions that have inspired my research.

Kate Rawles¹⁰ runs an independent field-based program in England called Outdoor Philosophy¹¹, while also working as a freelance outdoor philosopher and ethics consultant and as a senior lecturer in Outdoor Studies for St. Martin's College. She explains, "Outdoor Philosophy combines careful critical thinking and our impact on it, with emotional engagement necessary for change." The programs her organization runs "Involve... [c]losing the gap between abstract accounts of environmental problems, what they really mean, and our own responsibility for them" (Outdoor Philosophy). Similarly, Kathleen Dean Moore teaches a "Philosophy of Nature" field course at Oregon State University¹², which she documents in her essay "The Moral Equivalent of Wildness" (2004). Humanistic fieldwork is important to help students understand their moral obligations to the land, she explains, or to help them understand how to "take [their] wildland values down from the mountain" (101). Here Moore, too, ties environmental philosophical field learning to a sense of responsibility for lifestyle impacts and environmental

¹⁰ see Brady et al. 2004

¹¹ <http://www.outdoorphilosophy.co.uk/>

¹² PHL 439: Philosophy of Nature (3 credits)

change. A goal of her course is to guide students to think about how we can “live as if we were in the wilderness, with that same respect and care for what is beautiful and beyond us,” (96) when we inhabit all places. To embrace these values of care and respect, understand what they feel like, look like in practice, and mean for daily life, students need to experience these places, not just read about them, these scholars suggest.

The language both Rawles and Moore invoke—emotional engagement, respect, care—reintroduces the role of emotion in environmental philosophy. While emotional connections to places, ideas, and beings are often absent in contemporary academic environmental philosophical discussions, they are consistent themes throughout environmental literature (Emerson 1903, Muir 1901, Thoreau 2007, and many others), as well as in some threads of environmental philosophy (Leopold 1949, Moore 2004, Warren 1990). They permeate educational psychology (Furrer & Skinner 2003, Wentzel 1997), and the philosophy of education (Noddings 2002a, 2006) literature, and research in experiential (Alagona & Simon 2010, Johnson and Frederickson 2000, Proudman 1992) and place-based environmental education (Elder 1998, Gruenewald 2003, Knapp 2005, Sobel 2004). This interdisciplinary work reveals that emotion and personal relationships to ideas and places are important factors in positive and effective learning experiences. In environmental philosophy, these ideas echo Christopher Preston’s (2003) work on the role of place in grounding knowledge: “Not only does every cell in our body ultimately draw its atoms and its energy from the world around us,” he explains, but “so does every thought and belief depend ultimately for its structure on the ways in which we are grounded by our physical environments” (xvi). To attend to the role of place in our knowledge, identity, and development, we need time in place.

And it is not just independent scholars who are moving their philosophy classes outside. Entire programs, like the University of North Texas's Sub-Antarctic Biocultural Conservation Program, which uses field experiences and research in the Omora Ethnobotanical Park to understand and address the nested ecological, social, and ethical components of global environmental problems, have committed to field work as an integral component of interdisciplinary environmental ethics learning. The program's website explains:

Field philosophy is an emerging approach to philosophy that emphasizes the use of traditional philosophy in the assessment of tangible, current problems. It differs from "applied philosophy" in the sense that it starts with the problem itself – in the "field" – and identifies the implicit philosophical issues. In other words, it starts with the problem and not with the philosophy. (UNT, "Our Approach")

This is a consequential affirmation of the value of fieldwork and an interdisciplinary approach to environmental philosophy from the world's leading program in the discipline.

So why would these scholars break with tradition in this way? Certainly not just because its fun to camp and hike with students (which it is). Indeed, it is labor- and time-intensive to develop and teach field classes. It requires honest emotional engagement to do a good job while being on duty all day long for days in a row, which can be taxing in a different way than many educators are used to. Conditions in the field are unpredictable and sometimes uncomfortable, contingent on both weather and the landscape; group management can demand a set of skills beyond those usually expected of academics, including first aid, backcountry cooking, low-impact camping, and conflict management. And certainly, few university structures reward or facilitate such pedagogical endeavors. But scholars are taking these risks and embracing these challenges because they believe there is something value-adding, something irreplaceable,

perhaps even something transcendent in this type of learning. What these scholars expect, and what many outdoor education experiences promise, is something different, maybe in some ways better, than the indoor classroom offers. There may even be an emergent quality to this kind of immersed environmental philosophical learning that cannot be achieved through discrete outdoor and environmental philosophy learning experiences.

VII. Conclusion

My research about what actually happens in field philosophy experiences—are they effective, how might we know, what is the relationship of experience to learning, wonder, and environmental ethics?—hopes to ground these educational shifts in empirical data,¹³ for the claimed successes in the field still rely primarily on anecdotal evidence. These stories are useful, and often inspiring, but they will also be strengthened and validated by more formal data collection and analysis. By documenting how, and what, students learn, I hope to make the process of developing field classes a reasonable pursuit for educators. My results demonstrate these courses are effective. Students develop an appreciation for complexity; many move from a dualistic to a more complex or systems understanding of problem-solving, responsibility, and environmental action. They learn about themselves through challenge and reflection, and they learn about each other as they rely on the group for learning, chores, play, and exploration. As they develop an effective learning community, they open up to wonder and awe, emotionally engage the curriculum, and develop relationships with place and the natural world. All of this learning sets students up to understand how they might transfer their island learning to their home communities. More work, though, will be necessary to understand not just the value of this move for the discipline and for student learning, but also to develop effective practices and share

¹³ See chapters 5 and 6

curriculum, which will vary across landscapes, instructors, course content, and learning objectives. This work in field philosophy is a worthwhile direction for the future of environmental ethics and philosophy. It is a way to contribute to an engaged citizenry who is open to the role of environmental ethics in environmental problem-solving and conversant in the language and skills that will enable them to participate in ethical dialogue. As an environmental ethicist and environmental philosophical educator, I see an opportunity to shape and impact environmental issues with the tools of philosophy and ethics. I aim to educate students to do the same. This is the goal and role of field philosophy.

CHAPTER 2

ANTHROPOCENTRISM, OR IN A NUTSHELL: THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS¹⁴

I. Introduction

The previous chapter grounded field philosophy in the intellectual trajectory of environmental ethics to develop it as a meaningful direction for future scholarship and education. It is also important to understand this trajectory as a history of ideas. The following chapter develops my framework for the past, present and future of environmental ethics. In many ways, environmental ethics has been an exercise of re-conceptualizing the moral community based on consistent argumentation and a more developed understanding of ecology, moving from a human-centered, or anthropocentric, conception of ethics to a more inclusive approach. By tracing the dominant shifts in environmental ethics from the inception of the field in the 1970s to the present, I carve out the virtued, relational, and feminist approaches underpinning field philosophy as an emerging path. This exploration will set up a more formal theoretical analysis of these ethics as they inform the pedagogy and praxis of field philosophy in Chapters 3 and 4, which will then create the foundation for the empirical work on the Isle Royale field philosophy course in Chapters 5 and 6.

¹⁴ This article has been previously published: Goralnik, L. & Nelson, M.P. 2012. Anthropocentrism. In R. Chadwick (Ed.). *Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics*, 2nd ed. (pp. 45-55). San Diego: Academic Press.

II. Anthropocentrism: What is it?

Anthropocentrism literally means human-centered, but in its most relevant philosophical form it is the ethical belief that humans alone possess intrinsic value. In contradistinction, all other beings hold value only in their ability to serve humans, or in their instrumental value. From an anthropocentric position humans possess direct moral standing because they are ends in and of themselves; other things (individual living beings, systems) are means to human ends. In one sense, all ethics are anthropocentric, for arguably humans alone possess the cognitive ability to formulate and recognize moral value. This agency places humans at the center of whatever ethical system we devise, and this moral reality drives some scholars to claim that anthropocentrism is the only logical ethical system available to us (Norton 1991, Ferre 1994, Hayward 1997). But many other scholars argue this circumstance is an ethically uninteresting fact, not a limiting factor in the type of ethical system we devise to help us determine good and bad, right and wrong (Weston 1985, Fox 1990, Rolston 1994). We can accept the limitation of our human lens and still make choices about where we find value in the world. Because we are moral agents, the same cognitive ability that allows us to see the world in comparison to ourselves also allows us to treat with respect, or value as ends in themselves, other things. We can refer to this conception of a human-centered world in which human cognition determines our ethical approach as ontological anthropocentrism. Alternately, the definition of anthropocentrism that understands humans as the sole possessors of intrinsic value is ethical anthropocentrism.

But not all ethical anthropocentrism is the same. From this perspective, one can either view humans in isolation and disregard nonhuman relationships as unimportant for decision-making, what we will call narrow anthropocentrism, or one can understand humans in ecological context, as embedded in and dependent upon myriad relationships with other beings and systems,

what we will call enlightened, or broad anthropocentrism. Ethical anthropocentrism is often a focus in environmental ethics discussions, which unpack our valuation of the natural world in an effort to determine how we ought to live in relation to that world. What do we value in nature (and how do we define nature), why do we value it, and how are these valuations manifest? In this way, environmental ethics discussions are central to environmental policy and decision-making, whether motivated by ethical anthropocentrism or by some more inclusive theory.

Perhaps because of the similarity of the words, *anthropocentrism* is often confused with *anthropomorphism*, the act of imbuing non-human entities with human characteristics, such as square sea sponges that sing, dance, and emote just as human characters would. While mixing the two words might be a simple linguistic error, this conflation might also betray more interesting ethical parallels. For in the same way that ontological anthropocentrism highlights the limitations of our experience, anthropomorphism often demonstrates the human storyteller's attempt to create sympathetic characters that communicate and participate in relationships in the only way the storyteller fully understands, as a human, even if these characters' lives do not reflect ecological reality. Similarly, some ethicists (Naess 1973, Callicott 1989a) would argue that narrow anthropocentrism responds to a world that does not exist, because it does not reflect the complex ecological relationships that define and sustain humans. Hence, while both anthropomorphism and narrow anthropocentrism reflect an invented reality, anthropomorphism might also be seen as an attempt to remedy a moral shortcoming by allowing us to relate to nonhuman nature.

Similarly, *anthropocentric* thinking is sometimes confused with *anthropogenic* action, human-caused effects on the world. But this mistake, too, might be more ethically interesting than one initially recognizes. Environmental thinkers might argue that anthropocentrism is the

root of many of our current, anthropogenic, environmental problems, including issues of climate change and widespread pollution. In fact, some would argue that the origins of environmental philosophy itself lie in our reactions to anthropocentric thinking, filtered through reductionist science, which has defined the Western religious worldview since the Renaissance. The relationship between religion, science, and the environment is the central theme of the seminal essay in environmental ethics, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” by Lynn White Jr. (1967), which articulates a link between ethics and ecological degradation. White examines the Judeo-Christian worldview and its impact on the human/nature relationship, then traces a flawed relationship with the natural world to an interpretation of Genesis in which God gifts man the natural world for his use. According to White, our anthropocentric relationship with the natural world is responsible for our current environmental crisis, therefore to mend our ecological problems we must re-examine our worldview, or our religious interpretations. “What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship,” White explains. “More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one” (1206). Using the example of St. Francis of Assisi and his “humility—not merely for the individual but for man as a species” (1206), White calls for a more inclusive moral community. Ethicists have since taken on his challenge by defining and defending this community in a series of nested responses about who and what might matter morally, and why (Singer 1975, Regan 1983, Naess 1973, Callicott 1989a, Birch 1993).

So what role does anthropocentrism play in a discussion about environmental ethics beyond its place as the ‘other’ against which ‘proper’ environmental ethics are defined? If environmental ethics arose in part as a response to the call for a more inclusive moral community, then how can a traditionally human-centered ethic answer this call? In order to

address this question, we need to explore some nuanced versions of anthropocentrism that have arisen in response to environmental issues, as well as become acquainted with non-anthropocentric ethical systems.

II. Anthropocentrism as an Environmental Ethic

In his 1974 book, *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, John Passmore establishes himself as an early and prominent anthropocentric environmental ethicist. In reaction to philosophers who were pushing for the development of more inclusive moral systems, Passmore asserts that rather than devise a new ethic, what we need is stronger interpretation of our existing ethical obligations. Moreover, Passmore (1974) dismisses claims that it would be “intrinsically wrong to destroy a species, cut down a tree [or], clear a wilderness” as “merely ridiculous” (111). These views build toward his central idea, “the supposition that anything but a human being has ‘rights’ is [...] quite untenable” (187). Passmore’s views define narrow anthropocentrism, which is characterized by an embrace of traditional human-centered ethics that isolate humans from the environment. Narrow anthropocentrists believe humans alone possess value; human efforts on behalf of nonhuman nature are driven by a desire to serve human needs.

Other anthropocentric environmental ethicists include Kristen Shrader-Frechette (1981, 1994) and William Frankena (1979), who wonder why we would need a new, more inclusive ethic when we have access to centuries of theoretical philosophy we can apply to environmental issues. The problem, Frankena and others believe, is that we do not currently employ traditional ethics in competent ways; greater attention to the practice of traditional philosophical dialogue is necessary and sufficient for addressing our current ethical concerns.

Introducing another distinction, Bryan Norton (1984) differentiates between narrow anthropocentrism and what he calls weak anthropocentrism, or broad anthropocentrism, as I will

refer to it here, which aims for humans to live in “harmony with nature.” While nonhuman nature is still valued only in its relation to humans, this value may take forms other than the instrumental, such as aesthetic, educative, or restorative. Rather than bother with new theory, Norton suggests, we simply need constraints on traditional anthropocentric behavior to prevent consumptive habits. Broad anthropocentrism “requires no radical, difficult-to-justify claims about the intrinsic value of nonhuman objects and, at the same time, it provides a framework for stating obligations that goes beyond concern for satisfying human preferences” (138). Scholars who adopt this view believe it represents an ethic that is both effective and comfortable to adopt, a goal that leads to what might be the most common representation of environmental anthropocentrism: environmental pragmatism.

This enlightened or broad anthropocentrism, recognizant of the reality and importance of our ecological relationships, emerged in its current form with the convergence hypothesis of the same Bryan Norton (1991). While variations within environmental pragmatism exist, mostly surrounding a scholar’s adherence to the ideas of the founding American philosophical pragmatists (Dewey 1999; Peirce 1992, 1999; James 1907) and/or emphasis on environmental policy, most pragmatists believe that environmental change requires active solutions to current problems, and that the human population responds best to human-centered language. We ought not get tangled in theoretical dialogue, they suggest, but focus instead on real answers to real problems. Pragmatists argue that when ecologically-informed anthropocentric responses lead to the same policy implications as those recommended by a non-anthropocentric ethic, then we should use anthropocentric language to propose change, because more people might listen. Therefore, our journey to an answer is less important than the actual behavioral changes we promote. Norton (1991) argues: “active environmentalists [...] believe that policies serving the

interests of the human species as a whole, and for the long run, will also serve the ‘interests’ of nature, and vice versa” (240). Andrew Light (Katz & Light 1996, Light 2007), Eugene Hargrove (2003), and Ben Minteer (2011) also embody this view to some degree.

Another popular form of broad anthropocentrism arises not from policy, but from science. Don Marietta (1995) endorses a version of traditional humanism that is holistic, or demonstrative of the value and necessity of scientific wholes (species, ecosystems, the biotic community) in the lives of humans. By this, Marietta means a nuanced anthropocentrism that embraces the value of our ecological relationships, for it is impossible to isolate humans from their network of relationships, but one that still applies traditional ethical techniques.

Finally, some scholars defend anthropocentrism as the ethic that best embraces human creativity and innovation to address issues that are impacting humans. Biologist W.H. Murdy (1975) writes: “It is anthropocentric to value the factors that make us uniquely human, to seek to preserve and enhance such factors and to counter antihuman forces which threaten to diminish or destroy them. Nature outside of man will not act to preserve human values; it is our responsibility alone” (1171). As a scientist, Murdy also believes in a continued understanding of the ecological relationships in which we participate. But, Murdy continues, “[a]n anthropocentric belief in the value, meaningfulness, and creative potential of the human phenomenon is considered a necessary motivating factor to participatory evolution which, in turn, may be requisite to the future and survival of the human species and its cultural values” (1172). The implication here is that people will act for themselves in ways that they might not act on behalf of nonhuman nature. This view depends upon, of course, whether people really act this way. In other words, it depends upon empirical evidence, something missing from the philosophers’ analysis. Scholars who study environmental values, such as Steven Kellert (1996), however,

have long conducted surveys to analyze the ways people value nonhuman nature, and this kind of social scientific work has the potential to overthrow or verify the anthropocentric assumptions some philosophers embrace.

We must ask, though, if we sacrifice anything else when we look beyond the moral context of our intentions and focus only on the potential consequences of our actions, or when we choose an anthropocentric over a non-anthropocentric approach, even if the end-result is the same. Is there something important about the reasons we are motivated to act? Unpacking some of the non-anthropocentric ethical systems will provide us the tools to address this question.

III. The Other Lenses: A Wider Moral Community

Early approaches to a more inclusive environmental ethic applied traditional ethical systems—utilitarianism (Mill 1863, Bentham 1988) and deontology (Kant 2001)—to situations early thinkers did not imagine. In these systems, value is attributed to recipients (traditionally humans) based on qualities they alone are thought to share. Utilitarianism defines the moral community by members' ability to experience pleasure and pain. An action is thought to be right if the consequences of the action will result in greater utility than would result if some other action, or no action, were performed. It is, therefore, a results-focused or consequentialist ethic. Immanuel Kant's deontology, on the other hand, focuses on motivation and intentions rather than consequences. In this ethic, the key to the moral community lies in cognitive ability and reason; we have a duty to respect the rights of certain others who possess these same abilities and we have an obligation to act right (e.g., not to lie, steal, or cheat), according to moral norms. The difference between utilitarianism and deontology becomes elucidated with an example. Based on a traditional utilitarian ethic, one could theoretically justify framing an innocent person to alleviate the collective stress of a community that fears an uncaught burglar, because the good to

many would outweigh the harm done to one. A deontological ethic would preclude this approach because lying, e.g. framing the innocent person, is wrong; regardless of the consequence that lying achieves, the act is immoral. The difference between the two ethics lies in the responsibility of (and to) individual agents versus larger populations, as well as in the emphasis on consequences versus motivation. Traditionally both ethics were anthropocentric.

While the suffering of nonhuman nature was not historically considered in utilitarian equations, Jeremy Bentham (1988), the founder of modern utilitarianism, suggested animal inclusion with his now-famous admission that animals can also experience pleasure and pain. Thus the door was open for an extension of utilitarianism to animal ethics. In 1975 Peter Singer assessed the blurred physiological and psychological lines between humans and some animals and asked why we should recognize human pain alone; he wondered if, in fact, it was arbitrary, capricious, and ultimately immoral to do so. If animals are capable of suffering (and clearly many, if not all, are), and if the ability to suffer is the key to moral consideration (which is exactly what utilitarians assert), then why does this suffering not matter morally? He calls this exclusion from the moral community of beings that should qualify by our expressed standards, but are excluded solely on their failure to be human, *specieism*. By extending moral standing to sentient beings, Singer (1975) introduced what is often referred to, along with the animal rights theory of Tom Regan (1983), as the animal welfare argument. While these two theoretical approaches are quite different, their shared characteristic of extending traditionally anthropocentric ethics (utilitarian and deontological traditions) to some animals unite them as the first line of the non-anthropocentric moral argument, zoocentrism.

Regan approaches animal welfare through a deontological lens. Kant's deontology attributes only indirect moral standing to animals and other beings—a dog matters morally

because harming it would impact its owner, or because a person who abuses dogs might next abuse humans—and so is clearly anthropocentric. But Regan uses a similar argument, based on the language of rights and obligation, to extend direct moral standing to animals. He examines the qualifications for human inherent value (or worth) and locates the defining characteristic in our role as “experiencing subjects of a life.” He then applies this standard to animals. Because animals are also experiencing subjects of lives—lives that exist beyond their role as a resource for humans—they also ought to be considered possessors of inherent value. All experiencing subjects of a life ought to share the same basic moral rights, the most fundamental of which is the right to continue to exist, or the right to life.

Zoocentric arguments rely heavily on Darwin’s (1981) assertions in *The Descent of Man*, where he demonstrates that the boundaries between the mental faculties of humans and other species are less clearly defined than traditionally believed, as well as on work in the field of cognitive ethology, the study of animal minds. But with the blurring of these previously assumed boundaries and the associated and inevitable moral extension, some scholars wondered why sentience or one’s existence as an “experiencing subject of a life” should be the only qualities that warrant moral standing, or whether these are even the right qualities. As science gives us glimpses into the lives of other beings, we might wonder if perhaps there are levels of pain and pleasure, or even affiliated qualifications of a worthwhile experience, in other beings that we are not yet capable of understanding. These questions, woven with a continued re-examination of the type of ethical consistency that underlies the zoocentric argument and a desire to found an environmental, as opposed to a human or extended-human, ethic led to the life-centered theories of Kenneth Goodpaster (1978) and Paul W. Taylor (1987). Life-centered environmental ethics, the second line of non-anthropocentric extensionism, is called biocentrism.

Kenneth Goodpaster lays the ethical foundation for the moral considerability of all living beings and Paul W. Taylor extends Goodpaster's argument to its furthest limit. Granting *equal* moral consideration to all individual living things by virtue of the fact that they are "teleological centres of life" and hence have "a good of their own," Taylor posits and defends a radical biotic egalitarianism. Taylor admits that embodying this equal consideration would be paralyzing; rather he suggests it as an ideal, where as many "teleological centres of life" survive as possible. Though Taylor's language suggests the inclusion of wholes derivatively, because they are necessary for the good of their members, populations, according to Taylor, are simply a collection of individuals and do not have a good of their own.

Some scholars, however, view this restriction of the moral community as ecologically naïve, for no individual can exist outside of its greater context. How can we talk about an individual animal outside of its population, its species, and its habitat? As well, if possession of a "good of its own," as Taylor defines it, is the standard of moral inclusion, then does it not make sense to argue that a species has an interest in a healthy habitat or continued existence? As a response to these questions, we see the emergence of an ecocentric environmental ethic, one that grants moral standing to both individuals and to wholes—the systems and collectives in which individuals participate and exist. Ecocentrism is often posited against anthropocentrism as the extreme on the other end of the environmental ethics argument.

These successively wider boundaries of the moral community aim to respond to scientific observations of the world. If an environmental ethic is to carry weight within policy and decision-making, or even as a means to guide people to right action, it needs to reflect the realities of the actual environment. This awareness of the interconnectedness of the natural world fuels ecocentric theorists like Aldo Leopold (1949), J. Baird Callicott (1989a), Val Plumwood

(1993, 2002), Kathleen Dean Moore (2004c), Freya Mathews (1991a), the Deep Ecologists (including Arne Naess (1973) and others), and those ethically motivated by James Lovelock's (1972, 2000) Gaia Hypothesis. The central difference between these theories and anthropocentrism lies in the placement of humans in the world. Anthropocentrism locates humans, with their higher cognition and rationality, in the center of the moral universe, both capable of affecting the world around them and of making decisions about that world. Ecocentrists, on the other hand, place humans as equals among species, participants in an interdependent world. As Leopold explains in a quintessentially non-anthropocentric statement, "a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such" (1949, 204). Ecocentrists argue that wholes exhibit emergent properties not present in individuals that allow the collective to exist as something different, something greater, than simply the sum of its parts. This idea is called holism, and while an appreciation of holism defines the ecocentric position, it is also a component of less inclusive ethics. But beyond the recognition of and appreciation for these wholes, ecocentrists grant them direct moral standing, a position defined as ethical holism. Radical holists argue that wholes completely subsume individual entities; therefore moral standing should extend to wholes alone. More tempered versions of ecocentrism, like Leopold's, value both wholes and the individuals as ends in and of themselves.

At this point, one may wonder if broad anthropocentrists, who advocate a scientifically-enlightened anthropocentric position, are also holists based on this description. If one accepts that all things are part of larger entities, more difficult to disentangle from their contexts than we have previously appreciated, then by valuing humans would one not also be valuing the web

within which humans exist? The difference between interest-holistic anthropocentrism and ecocentrism lies in where one locates the ethical starting point for valuation and right action. An enlightened anthropocentrist would approach action and value from the starting place of the human, even if the human is suspended in an ecological context. Wholes have value in their relation to humans, thus matter morally, but secondarily. An ecocentrist would value both wholes and individuals directly. The biotic community is not secondary to the human experience. It is the holder of value in its own right.

Aldo Leopold's "Land Ethic" (1949), often embraced as the seed of modern ecocentrism, embodies this thinking. Here Leopold discusses the extension of human rights—from the moral inclusion of some humans to all humans—and then uses this process to explain the inclusion of collectives:

The extension of ethics to this third element [the land] in the human environment is, if I read the evidence correctly, an evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity. [...]

All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. [...] The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.

(1949, 203-4)

Trained in the anthropocentric policies of land management science, not philosophy, Leopold had an awakening experience in which he began to "think like a mountain" and understand that one could not remove predators from a landscape without impacting all other elements of that landscape. We exist in a vast and intimate web of interrelationships, he realized. This thinking led to his land ethic and modern philosophical ecocentrism.

J. Baird Callicott (1989a), a founder of environmental philosophy and leading voice in ecocentric theory, believes an environmental ethic can take two forms. Either it can be a plug-and-chug response to environmental problems by inserting an issue into an already formulated ethical theory in order to receive an ‘answer’ about how to act, an unsatisfying and un-nuanced approach to complex problems. Or, Callicott suggests, environmental ethics can do the hard theoretical work to create a new ethic that responds to the constantly changing understanding of the natural world and addresses new, and large, environmental problems, the likes of which our world has never seen. This is the difference between using the tools of anthropocentric ethics and creating a wholly different approach. He advocates for the latter. In his landmark 1980 essay “Animal Liberation: A Triangular Affair,” Callicott sets up the animal welfarists not just in tension with traditional moral philosophers who limit the moral community to humans alone, but also in conflict with the ideas of ecocentrism. For rather than just inhabiting different rings in the pond of moral extension, biocentric and ecocentric arguments differ not only in their definition of what ought to belong in the moral community, but in their very understanding of the world and how individuals operate within it: either as an interacting collection or as a connected and emergent whole. This three-way relationship, then, between traditional anthropocentric ethics, early environmental ethics based on an extension of anthropocentric argumentation to some others (zoocentric or biocentric arguments), and ecocentrism, is triangular, with all three corners pulling in different directions. They are mutually exclusive theories. Callicott argues that an extension of individualist traditional ethics cannot successfully defend the moral inclusion of environmental wholes, and a scientifically-relevant environmental ethic cannot fail to recognize the moral standing of systems and wholes. Ecocentrism starts, as its ethical grounding, with the

collectives and their ecological and moral relevance. According to Callicott, this element earns ecocentrism's place as the only effective approach to environmental ethics.

Some ethicists push the moral boundaries farther still. Thomas Birch's (1993) theory of universal consideration advocates for a potentially-morally-relevant-until-proven-otherwise approach, which grants consideration to all things, living and non-living, with the understanding that all relationships are important and necessary. Not only ought we think about the way things interact in a more thoughtful way, Birch suggests, or be attentive to scientific reality, but we should also approach our interactions with the world with a heightened moral awareness. In this way, Birch represents an extreme opposition to anthropocentrism¹⁵.

IV. A Changed Relationship With the Natural World

Whether Leopold (1949) or Taylor (1987), Singer (1975) or Passmore (1974) are correct, or even persuasive, is not of great importance here. Rather it is essential to embrace environmental ethics as an evolving dialogue. So where does a discussion about the widening of the moral community carry us in an explication of anthropocentrism? Questions about science and systems of valuation are important when we appreciate the role of ethics in determining action. The ethic that sways us, and our analysis of these theories, depends on how we approach a series of questions.

The difference between an anthropocentric and a non-anthropocentric ethic ultimately hinges on what it means to be a human. As humans are we a dominant or an equal species? How do we define the natural world, independently and in relation to ourselves, and why do we (or should we) care about it? What is the role of humans in protecting, experiencing, and

¹⁵ See Appendices C and D for diagrams that detail this environmental ethics evolution.

participating with other beings and collectives? What is the relationship between ecology and ethics?

In addition, we need to examine the goals of environmental philosophy. Lynn White Jr. (1967) utilizes the language of a crisis that needs address; he invokes a sense of urgency. The problematic ethic that White suggests is the cause of our environmental crisis requires a revision of our relationship with the natural world in order to be healed. Tied to the notion of an environmental ethic, then, is a call for change, a call to action.

Environmental pragmatism has embraced this call, prioritizing action as a guiding principle in ethical dialogue. But will any action serve this revision of our relationship with the natural world? Do intentions matter? Can we respond to environmental issues by engaging whatever language might sway an audience, whether anthropocentric or non-anthropocentric? Or are there reasons we ought to be attentive to the nuances of our dialogue and the ethic that drives our actions? These are important questions in an understanding of and discussion about anthropocentrism as an applied environmental ethic. Addressing them might help guide one's journey toward a meaningful relationship with, and perhaps even to right action on behalf of, the natural world. In addition, an analysis of these questions leads us to a clearer picture of the path environmental ethics has taken as it has developed.

In response to changing environmental issues, globalization, and the inclusion of voices not traditionally included in ethical discussions, new kinds of ethical arguments about our relationship with the natural world have emerged, including ecofeminism (and related ecological feminisms). Though a precise definition of ecofeminism remains unsettled, most scholars would argue that it is both an activism and a philosophy that addresses the nested issues of gender discrimination and environmental degradation. It is the bridging of feminism and

environmentalism with the goal of addressing and alleviating all forms of discrimination. These theories critique anthropocentrism based not on what is included in our valuation of the natural world, but in what is excluded from the valuation process—certain voices—and in the power dynamics inherent in this traditional valuation process.

Some feminist theorists are concerned with the role played by the traditionally anthropocentric institutions of early science and religion that helped shape our current environmental ethic. In her book *The Ecological Self* (1991), Freya Mathews traces the rise of individualism, or substance pluralism, and attributes its hold on Western thought to certain culture-defining scientific theories, namely Newtonian atomism, which dictated a wider worldview, which in turn influenced the development of a cultural environmental ethic. Her views about the masculinization of science, or the androcentric bias of Western rational thought and its impacts on our relationship with the natural world, parallel those of other feminist authors, including Val Plumwood (1993, 2002), Carolyn Merchant (1983, 2000), and Donna Haraway (1990). Mathews believes “conventional atomistic cosmology as it informs modern western consciousness [...is] a ‘bad’ cosmology—representing Nature not as hostile but as indifferent to our interests” (14). If we view nature as indifferent, then we have set up a dynamic in which we are always at odds. This inherent conflict is detrimental to the wellbeing of the natural world. It is also representative of the cultural dualisms that concern feminist thinkers, because they operate with what Karen Warren (1990) calls “the logic of domination.”

A prominent voice in ecofeminism, Warren explains “there are important connections—historical, experiential, symbolic, theoretical—between the domination of women and the domination of nature” (282). Western thinking has associated women with emotion and natural processes, in contrast to the male realm of logic and the mind. To address this schism, Warren

calls for a shift from conquest-driven thinking, which enables a hierarchical relationship with the natural world, to a care-based relationship with nonhuman nature. Some feminist scholars would argue that anthropocentrism, both in its historical roots and its perpetuation of dichotomies, precludes this type of relationship.

Other thinkers wonder even at the logic of a worldview that separates humans from their land context. An examination of a number of indigenous relationships with the natural world demonstrates it would be ridiculous, even impossible, to value some humans without also valuing their land, for the two are so entwined in action and identity that they cannot be parsed. Consider the Ojibwe belief that humans and nonhuman animals are brother and sister, or the Aboriginal landscape deities, or the centrality of prey animals in Inuit clothing, food, religion, and social activity. Nonhuman animals and landscape features not only tie the people to the land, but they inhabit every element of the human experience. An anthropocentric ethic applied to these relationships would be nonsensical, because it would morally recognize only part of a whole, a severance that might even serve to re-define the valued part and make it something other, thus not valuable in the way we intend.

Can these land relationships inform a discussion about an ethic to serve a modern Western audience that lacks this same connection to the land? One could argue that this very disconnect between humans and the land is a result of long-term cultural anthropocentrism, or that it has contributed to our present destructive behaviors toward the natural world. One could even imagine an argument that supported an effort to restore this kind of land identity to address environmental problems. In this way, some indigenous relationships could demonstrate an argument against the value of an anthropocentric ethic.

Beyond this question about the logic of anthropocentrism lie graver substantive questions, as well. Some scholars worry that if we abandon a concern with intentions and focus only on results, in the way that we might use anthropocentrism to ‘sell’ a behavioral change to the public, we will sacrifice some important ethical considerations. Despite the ways that anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric viewpoints may converge in action or policy recommendation, there are important ways that they diverge. Katie McShane (2007) explains:

Ethics legitimately raises questions about how to feel, not just about which actions to take or which policies to adopt. From the point of view of norms for feeling, anthropocentrism has very different practical implications from nonanthropocentrism; it undermines some of the common attitudes—love, respect, awe—that people think it appropriate to take toward the natural world. (169)

The author refers to the thinking behind David Hume’s (2000) philosophy of moral sentiments and E.O. Wilson’s (1984) biophilia hypothesis. These feelings of love and care emerge in Leopold and exist throughout environmental literature. McShane (2007) explains, “Claims about why something has value are claims about why we, as moral agents, have reason to care about the thing. More precisely, they are claims about why the thing is worth caring about” (172). To adopt an ethic that would make these feelings impossible or wrong would be a mistake, she argues; it would alienate a great number of environmentalists from environmental policy and decision-making.

McShane’s response focuses on what is perhaps an immeasurable quality of the human/nature relationship, while other scholars instead focus on the quantifiable elements of our relationship with the natural world. Anthropocentric views of the environment adapt well to cost-benefit analysis, a version of utilitarianism in which the language of economic gain and loss

replaces the language of pain and pleasure; this approach employs the only type of value that makes sense for many people, monetary value. What happens, though, to elements of the natural world that elude monetary valuation? Are only beautiful places valuable because people will pay for them? What about the wetlands that allow the drainage of a so-called beautiful place, but which many people would not pay for? Some people therefore wonder if an anthropocentric ethic can capture the true value of nature. If it cannot, it would fail as a guiding ethic.

Surely, though, we should use the language that best serves the environmental change we desire? In a recent conversation with students we raised this question. “Unless we are preaching to the chorus,” they answered, “we won’t change minds by trying to convince people they should value nature for its own good. People understand a future generations argument, though, and they understand things that might save them money.” Thus, we ought to ‘sell’ nature however we can, because any change in behavior is better than none. And maybe it is. But in selling a ‘product,’ which is nature, we might just sacrifice some of the meaning and substance of the very thing we value, in addition to selling ourselves short at the same time.

One could project an argument that weighs short-term minor changes against long-term grander changes, and while most environmentalists would likely prefer the big changes, many fear that we need small steps in order to build momentum, and we should take what we can get. In theory, this argument makes sense, but in context, it gets fuzzier. For what is the real societal gain when people make a multitude of insubstantial behavioral changes—e.g. if thousands of low-*mpg* cars are purchased in a national effort, when the *mpg* standards are a great compromise in the first place, and the real impacts on global warming lie elsewhere—then feel they have done their part to positively effect global climate change. They sit back and feel good, even though these small changes will, in fact, have little to no impact on the larger problems. But the

decision-makers, in selling this small change, have arguably exhausted their audience and therefore have lost power, not gained momentum. Rather than influence a changed relationship with the natural world, they might have only stimulated habit alterations, something different not only in scale but also in kind to the lifestyle and ethical changes that many scholars desire.

It is also reasonable to wonder if we limit ourselves by restricting the types of public arguments we make. If we rely only on anthropocentric language because we think it is all people will hear, we might be dwarfing our moral imagination, or precluding other kinds of argumentation in the future, because different language eventually becomes too foreign and uncomfortable. Our concern about the engagement and interest capabilities of the public might confine the individual moral abilities of other thinkers, and perhaps our broader cultural moral fortitude, as well. Do we sell not just the issues, but ourselves, short? Could we instead challenge ourselves to craft more persuasive, more creative arguments that tell the story about nature we believe? Can we, and should we, aim high? Intentions and outcomes both color our relationship with the natural world, and this relationship has great consequences for our world.

V. Why Our Environmental Ethic Matters

Of course, not all anthropocentric arguments are default positions. Many thinkers believe anthropocentrism presents the strongest, most effective case for our interactions with the natural world. And these arguments can, and do, overlap with non-anthropocentric arguments when they adopt a holistic perspective, one that recognizes the interconnectedness of all beings and systems. If we care about ourselves and our future, broad anthropocentrists argue, we will act to protect and respect all of the things we interact with, all of the things that we depend upon, and all of the things that sustain us.

And ultimately, these are the questions that matter most. What do we value in and about the natural world? What are our roles as valuers and moral agents? How can we best act to honor these valuations? Our answers here can help us navigate ethical discussions about the natural world, and can potentially help us create the world we envision and desire.

So as we address the environmental issues of our time, we should be conscious of the implications of our language, attentive to how our policies prescribe value in the natural world, and perhaps grateful for the rational power and emotional sensitivity to experience and manage the natural world for all of these considerations. And then we must ask ourselves: Are we responsible for nature, as Passmore (1974) argues, or stewards of sentient beings, as the zoocentrists might suggest? Are we logically consistent when we morally consider some beings and not others, and if not, is there a way to respect all living beings without considering also the inorganic elements of their habitats and landscapes? Can we consider beings and not the wholes and systems that emerge when a multitude of individuals acts and exists in connection, rather than in proximity? Our understanding of science and ecology matters here. If the natural world is balanced and orderly, then we can perhaps make predictions about our actions and projections about the impacts of our choices and the roles of certain others. But if the natural world is instead chaotic and unpredictable, how do we understand these relationships differently? How do we act when we are unsure of the consequences of our actions? With caution? With care? With gratitude? For in our ethical descriptions lie also ethical prescriptions. Why and how we value the natural world ought to dictate how we act on behalf of, and within, the natural world. Anthropocentrism is not just about who matters and why. It is about how we honor that value in relationship. These are the stakes of environmental ethics and the weight of our responsibilities for, in, and to the natural world.

CHAPTER 3

EMPATHY EDUCATION: ECOFEMINISM, THE ETHIC OF CARE, AND EXPERIENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

I. Introduction

Experiential environmental philosophy, or field philosophy, is fieldwork in the environmental humanities. Using experiences in the natural world alongside environmental philosophical discussions and coursework, it engages the intellectual content of environmental philosophy, while at the same time explores the physical dimension of this content to develop relationships with the natural world and investigate the context of the learning material as it is rooted in social, political, natural, and geographical place. It responds to recent moves within environmental philosophy that suggest physical contact with the natural world enhances environmental learning by enabling connections to, and possibly the development of an empathetic relationship with, the natural world (Preston 1999, Moore 2004, Brady et al. 2004, UNT 2010). Arguably, the type of community, personal, and ethical relationships discussed in the literature requires more than just contact with the natural world. Curriculum and course-planning need also emerge from and be driven by an appropriate environmental ethic, one that bridges relationships, focuses on connections, and applies simultaneously to the human and nonhuman world.

Ecofeminism, the theoretical philosophy and activism that seeks to understand and address common cultural dualisms many scholars believe lie at the root of a problematic relationship with the natural world—mind/body, human/nature, male/female, rationality/emotion—offers a viable theoretical model for this kind of learning with its focus on

the ecological and social dimensions of relationships in and with the natural world. But the splintering of ecofeminist arguments into multiple threads makes a clean delineation of ecofeminist values challenging to employ. The different interpretations of ecofeminism—spiritual, essentialist, materialist, and critical—are often in tension with each other, which complicates the development of a cohesive teaching and learning philosophy. One element of ecofeminism, though, which emerges early in the genesis of academic ecofeminist literature (Warren 1990) and appears across the different interpretations—the ethic and practice of care—offers great promise in this capacity.

The ethic of care originated in feminist social psychology, when Gilligan (1982) observed female research participants in Lawrence Kohlberg’s moral development lab processing moral dilemmas differently than the male participants. Rather than progress through a linear, principle-driven approach to action, women maintained a network of caring relationships, which informed their understanding and enactment of moral action. From these roots the ethic of care has evolved into a theoretical philosophical ethic in which context and relationships lie at the core of morality. With an intellectual lineage directly tied to the philosophy and practice of education (Noddings 1984, 1992, 2002a, 2002b, 2006), and to environmental philosophy (Adams 1991; Warren 1990, 2000; Kheel 2008), the ethic of care has great theoretical potential as a foundation for experiential environmental philosophical teaching and learning.

To illuminate this potential, I first ground experiential environmental philosophy in environmental and place-based education to describe how it aligns with—and differs from—current scholarship in environmental teaching and learning. Second, I summarize the different perspectives within ecofeminism to explore some of the tensions between them and demonstrate how certain elements of ecofeminism best serve field philosophy. Finally, I present a case study

of a field course I designed around an environmental pedagogy of care to provide context for the ethic of care in the field. My goal is to develop a picture of the ethic of care as a guiding pedagogy for and content-theme within experiential environmental philosophy, which aims to support the development of an empathetic relationship with the natural world through experiences in and with the natural world.

II. Foundations in Environmental Philosophy

Since its inception, environmental philosophy, in an attempt to understand and articulate appropriate relationships with(in) the natural world, has responded to and incorporated concepts from ecology, environmental science, and policy. While this interdisciplinary engagement is meaningful, environmental philosophy has primarily remained indoors, an exercise of scholars thinking and talking about, but not necessarily interacting with, the natural world. This is also how it has often been taught, with classroom-bound courses that focus on argument analysis and a theoretical engagement with nature. Recently, though, scholars such as Kathleen Dean Moore (2004) and Kate Rawles (Brady et al. 2004, “Outdoor Philosophy”), as well as collaborative projects such as University of North Texas’s Sub-Antarctic Biocultural Conservation Program (UNT 2010), have taken their environmental philosophy courses outdoors. This work responds to ideas that have emerged in places like Leopold’s (1949) *A Sand County Almanac*, where the author’s place-bound narrative ethic about the natural world emerges from a dynamic and personal relationship with the land; it draws on a conception of ethics that incorporates both rational and emotional responses to the world (Hume 2000; Smith 2010). In a quotation often touted by environmental philosophers, Leopold (1949) explains: “We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in” (214). If Leopold is correct, to develop a relationship of care and love for the natural world, one needs to

feel that world, see that world, develop a physical relationship with that world, love that world. Therefore, if a goal of environmental philosophical learning is to guide the development of a thoughtful ethic about the natural world and a nuanced understanding of the human/nature relationship—which many argue it is—and if an ethic about the natural world requires wide physical and affective knowledge about that world, as Leopold (1949) suggests, then educators and institutions ought to provide learning spaces in which these intellectual, physical, and emotional relationships can develop. Experiential environmental philosophy responds to this need.

III. Environmental Pedagogy

There seem to be two main ways we can conceptualize our purpose as educators in environmental philosophy: continued attention to theoretical questions, definitions, and argument analysis, or a more action-oriented interdisciplinary approach that illuminates the power and promise of the tools of philosophy and ethics for environmental decision-making, natural resource issues, and public dialogue. While both are valuable approaches—and likely complement each other for a complete environmental philosophical education—experiential environmental philosophy, in its interdisciplinary focus, hands-on engagement, and context-dependence, aims more for the latter. It embraces the application of the applied philosophy to give context to the theoretical foundation of the discipline, which informs course dialogue and content. A meaningful goal for this type of learning, then, is that students develop both the ability and intention to participate in environmental problem-solving and decision-making.

This intention and action is a central goal of environmental education research and practice. Many environmental education studies focus on the knowledge gained, skills developed, and behaviors changed as a result of environmental learning. Scholars (Hungerford &

Volk 1989, Marcinkowski 1998, Hsu 2004; Sia, Hungerford, & Tomera 1985/86, Sivek & Hungerford 1989/90) emphasize responsible environmental behavior (REB) as the primary goal of environmental education and point to a series of cognitive and affective shifts that enable the development of these behaviors, many of which are rooted in necessary hands-on experiences with the natural world. This is primarily a consequentialist approach, because effective learning is determined by an end result, the measured changed behavior, rather than process or intent. Empirical work to better facilitate and assess these outcomes has characterized much, perhaps most, of environmental education scholarship and dialogue.

While the sole focus on action might not align with the intellectual and process-focused goals of academic environmental philosophical learning, the affective elements of this REB approach do address the goals of experiential environmental philosophical learning. These elements include background variables (attitudes, sensitivity to environmental issues), ownership variables (personal investment in issues), and empowerment variables (intention to act and an internal locus of control, which is the belief that one can impact problems). The empowerment variables are generally understood to be the higher-level affective shifts necessary for stewardship behavior. While the emphasis is still on behavior—thus consequentialist in focus—these variables can also be understood in the context of citizenship (Dewey 1938, Orr 1991) and deliberative values (Ferkany & Whyte 2011). The integral piece here is *the why*, not *the what*. *Why* do I care, are my values consistent, and how might I act to honor these values in action? Of course, *the what*, the action, will hopefully follow. But this action, if guided by an ethic, is neither random nor finite. It is not just action fixed in time and circumstance, but action guided by critical reflection and system awareness.

The association to Dewey's (1938) notion of citizenship and to Ferkany and Whyte's (2011) participatory virtues ties these higher-level affective shifts directly to experiential education, while their focus on personal development and values ties them directly to ethical learning (Krathwohl et al. 1973). These connections reflect the multiple goals of experiential environmental philosophy. Research on the internal locus of control and environmental attitudes is helpful in understanding how we might empirically understand the development of affective learning variables through educational interventions (Hwang et al. 2000, Smith-Sebasto 1994, 1995), though the limited scope of most of this research makes it more applicable when engaged alongside theoretical discussions of place-based environmental learning.

Place-based approaches to environmental and experiential learning (Orr 1992, Gruenewald 2003, Sobel 2004) illuminate the nested environmental, political, and social dimensions of place—generally the local community, but also relevant to focused attention on any place where the learning context becomes the educational content. “[P]lace-based education...emphasizes...the ties that connect a person with nature and culture in her place. It does so out of the realization that love—love of nature, love of one's neighbors, and community—is a prime motivating factor in personal transformation, and the transformation of culture” (Sobel 2004, ii). The idea is that more explicit attention to the intersection of human and nonhuman elements of place will re-connect students to place as a specific concept and entity, and thus provide the emotional connection necessary to apply these feelings to all places. By moving learning into the community, built and natural, we shift awareness, stimulate relationships, and drive change by making issues more personal. These goals echo Leopold's (1949) sentiments about love and parallel the language of the ethic of care.

But mere contact with or experience in the community alone will not stimulate this motivation for change. Russell (1999) explains: “Part of the problem... is that nature experience is often seen to automatically contribute to environmental awareness, commitment, and action...[W]hat might constitute an educative nature experience is rarely interrogated” (124). Her concern is that educators often adopt experience or exposure to nature and/or community as a cure-all to environmental problems and institutional challenges, without worrying about right experiences in the natural world or the critical nature of the content engaged in the field. This concern is also reflected in environmental education (Marcinkowski 1998) and behavioral psychology literature (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975). While experiential education theory responds to this critique—and several experiential methodologies exist, including Kolb’s (1984) circular model of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation—models cannot replace attentive and critical pedagogy. Additionally, Kolb’s model lacks direct application to environmental learning, and Russell’s (1999) concern is less about mis-using experience, which she generally sees as meaningful, and more about mis-educating for the concepts embedded in the experience.

Educators of place-based environmental learning need to attend more carefully to how they define and employ concepts of nature and community with their students, because these are not straightforward ideas, though they are sometimes presented as such. Often within environmental education, a simple value assessment overlays common language: nature and community are good, while the alternatives, e.g. culture and individualism, are bad. But nature is a complex and socially-embedded concept; we should engage these complexities with students to deepen the relationships we develop. The ways we use and model these concepts affect how they materialize in our relationships with the natural world. Sometimes this can mean re-affirming,

rather than re-envisioning, problematic dualisms we intend to address. Thoughtful curriculum and course planning, cast through the lens of an empathetic environmental ethic, can address these concerns.

Russell and Bell (1996) suggest a critical ecofeminist pedagogy for environmental education. While the authors admit that a precise definition of ecofeminism is debated—as different interpretations arise from various intersections of race, class, geography and conceptual orientation—they claim an ecofeminist lens parallel to Carolyn Merchant’s (1990) socialist ecofeminism for their project. They do not explain why and how this thread of ecofeminism serves their purpose, but they do identify the ethic of care, as it emerges in this ecofeminist perspective, as salient for experiential environmental learning. We agree that the ethic of care offers an effective theoretical pedagogy for place-based experiential environmental philosophy, but teasing out why and how this particular ecofeminist thread differs from other elements of ecofeminism, then understanding what a pedagogy of care might look like in practice, is important. Therefore, Russell and Bell (1996) initiate a discussion we hope to further develop.

IV. Ecofeminism Foundations

Ecofeminism is both a theoretical philosophy and an activism that addresses culturally-held beliefs that associate the feminine with emotion and nature, while equating the masculine with rationality and culture or progress. These conflations and the associated value judgments—femininity, emotion, and nature are bad; masculinity, rationality, and technological progress are good—allow for a twin oppression of women and nature by patriarchal culture. The explanations for this association between women and nature vary from the biological to the material, and the proposed actions to remedy these dualisms differ accordingly. But most ecofeminists agree that environmental degradation and gender discrimination are related by a shared logic that enables

the oppression of one group by a more powerful group. In this way, all forms of discrimination are unified, thus ecofeminism is a theory and a practice that seeks to address hierarchical relationships, including those that exist around categories of class, race, sex, culture, and species difference. Disagreement within the field has persisted, though, about the root of the relationship between women and nature, as well as how to reconcile our obligations to individual nonhuman others while also honoring our environmental and ecological responsibilities to species, systems, and landscapes. A quick review of the history of ecofeminism unveils some of these distinctions within the field. Understanding these tensions will demonstrate how some elements of ecofeminism best share and support the learning goals of experiential environmental philosophy.

V. Spirituality and Essentialist Ecofeminism

Early ecofeminism sought to recapture what many believed was a lost relationship with the natural world, one rooted in the empowerment of the feminine as represented in some earth-focused religions, including Paganism and both Native American and early Celtic beliefs and practices (Christ 1990; Starhawk 1990, 1999; Orenstein “*EVE*”). A core idea is that by returning to belief systems that elevate the feminine, in the embrace of Mother Earth or Gaia, we become more attentive to the rhythms, needs, and gifts of the natural world, which is embodied as female, nurturing, and life-bearing. These beliefs provide practitioners an opportunity to participate as spiritual insiders in a way not available to them within more hierarchical, western religions and a way to relate to nature more personally. This spiritual ecofeminist thread was foundational in the early development of the field (Spretnak 1982) and is still embraced in some environmental circles, though it is often critiqued for essentializing certain qualities about women, feminine qualities, and nature.

Biological, metaphysical, and cultural essentialisms share a reliance on generalization. Some argue that generalizations, such as one's identity as a woman regardless of the details that enable that commonality, are necessary for action and movement toward change (Sturgeon 1997). But the criticisms against essentialism have been myriad to the point that the word itself, when applied to ecofeminism, has become a bit taboo, as many scholars fear the perception of ecofeminism as an essentialist philosophy threatens the validity of ecofeminism for a broad and critical audience (Biehl 1991, Merchant 1990).

Beyond these concerns, essentialist ecofeminisms are problematic as a pedagogy for experiential environmental philosophy. If the ability to give birth becomes a necessary condition to share a certain relationship with nature, many people are excluded from this experience. If access to a relationship with nature becomes exclusive, rather than inclusive, then we simply re-create (by inverting) hierarchies, rather than transform them. For this reason, biological essentialism cannot serve the community and ecological focus of experiential environmental philosophy, which invites all thinkers and participants equally. The same argument exists for essentialisms associated with indigeneity, race, class or other identities, which rely on generalized understandings of groups, rather than localized and specific understanding of individuals and the multiple identities that define them. When we prioritize the experience of some over the experience of others, we preclude the opportunity for everyone to develop meaningful, critically engaged communities with each other and with the natural world.

Spiritual ecofeminism is equally sticky as a learning paradigm. Discussing the nature experience as sacred (or using language which implies similar reverence) is common throughout literature (Muir 1901, Emerson 1903, Thoreau 2007, Sanders 2008). Allowing and guiding students to recognize and relish emotive, aesthetic, and personal connections to the natural world

is an important element of experiential environmental learning, where affective relationships to people and concepts are not only encouraged, but central to the learning experience (Johnson & Frederickson 2000, Knapp 2005, Lawrence 2008). But emphasizing particular religious traditions is exclusive. Experience is no longer filtered through personal or community awareness of place, rather through a provided lens, which dis-encourages an individual exploration of meaning and beauty. This individual exploration and self-awareness is an important piece of the experiential environmental philosophy learning process.

VI. Lived Lives and Materialist Perspectives

As ecofeminism evolved, arguments centered on the material aspects of women's lives that foster oppressive conditions, which parallel the exploitation of the natural world by patriarchal culture, gained prominence. This material existence forces women in some places to bear the burden of environmental degradation more severely than men, so often material ecofeminism parallels concerns of environmental justice and simultaneously seeks to address the nested injustices against the natural world, class difference, gender, and race. Carolyn Merchant's (1990) socialist ecofeminism, which Russell and Bell (1996) claim as their conceptual foundation, aligns with materialist ecofeminism. Generally, socialist ecofeminism focuses on capitalist patriarchy as the primary cause of these lived experiences of women. For Merchant (1983, 1990) and others (Salleh 1997, Mellor 2000), the transformation of nature by science and technology, as filtered through patriarchal institutions, lies at the center of a problematic valuation of women and nature that relies solely on their roles in reproduction and production, or as resources for use by others. To liberate both women and nature from these exploitative constraints, socialist ecofeminists argue for a re-envisioning of economic and social hierarchies by supporting decentralized communities that respect the constraints of ecology. This

requires the upheaval of existing systems and institutions. Russell and Bell (1996), in adopting a socialist ecofeminist learning philosophy, do not seem to endorse such dramatic activism to their students. Rather, it seems fair to assume they value the critical approach to existing norms, the project of and responsibility for crafting a world informed by our professed values, and the empowerment such awareness and participation might inspire for students.

The materialist ecofeminist argument contends that ameliorating the unjust conditions of the lives of women requires attention to degraded natural systems, and healing natural systems requires attention to socialized gender roles and experiences of women. These concerns are place-specific. They depend on culturally-defined gender roles and particular landscapes, environmental issues, community dynamics, and access to resources. Therefore approaches to address the shared exploitations of women and nature also need to be localized. These ideas resonate with a place-based pedagogy, though the grounded focus of materialist ecofeminism does not easily suggest ways to underst

and local problems in a global context. The same contextual emphasis also characterizes critical ecofeminism, though, which does address the move between the local and the global in a way that serves experiential environmental philosophy.

Critical ecofeminism is a theory tied to the late Val Plumwood (1991, 1993, 2002) and to Karen Warren (1987, 1990, 2000, 2002). In addition to the local-to-global applicability of this approach, critical ecofeminism engages the ethic of care most explicitly as moral prescription, rather than as descriptive behavior. Care in critical ecofeminism is dynamic, relationship-based, contextual, and focused on morality.

VII. Critical Ecofeminism, Care, and Relationships

Critical ecofeminism focuses on the logic that enables hierarchical relationships; the religious, cultural, and intellectual worldview that promotes power-laden relationships; and the exploration of different kinds of relationships that might ameliorate problematic hierarchies that currently exist. Attention to the dynamics of specific relationships, critical ecofeminists argue, can stimulate an empathetic understanding of all relationships (similar to the impetus for place-based learning). Plumwood (1991) explains:

Special relationship with, care for, or empathy with particular aspects of nature as experiences rather than with nature as abstraction are essential to provide a depth and type of concern that is not otherwise possible. Care and responsibility for particular animals, trees, and rivers that are known well, loved, and appropriately connected to the self are an important basis for acquiring a wider, more generalized concern. (7)

The focus here on concrete, place-based relationships as the root for more faraway relationships and abstract ideas captures the local-to-global applicability of critical ecofeminism. Care-based relationships put a face on the ‘other’, making their needs personally felt.

A moral focus on different kinds of relationships—reciprocal, nurturing, inclusive—between humans and the natural world, Warren (1990) explains, will address present problematic hierarchies. “An ecofeminist perspective about both women and nature involves this shift in attitude from ‘arrogant perception’ to ‘loving perception’ of the nonhuman worldin such a way that perception of the other as other *is* an expression of love for one who/which is recognized at the outset as an independent, dissimilar, different” (137). Critical ecofeminism honors differences while fostering connections. Unlike essentialist arguments, critical ecofeminism does not view all women as necessarily sharing singular qualities. It recognizes

gender as a complicated expression, just as nature is more complex than the stories we tell about rugged wilderness and lush gardens. Complex definitions reflect the kind of critical engagement with the concepts of environmental learning that Russell (1999) promotes.

Warren develops the difference between a contextual, relational ethic of care and the universal focus of traditional ethics, which make prescriptions for individual agents alone. Ecofeminism's emphasis on relationships personalizes decision-making and roots it in time, place, and specific situation. Growing this idea, Warren (1990) explains: "ecofeminism makes a central place for values of care, love, friendship, trust, and appropriate reciprocity—values that presuppose that our relationships to others are central to our understanding of who we are" (143). This central role of emotion aligns ecofeminism with important work in educational philosophy (Noddings 2006), experiential education (Johnson & Frederickson 2000), ethical learning and brain science (McCuen & Shah 2007, Greene 2009), evolutionary theory (Darwin 1981), some traditional ethics (Hume 2000, Smith 2010), and environmental ethics (Leopold 1949, Moore 2004). This interdisciplinary nature illuminates the ethic of care's relevance for experiential environmental philosophy.

VIII. A Pedagogy of Care

While the branches of ecofeminism might be united in their desire to bridge feminism and environmentalism to address the persistent cultural dualisms that place humans and nature, the feminine and the masculine, in hierarchical relationship, their contradictory ontologies are in opposition to each other. Therefore, they define the problem differently, which complicates the possibility of arriving at shared solutions. Either all women share a common experience, or all experiences are context-dependent. Either women share a particular biological, psychological, or material affinity with nature, or they do not.

Critical ecofeminism shares with essentialist, spiritual, and material ecofeminisms the goals of embracing a care-based relationship with the natural world and addressing hierarchical relationships and problematic dichotomies, but in its approach to this goal, critical ecofeminism insists on reflecting upon, questioning, and critiquing *all* potential drivers of injustice and inequity. Social institutions are interrogated alongside worldviews, assumptions, and personal responsibility. The aim is to develop an understanding of how conceptual foundations operate in practice. The ultimate goal is to use this knowledge in action for change that addresses and ameliorates degradation and discrimination as they exist. This coupled intellectual and participatory approach best responds to Lynn White, Jr.'s (1967) recognition of a worldview crisis—rooted in our problematic relationship with the natural world—in need of address. It is an approach that serves the critical academic audience of experiential environmental philosophy.

The material focus of critical ecofeminism is place-, time-, and actor-specific, which disallows generalizations and asks students to understand how concepts—including our ideas about nature, science, and human nature—have changed over time. This awareness can then encourage a more complex understanding of how they manifest in the present. The movement between a place-, time-, and actor-specific awareness (micro) to a broad picture awareness (macro) is also a quality of critical ecofeminism that aligns nicely with an educational ethic of care. According to Noddings (2002b), Curtin (1991), and others (Held 1993, Slote 1998), care begins at home, in the relationships we engage in daily, just as place-based learning starts in the local community or immediate context of the course material (Sobel 1999). We care about our classroom community first, including the context of the learning environment when learning in the field, as well as our closest friends and family with whom we share our learning process. We understand the concept of community and the manifestations of a right ethic in our immediate

context—the institution, the natural world, and the intersections between the social, political, and natural elements of place—then use these experiences to stimulate an empathetic understanding of communities in which we may never physically participate, but which we affect and which affect us in very real ways. Therefore this place-based, relationship-focused, critically- engaged lens—with clear links between academic and real world problems—allies critical ecofeminism and the ethic of care with experiential environmental philosophy as a guiding pedagogy.

IX. Care in the Field: A Case Study on Isle Royale National Park

In practice, a pedagogy of care may take many forms, but an integral piece of any manifestation would include the context of the course not just as a background for the learning, or even as mere element of study, but rather as a member in relationship possessing a voice as fully as possible. While we cannot presume to understand this voice, per se, attempting to know places through multiple lenses is a good start. This means we attend not just to the philosophical ‘story’ or our obligations to place based on ethical theory and policy. Instead, we want to pay attention to the stories in and of the land through time: natural science, human impacts and historical presence, natural history, literature about place relationships, myth, and artistic representations, as well as approach place through the framework of environmental ethics. We might want to experience and observe a place in different weather, times of the day, and on multiple scales. We should attune our senses and embrace learning as a more-than-intellectual experience. Being attentive to the possibility that the landscape exists as a participating member of the learning community can cultivate awareness, close attention, and open engagement.

I teach an experiential environmental philosophy course in Isle Royale National Park¹⁶—an island in northwest Lake Superior, 98% of which is designated wilderness—I have developed and structured around my conception of an environmental pedagogy of care (see chapter 4). On this course we read literary, philosophical, ecological, Native American, and historical ideas about wilderness and the natural world, while exploring the specific wilderness up close—literally what one observes in an area as big as his or her hand—and at a distance. We move through the landscape on our feet and in canoes, absorb natural history with the park rangers, learn the stories of species and people who have inhabited the place throughout history, and engage the ecological stories of the land as articulated by the field biologists who study on the island. These stories do not compete; they are pieces of a synergistic whole. Inhabiting the thick spaces of uncertainty that arise in this complexity of voices creates an intellectual climate of growth and attentiveness, while the analysis and interpretation of texts develops the skills of critical engagement. Through discussion about wilderness, conservation, and community at multiple scales—the immediate on-island context, other real world examples (through reading and discussion), and as abstract concepts—I aim to stimulate empathetic leaps from the known to the unknown, or from immediate to distant relationships, as Plumwood (1991) articulates.

For these empathetic leaps to occur, though, we must acknowledge, even encourage emotional responses to people, place, and content as they arise during the learning experience. Interpersonal relationships, individual connections to the landscape (past and present), the space and time to develop self-awareness are all academic elements of the course. Each day we practice individual, partner, and group activities. We encourage full sensory awareness of our surroundings, sometimes removing our reliance on one sense by blocking it to rely on other

¹⁶ See Appendix A for the course syllabus

senses or our peers to interpret the landscape for us. Feeling afraid but safe, physically or socially off-balance, surprised at new sights and sounds and flavors, or overcome with beauty or solitude all encourage us as learners of place, responsibility, and moral awareness to stretch and grow.

Weaving these emotional experiences throughout ethical coursework reinforces that environmental ethics have an emotional quality. They depend on relationships and the formation of community, and within these relationships we understand our obligations to each other and the social, historical, biotic community with which we share our experience. Thus to act as moral beings, to make ethical decisions, is to attend to relationships near and far, concrete and abstract.

The reflection of emotional value in ethical decision-making also mirrors the ethic of care as rooted in Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982), which lies at the core of care scholarship, as well as applications of the ethic of care in the classroom (Noddings 1984, 1992, 2002a, 2002b, 2006). These conceptions of care emphasize a dynamic relationship between *carer* and *cared-for*, in which one responds and adapts to the needs of the other guided by dialogue, attentiveness, self-awareness, and context. While the latter three of these techniques are available in all relationships, the notion of dialogue enacted with nonhuman or physically distant *cared-fors* can be challenging to conceptualize. But listening to the stories of the land—and understanding them as a shared conversation rather than knowledge absorbed—is a step toward making sense of this idea.

Still, the challenge inherent in relationships with distant others hints at a persistent critique of the ethic of care. Some argue that a developed ethic of care can only operate when reciprocated or received (Card 1990; Houston 1990), and we can only logically understand the reciprocation of concrete human-human relationships. Beings and systems in the natural world—as well as faraway humans we engage in indirect relationships with—cannot reciprocate in the

same ways we expect from our immediate human communities. Therefore relationships with these entities may threaten the *carers*, who might give, give, give to a relationship in an effort to act ethically, while receiving no reciprocation or indication that the care has been accepted.

Merchant (1992) explains this concern: “[A]n ethic of care, as elaborated by some feminists, falls prey to an essentialist critique that women’s nature is to nurture. An alternative,” she offers, “is a partnership ethic that treats humans.... as equals in personal, household, and political relations and humans as equal partners with....nonhuman nature” (185-7). She suggests that a caring ethic is innately one-sided to the potential detriment of the *carer*, a conception that assumes ethical care relationships are not equal partnerships. But this understanding of caring relationships might misunderstand important elements of the ethic of care as a moral manifestation of context and relationship between two parties. For the receptivity in which care thrives ought to be equal and fluid. Merchant’s concern, though, does reflect a wider concern (Houston 1990, Hoagland 1991, Bubeck 1995) we ought to attend to.

One can imagine how encouraging this kind of ethical care relationship with the natural world with students might be problematic. In fact, this kind of martyrdom permeates some environmental activist discourse already and such one-sided focus can undermine the very criticality we intend to promote through academic environmental ethics. Thus these concerns are important, for embedded in the ecofeminist position is the expectation that actors work to better problematic dualisms and power dynamics. Therefore action on behalf of relationships one cares about—loving, respectful non-hierarchical dynamics—is an important part of morality, a belief that underlies the project of experiential environmental philosophy, as well. But encouraging students to develop balanced, attentive, and sustainable relationships with humans, communities, beings, systems, and ideas—rather than potentially detrimental relationships—is crucial.

Curtin (1991) argues for a ‘politicized’ application of care, a qualification that Russell and Bell (1996) also employ, to address this concern of over-extending oneself in the service of unreciprocated relationships. He explains how care ought to fit into a “radical political agenda” based on women’s shared environmental and social interests across all contexts, which fosters the development of non-abusive contexts for caring. These empathetic leaps allow for care to respect the context in which the oppression is rooted, but also to acknowledge and honor abstract relationships across time and space. Curtin makes a distinction between caring- for (an active expression) and caring-about (an indirect, perhaps affective expression) that enables these leaps. In his explanation, caring-for is localized and tangible, while caring-about is the abstract relationship with people in contexts we do not immediately experience.

Separating the kinds of care in this way is perhaps a mis-step, though, for dual caring-for and caring-about relations are necessary within *all* care relationships, near and far. Joint affective and active expressions of care may, when applied together, prevent the martyr-like relationships that concern some critics. First of all, reciprocated care can be similarly problematic as unreciprocated care, for unhealthy or unethical actions may continue in response to eager reception of these behaviors. An affective or reflective caring about oneself and relationships as living things are necessary to recognize these situations. Second, care in action ought to reflect an awareness and protection of oneself as a partner in the relationship, a step that requires critical affective reflection of that relationship. To approach care ethically, one must also be attentive to his or her own abilities, boundaries, and needs, as if in relationship with himself or herself. When one ignores his or her own needs within a relationship in the name of caring behaviors, the relationship is not an ethical expression of care, because it does not reflect or honor the needs of both parties. Therefore, care behavior might not always look like a mother’s care for a baby or a

teacher's care for a student, or any other commonly rendered expression of care, especially when enacted in relationship with distant communities or nonhuman nature. Ethically motivated care might even take the form of doing nothing, rather than doing something that endangers the *carer*. Assuming the ethic of care manifests only in expected ways misses the focus on contextuality, and dwelling on concerns about self-sacrifice dismisses the emphasis on relationships and reciprocity. A nuanced understanding and application of care contributes to a pedagogy built around self-awareness, reflection, attentiveness, and critical engagement.

But students need to learn what it means to be in relationship and in community before they can understand how these things operate morally. Experiential environmental philosophy offers them an opportunity to practice relationship-building and maintenance with oneself, the learning community, and place as an environmental, social, and political entity. On our Isle Royale course we make room for interpersonal relationships of care to develop in the in-between spaces of living, cooking, learning, and exploring together. Conflict resolution and collaborative group skills, personal reactions to texts, emotional responses to beauty and to nonhuman others, personal reflection time, animal and landscape observations—these are all meaningful pieces of the curriculum, and they are ripe places for the exploration of moral obligation to each other and to nonhuman nature. Including the natural world in this community by being attentive to the impacts we have on it and the impacts it reciprocally has on us, we learn better how to understand it as a relational other, as well as how to transfer our responsibilities from this environment to our home environments, thus making affective and moral leaps across boundaries of place, circumstance, and experience. Understanding reciprocity in care relationships with unlike others is a skill that requires practice, and experiential environmental philosophy provides the space to grow this knowledge and moral capacity.

X. The Pedagogy of Care in Action

How we camp on our Isle Royale course is as important as the level of academic dialogue, for our actions as members of the Isle Royale community enact our ideas about community membership, personal and collective responsibility, and the role of lifestyle as a driver of environmental degradation more widely. One example of these nested qualities of the intellectual and physical learning occurred on a course I co-led in 2009. A group of 11 students and 2 instructors, we camped in a designated wilderness group campsite for seven very full days of day hiking, landscape exploration, literary and ethical discussion, and trail experiences with both the natural history park rangers and the ecological researchers who work on the predator/prey study on the island. The student group was thoughtful, mature, and eager for experiences in the natural world. They were a mix of science and social science majors, mostly juniors and seniors, several of whom lived off-campus in the student co-op houses. Thus many of them were accustomed to group cooking and community living, so we thought these concepts, as academic elements of our course, would come easier for this group than they have in other years when the students have not yet lived on their own. These students were critically engaged, voicing strong opinions about activities, ideas, and land management. For the most part they enjoyed each other and the course, evidenced through their course journals and our observations.

But this group camped terribly. Despite reminders and reprimand from the instructors every morning, they stayed up late into the night talking loudly, playing drums, and hanging out. While this was annoying, the bigger issue was the impact they were having on the wildlife, the other campers, and even the researchers and park staff, who, despite living a quarter-mile away up a forested hill behind our camp, could hear them. The ground around our picnic table was littered with cigarette ash, micro-trash, and spilled bits of food. Requests for camp sweeps and

discussions about low-impact presence even in impacted sites were met with lukewarm engagement. The group, while often invoking the concepts of community, love, and respect to describe their relationships with each other and their ideas about environmental action at home, was petty, exclusive, and sometimes harsh to one another, as expressed in their daily journal reflections. Still, the academic grades for the course—those based on their reading responses, the 10-20 minute classes each student taught, and their final projects—were quite high.

Grades aside, though, the students' actions in and with the land told us they weren't learning, at least not in the way we hoped. For the ability to invoke concepts, critically engage texts, and present material to others are only one level of the environmental ethics learning we expect them to develop. The other piece, which lies in their ability to understand moral obligations through the lens of relationships, act in ways that respond to their professed values, and transfer their learning about living in this place to living in all places, is equally important to our learning objectives for this experiential environmental philosophy course and representative of our understanding of our role as environmental ethical educators.

So I changed the course. I now take a smaller group—7 students and one instructor—which enables us to spend more time on trail and less time in the impacted areas of the park around the ranger station (there is an 8-person limit for travel in the park). The group no longer splits in two for day hikes to regroup for shared classes. Instead we spend all of our time together as a single group, visited by or joining on trail our guest educators. We cook as a group on a single 2-burner stove, eat a single shared meal, collaborate on consistent chores, and learn to rely on each other for comfort, help, fun, and idea development.

And it's working. I have not had the same issue with the camping since I altered the group structure. Of course, we are a smaller group with an inevitably smaller impact, and no

group is perfect. But for the last two years, students have instigated camp sweeps on their own. They grab a partner to trek to the waterspout to re-fill our jugs without waiting for camp to be totally dry. They organize the food bags, keep the cooler clean, check each other's blisters and fill each other's water bottles; they listen when their peers share ideas, then respectfully disagree when the ideas conflict with their own. Thus the pedagogy guided the development of *and* the tinkering with the course format. It informs the content, the daily structure, and the learning objectives of our course, as well as the content and tone of discussions. Our environmental pedagogy of care is contextual, fluid, and dynamic, just like the ethic of care. We are in relationship with each other, the ideas, and the place. Each group is a new and individual entity and to appreciate it as such, we make changes based on the interests, energies, and learning needs of the individuals on the course.

Certainly there are institutional, financial, and energetic challenges to teaching environmental ethics in this way. The ability to take 7 students on a course is a luxury not available to many educators. My students are required to pay an additional \$475 course fee beyond the costs of the 4-credits for the course, which covers food, park fees, and the ferry to and from the island. This fee can be prohibitive for some students. Finally, this kind of hands-on, twenty-four hours a day teaching in all weather can be exhausting. But the rewards are glorious. There is nothing better as an educator than to watch students light up with awe as a moose swims out into the lake, work through interpersonal challenges and tough hikes, and experience personal transformations—all common occurrences on the field philosophy courses. These educational rewards for students and educators alike ought to encourage us to work within the system to find ways to provide these kinds of opportunities.

XI. Conclusion

Experiential environmental philosophy educates for empathetic relationships with the natural world by drawing on its foundations in environmental ethics, experiential and environmental education, and place-based learning. The shared goals of these fields include critical engagement with people, place, and ideas; the development of a nuanced and scientifically-relevant conception of community, both human and biotic; and attention to the roles of humans within the ecological community. These goals are best served by a learning philosophy that arises from an ethic that shares these important ecological and social emphases. Critical ecofeminism addresses domination, degradation, and exploitation in all of its forms; attends to the development of human relationships based on equity, fairness, and love; and promotes relationships with the natural world informed by ecological and social realities. Important commonalities resonate between experiential environmental education and ecofeminism—specifically an interdisciplinary interpretation of the ethic of care—most apparent in their shared focus on relationships, critical engagement, and context. A pedagogy of care that attends to our relationships near and far, to our obligations to each other and our places, and to the social and ecological inequities of our world honors our roles as philosophers, educators, and humans in relationship. These are the intentions of experiential environmental philosophy in theory and in practice.

CHAPTER 4

AN ENVIRONMENTAL PEDAGOGY OF CARE: EMOTION, RELATIONSHIPS, AND EXPERIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION ETHICS LEARNING¹⁷

I. Introduction

Literature in environmental and place-based education argues for direct experience with the natural world to develop relationships with nonhuman nature. In addition, recent scholarship in environmental philosophy (Brady et al. 2004; Moore 2004; Preston 2003) emphasizes the importance of physical connections to the ecological realities upon which theoretical ethics relies. To shape an empathetic and inclusive environmental ethic, students need opportunities to understand their relationship with the natural world experientially, so they can probe and re-evaluate this relationship and their environmental values in the contexts where they matter. A community-focused conception of environmental ethics (Leopold 1949), where relationships with the natural world ground our moral obligations to human and nonhuman communities, drives this notion of experiential environmental philosophy, which contends that environmental ethical learning should cultivate an appreciation for the role environmental ethics plays in environmental decision-making and develop a sense of responsibility to address issues. For students to fully engage this kind of curriculum, they need more than just abstract theoretical readings. Learning must be an emotional, as well as intellectual, experience.

¹⁷ This article has been accepted for publication: Goralnik, L., Millenbah, K., Nelson, M.P., & Thorp, L. (2011). An environmental pedagogy of care: Emotion, relationships, and experience in higher education. *The Journal of Experiential Education*. Accepted 11/17/11.

There are challenges to integrating field-based learning opportunities into the environmental humanities curriculum. Often experiential environmental education manifests as embedded experiences in the natural world, where students might spend anywhere from several days to several months in the field. While there is great value to this kind of learning, these experiences do not always fit easily into higher education teaching models. In addition, humanities courses do not typically include a lab section. Thus, both the institutional structure and the disciplinary tradition present challenges to integrating worthwhile experiential learning into the environmental humanities curriculum. But the affective and relational benefits of experiential learning demand creative solutions to these challenges to provide experiential learning for environmental humanities students. These experiences ought to be guided by a thoughtful and cohesive pedagogy, one that grows from the teaching objectives, content themes, and goals of the curriculum. For experiential environmental philosophy, this pedagogy ought to attend to affective learning variables by encouraging both the development and interrogation of relationships, as well as emotional and intellectual responses to place and course content.

Experiential education's focus on relationships and emotional connections to content and learning community weaves through educational psychology research on student engagement (Wentzel 1997, Furrer & Skinner 2003, Skinner et al. 2008). This same focus characterizes the ethic of care, a theoretical philosophical ethic derived from feminist environmental ethics with direct application to classroom learning (Warren 1990, Plumwood 1991, Noddings 1984, 1992, 2002a, 2002b, 2006). While experiential education, emotional engagement, and the ethic of care are not often discussed simultaneously, their shared ideas and application unites them. By exploring the connections between the ethical, environmental, educational and psychological scholarship, I demonstrate how a synthesis can inform a meaningful pedagogy for experiential

environmental humanities learning, or an environmental pedagogy of care, that is attentive to course and curriculum development, instruction, learning environment, and content and process objectives.

II. The Role of Emotion in Learning

To articulate the roles of emotion and relationship in experiential education, emotional engagement, and the ethic of care, it is necessary first to understand how emotion is thought to function in learning more generally. Scholars argue that emotion is an important factor in attention, focus, and memory. Recent scholarship demonstrates that emotional learning is not a separate or even parallel process to cognitive learning; rather affective and cognitive learning are enmeshed elements of a single learning process (O'Regan 2003, Weiss 2000, Zembylas 2007). Neurologist Steven Peterson explains, "You can use emotion to direct attention, and that attention will lead to better learning" (as cited in D'Arcangelo 2000, 70). Weiss (2000) further articulates: "Emotion impels what we attend to, and attention drives learning. So, one of the most important things we have to do is to ensure that learners become emotionally involved in whatever we're teaching them....In fact, the more emotionally engaged a learner is, the more likely he or she is to learn" (47).

Sylwester (1994) connects emotional learning to the kind of whole student education promoted by Dewey (1938) and others when he advocates learning activities that utilize social interaction and full-body engagement, which provide emotional support by enabling students to interact personally with each other and the content. Adult educators argue for similar active and full-sensory learning experiences, though with a focus on meaning-making—the development of personal and intellectual meaning through reflection or shared processing—and emotion's role in memory. Wolfe (2006) explains that two factors influence how the brain remembers information:

the meaningfulness of the information and its ‘emotional hook’. For older students, researchers emphasize the importance of learning that responds to what students already know, so they start in a place of emotional comfort and grow their knowledge through challenge. Research suggests learning ought to be personally relevant for students to stimulate emotional engagement. Wolfe (2006) continues:

[O]ur brains work better if they first ‘get’ the context the parts [of a learning experience] belong to. When curricula and assessment practices focus on discrete parts of the learning challenge...adults have difficulty remembering—let alone understanding—because they do not see how everything fits together....The brain does not take meaning; it must make meaning. (38-9)

Sometimes students do not have past experience to contribute to the meaning-making. In this case, the ‘emotional hook’ then becomes especially important. Wolfe (2006) argues that concrete experiences address this deficit of previous experience. He elaborates: “What the new research on learning and the brain now reveals is that when learners are actively experiencing, new neural networks are created in the same way that networks of neurons are created from birth as children begin to experience their world” (38). Experience, Wolfe explains, is integral to developing an emotional connection with learning material.

The relationship between emotion and learning is particularly important for ethics education. “The recent research indicates that the emotional activation of the brain due to a value conflict takes time to subside,” McCuen and Shah (2007) explain. “Only as the emotional involvement wanes can actions be influenced by cognitive thinking” (45). People often experience emotional reactions to situations, the authors argue, before they can engage events and ideas intellectually. This makes sense: we might feel fear when we hear a noise in the dark

before we can rationalize that fear away, or react to an idea before we know anything about it. If we focus only on cognitive development in ethical learning, students do not develop the skills to understand and address the preceding emotional response. Without proper skills, they may make rash decisions in response to ethical dilemmas. McCuen and Shah (2007) elaborate on the role of emotion in ethical learning:

Recent neuroscience research with positron emission tomography and functional magnetic resonance imaging indicates that emotions actually play a significant role in ethical decision making. It then follows that emotions actually play a significant role in ethics education....Instruction to improve emotional maturity must be accompanied by teaching of cognitive subject matter if long-term learning is to occur. Emotions influence the solution of ethical problems as they affect the accuracy of the problem assessment and the accuracy, intensity, and duration of an emotive response. (44)

This kind of emotional learning is likely a process, rather than a measurable outcome. But integrating sensory activities and experiences as an integral element of the curriculum to develop emotional maturity can address this challenge (Johnson & Frederickson 2000, Proudman 1992). This theoretical evidence is also supported by empirical studies on the brain (Greene et al. 2001, Greene 2009, Maddock 1999).

Including an emotional component in ethics learning runs contrary to most traditional academic approaches to philosophical education. Emotion does not often have a role in objective, intellectual dialogue; coursework in ethics is often theoretical and not applied. The development of a rigorous theoretical understanding of our environmental problems is an important goal, but deepening students' involvement with the ideas by adding an affective, as well as this cognitive, emphasis is also important to empower students to apply their

environmental ethics knowledge. Experiential learning, with its embrace of emotion as an integral piece of the learning process, can help develop the emotional maturity necessary for ethical decision-making in context by enabling students the opportunity to practice their skills in new or real world situations and within different social dynamics (Johnson & Frederickson 2000). “To learn from experience requires one to be fully in the experience: mind, body, heart, and soul,” Lawrence (2008, 68) explains. Experience can help students, especially students of ethics who will simultaneously develop the language of values and right action, understand the relationship between intellect and emotion, because “Doing the right thing doesn’t always flow naturally from knowing what the right thing to do is,” explains LeDoux (2002, 46). This distinction is important for a theory of environmental ethical learning that aims not just to provide knowledge about ethics and the environment, but to cultivate an understanding of environmental ethics’ role in problem-solving and the personal and collective motivation to participate in the address of environmental issues. Experiential learning can help students develop this awareness.

III. Affective Learning and Experiential Education

Experiential learning in higher education often manifests as fieldwork for science students, internships or service learning for business education and the social sciences, and embedded wilderness or study-abroad programs for cultural, group-building, environmental, or skills-development experiences. Educators cite numerous reasons for employing experiential techniques, many of which echo Johnson and Frederickson (2000):

The primary goal of the experiential component is to deepen the students’ understanding of the main ideas of the course by enlisting *experience and emotion as allies in the process of understanding*. The understanding sought is not merely the ability to

reproduce the ideas of the course on a test, but understanding that extends to the students' lives and actions. (45, emphasis added)

Additionally, scholars argue experiential learning can help develop a sense of community (Jacobs & Archie 2008), practical (DiConti 2004) and problem-solving skills (Itin 1999), empathy (Jakubowski 2003), and personal growth (Lindsay & Ewert 1999). While all of these are important learning outcomes, it is often this affective component, suggested in the language of emotion and in the focus on relationships to place, peers, and content, that differentiates experiential theory from other pedagogical approaches (Crompton & Sellar 1981, Proudman 1992).

As Burnard (1988) suggests, the experiential domain of knowledge occurs when learners encounter a subject, person, place, or thing personally and directly. There are kinesthetic, cognitive, and emotional connections we make when learning becomes personally experienced with multiple senses. Something emergent happens, scholars suggest, when students learn about a subject while participating in and with that subject (Alagona & Simon 2010). For example, learning about a wolf's habitat, feeling excited about stepping over a wolf print the trail or afraid while hearing its howl's in the night, and discussing the challenge of honoring our obligations both to individual animals and to species all in a single learning experience can help students develop powerful awarenesses about place, responsibility, environmental management, and environmental action that are different than engaging the biology, emotional and physical responses to wild animals, and environmental ethics coursework discretely.

This is not to suggest that emotional connections are not possible in the classroom. Certainly students can connect to each other and theoretical content within the university walls, and some experiential techniques work in the classroom. But for many students, the impact of

school learning is limited. *How does this apply to my life?* they wonder, and *Why should I care?* Fear, embarrassment, or ambition can be effective motivators, but external motives do not encourage students to value knowledge for any other sake than to avoid punishment or get a good grade. Externally motivated learning is often superficial, and as educators we ought instead strive for deep, lasting learning (Barr & Tagg 1995), which means we ought to help students develop internal motivations to care about content and the learning process (Dewey 1938). The emotional engagement stimulated by experiential learning can help students develop this curiosity and investment in the learning process.

IV. Emotional Engagement as Learning Goal

Dewey (1938) and others argue that schools ought to create an engaged citizenry, not just educate students with content knowledge. This goal aligns with the action competence goals of environmental education (Hungerford & Volk 1989, Mogenson 1997) and the participatory awareness and motivation at the heart of experiential environmental philosophy. In this vein, to better prepare students for the future Orr (1991) suggests a shift from subject mastery to personal development, an emphasis on knowledge application and system awareness, and attention to the process and context of learning. The focus, Orr argues, should be on the role of each individual in a larger social and ecological system and on both personal and institutional responsibility. These are affective as much as content goals.

If we aim for the classroom learning environment to be both preparation for and modeled after what we might consider a good community—for not all communities are good communities, and not all collections of individuals working together become a community—and if we want to develop engaged citizens, we need (at a minimum) to craft curriculum that makes learning personal and purposeful for students. Finding motivation to care, understanding the role

of self-reflection in learning, and developing the skills to form relationships with people, places, and content are relevant experiential outcomes (Fien 1997, Proudman 1992, Mortari 2004). Experiential educators can help students recognize that content learning (whether abstract theory or application) has relevance to their life outside of school, and their work and interests outside of the classroom have relevance in their academic work. This awareness can lead to emotional and personal engagement with their learning (Alagona & Simon 2010). Often educators cite indicators for these kinds of outcomes anecdotally, through participant observations, or by interpreting student self-reports on the learning experience. These are useful tools and provide insight to the field and learning experience. To streamline these indicators, though, and clarify the language we use in discussions about emotional engagement, we might look to the educational psychological research on emotional engagement.

While the literature on emotional engagement focuses primarily on general learning motivation rather than course-specific content engagement, it can illuminate the field's conceptual overlap with experiential education. Skinner, Kindermann, and Furrer (2009) define educational engagement as “the quality of a student’s connection or involvement with the endeavor of schooling and hence with the people, activities, goals, values, and place that compose it” (494). Studies in emotional engagement aim to understand and quantify students’ emotional and behavioral responses to activities or with subjects. These emotional connections to coursework serve to impact, both positively and negatively, the ability to learn and the learning experience. But the research, especially at the college-level, is limited. Handlesman, Briggs, Sullivan, and Towler (2005) summarize the field:

First, many researchers have studied cognitive engagement or the use of students’ more complex cognitive strategies (e.g., Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle 1988; Pintrich &

Schunk 1996). Second, much research has focused on engagement in specific tasks, such as reading (e.g., Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999). Third, studies have focused on engagement in elementary schools and, to a lesser extent, secondary schools (e.g., Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Many of those authors tied their notions of engagement to more general theories of motivation. (184)

Most higher education engagement studies occur at the university, rather than the classroom, level. Handlesman et al. (2005) cite the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which measures engagement as a global representation of student perceptions of academic challenge and the supportiveness of campus environments, to make this point. Limitations aside, the authors emphasize that most scholars agree both cognitive and affective components impact student engagement; many researchers (Connell & Wellborn 1991, Deci, Connell, & Ryan 1985, Guthrie & Anderson 1999, Skinner & Belmont 1993) also believe an interpersonal or social component is integral for student engagement. These findings parallel the nested cognitive, affective, and social components educators cite as meaningful outcomes of experiential learning (Alagona & Simon 2010, Dewey 1938, Proudman 1992).

Literature about educational engagement also mirrors the language of experiential learning in its focus on community, physical experience, and student development: “Engagement refers to *active, goal-directed, flexible, constructive, persistent, focused interactions with the social and physical environments*” (Furrer & Skinner 2003, 149, emphasis added).

By understanding the overlap between the goals of experiential learning and the capabilities and range of emotional engagement research, we can refine methods to understand and assess the emotional engagement generated through experiential learning in higher education. But a guiding pedagogy for experiential environmental philosophy first needs a philosophical core to guide the

development of the experiential activities and learning environment that attends to the affective and relational content and learning goals.

Furrer and Skinner's (2003) definition of engagement also echoes the language of the ethic of care, a context-based relational ethic that roots moral development in relationships between a *carer* and a *cared-for*. Right action depends on the needs of the 'other' in relationship, rather than on prescribed rules of good and bad and right and wrong; moral development is rooted in embodied experiences, a context-based approach that resonates with the goals and purpose of experiential education. Connected both to educational (Noddings 1984, 1992, 2002a, 2002b, 2006) and environmental philosophy (Plumwood 1991, Warren 1990), the ethic of care has great potential as a pedagogical framework for experiential environmental philosophy.

V. The Ethic of Care in the Learning Environment

Implementation of the ethic of care within educational contexts relies on the development of attentive relationships between a *carer* and a *cared-for* (student-student, student-instructor, student-content, participants-learning environment). The goal is to develop the ethic of care as a guiding morality both in the classroom and as a bridge to the beyond-school world, where it can lead students to right action on behalf of the beings, places, and ideas they value in relationship.

The literature often discusses these relationships as reciprocated, but an ethic of care need not be reciprocated in kind. Many would argue that while we learn how to inhabit care in concrete relationships with other humans, we can translate the feelings these relationships engender into relationships with nonhuman nature and even ideas (Fien 1997, Mortari 2004, Noddings 1990). Noddings (2002a) explains that the ethic of care originates out of a universal desire to be cared for and sharing positive relationships with at least some other beings. Therefore, she continues, "our most fundamental 'ought' arises as instrumental: If we value such

relations, then we ought to act so as to create, maintain, and enhance them” (21). The ‘ought’ distinguishes this action as moral action, rather than just simple behavior.

Most traditional ethical theories rely on rules and principles for ethical guidance, but the ethic of care instead responds in relation to others and in response to actual situations, therefore it is ethics rooted in context, which means good, bad, right and wrong are somewhat fluid concepts, for they depend on the needs of the participants in particular relationships and in specific situations. This relational focus parallels Proudman’s (1992) description of experiential education: "The experiential process can best be described as a series of critical relationships: the learner to self, the learner to teacher, and the learner to the learning environment. All three relationships are important and are present to varying degrees during the learning experience. These relationships are two-way and highly dynamic" (241). By emphasizing the particular (rather than the abstract), the ethic of care aligns with place-based experiential approaches to environmental learning (Elder 1998, Sobel 2004). Similarly, the ethic of care is tied to experiential learning in its emphasis on reflection, personal growth, and awareness (Alagona & Simon 2010). Noddings (2002a) explains, “We need to understand our own capacities and how we are likely to react in various situations....Hence moral education is an essential part of an ethic of care, and much of moral education is devoted to the understanding of self and others” (15). This kind of self-knowledge in response to situations coincides with McCuen and Shah’s (2007) explanation of emotion and ethics education, as well as with scholarship about the affective and social learning goals of experiential learning (Haluza-DeLay 1999). Self-awareness and attentiveness to the emotional learning process also reflect important educational engagement variables (Skinner et al. 2009). Synthesizing these scholarships in theory and practice grows their application and resonance, and these connections extend beyond learning goals to the structure and format of the learning environment.

Noddings (2002a) offers strategies (e.g., cooperative learning, noncompetitive grading, service learning) to foster the ethic of care in the learning environment. However, she stresses that strategies alone will not suffice because every implementation depends on the students, instructors, community, institution, and content involved. “[Any] strategies have to be part of a dedicated drive to produce caring, competent, loving, and lovable people, ” (35) she asserts. Strategies must also be embedded in a classroom where care is promoted through modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation rather than employed in a hierarchical environment (Freire 1970). Noddings (2002a) writes:

The result of academic coercion, even the best-intentioned coercion, is often frustration and a pervasive feeling of ‘being dumb.’ . . . If a youth’s own legitimate interests and talents are not admired and encouraged, he or she may never really learn what it means to be cared for. All care then seems to be contingent and associated with psychological or physical coercion. (31)

Here the ethic of care again joins the discussion of emotion in the learning process, for a care-based classroom seeks to develop positive emotional learning experiences—or to encourage emotional engagement—and thus to eliminate feelings of dejection and apathy.

Care scholarship (Noddings 1984, 1992) and engagement literature (Frenzel et al. 2009 , Skinner & Belmont 1993) both also attend closely to the dynamic between a teacher and a student. Curriculum that encourages the development of this relationship can increase the potential for students to emotionally engage with the material. An experiential curriculum can advance this goal because unconventional learning environments allow students and instructors different opportunities to know each other in non-hierarchical ways such as conversing during

transportation, engaging in activities, and participating with hosts, guides, or community members. Noddings (2002a) explains:

As students and teachers slip into ordinary conversation, they learn about one another. But they also learn from one another. Without imposing their values, teachers can convey all sorts of messages about respect, taste, choice, time management, humor, human foibles, fears, disappointments. It is hard to exaggerate how much it might mean to a particular student to hear a teacher say, 'That happened to me once too.' (142)

Observations about the student-teacher relationship might seem simplistic: Students enjoy relating to their teachers and they enjoy school when they relate to their teachers. But, Furrer and Skinner (2003) reveal, psychological engagement is more than enjoyment:

Children who felt appreciated by teachers were more likely to report that involvement in academic activities was interesting and fun and that they felt happy and comfortable in the classroom. In contrast, children who felt unimportant or ignored by teachers reported more boredom, unhappiness, and anger while participating in learning activities. (159)

While much of the research on emotional engagement and the ethic of care in the classroom involves younger students, college-age learners are also impacted by the social dynamics of the learning environment (Robbins et al. 2006), in which the teacher-student relationship is an important element. Wentzel (1997) provides similar insight into a care-based pedagogy:

[R]ecent studies have linked interpersonal relationships between teachers and students to motivational outcomes (e.g., Birch & Ladd, 1996; Pianta, 1992; Wentzel & Asher, 1995). [S]everal authors have suggested that feelings of belongingness and of being cared for can foster the adoption and internalization of goals and values of caregivers (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Noddings, 1992)...[T]his explanation

translates into the notion that students will be motivated to engage in classroom activities if they believe that teachers care about them. (411)

These relational aspects of all three literatures also tie them strongly to the goals and methods of environmental and place-based learning, which can provide a framework for the kinds of experiential learning experiences we design. In the introduction to *Stories in the Land: A Place-Based Environmental Anthology*, Elder (1998) writes: “Our pressing need now is for a pedagogy that exposes people to the range of their possible relationships in the world, and that gives them the language and models to explore and express such affiliation within a vivid community of values” (p. 12). The ethic of care, coupled with experiential education theory and techniques, as well as the kinds of metrics and insight provided by research in emotional engagement, serves this need.

VI. Field Trips: Experience, Emotion, and Engagement in Practice

Although environmental humanities courses do not often include experiential field components, aesthetic, literary, philosophical, and emotional experiences in the natural world or with course content are important for a whole student approach to environmental learning (Alagona & Simon 2010, Foster 1999). Thus we need to build opportunities to unpack values, relationships, and identity in environmental humanities courses to provide quality environmental, philosophical, and care-based learning experiences. Embedded experiences in the natural world are an effective and meaningful tool and we should continue to provide these opportunities for students, but these kinds of courses are limited to small student groups and can require challenging logistical and financial wrangling. Using the resources of place—thus eliminating the travel times, logistical hurdles, and expense of distant experiential activities—is an effective way to build experience into the on-campus learning model, as well as an opportunity to explore the concepts of place, community, and everyday responsibility as complements to environmental curriculum. For example, in addition to community-based projects with nonprofit or local

organizations, courses could use campus natural areas or creeks, local nature centers and parks, farms, zoos, campus energy production sites, recycling centers, or even the design of the campus landscape as meaningful places of entry to interrogate the human/nature relationship, our responsibility to nonhuman others, and the kinds of spaces that enable community-building, connections to nonhuman nature, and a wide notion of health. Closer inspection of students' home terrain can enliven their curiosity about the wonder and complexity that surrounds them in their everyday environments, rather than reinforce the notion that environmental learning and ethics only apply to special, faraway places. Local investigations also provide opportunities for collaborations with local and campus knowledge holders.

Noddings (2006) writes, "Moral life grows out of the practices in our communities and the demands these practices make on us," (11). Explorations of and participation in our communities linked with discussions about ethics can stimulate moral development. Place theorist Gruenewald (2003) explains: "Place-conscious education...aims to work against the isolation of schooling's discourses and practices from the living world outside the increasingly placeless institution of schooling. Furthermore, it aims to enlist teachers and students in the firsthand experience of local life and in the political process of understanding and shaping what happens there" (620). The idea is that places are holders and nurturers of concepts, hierarchies, values, and meaning; in experiencing and developing relationships with these places, we can learn about the confluence of these elements. Self-identity is often rooted in place and conceptions of home, so to know and understand one's place(s) better is to actively develop a clearer sense of self, a key element in cultivating an ethic of care. Gruenewald (2003) demonstrates this conceptual overlap when he explains the purpose of place-attentive learning: "Interest in place-based education often derives from the belief that encouraging an emotional

attachment to a place will lead people to care and learn about that place and, subsequently, produce a desire to protect the place” (118). This caring about is a goal of experiential environmental philosophy (Moore 2004), as well as an element of both emotional engagement scholarship and the ethic of care. So if particular attention to one’s place can inspire care for that place—and, through moral and imaginative leaps, as Plumwood (1991) articulates, care for other, related places and ideas—then this kind of attention is something we ought to nurture.

Connecting students personally to the relevance and role of ethics in their local community and in popular culture issues (through reading and discussion) may help them embrace ethical theory and emotionally engage course content. Breunig (2005) describes theory as an abstraction, while practice involves action. “[T]heory represents knowledge,” she writes, “while practice is the application of that knowledge” (109). Helping students make this leap from theory to practice by providing opportunities to experience ideas in context can help them form links between emotion and rationality, learning and life, knowledge and responsibility.

Regular field trips are an effective way to integrate place-based experiential education into the traditional higher education classroom. Rone (2008) describes the role of field trips for the humanities and social science learner akin to the role of laboratory learning for science students. Scarce (1997) describes other benefits of field trips:

Students are motivated to learn when they concretely experience social phenomena through the everyday settings of field trips; such experiences are impossible in the classroom.... [S]tudents often seem unsure of the connections between daily life, on one hand, and the classroom and textual content of our courses—the theory, the details of research, and the legitimacy of our data—on the other. Field trips can clarify and confirm those connections. (220-1)

The material of class gains meaning and purpose when learned in context. The theoretical content gains pragmatic strength through field trips and immersion. Research on student articulations of their own learning collected in experiential classes (paper in process, see also Dymont and O'Connell (2010) for a useful discussion of student journaling) can help us grow an assessment methodology that speaks to students' emotional engagement with course content.

VII. Experience and Responsibility

The unifying threads that weave through the philosophy of experiential education, emotional engagement research, and the ethic of care—including the importance of relationships and an emotional connection to content, place, and peers—serve Elder's (1998) call for an environmental pedagogy that unites disciplines, addresses problems, fosters connections, and inspires care. "Love," he writes, "is where attentiveness to nature starts, and responsibility toward one's home landscape is where it leads"(8). An environmental pedagogy of care can cultivate this love and help students develop a sense of moral responsibility for self, others, beings, place, and ideas.

Growing these connections with nonhuman nature will require that students learn how to bridge the boundary between self and other, an important step in engaging community-focused environmental ethics (Leopold 1949, Moore 2004). For an ethic built on relationships requires attentiveness and respect for someone or something outside oneself, an awareness beyond one's individual rational abilities. These relationships based on love and respect for the natural world then can address what many environmental scholars consider problematic dualisms between human/nature, male/female, mind/body, as articulated in ecofeminist conceptions of the ethic of care (Warren 1990). Place-based learning fosters these relationships. "In *I-Thou* (1958), Martin Buber described two ways of relating to the world," Knapp (2005) writes. "If you relate in an *I-It* way, you view your environment as made up of things that are separate from you. If you relate in

an *I-Thou* way, you will feel a more intimate environmental relationship that will help you feel part of the greater whole” (278). This relationship relies on a physical and emotional knowing of the environment. Knapp (2005) continues:

Place-based education “is a way to ‘re-member’ participants who feel dismembered from the physical context of their immediate worlds and for them to ‘remember’ earlier positive contacts with nature....[It] is a response to feeling alienated from nature and human nature (Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000)....When participants purposefully consider their relationship to the landscape (landfullness), they relate more closely to their world. (278)

When beyond-campus places become the spaces for learning, then also the backdrop for students’ beyond-academic life, the two worlds of school and life may begin to inform each other. Blending these boundaries can also soften other dualisms and create the room for relationships to develop with people, place, and content. These experiences, then, can help students make the leap from relationship to responsibility. As Kathleen Dean Moore writes: “Loving is not a kind of *la-de-da*. Loving is a sacred trust. To love is to affirm the absolute worth of what you love and to pledge your life to its thriving—to protect it fiercely and faithfully, for all time” (392). In loving relationships, she suggests, we understand our obligations to others most clearly, and through understanding we aim to enact these responsibilities in the world. When students learn to care about each other, the place and context of the learning environment, and nonhuman nature, they begin to develop not just knowledge about environmental ethics, but a personal environmental ethic that can guide their actions as citizens and members of the beyond-classroom community.

VIII. Conclusion

Relationships, emotion, and particular attention to the learning environment as a meaningful place for content and personal development unite the scholarships of experiential and place-based education, emotional engagement, and the ethic of care. Woven together they inform a promising environmental pedagogy of care for higher education experiential environmental ethics curriculum. If an important goal of environmental ethics and humanities learning is to develop a personal relationship with the natural world, if a valuable outcome of this learning is personal and collective responsibility for beings, places, and ideas, and if environmental ethics is, as a discipline, interested in not just knowing about environmental issues and values conflicts, but in using the tools of philosophy to address environmental decision-making, then attending to relationships in theory and practice and embracing emotional responses to ideas and situations are important elements of the learning process. An environmental pedagogy of care places these goals at the center of the curriculum, learning environment, and content. Future work that applies the tools of emotional engagement research to care-based experiential courses will provide more insight into the effectiveness of this pedagogy in stimulating relationships, responsibility, and self-awareness, as well as perhaps enabling ethical shifts.

CHAPTER 5

BORDERLANDS: FROM DUALISM TO COMPLEXITY IN THE FIELD PHILOSOPHY EXPERIENCE

I. Introduction

Experiential environmental philosophy, or field philosophy, is a type of fieldwork in the environmental humanities¹⁸. The goal is to combine the intellectual content of environmental ethics and literature with physical experiences in the natural world to develop personal, emotional, and concrete relationships with the natural world. Responding to recent ideas in environmental philosophy (Moore 2004c, Preston 2003, Brady et al. 2004, Plumwood 1991, Leopold 1949) and driven by research in environmental (Hungerford & Volk 1990, Russell & Bell 1996, Smith-Sebasto 1995) and experiential (Elder 1998, Knapp 2005, Mortari 2004, Proudman 1992, Sobel 2004) education, field philosophy aims not just to educate students about theoretical environmental ethics and current environmental issues, but to develop care, love, and responsibility for the natural world. Learning objectives, therefore, entail both cognitive and affective variables, including the development of a nuanced and complex awareness of ecology, environmental issues, and community membership, as well as empathetic shifts that might signify the development of a personal environmental ethic or a deepened relationship with the natural world.

¹⁸ This is a new phenomenon practiced by a few philosophers—see Brady et al. (2004) and Moore (2004c, 90-104)—and on some humanistic field courses—see Alagona et al. (2010) and Johnson and Frederickson (2000)—but it is not the norm in environmental philosophy education by any means. The terms experiential environmental philosophy and field philosophy are not used in any of this literature; they are specific to the model described in this dissertation, which is reflective of the experiments and programs documented in the literature. The model I present here is also congruent with the practice of outdoor philosophy (see “Outdoor Philosophy”), which is the title of the case study course described in these pages (Michigan State University, Outdoor Philosophy NSC 490/FW 491, section 701).

One way we can observe and assess this learning is through a conventional qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon 2005) of student work from different stages of a field philosophy course. For three years I have analyzed student writing (pre-course summary/response essays for 31 course pack essays; on-course journals and daily unguided reflections; and 3-page post-course reflections) from a course I teach in Isle Royale National Park, a wilderness island in northwest Lake Superior. Through this analysis I have found the students' pre-course and on-course writing to be an effective indicator of their ethical and knowledge baselines and a foil against which post-course growth can be understood. Pre-course reading responses, when observed alongside daily on-course and post-course reflections, can help identify shifts in individual student thinking, make comparisons across students, and identify recurrent themes in the processes of ethical development, learning, and self-awareness.

Pre-course writing across all three years of this class demonstrates a reliance on dualistic thinking, which takes a number of forms, including true/false and selfish/generous characterizations applied to people, the land, and motivations for action. These dualisms are used in ways that simultaneously impose evaluations of good and bad, right and wrong, indicating then both a description of an action, thing, or idea, as well as a moral judgment. From this language trend—which suggests the way students conceptualize the world when they enter the course—and the way it changes, disappears, or is challenged during the students' field philosophy learning experience, we can draw some conclusions about students' ethical inclinations, shifts, and responsibility for environmental problem-solving.

Dualisms play an important role in student writing both because their shift can indicate growth to more nuanced intellectual stance, thus can be a marker for critical thinking, and also because they figure significantly in the trajectory of environmental ethics scholarship. This rich

history in environmental ethics about the problematic nature of dualisms in the Western worldview can help clarify how dualistic thinking is tied to particular ethical stances, as well as explain why dualisms are an issue worthy of attention.

Mathews (1991a) believes the “conventional atomistic cosmology as it informs modern western consciousness [...] is a ‘bad’ cosmology—representing Nature not as hostile but as indifferent to our interests” (14). If we view nature as indifferent, she argues, then we have set up a dynamic in which we are always at odds. This inherent conflict is detrimental to the wellbeing of the natural world. It is also representative of the cultural dualisms that concern feminist thinkers, because they operate with what Karen Warren (1990) calls “the logic of domination.” A prominent voice in ecofeminism, Warren explains that “there are important connections—historical, experiential, symbolic, theoretical—between the domination of women and the domination of nature” (282). Ecofeminists argue that the feminine has long been associated with the natural, the body, and emotion, symbolized in metaphors like the nurturing image of Mother Nature. Alternately, the masculine is tied to traits like rationality and civilized (non-natural) progress. Shared logic perpetuates these dualisms—female/male, nature/culture, body/mind—which are overlaid with corresponding value judgments: rationality, male-ness, and culture are good; expressions of the body, the female, and nature are bad. Val Plumwood (1991), associates this logic with the role of rationalism in our culture, or the Kantian-rationalistic framework we often employ in ethical analysis:

[I]t is not only women but also the earth’s wild living things that have been denied possession of a reason thus construed along masculine and oppositional lines and which contrasts not only with the “feminine” emotions but also with the physical and the animal. Much of the problem (both for women and nature) lies in rationalist or rationalist-derived

conceptions of the self and of what is essential and valuable in the human makeup. It is in the name of such a reason that these other things—the feminine, the emotional, the merely bodily or the merely animal, and the natural world itself—have most often been denied their virtue and been accorded an inferior and merely instrumental position. (5-6).

Her concern is that by creating these value-laden dualisms, we have made it good and right to treat women and nature as means to an end, or to value them only in their capacity for use, rather than as ends in and of themselves. They are instrumentally important for the services they provide—natural resources, reproduction, nurturing—but not as intrinsically valuable beings.

Callicott (1989b) also discusses the problem with viewing reason or rationality as the sole repository of our moral goodness or capability, though he points to different reasons. Rather than trouble over the power dynamic we create by uncritically embracing rationality, he demonstrates why this stance grates against what we know about evolution. He explains:

Western philosophy...is almost unanimous in the opinion that the origin of ethics in human experience has somehow to do with human reason....In short, the weight of Western philosophy inclines to the view that we are moral beings because we are rational beings.... An evolutionary natural historian, however, cannot be satisfied with either of these general accounts of the origin and development of ethics....[W]e cannot have become social beings unless we assumed limitations on freedom of action in the struggle for existence. Hence we must have become ethical before we became rational. (78-79)

Therefore, a reliance on rationality over emotions does not make sense, Callicott argues. He would also likely argue that the human/nature dualism is equally problematic, for his ecologically-grounded approach to environmental ethics relies on the understanding that we are nested in an interdependent web of relationships. For all of these reasons, dualistic thinking is a

sticky issue both ethically and educationally. Thus recognizing it as a trend in the student writing (and worldview) is an important step in acknowledging the students' pre-course baselines, as well as in recognizing the ethical work that needs to be done in classes like this.

It is exciting that by the end of the Isle Royale course, many students transcend this dualistic thinking to achieve a more complex ethical awareness and nuanced understanding of environmental problem-solving. These shifts often happen in, or as a result of contact with, what we might call borderlands: physical or figurative middle-grounds where the needs of the individual and the community are in conflict or questioned, where one's previously held values require confrontation and re-visioning, and where one experiences some kind of new awareness of complexity, responsibility, or morality. This is not a concept from the literature. Rather it is something that has emerged from my data analysis of this course. In their on-course or post-course reflections, a number of students describe a moment or an experience that causes them to reconsider or reevaluate their previous thinking in a way that moves them into a more nuanced or complex understanding of relationships and ideas. These moments or experiences serve as borderlands, the place in between two distinct ways of thinking and approaching the world. Experiential environmental philosophy provides the spaces for these moments, and in doing so it enables learning and ethical outcomes perhaps not possible in the classroom alone. For it is the experience itself in the borderland that allows students the space, awareness, challenge, and opportunity to create concrete relationships with both the natural world and a cohesive learning community that enable these meaningful transformations.

In this chapter I will discuss the different dualisms students commonly invoke to demonstrate how they provide a lens into student value stances, perspectives on environmental problem-solving, and sense of personal and collective responsibility for environmental change.

This discussion will provide context for an illumination of the growth and transformation students express as a result of the experiential component of their learning. From this grounding I discuss the role of borderlands, as well as explore some examples of borderlands my students have encountered in their field philosophy experiences, which will capture the kinds of ethical shifts and learning field philosophy fosters. The ethical awareness and empowerment students develop in these field philosophy experiences provide evidence for the value of experience in environmental philosophical learning.

II. Course Background and Pedagogy

Isle Royale Outdoor Philosophy is a 4-credit, upper-level course in the environmental humanities at Michigan State University. It fills an elective core and tier-2 writing requirement¹⁹ for students in Lyman Briggs College, an ethics requirement for students in the Fisheries and Wildlife major, and elective credit in the Residential Initiative for Studies of the Environment (RISE) and Sustainability specializations. The course includes: a pre-course meeting in April; a 31-article course pack (environmental ethics, traditional ecological knowledge, nature writing, place-based environmental history and ecology) and a collection of nonfiction nature ethics essays (Moore 2004c), which the students read and write summary/response essays about prior to meeting for the field component; one-week of base camping in a wilderness group campsite; experiences on trail and in dialogue with the researchers from the Isle Royale Wolf-Moose Project; interpreted human and natural history hikes with National Park rangers; hiking, canoeing, cooking, exploring, and discussion; and individual, partner, and group exercises.

¹⁹ This is the university-wide upper-level writing requirement necessary for graduation. Specific requirements vary by department, but standard expectations include a significant number of pages produced during a course, regular attention to writing in the class, and at least one draft revision following feedback from the instructor.

Students write daily unguided reflections, teach 10-20 minute classes on an island-related subject they research during the course, and present 5-minute literary and natural history interpretations of a flora, fauna, human history, or geological feature. They also complete a post-course project due 2-3 weeks after we return from the island, a creative expression of what they learned from the reading and through their experience, plus any applicable research.²⁰ With this project students also turn in a 3-page final course reflection about their learning and their experience on the course.

Students have ranged in age from 17 (a sophomore who skipped several years of school) to 27 (an advanced zoology Ph.D. student), though 22 out of the 25 students represented in this data are between the ages of 19 and 22. They are primarily science majors in fisheries and wildlife, zoology, and human biology. Other majors include psychology, microbiology, chemistry, political science, English, environmental studies, and anthropology. The course size has changed across the three years of data collection: 8 students and 2 instructors in 2008, 11 students and 2 instructors in 2009, and 6 students with 1 instructor and an undergraduate TA in 2010. This change was a response to the learning outcomes and group dynamic hurdles we encountered in 2009 (paper in process). Most students do not have a strong environmental learning background or any ethics training, though nearly all students have a background in outdoor activities from summer camp, scouts, family camping, or school-related activities. The application process is competitive: students submit a 1-page essay about their outdoor and group experience, interest in the course, and learning goals; in the past, around half of the students who

²⁰ See Appendix A for the course syllabus.

submit essays are interviewed and about half of the interviewed students are accepted for the course²¹.

The learning goals of this course include the expectation that students recognize and engage complexity—by acknowledging it as an defining element of environmental issues, ecology, and ethics—but also that they to feel they have the skills, intellect, and creativity to address this complexity—for example, sticking with problems when they get hard, thinking their way through challenging issues, or developing effective groups to do so in collaboration—in the world. To overwhelm students by painting issues as so complex they are un-solvable would be a failure, but to encourage them to retain a black and white worldview, which many students demonstrate in their pre-course writing, would be worse.

III. Methodology²²

My research is grounded in constructivist philosophy. The understanding and the knowledge we learn from this research is co-constructed by the participants and me, the researcher, in a shared experience reflective of the time, place, context, and conditions of our learning. The focus on power and inclusion in the knowledge-construction and meaning-making process also aligns my research with feminist discourse. I have approached the data collection and analysis of this research through the lens of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967), which is an inductive approach to data about a phenomenon—in this case field philosophy—for which a suitable theory does not already exist. The researcher collects a lot of data, codes it for emerging themes, then iteratively groups and makes meaning from the themes as they arise from the data until

²¹ In 2010, 32 students submitted written applications. I interviewed 15 of these students and 6 students participated on the course. In 2011 I received 25 written applications, interviewed 13 students, and brought 6 students on the course.

²² See Appendix B for a more developed methodological statement.

saturation enables some kind of localized theory to emerge. But I am not interested in crafting stagnant or universal theory. Instead I aim to create “thick description” (Geertz 1973) of a phenomenon I have experienced, documented, analyzed, and interpreted. For this reason, my research is grounded in a constructivist version of grounded theory (Charmaz 2006), which better recognizes and attends to the researcher’s role in the process of making meaning, as well as to the contextual nature of the phenomena, data, and analysis.

In the grounded theory tradition, I have analyzed my data using a conventional qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon 2005), specifically the technique of the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss 1967). This is an iterative process of data coding, reflection, memoing, and categorizing. I inductively coded 25% of the data (6 of 24 student journals and post-course reflections), then I created a codebook I used to deductively code the rest of the data, adding new codes and refining the code descriptions as I went. I continually returned to the data with the in-process versions of the codebook until I was satisfied with its saturation and usefulness. I used NVivo qualitative software to organize and manage my data. Data collection methods and consent forms were reviewed and approved by Michigan State University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB approval #X08-185).

I am deeply embedded in the teaching, learning, and experiential process of this course and my role in the experience and in relationship with the participants allows me particular insight into the learning process and group dynamics not available to other researchers. Therefore I am the primary coder and interpreter of this data. I acknowledge and accept that my participation in the course and with the participants is a potential bias, but I also think this kind of subjectivity can be a strength of qualitative research. I have addressed this bias by taking steps to establish the validity of my process and analysis. I memoed (Bringer et al. 2004, Glaser & Strauss 1967,

Lincoln & Guba 1985, Miles & Huberman 1994) continuously, first with thoughts about the challenges of the research process, then about emerging themes, and finally about the relationships I recognized across themes. These narrative memos allowed me to document the process and progress of my thinking over time, as well as capture the story of the data as it emerged linked directly to the evidence.

The ‘validity’ and goodness of my work is thus rooted in the trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln 1994, 114) of my process—it is transparent, reflexive, and well-documented. I include a large quantity of primary data in my research narrative to include the reader in my process (Wolcott 1994). In line with Lincoln and Guba (1985), I also peer debriefed throughout my process with two committee members by meeting regularly to discuss themes and ideas I was seeing in the analysis, triangulated my data sources with a pre- and post-course survey and field notes, and validated my codebook for inter-coder reliability by co-coding a different uncoded journal alongside each of the same committee members. This process helped me further refine the descriptive language of the codes, enabled the merging of several codes, and demonstrated the need to add new codes. In addition, I made instructor observations, experienced the courses alongside my students, and have engaged informal follow-up relationships with the students.

To facilitate this process I developed a logic diagram, or a concept map,²³ that captures the process of learning and ethical development as described by the data and the codes that emerged. This process helped me identify a central phenomenon—that of the social learning experience—upon which all of the other codes relied. Understanding how the other codes enabled or disabled this process, while also explaining the contexts and conditions that allowed these relationships, helped me understand and articulate the story of the experience more clearly.

²³ See Appendix E for a version of this concept map.

Creating the diagram helped me explain how, why, and when the process of field philosophy is effective based on my theoretical goals. This explanation has led to the descriptive and interpretive understanding of the phenomenon of field philosophy I present here.

IV. Dualisms and Moral Extremism: True/False

One of the consistently recurring descriptive dualisms in the student writing involves the language of true and false. After reading an article about an historical wilderness area (Cronon 2003), in which the author discusses the re-wilding of the landscape by both time and management decisions, Jason writes: “Makes you think about what other land you might have seen that has been falsified. [Has] everything we visit already been visited?” Apparently Jason had not thought before reading this article that nearly all landscapes are impacted by human influence or presence. Since the article discusses a wilderness in the upper Midwest, a historically populated landscape in Jason’s home region, this point is even more interesting as a baseline acknowledgement of Jason’s experience in and with wilderness. His language also suggests that human presence—the apple trees and rotting foundations left by the settlers that have now grown back into the wilderness, the management choices to remove old buildings—creates the falsification of the landscape. This falsification seems to violate the inherent truth or honesty that Jason understands to exist in untouched—or touched but unmanaged—landscapes. His curiosity about past experiences that were crafted for him without his notice conveys a lack of agency for making meaning from or engaging his experience in the world critically. Jason seems now to perceive these past experiences as inauthentic. Thus is it not just the land in the essay that has been made false by management decisions, but Jason’s own life and understanding of the natural world. Here the land itself is false. The land—and Jason’s past—is a thing that has been acted upon unjustly by humans.

Jason also indicates that intentions for action in our relationship with the natural world can be false. In his response to the essay “The Owner” by Robin Kimmerer (2003a), in which a bryologist is hired to grow moss on a wealthy landowner’s property, he writes: this is “a true narrative of someone who really cares deeply about the work they do, but the job they were hired [to do] was painful to perform after the false pretenses were” revealed by the person who hired her. Jason’s implication is that the wealthy landowner’s desire to tinker with his landscape is itself false—not the impacted landscape—and in tension with the truer self of the bryologist who must work at the whim of the owner. The true/false dualism here is rooted in a power dynamic. Ownership and particular ways of altering the landscape are false and bad, Jason explains; these forces are in direct opposition to truth and right action on and for the land, which he associates with wild or native landscapes. This is a problematic moral stance because it sees the world in poles: those who have good intentions and those who do not, the true and the false, the natural and the unnatural. There is no nuance in Jason’s evaluation of the relationships with the natural world portrayed in the articles.

His language is consistent across a number of student pre-course journals. Chris also responds similarly to the Kimmerer (2003a) essay, writing, “Nature is something best left to chance and can never be recreated in a synthetic environment. The fact that the botanist used superglue to hold the moss in place captures the essence of the forgery that takes place in this essay.” Chris implies that nature is akin to art and it is forged²⁴ when recreated. Fake or

²⁴ Unbeknownst to the student, this is also an ethical critique of restoration ecology. Katz (2003) summarizes Elliot’s (1982) analogy between restored natural areas and art forgery to argue, “A ‘restored’ nature is an artifact created to meet human satisfactions and interests” (391). This relationship between the student’s ideas and environmental ethics arguments demonstrates he is thinking in the right directions but does not yet have the evidence to ground his claims. At the same time, the student does not think his way out of a problematic extension of his ideas in the

forged nature is untrue. In his association of nature with luck or chance, Chris suggests that human actions in or on behalf of the natural world—perhaps separate from intention—destroy pure or natural landscapes, making them forgeries. Of course, the article portrays an extreme example in this instance of gluing moss to a rock when it will not transplant on its own. But the stance Chris takes about nature being left to chance does not consider the implications this logic might have for things like land management or restoration. How is one re-creation, or one intervention, different than another? He does not leave this question open. Chris and many of the students still have pure ideas about what is true (and right) and what is false (and wrong), but they do not yet have the awareness to understand the slipperiness of these distinctions.

A third student from the 2008 cohort, Elise, responds to the same essay (Kimmerer 2003a): “The very definition of ownership implies domain over it. Something such as this should be respected and revered for the true, untamable beauty it undoubtedly has. Owning something instantly makes it an object, not worthy of further consideration and respect.” In Elise’s response, truth aligns with particular actions on or for the natural world—lack of ownership—while falsity is enacted by owning. We should respect the true and the beautiful she suggests, which reside in public or free landscapes; we need not respect things that are owned, which have been tamed by the very nature of their relationship with humans. This is interesting because, if extended, Elise’s logic vilifies some ownership-based conservation strategies²⁵, and perhaps even larger ideals like capitalism, which is premised on the concept of private ownership. Additionally, ‘true’ and ‘wild’ are intertwined in this student’s, and in most of the students’, ideas

ways that Katz does, thus still argues from a ‘pure’ nature position, which is where his dichotomous language becomes weak.

²⁵ For example, privatization, permitting, easements, or access to particular public places that relies on purchase or elements of ownership, such as National Parks, a strategy that privileges the experience of some (those who can afford it) over that of others (those who cannot).

about nature. True things are untamed and natural, while created things like art—and perhaps even managed wilderness—are somehow untrue or unnatural in a way that precludes inspiration (and engenders disdain).

V. Dualisms and Moral Extremism: Selfish

Another dichotomy many students invoke identifies—and likely rightly so—selfish behavior as bad and (implied) generosity as morally good. But the way they understand these concepts to manifest in the world, especially as they relate to the arguments we might make on behalf of wilderness, suggests students mean more than the kinds of simple selfish behavior one might enact in his or her daily life, such as taking the last donut, cutting in line, or even voting for politicians who protect personal wealth, which some might argue demonstrates a selfish tendency. The students’ language instead often equates selfishness with what we might understand as an anthropocentric ethical position, or one in which nature (or elements of the natural world) are valuable only in their benefit for or relationship with humans. Additionally, the students’ over-reliance on the word selfish to capture their valuations can lead to inconsistent argumentation in a single students’ unreflected-upon position.

Sarah captures both of these trends in her pre-course journal. In response to an article by Jack Kulpa (2002) that muses on the re-growth of natural places over the stories of homesteaders, she states: “Basically, wilderness is either confined and restricted to humans or it is the subject of human recreation. Both situations sound selfish to me.” Sarah is struggling with the definition of and motivation for wilderness. Either we create wilderness and keep humans out to protect it from degradation (and, it seems, to preserve it for human appreciation) or we let humans in so they can play. Both of these definitions, in Sarah’s mind, are selfish because they serve human enjoyment or desire. She associates human influence and interest as selfish. We can

understand this characterization of selfishness an expression of anthropocentrism, even if other beings and systems might also benefit from the human actions, because Sarah does not recognize these benefits as drivers of wilderness designation or protection. While Sarah does not say she does not like or want wilderness in the world, she does imply that she is troubled by anthropocentric argumentation on its behalf, therefore it is a somewhat flawed concept for her and many of the students as they start to interrogate it. At the same time, Sarah's journal makes clear she wants and values wilderness, so her dualistic stance presents a conflict for her.

Later in her pre-course journal, responding to Rolf Peterson's (2008) essay about whether to genetically rescue the wolf population on Isle Royale National Park or to let it go extinct, Sarah explains: "Peterson ended with his vote to keep and support wolf populations on Isle Royale. I agree and I think this is important although still it is selfish." Here Sarah equates saving the wolf population as selfish for human good, rather than recognize it might be good for the wolves or the ecosystem too. As well, it is as if she is in tension with herself, for she claims Peterson's argument is persuasive, even true, but she is also—as indicated with the 'although'—somewhat disappointed with herself for thinking in what she considers selfish ways. So Sarah believes recreation in the wilderness is selfish, because it 'uses' nature for our enjoyment, while preservation is also selfish because it 'saves' wilderness from us (and for us), therefore still serves humans in some way. She conveys the word selfish in a negative way, while at the same time she also supports some 'selfish' environmental decision-making, demonstrated in her support for genetic rescue. So anthropocentric or human-centered argumentation does not sit well with her, even though she finds the outcome it enables persuasive.

With the limited nature of Sarah's journal entries, we cannot know for sure what she values and why, or even that she intends or is conscious of the multiple ways she employs the

word ‘selfish’. But we might infer from her reactions to the texts that she in fact does not mean the same thing when she uses the word selfish in two different contexts. The tension might be instead that Sarah is actually persuaded by some conservation strategies that include human intervention in natural systems, even if they are driven by goals that could be understood as anthropocentric, like scientific learning or the preservation of animals we care about. But these may or may not even be anthropocentric reasons for conservation. While they pertain to the human good, they might also preserve ideals about the natural world we value, benefit species or individual animals, reduce suffering, or contribute to the health of ecosystems. Perhaps these are elements of the management strategies Sarah supports, but she cannot disentangle the multiple values in a single conservation issue; she can only respond with the dualistic language she knows: good and bad, true and false, generous and selfish. In addition, it is striking that she and other students claim such morally condemning or praising positions so quickly without any attempt to see multiple motives in a single action. Alternatively Sarah may not be persuaded by strategies driven solely by utility or enjoyment of the natural world. Wilderness designation and the genetic rescue of the wolves may or may not have any relationship to selfishness. But selfish is a word Sarah has learned to equate with bad behavior or a problematic motivation for action and so she employs it in response to both articles.

Sarah’s and the students’ language demonstrates a couple of things. First, students have limited vocabulary to discuss natural resource and ethical issues, and through the association of their language to moral perspectives, a limited moral awareness, as well. I do not expect them to have this language or awareness yet. While many of the students have a solid grounding in popular culture environmental issues from personal reading, introductory classes, and coursework, this field philosophy course is often their first formal ethics learning experience.

Still it is important to understand the students' knowledge baselines to best teach them this language and the intellectual content of the course in ways they will respond to and remember (Wolfe 2006). It is also useful to recognize common ways students might express the limitations of their ideas or the conflation they might make that demonstrate value delineations and intention. Second, Sarah's language provides insight into the general tone of utilitarian (use-driven, not necessarily ethical utilitarianism, though this occasionally arises too in the students' language) and anthropocentric thinking—predominant voices in environmental decision-making—about environmental issues. For this student, and a number of others, something about the solutions generated from these perspectives is unsettling or not quite right, even if she cannot identify exactly what it is that troubles her. Often students invoke the word selfish to describe their discomfort with an idea or an action. What they are saying, it seems, is that these approaches feel driven by unacceptable motivations.

This position the students inhabit is complicated when individual selfish behavior—or the embrace of personal freedoms at the expense of impacts on the community—is praised, while collective 'selfish' actions regarding the natural world, as in Sarah's examples about wilderness or genetic rescue, are held in disdain. For example, in response to Garret Hardin's (1968) "The Tragedy of the Commons" Sarah explains, "If someone has much wealth, it is their decision to whom they'll leave their money. Although that situation may leave money in the more irresponsible hands, it is still their money. Private property and private rights are important, even if the overall picture isn't ideal." The tone here is quite different than the distaste Sarah holds for what she considers 'selfish' conservation action, which lends greater insight into how she understands the word 'selfish' more generally. Perhaps it is not selfishness at all that is bad in her estimation, for Sarah embraces what we might refer to as selfish behavior regarding money and

personal freedoms in her response to Hardin. At the same time she critiques what she calls ‘selfish’ action or intentions related to our relationship with the natural world. It is not the word ‘selfish’ itself that is the problem here, but rather her conflation of selfishness with anthropocentric ethical positions regarding the natural world and conservation action.

VI. Dualisms and Moral Extremism: Generous

Sarah’s language also encourages us to ask if generosity, the opposite of selfishness, is an indicator of good moral behavior and intention. If she considers these anthropocentric approaches somehow bad or unsatisfying, does she imply that generosity or sharing, perhaps with(in) and on behalf of our wider natural community, suggest a particular kind of right-ness in the world? This seems to be a fair leap, for later in her on-course journal, in an exercise we do on the last day of the course²⁶, Sarah finds arguments on behalf of our obligations to future generations persuasive: “I do agree that this [the future generations argument] is valid—it is an expression of selflessness and care towards people other than ourselves.” She suggests that selflessness is a responsibility or perhaps even a moral obligation. Contrarily, arguments that rely on her definition of selfishness prohibit moral action, as she writes in response to the argument that wilderness areas promote social bonding, thus are valuable and necessary: “Although I know this is true and I experience social bonding more when I’m with others in nature, I think it’s too selfish of an argument to stand alone. It’s all about the well being of people.” She suggests that arguments to support wilderness need to be for the good of nature itself, rather than for the good of the humans who experience it or benefit from a relationship with it. These responses to

²⁶ See Appendix F for the wilderness arguments exercise lesson plan, as well as Nelson (1998), “An Amalgamation of Wilderness Preservation Arguments,” upon which this exercise is based.

wilderness arguments at the end of the course mirror her responses to the pre-course reading, thus reveal only limited growth in Sarah's thinking.

Other students make parallel claims. John responds in the same exercise to an argument that claims wilderness areas are valuable because they can be appreciated in a similar fashion as art galleries: "This argument is "[t]oo egotistical of [a] way to look at nature. It's not the wilderness that matters, it is what I can get from it that matters." 'Egotistical' here feels relevant or parallel to selfishness, or even anthropocentrism as a moral stance, for it suggests that considering human needs alone is wrong, because it would be a violation of nature's own good. In this way, concepts of community, interconnectedness, generosity, and unselfishness exist as the contrary, perhaps more morally acceptable, position for the students. This idea is fortified by John's response to the argument that wilderness is intrinsically valuable, or has value simply because it exists. He summarizes the position first: "Wilderness without use is still important," then describes it as the "Least selfish reason to have wilderness." Selfishness is directly associated with use; intrinsic value is associated with generosity. The tone here also suggests, then, that utility is bad, while intrinsic value, or nature for nature's sake, is good.

Often students identify the 'selfish' arguments as culturally persuasive, but they describe 'generous' arguments as the ones they are or feel they should be persuaded by, even though they do not believe these arguments will resonate with the wider public. Thus the students reveal their ideas about human nature or sociological truth, while also imply an underlying pull toward ethical motivations that might be what they consider outside the social norm (and away from utilitarian and individualistic arguments). In making this leap, the students are either short-selling the moral imagination of society, or they might be recognizing their own personal tensions between values and action, or between what they care about and how they act in the world.

Either way, the suggestions capture the students' ideas about ethics and motivation. To demonstrate this, we can observe how Nina responds to Richard Louv's (2009) "A Walk in the Woods," an essay about the right children have to experiences in the natural world:

It is our obligation to be the stewards of nature, ...to protect it and keep it healthy. I believe this should be done regardless, because it is what is ethically right, we have the ability to keep watch over it, and thus, we should do what we can to protect it, because nature provides us with so much in return. But if others need a more selfish reason to agree to this obligation, we can use the arguments that Louv presented: that interaction with nature (a healthy nature) positively affects humans' 'ability to learn ... [and our] physical and emotional health.

While first aligning herself with, one could argue, a relational or virtued approach to ethics—we ought to give to nature because we can, it is the right thing to do, and because it gives to us, thus reciprocity is the ethical action—Nina then provides what she considers a less meaningful (and what she thinks might be more persuasive) ethical argument on behalf of the protection of the natural world that we might employ to persuade the public. Suggesting it is human nature to be selfish, she argues that people will likely respond to utilitarian and anthropocentric arguments on behalf of the natural world (even though she is not), thus we should utilize these arguments in the public sphere. Her logic parallels the student responses above, too. For while John identifies intrinsic value as the 'least selfish' reason to defend the value of wilderness, he does not yet say it is the most persuasive for a wide public, or even a good reason. He just claims it is a not selfish reason.

Even more interesting is how students believe we transcend these selfish motivations. Eric responds to Aldo Leopold's (1949) Land Ethic: "I agree that people need to become more

unselfish when dealing with nature. More education will yield better land protection. Man can have a great effect on nature, for better or worse, and it is up to humans to ensure [a] land ethic.” For him, education is the key to becoming un-selfish, or perhaps more generous toward the natural world. It seems fair to assume he means ecocentric when he says un-selfish, for this is actually the position that Leopold invokes in the essay when arguing for an evolution of ethics to include the land. Selfishness here seems again to be equated with anthropocentrism, while generosity means ecocentrism or biocentrism instead, or an understanding that nonhuman nature has moral value or deserves moral consideration apart from its benefit to humans. The question, then, is if education really can provide this kind of shift—will more facts lead us to greater ethical awareness, or to a more inclusive moral community?

Leopold (1949) actually argues they will not in “The Ecological Conscience,” a chapter within his seminal work “The Land Ethic,” the same essay Eric is responding to in the above statement, thus Eric must have missed this point. Other scholars agree, often by making arguments about the indirect relationship between knowing and caring or about the process of arriving at pro-environmental behavior (Kellstedt et al., 2008, Marcinkowski 1998, Moore & Nelson 2010). The students, if prodded, might agree as well, based on the ways they explain their own expanding moral community in their course writing. Thus simplified proposals like Eric’s that students often suggest to enact environmental change—we just need more education, just need to respect nature, etc.—are important places for us to prod students to explore what really might be needed to affect a shift in attitude and behavior, especially if we are going to help them move toward an empowered responsibility for this change. One easy place to start is to ask them what—in this field philosophy context especially—has impacted them the most in their relationship with the natural world. Based on my data, they are likely to say things like awe,

inspiration, observation of other beings and beauty, and spending time in place. These things are certainly part of the learning process, but they are not often included common references to ‘education’. In this way we can help students not only deepen their thinking beyond selfish/generous dualisms, but also conceive of ways they might help others do the same, especially as they are talking about the kinds of arguments we need to make on behalf of the natural world and wilderness landscapes.

All of these examples about selfishness versus generosity, or anthropocentric versus ecocentric positions on behalf of the natural world, align fairly consistently with other dichotomous language the students employ. Throughout the journals students associate the words fake, unnatural, and false with humans, anthropogenic impacts on the natural world, and problematic motivations for action on behalf of the natural world. These words parallel the ways the students employ the language of selfishness. Contrarily, the words true, natural, and real describe nonhuman nature and systems; often students condone these characteristics in similar ways as they do implied generosity or selflessness.

VII. Dualistic Thinking and Its Relevance for Conservation

An analysis of the ways students commonly invoke these dualisms reveals that the students often perceive selfishness—either individual or cultural—to be a driver in the destruction of the natural world. These selfish motivations are connected to particular behaviors, as Emily, a student in 2009, writes in response to Thoreau’s (2007) “Walking”: “We are always trespassing. In one sense the earth does not belong to us, so we are constantly trespassing on nature. In more popular modern thought, we are constantly trespassing because ownership of land has caused a selfish mentality.” Many students respond this way to the concept of ownership as it emerges in the pre-course reading. Later, in response to Lynn White Jr.’s (1967)

essay “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”, Emily explains that the “author focuses on the selfishness of the Industrial Revolution, doing exactly what humans want without consideration of the natural world. It is this kind of selfishness that leads to rapid destruction of resources and wildlife.” Selfish behavior, she argues, including land ownership and the rampant progress of industrial development, drive a problematic relationship with the natural world and the ultimate destruction of nature.

Students writing across all three years of data collection equate selfishness with utility, the capitalistic Western worldview, and unacceptable motivations for action. This may be because they have limited language to capture motivations, or perhaps they do not yet understand that utility and intrinsic value can co-exist, or that we can respect and love a thing and still value it for what it 'does' for us (likely because this is a challenging concept they have not been exposed to). This thinking complicates concepts like conservation for the students, as we saw in the discussion of Sarah’s writing, because conservation action is often consequentially driven, sometimes by potentially anthropocentric motivations, such as alleviating guilt for past harms against the natural world or protecting a species we want to exist, even while it might be 'natural' for a species to go extinct.

This highlights a need to articulate for students various approaches to conservation and to distinguish consequence-driven versus motivation-driven action, since they seem to value a virtue ethics approach to environmental decision-making and natural resource management, or at least suggest an appreciation for the intentions and motivation behind one’s actions on behalf of the natural world, not just the consequences of the action. Many students think attending to the needs of the community—and living a life driven by relationships and community connections—is good and 'true' and honorable. They demonstrate this thinking with their consistent critical

evaluation of selfish motivations and in journal responses like Tom's, who writes, "[T]his goes back to the thought that we are part of a community that gives and receives. Together in this community we enrich each other and invoke an almost necessary feeling." It is not entirely clear what Tom means by 'necessary', but its use here conjures a similar tone to student use of words like 'real' and 'true', the kinds of words students invoke to capture concepts and actions they consider good. Similarly, Jessica explains: "Our existence depends so entirely on our environment and community of organisms. [Because of this] I can no longer consider my actions trivial." It is community membership in and with the natural world that makes Jessica want to act in morally responsible ways.

Contrarily, students consistently express frustration with individualistic motivations. Thus, demonstrating ethical approaches that capture a community-focused approach to conservation (see Goralnik & Nelson 2011) will help them articulate and enact consistent ideas about our responsibilities to the natural world in ways they find satisfying. If instead their fear of selfishness pervades, then we enable a confusing relationship to persist, for they feel bad or conflicted about potentially meaningful actions—actions that might even be in line with the students' values—we might take on behalf of the natural world that also benefit human needs or desires. Always prioritizing the 'natural' or anti-selfish position, especially without fully interrogating these concepts, might lead students to inhabit what sometimes gets referred to as the fascist ecocentric position (see Nelson 1996), an anti-individual stance, as if by shunning anthropocentrism one must run to the other pole to establish a more acceptable identity.

Healthy communities cannot exist without healthy individuals whose needs are being met, and this borderland, or middle place where utility meets respect and gratitude—perhaps at the honorable harvest (Robin Kimmerer, presentation at Michigan State University, 2/2010), in

which we interact with the natural world with both gratitude and reciprocity, valuing utility, beingness, and system health all at one time—or where the needs of the individual and the community are both considered, is an important element of an appropriate relationship with the natural world. As Jessica articulates, “We need to explore the ‘middle ground’ between the natural and the unnatural, we should explore discussions of both use and non use of the land.” For in some ways, the selflessness the students are drawn to is as much a representation of dualistic thinking as selfishness is. When all actions taken on behalf of oneself are selfish and thus bad, and then when all actions taken on behalf of the community, or on behalf of others, are good, then perhaps the idea of community is somewhat undeveloped or un-nuanced, even lacking of the kind of challenge and depth true community demands. This might be why borderland places (see discussion below), the physical and figurative places that lie between here and there or that straddle two different ways of approaching the world, are so interesting. For these places represent the places where the needs of both the individual and the community overlap, perhaps even conflict. They require an awareness of interconnectedness, multiple value commitments, and the consequences of one’s actions. By demanding some kind of values prioritization, borderlands challenge students to confront romantic notions of community or the natural world and push them to adopt a more complex, reflective awareness.

VIII. Borderlands: Nuance, Conflicting Values, and Transference

A common trend in the student writing is a heavy reliance on romantic notions of community, nature, and human responsibility to affect the natural world before the course, which then shifts to a more complex and reflective awareness about the challenges of true community, ecology, and the complicated nature of good human action by the end of the course. With the exception of several students from 2009, when the course size was likely too large to effectively

enable the kind of community-building and responsibility necessary for meaningful ethical shifts (paper in process), most students realized this transition from some kind of romanticism to complexity. This process looks different for different participants, but there are common elements that unite the students' learning experiences (see the following chapter) and that foster the kind of ethical and learning shifts I have seen. These include personal growth and self awareness, social learning and the development of a safe learning community, emotional and curriculum engagement (enhanced by awe, inspiration, and place relationships), the development of agency and an empowered sense of responsibility for action in the world, and an expanded moral community or deeper relationship with the natural world. These things—not necessarily linearly related—lead to reflective awareness and intended or manifest transference of course learning to the students' home environments.

The most dramatic instances of this shift from dualism to complexity, though, arose in response to what we might call borderlands, or the physical and figurative landscapes where students have an opportunity to confront their previously held values, re-configure them based on new learning or exposure, and recognize a re-prioritization or a depth of complexity they had not before acknowledged. For Sarah (the student who above showed consistent reliance on dualistic language both at the beginning and end of the course), this borderland was literally between here and there, or between Isle Royale and home. Sarah's moral borderland occurred when she watched a wolf cross Highway 61 in front of her car—from the forest to the lake—as she drove away from the island on her way home from the course, only three hours after disembarking from the ferry. In an unprompted and un-assigned journal response Sarah wrote following this event, she muses:

So then we ask again, what is wilderness? We saw a wolf out of our expected context and it was equally exciting. I do feel badly though, because the wolf was confused about the highway and was definitely scared of the cars. In this way, I am grateful for ‘Leave No Trace’ on Isle Royale. It gives wolves respect to have their own habitat. Seeing the wolf was awesome and I will continue to debate the ethics of ecology, wilderness, etc. in order to find compatible solutions.

This is remarkable because earlier in her journals, in response to Turner’s (2002) “From Woodcraft to ‘Leave No Trace’: Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America,” Sarah criticized Leave No Trace (LNT) principles because she felt they caused a human/nature separation and allowed park policies to disrupt one’s ability to respect and care for the natural world. She wrote:

I do not like the idea that ‘leave no trace’ encourages back- packers to stay on the already-used sites, so that the wild areas would be left wild. In some ways that’s a compromise. We allow packers on the trails who leave minimal impact and then the wilderness is still protected. But I still am not okay with this feeling of disconnect. The wilderness is then not ‘ours’ to take care of—it’s separate and people don’t care for that which isn’t theirs.

She believed the LNT principles separate humans from nature and this frustrated her, because it grated against her idea of a true relationship with the natural world, one characterized by the opportunity to experience wild nature unmanaged and unscripted by human intervention. But Sarah’s early position didn’t consider the intentions of LNT for the natural world more widely, rather she only thought about their impacts on her own experience or the experiences of other humans itching for raw exposure to the natural world. Her more complex understanding of Leave

No Trace principles for backcountry camping and travel after the course, in which Sarah looks beyond herself and to the needs of her wider natural community, occurred in the borderland on Highway 61.

Her post-course borderland reflection demonstrates a shift in empathy from the start of the course—where her language suggests a romanticized image of the human/nature relationship—to the end of the course—where she inhabits a more complex, reflective view that attempts to understand the wolf’s needs from its perspective. This is exciting, especially as it occurred in the transition between her faraway experience in a ‘special’ landscape, the wilderness, and her return to the ‘near’ everyday environment of her home landscape. One of the themes of the course is understanding how, in the words of Kathleen Dean Moore (2004c), to “take our wildland values down from the mountain,”(101), or how to understand our obligations to the natural world by learning to transfer the value and meaning we bestow upon our special places to our daily lives and actions. This entails overcoming what we might refer to, invoking Moore’s own language, the near/far or the sacred/mundane paradoxes. What she means by this is that the boundaries between these poles are far fuzzier than we often admit. We can revere the mundane with the same respect we apply to the sacred by attending to it closely, forming a relationship with it, and caring about it; we have an obligation to love our near places in similar ways as we do our far places, for they are connected and related. Such awareness requires the realization that that one’s environmental ethic must inform all actions, not just actions in some places. For not only are all places connected—the boundaries between here and there, water and land, are fluid and unfixed—but an ethic is not just a hobby or a set of rules. Rather it is a way of being in the world, an expression of one’s values that serves as a guide to action.

Sarah's learning, then, reflects a better understanding of the near/far dynamic and the actual needs of the natural world, in this case the wolves and their habitat. Ownership was previously a problematic construct for Sarah, but when she understands that the wolves need their 'own' habitat, she adopts a more nuanced position on ownership: it is not wholly good or bad or right or wrong. Instead it has gained meaning and value in place and through experience. The shifting context of wild animals becomes important in her understanding of nature, wilderness, and our obligations to the natural world. Thus, in crossing the literal borderland between here and there, wilderness and home, Sarah encountered a moral borderland, as well, a place that asked her to question her previous valuations and re-structure, then re-prioritize them; when she experienced an actual values conflict between her desire to have full access with the wild experience and her valuation of the wolves' lives as beings in the world, she experienced an ethical dilemma. This dilemma and the resultant reflection enabled her to articulate a shift in her environmental ethic, or her understanding of an appropriate relationship with the natural world.

For other students, we might say that the Isle Royale field philosophy experience is itself a borderland. Isle Royale is an island, a place with fluid boundaries between land and water, so close to Canada an ice bridge can eclipse or potentially solidify the once watery boundary and tie island to land. While the island is a wilderness, our group campsite in Windigo lies in the 2% of non-wilderness land in a park; it is remote and in the woods, but also a quarter-mile from the ranger station, flush toilets, and a small store that sells candy and souvenirs the students (and instructors) sometimes consume. The island, and our camp on it, are themselves places between here and there, the slashes in the human/nature, wilderness/civilization relationships. Brendan articulates this placement in an on-course reflection:

Monica [a staff person on the ferry to Isle Royale from Minnesota] has been working on the Winona boat [the ferry] since the year I was born. What happens to her job security if a certain demographic of people stop paying for brief snippets of seasonal wilderness visitation? Our campsite was perfectly positioned between the edge of these disappointing observations of tourist interaction and the unpredictable space of moose sightings and stars. We may not have developed any solutions to the problems Abbey was writing about, but at least we now have a deeper understanding of them.

The literal borderland placement of our campsite enabled for Brendan a philosophical tension between the reality of wilderness consumption—where tourists buy brief visits to a faraway place—and the ecology of wilderness places—characterized by aesthetic inspiration and wildlife encounters. He was experiencing what felt like the very dilemma Edward Abbey (1968) describes in “Polemic: Industrial Tourism and the National Parks”, an article in our course pack. Our trip provided practical context for his intellectual course learning, thus played another important borderland role, blurring the line between school and play, a move that helps students understand that learning happens everywhere, not just in the walls of the university.

While our Isle Royale field philosophy course is a rigorous academic experience complete with a large volume of reading and writing, challenging discussions, and a high expectation for engagement and participation, it also encourages aesthetic appreciation of place, emotional responses to ideas, relationship-building and reflection as academic content. These are new additions to the academic experience of most students; they are skills and thinking the students likely associate with their everyday life, not school life. In addition, we hike and cook and take photos alongside our research, writing, and dialogue. Class work is woven into daily life, and daily life becomes class. Nina captures the breadth and interwoven nature of the

different kinds of learning on our course in a list she made in her final reflection, which details what she learned in her Isle Royale field philosophy experience:

- You can cook actual and good food (not just typical camp food) while camping, easily, and I can make that food alright too, surprisingly.
- Moose calves are born blonde, and moose are larger than you think.
- You can track wolves by radio collar telemetry and I can now use the telemetry machine.
- Island culture is something to aspire to: Everyone...visitors, staff, researchers...are so nice. Everyone stops to say hello or for a quick chat on passing...EVERYONE. It is a different breed out here....
- It seems that each person, even if all of like mindset and working towards the same goal, have different opinions and view the same things in very different ways. It is important to explain yourself well and to listen to others because they often will bring up points that you have overlooked which may help to sharpen your own perspective.
- While we commonly recognize some objects have utilitarian value, and we sometimes realize some objects have intrinsic value, it is possible for objects to have both intrinsic and utilitarian value.
- Language is a tricky thing. Words may hold different meanings for different people depending on what the individual brings to the word.
- French braids are a wonderful option when you haven't showered in a week....
- Lake Superior is only really cold the first 2-3 times you jump in. After about the fourth jump off the dock, it doesn't feel all that cold.
- The fuel dock is a wonderful place to star gaze.
- Huginnin Trail is insanely beautiful.
- The visitor's center is full of good books.
- Loon and wolf calls really do sound quite similar.
- A nice long trail feels great at the end of the day.
- Fox urine resembles the smell of a skunk.
- This trip turned out to be a priceless experience.

Nina's learning tally includes multiple kinds of knowledge: self, natural history, technical, interpersonal, ethical, literary, practical, place-based, observational, and reflective. None of these knowledges is any more meaningful to her than the others, as she suggests with the open and curious ways she presents them. They are nested and complimentary; for her they are important and relevant because they are pieces of a larger whole. The intertwining of practical and personal learning—things she will take easily into her relationships and lifestyle away from the island—with ethical, scientific, and natural history learning encourages Nina to apply the academic

learning at home, too. For these knowledges are not separate or finite stores of information. They are related to her own development and awareness in vital ways.

The field philosophy course is a borderland between learning and life, experience and ethics, a place where how one acts in class bangs heads with how one acts in the world. This contact zone can cause a re-valuation and re-prioritization of ideas and actions similar to what Sarah experienced on the highway. It can also encourage a similar embrace of complexity. As Jake wrote in his final reflection: “From this adventure I have learned to question the question. My response to a question has always been to find the answer as quick as possible. Now I will take a moment, or a lifetime, to explore the question before responding.” When he took the course in 2008, Jake was an advanced doctoral candidate in the sciences, a sophisticated scholar and mature student. But it took a week in the woods, in the borderland of Isle Royale, for him to develop the intellectual sophistication to inhabit the grey zone between knowing and not knowing, as if he has learned altogether a different way of knowing, learning, and approaching our relationship with the natural world.

Other students had similar transformations. Kelly explains how exactly these borderland experiences are important, especially in light of the dualistic thinking many students express in their pre-course writing. In a reflection halfway through his course in 2010 he wrote: “Today I had quite a few moments that make me want to hit the reset on my brain and begin to build my philosophy from the ground up again. I realize a lot of what I believe may clash as I have tried to make some things black and white.” Not only does he begin to inhabit the grey zone, he recognizes his previous tendency to create false dichotomies. “I think though that the most important thing I learned is that we have to be conscious of the multitude of opinions out there and understand they may have valid points. I also feel it is important to help inform those who

have false notions of facts that they use to back up their ideas,” he continues. “This is why I think it is important that I came to Isle Royale to learn philosophy. I learned in the environment I want to protect. The place, not some book, is teaching me how I feel as I study about how I feel and what I ought to do.” These experiences matter. They are not just neat learning experiences, but consequential opportunities for students to develop ethical awareness and a sense of responsibility for their knowledge as it manifests in the world.

Without our time on the island—in the borderland where previously held values collide with new learning, emotional awareness, relationships, and a physical experience with(in) the complexity of ecological concepts and the challenge of managed wilderness—our curriculum consists of fairly conventional environmental literature and ethics exposure. Students read a bunch, write a bunch, reflect a little, and are guided by probing questions. These things are important and valuable. But giving students opportunities to re-evaluate their values when prioritization matters, when something is at stake, matters too. John, a student in 2009, explains, in a sentiment echoed in several student reflections, “I think having the opportunity to be knocked out of your routine gives you a rare chance to reflect on your routine, analyze it, see it for what it is, and perhaps make changes to improve it.”

And there is a lot at stake in our relationships with the natural world and in our communities, which the students may or may not recognize until they are in the borderland and understand the relevance of their learning in the world. Kelly straddled this line one evening in 2010, when a couple of us had a conversation with a friendly old fisherman who was camped on his boat at the dock. As Gene, the fisherman, fed us fresh-caught fish he had pan-fried while we held our evening discussion on the dock, he explained he had been fishing on and around Isle Royale for fifty years, since he was a kid and his relatives had an old cabin on the island. He had

a special relationship with the island and Lake Superior, but he understood the place differently than we did, especially in his hatred for the island wolves, which he saw as pests. He shared with us his hope that the wolves be removed from the island to protect the moose. I talked a bit about the important roles I understand wolves to play in island ecology, scientific learning, and as beings just living their lives as they know how. We disagreed but in a friendly way. The students observed our interaction. Kelly reflected on this exchange at the end of the course:

Maybe my actions and attempts at kindness and patience will give inspiration to others to find out for themselves how they want to live with Nature. I think that is a problem for both myself and many other people, we don't know exactly how we want to live with Nature. Do you want to be primitive? Or is air conditioning and sports cars your primary concerns? This has a lot to do with how you approach a conversation with somebody. I learned this as I watched Lissy [my instructor] and Gene talk about the moose and wolves. Both people loved the outdoors, the animals, and Isle Royale, but they had different values and reasons. Their differences defined the conversation from the beginning, and with the amount of time they had they could only talk so deeply about it. I have to be open-minded, but solidly in place to defend my own virtues as well.

In observing the conversation between his instructor and this island fisherman, Kelly learns first-hand what is at stake in our definitions and environmental values, as well as gains a concrete understanding of the fragile human dynamics required to engage value-laden conservation dialogue. Kelly stood on the border between two paradigms and gained an awareness of the kinds of virtues he needs to cultivate to participate in these challenging conservation ethics conversations, as well. He is thinking about the lifestyle implications of our island learning, committing to work on its behalf, and setting goals to allow him to transfer his learning

effectively. Kelly is not asking what facts he needs to know to engage an appropriate relationship with the natural world. Rather he is wondering how he might best communicate empathetically, think critically, and defend his actions and ideas in a kind and consistent way. This is remarkable learning enabled by an experience in the borderland.

IX. Conclusion

Field philosophy intends to educate students for content knowledge and cognitive development, as well as help them interrogate and develop relationships with people, place, and content. Course goals include a deepened awareness of complexity, empowerment and a commitment to work toward the address of environmental problems or to act in alignment with one's values, and the cultivation of love and respect for systems and beings. Student reliance on dualistic characterizations of people, problems, and environmental action betray a problematic understanding of issues, responsibility, and the work necessary for environmental change. The specific dualisms the students invoke, as well as the different ways these dualisms are used, also demonstrate student knowledge and ethical baselines that can help us understand how best to focus curriculum and identify growth in subsequent student writing and thinking. Experience in the natural world, then, can provide students opportunities to engage borderlands, the places that are both learning and life, special and familiar, practical and theoretical; borderlands are at once individually experienced and communally resonant. It is in these borderlands that the crystalline distinctions between students' previously invoked dualisms lose power and relevance. Boundaries are blurred, positions challenged. Encountering these places can help students understand and articulate value conflicts, prioritize commitments, and appreciate the un-straightforward nature of moral decision-making and action.

These are important learning and ethical outcomes, especially for the role they play in

helping students develop citizenship and participatory skills and values. Attending to multiple voices, caring about the consequences of one's actions on his or her community, committing to the challenging work of environmental and community action on behalf of one's love for wilderness, nonhuman others, natural systems, or a wide notion of healthy relationships—these are meaningful and powerful things to take away from a learning experience. Not all of our students will work for environmental organizations or causes; most of our students will not become active environmentalists or ethicists, writers or scholars. But they will all be members of communities, all actors in relationship with the natural world whether consciously or unconsciously. They can choose to inhabit these roles as moral agents, and it is our goal to provide them the skills, intellectual seeds, and emotional motivation to do so. Experiential environmental philosophy, in its capacity as a borderland, does just this.

But the opportunity to teach field courses in beautiful places with a very small student group is a luxury. So what can this understanding of borderlands, emotional involvement with course content, and experiential learning contribute to our scholarship and practice more widely? Plenty. The outcomes will be different, and it seems safe to assume they will likely be less dramatic when the learning community does not live, learn, and travel together in such a tight unit, especially for environmental ethics curriculum so focused on the relationships between communities and responsibilities. But different does not mean bad, and there are all sorts of ways to develop community or communities in the classroom, engage experiential learning techniques, make students responsible for each other and ideas, develop and reflect upon gratitude, create a sense of the stakes involved in our relationship with the natural world and in our daily ethical decision-making, and welcome emotional, aesthetic, personal, community, curiosity-driven, and playful reactions to course material into different kinds of learning environments.

First of all, encouraging and attending to these reactions—what excites students, how do they care about course ideas, what do they care about in their out-of-school lives that might apply to in-class learning—will help identify ways to inspire students to bring their in-class learning back to their beyond-school lives, as well as show them that their beyond-school world has relevance and impact in our classroom work. This interplay is important. Caring and knowledge are not directly related (Marcinkowski 1998) and helping students care about what they are learning in a way that they will want to carry it with them into their lives will require their investment in it. It will require a moral, social, or personal imperative (Moore & Nelson 2010). This might mean straying a bit from a scripted curriculum, and this is good. While we cover consistent material in Isle Royale, we also adapt this curriculum every year to meet the learning needs and curiosities of the individual students and group, as well as build in opportunities for the students to explore ideas and place-based subjects on their own, including student taught classes and open-format final projects. Our field philosophy course is a student-centered learning environment (Barr & Tagg 1995), an approach that works equally well in the classroom.

As well, it is useful to pay attention to the language students use in writing and discussion at the beginning of the semester to understand the kinds of connotations they make, the limitations of their moral awareness and vocabulary, and the types of conservation or environmental actions they react most strongly to—ownership, endangered species intervention, habitat or landscape restoration, hunting, small-scale or local agricultural systems, etc. This knowledge might help an instructor identify what kinds of case studies, class debates, experiential opportunities, or research projects would be most effective in crafting a sort of borderland learning experience that will challenge student values, demand a challenging values prioritization, or spark a personal and

emotional investment that will enable the students to transcend their ‘stuck’ thinking about an issue or a concept. These things are all do-able and relevant to on-campus or classroom learning and they all directly respond to the learning this research has enabled.

The work on field philosophy has also demonstrated that the opportunity to develop a relationship with the natural world is important for student environmental learning and ethical development. These experiences serve as a baseline for some students, who may not have engaged their past experiences reflectively, who may have had past experiences but might be unaware of the relevance of these experiences to theoretical content, or who may not have had any experiences in the natural world to help them understand the complexity of classroom learning in a meaningful way. In addition, shared experiences with the learning group enables a related and common reference point to draw upon in discussion, reflection, and class activities. In some ways, shared experiences level the playing field and allow students an interpersonal connection, which is a necessary and important piece of this kind of learning (see next chapter).

Regular visits to an on-campus natural area (or farm) for observation or interaction is one way to stimulate the development of a relationship with the natural world, and it is quite successful (paper in process). But field trips, homework assignments that require nature journaling or outdoor reflection, and in-class creative nonfiction or reflective writing that allows students the opportunity to think and write about their relationship with the natural world at different stages in their lives are also meaningful ways to engage a relationship with the natural world. Past and current relationships with the natural world can then serve as jumping off points to discuss how interpersonal relationships—for example those in the learning environment, which can be stimulated by regular group work, out-of-class experiences that allow informal conversation, and small-group discussions that include personal, not just academic, dialogue—

share characteristics with our relationships with the natural world, or might. It is important, then, to interrogate the concept and practice of relationship-building as an element of course study, as well. Encourage students to reflect on the relationships in their lives with family, friends, and places. Help them understand how and why some relationships are effective, and why being in relationship is different than spending time in a place or around people; this is an important step in learning how to build and maintain relationships. While these things are not often included in academic environmental ethics curriculum, we might be doing students a disservice by leaving them out. For expecting students to cultivate an ethic without understanding what this means or what this takes is unfair. If we hope they learn that environmental ethics can be a community- and relational expression of our obligations near and far, we need to guide them to this awareness.

The important thing is to listen to what our students are saying, to pay attention to the words they use, the concepts they react most strongly to, and the ideas that challenge them the most. These are our opportunities. For if we are concerned not just with what our students learn, but how they care about and intend to apply this learning in their lives, then we need to make sure they have the tools to do this well. This includes helping them nurture the curiosity to continue learning when they leave our classes. Field philosophy, this research has shown, is an effective and meaningful approach to helping students develop or deepen their relationship with the natural world, form an attentive and nuanced environmental ethic, and cultivate responsibility for environmental action. But we should also start studying other models that might enable the same kinds of shifts so we can impact a wider student body and better understand effective strategies that can enable these meaningful shifts. These things matter. There is a lot at stake. I hope this research is just the start of the discussion.

CHAPTER 6

EXPERIENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY: THE PATH FROM DUALISM TO COMPLEXITY

I. Introduction

For three years I have collected and analyzed student writing (pre-course summary/response essays for 31 course pack essays; on-course journals and daily unguided reflections; and 3-page post-course reflections) from a field philosophy course I teach in Isle Royale National Park, a wilderness island in northwest Lake Superior. Through this conventional qualitative content analysis²⁷ (Hsieh & Shannon 2005) I have found the students' pre-course and on-course writing to be an effective indicator of their ethical and knowledge baselines and a foil against which post-course growth can be understood. Pre-course reading responses, when observed alongside daily on-course and post-course reflections, can help identify shifts in individual student thinking, make comparisons across students, and identify recurrent themes in the processes of ethical development, learning, and self-awareness.

This student writing data (IRB approval #X08-185) demonstrates that many students hold a dualistic or romantic conception about natural resource issues, environmental responsibility, and problem-solving in their pre-course reading responses. Students identify actions as true or false, ideas as good or bad; they glorify representations of wild, untouched, unmanaged nature and the beliefs and practices of indigenous groups, while they vilify overt management, restoration, and constructed representations of nature. By the end of the course, though, many students inhabit a significantly more complex grey zone. They demonstrate this shift by identifying and empathizing with multiple points of view, appreciating the challenging process

²⁷ Please see Appendix B for the methodology that guided this research and analysis.

of problem-solving, and claiming personal responsibility for effecting change, rather than assuming problematic present conditions are someone else's fault or suggesting change is something that happens by others around them.

This journey from romanticization to complexity, or from dualistic thinking to nuance, is dramatically experienced in what we might consider “borderlands,” the physical or figurative places that ignite our moral awareness and force a re-conceptualization of our obligations (see previous chapter). Certainly, not all learning and ethical transformations emerge so poetically. My data suggests, though, a series of steps and relationships that are integral to the development of a critical and complex awareness, as well as a wider moral community, or the belief that beings and systems other than humans are the holders of moral value or deserve moral consideration. However, a wider community alone will not necessarily lead to changed action in the world, for people often act in opposition to their professed values. Students need also to be empowered to act. The ultimate goal for my version of field philosophy is the transference of course content and learning to the students' home lives, either intended or manifest. I aim to help them, in the words of Kathleen Dean Moore (2004c), “take [their] wildland values down from the mountain”(101).

This is a challenge. In my courses, students display a general lack of agency and voice in their pre-course writing (which they complete before the experiential field component). This manifests both as a lack of action agency—not taking initiative to act in the world, expecting that decisions happen around them, blaming institutions for the problems in the world or in camp, or not taking responsibility for their own learning from texts or experiences—and also as an absence of moral agency. Students do not feel responsible for their lifestyle decisions or environmental change; though they recognize and remark upon goodness and good behavior in

the world, and they expect others to act in these ways, they do not tie this awareness directly to their own actions as an obligation. Field philosophy, though, in its focus on emotional engagement (Skinner et al. 2009, Wentzel 1997) and affective learning variables (Alagona & Simon 2010, Fien 1997, Johnson & Frederickson 2000, Proudman 1992), which through environmental education research (Hungerford & Volk 1990, Smith-Sebasto 1995) are connected to the locus of control (the feeling that one's actions can be effective) and empowerment (the motivation to act on behalf of things one cares about), can help students overcome this lack of agency. This is an important step in the process from dualistic thinking to complexity and an empathetic moral awareness. Coupled with an empowered sense of responsibility, this kind of awareness can (and I found often does) lead to the transference of course learning to new environments. In this chapter I will use student writing from three years my field philosophy course in Isle Royale National Park to illuminate the stages of this process, including the development of self-awareness, participation in a safe social learning community, full (cognitive and affective) engagement with course content, and finally responsibility and transference.

II. Agency, or Lack of Agency

Pre-course writing demonstrates that students feel a lack of agency or voice to affect environmental problem-solving, impact policy, or engage in meaningful conversations with texts or authority. This lack of agency then impacts their sense of responsibility to act purposefully toward these ends. From the data I have identified two forms of this lack of agency or disempowerment: one is a general laziness to dig deep and act when things might be challenging—which may or may not actually be laziness, but might instead be fear or another related emotional hurdle—so even if the students are disappointed with a circumstance or an issue, they sit back and allow it to continue to happen. The second form of this lack of agency is

related to a feeling that one's actions will not result in intended consequences, which suggests an inclination toward consequentialist ethics (where an act is ethical if it results in good consequences), rather than an approach to morality that honors virtuous intentions. Therefore, the students suggest, acting good might not be worth the effort, because their actions will not affect grand change. They expect others—institutions, authorities—to act in these ways, thus the students understand there is good and right action in the world and it matters. But they feel their voice is not heard, their actions not counted, and their choices not important in the larger context of environmental decision-making and choice.

The most basic and troubling sense of ineffectiveness occurs in response to course readings. Because students are perhaps accustomed to hand-holding or waiting for someone with more authority to act for them, they do not acknowledge their own capabilities or take responsibility to act themselves. They make statements like: “Honestly that story really didn’t give much to me...[I]t is hard to see the relevance of stories such as this in today’s developed world....Perhaps I’m being totally ignorant, it wouldn’t surprise me considering the society that I am a part of.” This student suggests meaning should be handed to him, rather than take responsibility to develop his own meaning. He also blames his lack of agency and critical analysis skills on culture and society. His failure is not his responsibility.

Students fault authority in a similar way when discussing their experiences the world: “It is the unfortunate part of the great American Contradiction that we can get this glimpse of that wilderness in very few places for ourselves. It has been taken away from us; those experiences have been revoked from citizens by our own government in an attempt to make them more available,” wrote one student. She suggests the power holders—here the government—are taking things away from the culture consumers, the powerless, who have no part in the process of

culture or policy. Similarly, another student responded to a course pack essay: “It makes me want to keep an ear tuned to the happenings of the NPS to see what kind of policies may occur in the future.” He suggests that policy decisions happen around him; he is not a part of the process.

At the same time, students revere these power-holders, or at least dare not question them: “Many problems are said to be caused by the over-population of earth. There is no punishment for over breeding. In fact, the UN has declared that family size is human right. What rational person is going to argue against the UN’s definition of human rights?” Power-holders, like the United Nations, have answers, this student suggests, and one must be crazy to interrogate those answers, even about intangibles or un-evidenced things like rights. Another student writes: “The parts of his argument I disagree with...I can consider to be simply different interpretations—and who am I to judge whether Sanders is right or wrong?” Here the student is afraid to offer an opinion or disagree with an argument, even with evidence from the text (Sanders 2008). The author is the authority, and rather than defer to his power as in the previous example, this student defers instead to relativism, an equally slippery slope and yet another expression of disempowerment. For relativism—the belief that all ideas and positions are equally valid depending on one’s perspective—fails to stand for an idea, claim a position, or trust one’s ability to engage evidence to arrive at a grounded conclusion. Therefore deferring to relativism simply reflects a fear or a lack of power to assert one’s own ideas or to speak in dialogue with more established voices. This perceived lack of agency disallows students from creating their own evidence-based opinions about texts, ideas, and arguments, which is significant problem if we expect them to identify and critique sound argumentation as ethics students. Of course, they may fail to engage evidence and argumentation because they are intellectually lazy, but this is, in

some ways, just a different form of disempowerment. If they do not care enough to act in the world or in their education, they fail to be agents in their own growth or learning.

As well, these expressions of powerlessness are occasionally coupled with platitudes of agency that lack specificity, clarity, and urgency. Meaningless statements about action ultimately have the same impact as inaction. For example, one student wrote: “I can only hope we wise up and stop abusing the wilderness or I fear the withdrawal symptoms of no more wildernesses will be too hard to face....Nonetheless we should hold dear the few pristine areas left for us to enjoy.” The general actions of “wising up” and “holding dear” lack any real momentum. In fact, they are nearly meaningless hopes for a vague set of actors, identified only as “we.” While the sentiment is fine, agreeing with the course pack author’s general points and identifying the student as sympathetic to wilderness issues, such statements lack any substantive agency.

All of these examples of student disempowerment or lack of agency demonstrate the work that needs to be done. Students need more than just knowledge about ideas and issues. They need to be empowered to engage these ideas, develop relationships with the literature, and claim their own voices in dialogue with other thinkers if they are to effectively engage the learning process of personal, community, and ethical awareness and responsibility. So how can we guide the process to agency, and how do we recognize it when it happens? My data indicates that agency develops in steps, which becomes clear through a couple of examples. Early in her course, Jessica, a student in 2009, wrote a reflection that captures the first, tentative move toward agency:

Continuing the day with a TEK [traditional ecological knowledge] discussion only increased my meditation on impact. What is my effect on the land? On East Lansing? Is there anything substantial I can do in my current situation? It’s easy to think about the

way we live on this remote island, but it isn't very comparable to how I live in East Lansing. I can't allow myself to take a defeatist attitude. People have to realize that sustainability is possible in the wilderness, farm-rural areas and even in urban areas. Jessica is thinking about the challenges of transference, though her ideas are still rooted in generalized statements. At the same time, she realizes she has some responsibility for enacting change and there are things she can work on—her attitude, her awareness of personal impacts—to contribute to change. Later in the course she wrote:

Today's discussion of the Apostle Island article [Cronon 2003] brought up a lot of thoughts for me about my personal ethical identity. I've been confused about the translation of the conversations we have had here and my actions at home.... I have often felt overwhelmed about my life and my connection to the environment. It's so easy to become apathetic about action when all around me I see laziness and "inactive activists"... I have often thought "What can I do on my own?" Why do my actions matter? The burden seems too great. But today it was encouraging to hear [the instructor] say that once you have defined and solidified your personal ethics, no one can shake you. I know that I want to devote time and energy into a project that is deserving of my passion. [Perhaps] it is increasing awareness of environmental and social conflicts, more specifically working towards finding sustainable methods for urban and suburban dwellers...It scares me that people are scared. I need to build the confidence...to help usher in a new and hopefully better relationship with the environment. The first step will be to define myself and my ethical identity....I also recognize that there are things in my life that I need to change. I can act now and practice what I preach in order to reduce my impact.

This is a loaded and complicated reflection, but it shows how overwhelming the process of developing agency can feel for students, and it also demonstrates this student's resolve to do the work. She recognizes that her formal or informal learning have not yet enabled the self-awareness or agency necessary for her to be who she hopes to be in the world, even though from demographic data we know she is an environmentally-engaged student who lives in cooperative housing. But the reflective time, space, ethical guidance, and education of the field philosophy course, as well as probably her own readiness for this growth, have helped her over the fear hurdle. This is a solid step toward agency and transference.

But students do not overcome a displayed lack of agency just because they have contact with the wilderness, or even because they study environmental philosophy concepts in the woods (Marcinkowski 1998, Russell 1999). While the process of learning, ethical awareness, and agency occurs at different rates and in different ways for every student (and sometimes not at all), there are, my data suggests, necessary steps without which these ethical and learning outcomes do not happen. The rest of the chapter will look at each of the steps in the process from romantic, dualistic thinking—and a primarily anthropocentric or utilitarian approach to ethics (see previous chapter)—to critical reflection and complex awareness of environmental dialogue, which is often accompanied by a holistic understanding of natural systems and moral accountability. In her reflection Jessica identifies the first important step toward achieving these goals: to work on her self-confidence and ethical identity. The process starts with self-knowledge.

III. Self-Knowledge and Self-Awareness: The Role of the Individual

Students need to become comfortable with themselves as members in a group, think about the role(s) they play in their communities, and reflect on their needs, discomforts, strengths

and limitations, before they can both develop authentic community with their peers and educators and engage the course material sincerely. This is a lifelong practice. I do not expect grand self-awareness or confidence in a few days. Rather what I am looking for—and what the data reveals as important—is the honest admission of challenge or joy, the recognition that certain challenges (or distractions) color one’s experience in a way that prevents full engagement, and/or a thoughtfulness about what one might bring to or learn from the group. Sincere reflection about oneself can lead to realistic goal-setting, stronger relationships, and fair expectations for an experience. Failure to engage this reflection and the self-knowledge or the learning it inspires can hamper a student’s ability to be real with his or her peers, claim responsibility for getting what he or she hopes for from an experience, or deal with challenge. Often we find this self-growth emerges as a response to the peer group or the group living/learning situation. One student explained early in the course: “I struggle with thoughts of people liking or disliking me, but also being perceived wrong; these things stop me from enjoying nature completely.” Her personal insecurities are tied to the social dynamics of the group, and her nested individual and social concerns are intertwined with her ability to engage and enjoy the learning experience. This relationship between personal development and the social dynamic of the learning environment parallels educational psychology research on engagement and learning (Buhs et al. 2006, Furrer & Skinner 2003), and for our curriculum, the associated learning impediment is also connected to a student’s ethical development. My data demonstrates that personal growth requires vulnerability, exposure to new ideas, and often some kind of discomfort, either physical or emotional or both. Students often have to step outside their comfort zone to engage, and ultimately learn, the material.

Often the course itself—removed from the mainland with constant exposure to the elements, the group, and insects, with all-day learning away from technology and familiar people—tends to stimulate discomfort on its own. Constructed discomfort need not be invented in the experience²⁸. A student willing to dig in and explore ideas, people, skills, and place will encounter discomfort or challenge in a field course, often in unexpected ways, whether or not it is intentionally built into the curriculum. Sometimes the student who is worried about long hikes will instead be challenged by cooking for an entire group, or the person afraid of a lack of solitude will instead be challenged by a lightening storm or mosquitoes, or even long, full days of activity. Some students are challenged to spend time alone in daily reflection. But students can either build walls to avoid recognizing or addressing their discomfort, or they can acknowledge it and respond to the questions it raises.

We see the process of self-growth in the students' daily reflections. Early in her course in 2009, Jen wrote:

Well...I started out the day pretty moody. For whatever reason, I was not in a social mood. After the morning session, I took a short walk by myself and did some personal reflection and after lunch I was fine. I sat by the water for calm and an attitude refresher. Sometimes I get really uncomfortable around people and I need my space. I realized I needed to get back into the social groove. It was difficult to get out of that dark place, but it is becoming easier to pull myself out. I get social paranoia and think everyone dislikes me. It is hard to form social relationships and share emotions....I'm scared to let people get to know me. Hopefully I can make some progress this trip.

²⁸ Some outdoor education programs do take this approach, including certain wilderness therapy and Outward Bound courses, but the construction of the challenge in these experiences creates a power dynamic in the learning environment that is not consistent with the pedagogy of this field philosophy course.

This reflection is ripe with insecurity, self-confidence issues, and a distracted focus on the social dynamics of the course, rather than on the course ideas. Not all students are this self-aware or as comfortable with regular journal writing, but Jen's journey gives insight into the path toward learning and ethical awareness in this community-driven environment. She learned early in the course how to take care of herself when these feelings arise—take a walk, spend time alone—and this self-care is an important skill not just in the context of a field course, but in the world as a responsible, engaged member of any community. When Jen writes that “it is becoming easier to pull myself out” we can understand her personal growth as a process she is actively working on, and her ability to re-enter the group refreshed and cared for will enable her to participate more fully as the course proceeds. Social anxiety—which distracts Jen's focus from the ideas of the course and prevents her from engaging open and honest discussion with the group, for fear of embarrassment or social repercussions—is common across the students. Another 2009 student struggled similarly on the second day of the course. Anna wrote:

I've become closer with some people, farther from others, and parabolic with yet others.

I've also noticed the different characters we all play. Playing a role is mentally taxing and I'm personally ready to be done with it. It was nice getting along with people I don't know for once, but I'm ready to go back to my relatively solitary life without the intrusion of others in my personal space. I'm not a “friends” person. It's hard for me to make them and if I make them I can't keep them. Living in a co-op gives me automatic friends until I move out, and I like that. It's like leasing a car, no long-term personal commitment....I guess this is why I appeared outwardly entertaining and cynical. It keeps people at a comfortable distance.

Here Anna recognizes the walls she puts up to keep people—and issues—at a distance. This half-commitment to ideas and relationships is not sufficient for real engagement, attentive problem-solving, or growth. By the second day, the course has already taxed Anna's coping abilities, and this challenge has driven her to reflect on her own roles in groups, her habitual behaviors, and the reasons for her relational choices at home. At this stage, she could either shut down and disengage from the group, as she suggests she wants to do, or she could rise to the challenge the constant social engagement demands of her so she can enjoy the course and learn the content. Anna chose the latter. At the end of the course she reflected on her personal development:

In my very first journal entry, I wrote about the social anxieties and fears that I was going through. I want to revisit that time and realize how quickly those went away. The paranoia of those thoughts dissipated much faster than in the city. Why would I be caught up in self-demeaning thoughts when I am on Isle Royale with a group of other people who care about being here just as much as I do? How could I be so self-involved to think those thoughts when I was surrounded by forces much greater than myself? If this class had been in a traditional building classroom, I do not believe I would have gotten to know any of the people in the group the way I did....I don't really know what I was expecting the class to be, but it helped me reassess myself and social situations in a more positive way than I am used to.

If this self and social learning also opened Anna up to be more receptive to the content ideas of the course—which it did, as we observed in her demeanor, as well as in her thoughtful engagement and work in second half of the course and with the final project—then the challenge and growth played an important role in her cognitive learning process.

Challenge emerges in different ways for the students—including in the social, physical, and intellectual environment—depending on each student’s needs, fears, and background. The most basic statements involve the physical elements of the course:

I’m pretty apprehensive about tomorrow, though I am sure it will probably be the most rewarding day of the trip. Today was a mere 3 mile hike. Pretty much a short walk and I was still out of breath. Flashbacks of me pitifully suffering through the mile will haunt me...always struggling. So what will a 9 mile hike be like?

Hiking ability is a common worry, often attached to embarrassment in front of one’s peers, and this kind of response to a daily course activity can hinder honest participation in activities, openness with the group, and real comfort in the learning environment. Students are also challenged by the social environment and group learning process, as evidenced with Jen’s and Anna’s earlier reflections. This is probably the most frequently expressed challenge students acknowledge. Krissie explains:

As much as I wish to connect and converse, I find I have nothing to say or give. I truly admire everyone who surrounds me; I wish to understand the inner dialogue of these people, if they have the same doubts I have, if they see my envy. I have found that lately I fear silence. I starve for something worthwhile to say, but I sit there embarrassed and blank. And so I look in the trees as others converse.

Krissie’s choice to withdraw from the group discussions, an integral element in the course learning, greatly impacts the group and Krissie’s learning. Students also voice a similar fear about the content of the course.

As primarily high-performing science students, many of whom are involved in upper-level humanities coursework for the first time, some of the students react negatively to our

course readings or to the authors who write challenging creative narratives. For example, G.R. responded to Moore's (2004c) *Pine Island Paradox*, which the students read before the field course: "Moore was overly melodramatic, obsessive, and seemed controlling of her children, and her imagery, while vivid, also seemed as fake as a three dollar bill. People simply *do not* talk like she writes, plain and simple." His critique is personal, not rhetorical, and stems from a discomfort with the genre of literary nonfiction, with which he was generally unfamiliar before our course. The student journals often reveal that this kind of reaction stems from feeling stupid or uncomfortable with literary analysis. In fact, halfway through the course in 2010, after several reflections about playing devil's advocate and resisting the ideas of the literary part of our course, G.R. wrote: "I'm missing points of the essays, and the discussions are only serving to deepen my confusion...Not that the discussions are bad but I'm just missing something I guess." This was a breakthrough moment for him, because he stopped disregarding the essays, the ideas of his peers, and the content of the course, and instead took some responsibility for his role in his reactions. The kind of aggressive energy G.R. expressed early in the course or the tendency of students to withdraw impacts the ability of the group as a whole to uncover the layers of meaning in the readings or draw connections between the literature and our experiences. As the group grows more comfortable with each other, or as individuals grow more comfortable with the techniques of humanities scholarship, as G.R. did, this challenge provides a valuable learning experience.

While challenge is often beneficial to the individual learning experience, because it asks the student to rise above and problem-solve so he or she can grow and enjoy the course, it can also impede the learning process if students do not overcome it. While an emotionally supportive learning environment can alleviate personally felt challenges, if the group dynamic is not

supportive or inclusive, individual challenges are more deeply felt. Group size, then, can impact the amount of challenge individuals experience, both for better and worse. In a large group, the constant exposure to other people makes it harder to find time for self-reflection. For example, on our Isle Royale field philosophy course all of the students are responsible for teaching a 10-20 minute class (many of which run longer). Accommodating these classes in the schedule requires 3 (of 7 total) very full evenings for a group of 11 students, while it only takes 2 comfortably full evenings with 6 students. This difference allows more time for exploration, hanging out, schoolwork, and reflection.

As well, in larger groups the camp chores are divided up across more bodies, so fewer students are engaged with getting water, cooking meals, and tending to camp at a time. This frees students from some responsibility—which itself tends to be an important teaching and learning opportunity—and allows them a bit more free time. Students want and need this free time in their day. But a large group also means there are more free students with whom to spend unscheduled time. It is hard for college-aged students to turn down fishing, ukulele-playing, hammock-swinging, and exploration with their friends when they need (or are required as a course expectation) to take personal reflection time instead. Large groups also provide more opportunities for cliques to form or for students to shirk serious engagement with all group members. This precludes the development of an interdependent and cohesive learning community, which likely prevents the inclusion of the natural world in this community, an important step toward the inclusive moral awareness for which we hope. Thus a large group size can prevent the self-knowledge necessary to engage the other steps in the learning process (paper in process).

In all of these examples of the self-growth process, we can see the next stage of the learning process start to emerge, for each of these students' personal growth is nested and intertwined with the social dynamic of the group. Social learning—emotional safety and the development of an honest, inclusive learning environment—is both linearly and circularly related to the students' self-knowledge and awareness. Thus self-growth prepares students to create and participate in meaningful community; engaging this individual process enables them to proceed to the more sophisticated intellectual and interpersonal steps in their learning. At the same time, a positive, inclusive community can inspire students to focus on their personal development, help them to address challenges productively, and nurture their growth. Working in both of these directions, the effective development of community and meaningful peer relationships—what I refer to here as the social learning process—is perhaps the most important element of the learning process. This is the stage upon which all the others depend and filter through. When it is interrupted, my data suggests, the process of deep learning and ethical development can be derailed.

I might have suspected the importance of this element of the learning process from the age group and generation affiliation of these students—Howe and Strauss (2003) describe Millennials, students who were born between 1982 and the present, as “team-oriented” and geared toward group allegiance, work, and socialization—though the consequential role it played in the field philosophy courses still surprised me. Ethical development, while rooted in social processes and norms, is often a process of individual reflection and re-evaluation. I took for granted the ability of a group in the field to function as a community, thus did not see the development of community to be a hurdle, though it can be. Rather I anticipated this community of college-aged human beings, who can be self-involved or regard themselves as “special” (Howe & Strauss

2003), would have a limited ability to look beyond itself to include elements of the natural world in their wider learning community. But their capacity for this inclusion delighted me. Well-functioning, caring groups were quite open to awe, gratitude, and the rhythms of the landscape, all building blocks of a wider moral community my data suggests.

IV. Social Learning

Social relationships and emotional safety are impacted by, and impact, the success of the mini-classes the students teach, our guest educators' lessons, and the group members' relationships with our wider learning community on the island. The group dynamic also then impacts students' engagement with the curriculum as it manifests in discussions, on trail, and in relationships around camp, for cooking, chores, researching in the 'library' tent, and non-structured group time are all curricular elements of the course. The process of these activities allows students to know each other (and the instructors) more personally (Noddings 2002a, Scarce 1997), but if the group never gels, these activities become awkward, petty, or dysfunctional. Krystal articulates the value of these elements of the course in our curriculum:

It was amazing because it was a continuous learning experience. We would have set times for discussion on the readings and philosophy, for lessons with the different rangers and researchers, and for time to write and reflect but yet, it continued even outside of these structured sessions. On hikes back, discussions would continue...for those who still wanted to talk. We'd look for and point out different flowers, lichens, trees, and berries everywhere we went. Even at night, writing reflections would often turn into discussions on how and why we viewed things at a more personal level. I felt like I was always discovering something new about someone or something.

Group relationships are fostered by time and space for reflection, which benefit the self-learning and content learning process, as well as provide students a chance to disengage from the group for a short time, which is important. A positive group dynamic grows from individual student emotional engagement with people, place, and curriculum content, for investing in the process, the people, the ideas of the course demonstrates a commitment to shared goals. Our data also illuminates a connection between interpersonal relationships and course discussions (open-ended and structured), which both stimulate the growth of group bonds and are enhanced by good group rapport. This highlights another reason smaller groups are more effective; small groups hold everyone accountable for participation in discussions and encourage contributions from each member. Tom, a student in 2009, captures the role of social learning in his reflection on the last day:

I enjoy sharing my experiences in the outdoors with others and find that when I share certain things with people they become more profound in my mind. For instance, the moose we saw this afternoon was awesome but experiencing it with the rest of the group and sharing our thoughts and opinions gave me a different perspective and now I will remember that experience for the rest of my life....I have found that the definition of community has completely changed for me. Considering myself part of the natural world and everything living as part of my community is an important step in understanding the world. In everything I do I constantly effect the world around me and ultimately the people around me and my self....These ideals that I have obtained were greatly influenced by the experiences that I had on the island and the people that I shared these experiences with.

Similarly, Jen, a student who was challenged by the group dynamic throughout the course, discovered a meaningful sense of community at the end of our week:

Until this week it was work and preparation. I've learned that having the gear, your dusty toolbox full of words, and agile muscles don't quite prepare you. One can endure all the precourse reading and still not be prepared. I will go ahead and admit that I was not prepared. And not for the mosquitoes or black flies, or the personal contact or getting to know strangers. I was not prepared for the experience to cause such an introspective look into myself. I did the reading like a good student, brought my tree book like the nature nerd I am, but did not prepare for the self-inflicted breaking down of ideas and virtues....I finally slept under the stars last night [with the rest of the group outside of their tents]. I felt like part of the community last night.

Only after she experienced a profound personal journey was Jen able to engage the group and the natural world as community. And this sense of community and comfort enabled her to reflect on the curriculum and content in her journal, not just her insecurities and frustrations that before bogged her down.

Most interesting about Tom's and Jen's comments, both of which arise in the students' final on-course reflections, is that they not only capture the social dynamic of the course for these students—a common thread in all of the journals—but they demonstrate the nested quality of this social learning with the overall objectives of the course. These students developed an awareness of and recognized the challenge inherent in community membership. They are self-aware and they recognize complexity. Tom discusses his obligations to continue to act on this learning, and while Jen does not mention that action here, having interacted with Jen in the last two years since the course, I have observed this action in her life. Full engagement with the

curriculum—which Jen demonstrates when she recognizes the breadth of her learning beyond knowledge about the natural world and assignment fulfillment, and which Tom recognizes in the joy of sharing (and remembering) the learning process—is both enabled by and allows (in a feedback loop) social learning in the path to complexity and moral awareness. I consider full engagement as both cognitive and emotional investment in the learning experience; it is attentive to the course content, relationships, feelings, attitudes, and personal responsibility.

V. Curriculum Engagement

Curriculum engagement—beyond completing required work, memorizing natural history knowledge, or mindlessly participating in daily activities—is fostered by social relationships and emotional safety. It can lead to gratitude—a content theme on our course through our work with traditional ecological knowledge (Kimmerer 2003a, 2003b; Pierotti and Wildcat 2000) and our pre-course text (Moore 2004c)—a more developed relationship with the natural world, and sometimes a more ecocentric attitude, which is a holistic approach to environmental ethics that honors, at its core, the interrelatedness of ecological relationships. Ecocentrists, including Leopold (1949), Callicott (1989a), and Moore (2004c), believe both individual beings and natural wholes (ecosystems, species, the biotic community) deserve moral consideration. An ecocentric attitude, then, might suggest obligations to the landscape, the Isle Royale wolves as a population, or the Lake Superior system, as well as to the humans in our group or the moose and her calf we see near our camp. In a mid-course daily reflection after a class discussion about traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), Nina, a student in 2010, wrote (underlining in original):

I like the idea of a relationship with nature in which humans are not responsible for all of nature, but must remain in a responsible relationship with nature. I like these ideas, but they're coming from a completely different culture than our western culture, so it really

isn't fair to say we should directly adopt the ways of TEK. I think though that we can learn from the values of TEK and adopt them to our own culture. We do need to start looking at nature as kin, similarly to how Kathleen Dean Moore [the author our course text] describes it. This type of relationship...implies an inherent reciprocity and value in and from the other members....It is not a theory of...finding a way to get "the greatest good for the greatest many" but one of trying to find a good that will hopefully satisfy...all, [...or] a way in which no one loses. This isn't always possible because if we need to eat, we kill a cow, but we do this with respect for the cow and recognize what he is giving to us²⁹.

Nina's awareness is complex, recognizing both nuance in how we can approach utility, as well as the problematic nature of adopting wholeheartedly the ideologies of other cultures. This appreciative understanding of TEK is more sophisticated than the romantic notion some students argue for at the beginning of the course—which advocates for the wholesale adoption of the 'ideal' belief systems of other groups to replace the 'bad' western ideology—and that several of the students in 2009, when the group size was large, still claimed at the end of the course.

For example, these students, who failed to engage the curriculum as fully as I had hoped, suggest that to address our environmental problems we essentially need to regress to prehistoric

²⁹ Theoretically, these kinds of ideas also emerge in Western literature, so Nina's inclination toward the kind of reciprocity she sees in the TEK articles resonates across cultures, which might ground her positions in evidence, as well as combat her fear of co-opting another culture's beliefs. There are ways, as she suggests, to inhabit gratitude as a daily ethic without forgoing our own identity. See, for example, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I (2010) on the Christian practice of asceticism, which is "a vision of return to a world in which we give to as well as take from creation," (135) Campbell's (2010) Christian moral ecology, which suggests, "Awareness of the biological reality that our very existence is contingent on Earth, soil, water, air, and so on should cultivate moral dispositions of gratitude, humility, and solidarity," (148) and Moore and Nelson (2010) on the ways we might daily "express gratitude to the Earth for all its gifts," (163) including writing songs, being glad, saying thank you, listening, and imagining. Gratitude, they argue, is a way of being in the world, both in action and in mind.

ways of life, as Anna suggests in her pre-course writing: “This article reinforces my life-long dream of traveling back in time a thousand years to live as a native.” Or they embrace a vague and un-nuanced understanding of nature, as Krissie explains in her final reflection: “Nature and wilderness are an intracle [integral] part of being human because we were created by nature and we now must move on to educate everyone we possibly can so they will be as passionate about the wild as we are. So we can live in harmony with the other organisms that inhabit this beautiful planet.” This is a simplified understanding of the human/nature relationship, one rooted in harmony and love, but not work, complexity, reciprocity, or attentiveness. The alternative is a reflective and thoughtful approach to a relationship with the natural world, such as Nina articulates. Sentiments like hers capture what we might consider a broadening of one’s moral community, or a deeper relationship with the natural world as a result of experiences in the field coupled with coursework. Jen captures a similar awareness in her final reflection:

I had never looked at wilderness as something to form a relationship with. This might be her [Kathleen Dean Moore’s] overall goal, but still I am conflicted. It makes me think of the why and how of the perspective. It allowed me to notice that it is a reciprocal relationship. I think a lot of people miss this point. It gave wilderness a face and I found that it was similar to my own. It was like I have spent so much time saying I love it, but reading that book [*Pine Island Paradox*] made me understand why. Through the environment we can channel our energies; we can understand the environment almost as if it is a person with feelings and emotions of its own. . . . I have an even stronger urge to develop a more intense relationship with the natural world.

Here Jen acknowledges uncertainty and challenge, the complexity of what it might mean to be in actual relationship with the natural world. She does not just accept that she is already in a

functional or caring relationship with the natural world because she has spent time in it, rather she wants to commit to the process of relationship-building. In her final writing assignment for the course, Jen demonstrates what we would consider full curriculum engagement, returning to her ideas about the book she read before the course to tie its lessons into her learning after the course, grown and refined through her experiences in the field.

Full (emotional and cognitive) curriculum engagement is enhanced by curiosity, awe, wonder, and inspiration, which are words the students often used to describe how they related to the landscape. All of these things are sparked by a physical and personal relationship with place and the opportunities for discovery it provides. Nina captures many of these ideas, including the overlap between inspiration, awe, gratitude, and interconnectedness or complexity, in one of her daily reflections late in the course:

(1:18am) WOW! I truly can't believe it! Dan, Rachel, Kelley, Krystal, and I went for a walk because it was a clear night and we planned to go out by the docks to stargaze, and the moon was very bright – it was a half moon. Before we left the campsite we heard wolves howl! The first thing on our midnight adventure was incredible, but then on the trail, where the trees thin a bit and you can see the water, after the bird rock, we saw a moose and her calf. We probably scared her a bit because she started walking along the water, but as we walked ahead to see her, she and her calf stopped. We went on to go sit on the dock. We think we saw them through the binoculars. We kept hearing the wolves howl and the birds cry and the frogs and the bugs “chirping”. It was a beautiful night in the bay with the reflections of the moon and stars and trees/shoreline, the night was perfect. I don't know if I've ever felt so small, so much a part of something larger....It was incredible to actually have firsthand evidence that [the wolves and the moose] are out

there.... I am happy to know that tonight I'm going to sleep in such close proximity. I'm also very happy with the people I shared it with. This group of people is phenomenal.

With a smile, I go to bed.

The exclamation points, the energy of her tone, the rapid fire with which she shares her experience all capture Nina's awe, while her descriptions communicate her relationship to the physical landscape: the observation of the stage of the moon, the awareness of the multitude of sounds in the night, the mention of 'bird rock,' a group-named landmark in the lake near the trail, where often we see a merganser sitting. She is grateful not only for the animal experiences, or for the opportunity to spend time in this landscape, but for her peers, for sounds, for beauty. These things humbled her and embedded her in a complex landscape, of which she is only a small part. Her joy is relational, contextual, and rooted strongly in place. These experiences connect her to the concept of gratitude, both as a content theme and as a way to relate to the natural world.

From the data, I have found these experiential outcomes of awe, curiosity, wonder, and inspiration are not just fostered by spending time in beautiful and interesting landscapes, but by telling and hearing stories. Non-scientific ways of understanding place and the natural world, including traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and creative writing, offer exposure to stories and communicate course ideas in new forms. These components of our curriculum counter the cultural tendency to approach everything through cost/benefit analysis by offering alternative ways to evaluate unmeasurables like beauty, love, and relationships, as well as cultural value, wilderness, and even intrinsic value. They demonstrate that science—which students nearly always associate with truth and knowledge in their pre-course writing—isn't the holder of all knowledge, rather it is one voice in a poly-vocal story about the natural world. Stories and the affective focus of our course allow emotional reactions to the natural world and course content to

count as meaningful, telling indicators of how we value beings, systems, and places. These kinds of reactions are not often encouraged or allowed as evidence in the students' other courses.

To open students up to these ways of knowing we invite multiple voices into our understanding of place and the natural world (an important element of the care-based pedagogy that informs the course), not only through the reading, but also through class exercises. We tell personal stories in dialogue, in our journals as essay prompts, and as acceptable pieces of evidence in rhetorical responses to the reading. This technique encourages students to claim their own experiences in the natural world and both develop and reclaim their voice (Warren 1990). To own their voices is to gain the ability to critically and meaningfully converse with texts, ideas, and whomever they consider knowledge-holders, an important step toward transference and an empowered sense of responsibility for lifestyle choices and environmental problem-solving. It addresses the lack of agency we see frequently in their pre-course writing.

This relationship with agency, though, works in both directions. While full curriculum engagement can help to address student disempowerment, both agency and emotional engagement can also help students engage fully with the curriculum. It is a circular process and students need to choose to be agents in their own experience. Learning does not happen to a learner; he or she must decide to commit to and be responsible for his or her own learning. Nina's night hike with several other members of her group demonstrates this agency and commitment. Our evening sessions usually end between 10-11pm. Students, especially whoever is cooking breakfast, need to be up around 7:30am so we can be on trail by 9am. Nina and her group-mates, though, used their limited free time—when surely the instructor and the other students were sleeping—to stargaze a ¼-mile from camp. Because they chose to spend this time together and out of their tents, they had what was probably one of their most memorable and

special moments of the course, meaningful not only because it was neat, but because it played an important role in their overall learning, engagement, and moral development.

Full curriculum engagement depends on individual comfort and awareness, for unreflective students cannot engage group learning openly or honestly. This engagement relies on safety and support within the group—and it is grown by group discussions—as well as an openness to awe, inspiration, and multiple ways of understanding place, ideas, and environmental issues. Full engagement, then, is necessary for the development of complex and reflective awareness, an empathetic relationship with the natural world, and likely effective transference of course ideas and learning into new landscapes and communities. For our course, these outcomes might look like this final on-island reflection from Jessica, who has since returned to the course as a teaching assistant. Moments before Jessica boarded the ferry back to Minnesota, she reflected:

I'm red and burnt, itchy and bug-bit and physically exhausted. But as I watch a pair of loons drift by my secret cove, I recognize a change in body and mind. I am, in the fitting term of Annie Dillard, more "awake" than I have been in a long time. There is a healing quality about this island and as I sit on the edge of this wilderness, I can breathe deeply. Here, the plants are concerned with growing, the animals with living, and the humans with appreciating....I followed a moose trail to this very spot. What will I find here? A sandy beach, a birch bench, a swirling conflict of creek and lake currents, and a tiny pest resting on my paper, swollen with my own blood. I sit under overcast skies and I am whole. For the first time I am engaged, confident, joyful, and totally alone. Solitude. Perfect, sweet, and so valuable. As the world grows ever closer, everyone and everything just a digital message away, I wonder about the mental welfare of those poor souls so

consumed by their own consuming. A beetle smacks against my jacket. How do you make someone relish grass under bare feet? Tiny waves ripple silently to shore? How do you show the value in suddenly realizing you are covered in countless invertebrates? I've become part of the landscape....When we strip the land, bulldoze the forests, and poison the water, we are doing these things to ourselves. I won't sit quietly by as my blinded race destroys itself.

We see here a calm and reflective student who feels gratitude for even the mosquito who is swollen with her blood. She is, in her own words, engaged, hyper-aware of her immediate physical surroundings while also conscious of how this place fits into a larger whole. She is comfortable alone, unconcerned with and apart from the social dynamic of the group; she is integrated in a wider community. While un-specific about intended action—this was an unprompted reflection, so such specificity is not expected—she claims responsibility for affecting change. Jessica's reflection is both poetic and aware of her self, the landscape, her own responsibilities, and the interconnectedness of values and action, for this place and all places. Similarly, Emily writes in her final reflection:

Walking away from this class I feel challenged to find something to feel passionate about, to feel that passion, feed it and thrive from it. I feel more aware, aware of my surroundings, my lifestyle and my habits. Although some of the articles were written in response to human carelessness, I still feel a sense of promise and hope. I believe in small changes leading to big differences and simplicity is key.

What is interesting about Emily's reflection is that while it also lacks some specificity in terms of how she will manifest this transference of her learning, she is empowered to act in accordance with her values and feels she has something worthwhile to contribute. She demonstrates here

both the locus of control and an empowered sense of responsibility. And more than specific action—which lacks general application and attention to the complexities of context, relationships in place, and the particularities of circumstances—she suggests who she wants to be in the world. Who we are—essentially a virtued approach to action, environmental and otherwise, that expects right action will emerge from good people with ethical intentions who work to cultivate integrity and moral virtue—might be far more important than the concrete individual things we do. Emily is not overwhelmed by the destruction we have enacted against the natural world (a potential problem in environmental learning³⁰) or the challenges ahead. Instead she feels not just hope, which in and of itself might be meaningless (Nelson 2011), but hope that the action she is willing to take will be meaningful because it is driven by passion, awareness, and a commitment to the work it will entail.

VI. Conclusion

The path from dualism to complexity, or from a straightforward utilitarian cost/benefit approach to the natural world and environmental problems to a reflective, empathetic relationship with the natural world, is neither easy, nor linear. But from three years of data collection with our field philosophy course in Isle Royale National Park, I have identified common themes and processes that enable this transformation to occur. This process³¹ looks something like this [While drawn linearly, these are nested and overlapping processes, often in circular feedback loops. Some directionality is present in the process, e.g., self-learning needs to

³⁰ See Sobel (1999)

³¹ See Appendix E for the concept map that details the relationships in this process as they emerged in the data.

happen for effective community and social learning, but most of these stages occur simultaneously]:

Dualism/Utility (reading, writing, dialogue) → **Self Awareness, Self Knowledge** (space, reflection, challenge, vulnerability) → **Community Development, Social Learning, Safe Learning Community** (group chores, discussion, unstructured time, group size considerations) → **Emotional and Curriculum Engagement** (agency, awe, inspiration, multiple voices, active learning, place exploration and relationships, gratitude) → **Reflective Awareness, Complexity, Empathy, Expanded Moral Community** → **Transference.**

This process will not be complete for every student. It can get derailed by external circumstances (groups that just will not gel or have too many members to enable effective community) or by a student's unwillingness to commit to the learning process. For student engagement depends on his or her willingness to dig in, develop meaning, make connections, be honest and vulnerable, and seek growth. Care-based learning is a reciprocal relationship (Noddings 1984, 1992, 2002a, 2002b, 2006) between teacher and learner, learner and learning environment, and learner and content. This means learning is as much about listening, giving, and responding attentively as it is about receiving knowledge and care.

My data reveals, though, this process is not just possible, it is common. And if our goals for environmental philosophical learning extend beyond knowledge about the natural world and a theoretical understanding of environmental ethics, if instead we aim for our students to embrace complexity, acknowledge uncertainty, develop the ability to deal with challenge, and cultivate reflective awareness—if we want students to understand the role of environmental ethics in environmental problem-solving and feel in some way responsible for participating in

the world as engaged environmental citizens—then experiential environmental philosophy is a valuable approach.

In the *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) Leopold explains it is not just *more* education that is needed to develop a land ethic, but *different* education, a moral education in conjunction with experiences in the natural world. Field philosophy. He writes: “The usual answer...is ‘more conservation education.’ No one will debate this, but is it certain that only *volume* of education needs stepping up? Is something lacking in the *content* as well?....[The current content] defines no right and wrong, assigns no obligation, calls for no sacrifice, implies no change in the current philosophy of values” (207-8). Later he explains, “We can only be ethical in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in” (214). Students need to see, feel, and love the context of their learning about conservation and environmental ethics, he argues, and this relationship with the content should interrogate responsibility and values. Leopold’s ideas parallel current conversations in environmental problem-solving (Kellstedt et al. 2008), where scholars argue it is not facts we need to change public participation and care for issues like climate change, but a different kind of knowledge and understanding. A similar argument permeates environmental education scholarship. The former model, which presumed that knowledge about an issue or an idea led to an attitude change and behavior on behalf of that issue or idea has been replaced (Marcinkowski 1998) with an approach (Hungerford & Volk 1990) that includes both cognitive and affective variables, or that recognizes the necessary roles values and investment play in action on behalf of the natural world (Goralnik & Nelson 2011). This research relies on experiences in the natural world to develop the knowledge about and care about environmental action. Finally, these ideas coincide with recent work in environmental philosophy, as Moore and Nelson (2010) explain, “No amount of factual information will tell us

what we ought to do. For that we need moral convictions—ideas about what it is to act rightly in the world, what it is to be good or just, and the determination to do what is right. Facts and moral convictions together can help us understand what we ought to do—something neither alone can do” (xvii). Field philosophy can fill this role. The process I have detailed here provides educators a lens through which to develop curriculum, approach course planning, and recognize effective environmental philosophical learning experiences.

CHAPTER 7

OTTER DANCE

I pulled up to the ferry, a little metal toy-looking boat against a background of a vast and blue lake, eight students standing around me waiting for instructions. This part I was comfortable with: backpacks, stoves, bulky food bags, and group organization. Just do what you know. Act in charge. It'll fall into place.

"Let's fireline our bags up to the dock and I'll figure out how they want us to load up," I said.

The students hung around, fidgeting, so I lined them up, demonstrated a fireline, and ended up carrying most of the bags to the edge of the dock myself, which was fine because I feel better when I'm busy. We parked our cars, then hovered at the edge of the water taking pictures and making hesitant early-morning conversation until the scraggly ferry driver dropped his cigarette into the lake and waved me up, barely lifting his eyes from the water, to let us know it was time to lower our bags, coolers, and backpacks into the hold under the boat.

And this is how it started. Not really, of course, because I had just spent nine months developing curriculum, reading environmental philosophy and human dimensions and experiential, place-based, and environmental education articles, willing myself to become a faster thinker, smarter reader, better faker so my facade as a writer posing as a philosopher in a science department wouldn't creak so loudly whenever I explained what I was doing here. In the last twelve months I had bought a house in Michigan, led a month-long backpacking trip in Alaska during which I was charged—like within 25 feet charged—by a mother grizzly and her cub, dealt with an exploded diesel engine on a sailboat in the Atlantic Ocean, dealt with an exploding sewer as a new homeowner, started graduate school a second time, and after years in workshops and literature classes, had convinced myself I was going to learn enough social science to pass as a researcher, grow comfortable with the word 'data' coming out of my mouth, and pull off crafting an

experiential class in a landscape I'd never visited to collect said 'data' with a group of students I'd met only once. And here we are.

*

Isle Royale National Park is a 98% wilderness island in the northwest part of Lake Superior. I guess I sort of knew this that first year, but I couldn't have said it so succinctly, having never been to a Great Lake, traveled through the upper Midwest landscape, or heard of the wolf/moose research my students had all studied in high school biology, and which I know so intimately now, five years later. It was a different wilderness than what I was used to. I had spent the last eight years working, living, and traveling in California, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Alaska, and Washington State. It's more claustrophobic there. Flatter. Gloomy, in fact, in a low light or particularly buggy stretch of trail. Which isn't to say Wyoming wilderness isn't buggy, because my god, is Wyoming buggy unlike anything I ever hope to experience again. And man, can Alaska be gloomy after 24 days of straight rain. But this was different, because there were none of the same wide open vistas you grow so accustomed to out west, no *Stop, breathe, let your eyes tear up with the holy-cow-ness of the world around you no matter what hurts, itches, hungers, or fears* moments. But you know, it's pretty, and prettier the more time I spend there, and I wonder now, five years later, if one of the reasons I couldn't accept the beauty or solitude of the place that first year had nothing to do with the relative impactedness of the island compared the vast tundras of my years before, but instead with the fact that I was just trying to keep my head above water the whole time I was there, hoping the heavens didn't open and crush us with a storm I had no backup plan for, hoping I didn't get the students lost on a trail I'd never traveled, hoping the classes I'd written entertained them enough to get them to think, hoping I could pull this thing off. And I did, and it was fun. They learned some stuff, I learned some stuff, someone fell in the lake, others swam on purpose. One student saw a wolf from very close up. We all saw fog roll over the hills and a moose swim in Lake Superior, hiked some cool trails, cooked some delicious meals, shared some mostly interesting discussions, and had bats fly into our heads as they dive-bombed the insects drawn to the thin beams of our headlamps as we told stories late into the night. And on the last morning,

when I was taking my tent down before the rest of the group woke up, I saw two otters pull themselves out of Washington Creek on a sandbar below my tent, and there, on the dark, damp sand in the weak morning light, the only real cloudy day of our trip, they braided and wrestled and slipped on and over each other in a playful, goofy dance. It felt like a gift. I'd never seen an otter before.

*

I suppose I have done research before, but not really. In undergrad I didn't go to the library much and no one expected me to. The Internet hadn't quite taken off like it is now, so I didn't rely so much on what other scholars before me had thought about the books I read, often one a week for each of the three literature classes I took each quarter. Rather I made my own meaning from the texts with close readings, synthesizing ideas across texts, peeling the layers of the literature back to find a new, hidden story. I loved making connections, tying the threads, seeing the words in a different way than my friends because there was ownership in that kind of scholarship, a sense of discovery. My arguments were researched, sure, but not in the way I teach my students to do now. During my MFA I also did research, sometimes of this close-reading variety, sometimes using books from the sad, little University of Idaho library or the mildly better Washington State University library, trying to beat the other eight people in my class to the few books on Emerson or Melville, picking one theorist to graft over my reading of a book to illuminate my particular approach to the text: Rimbaud for Philip Roth, Foucault for Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Otherwise, my research was far more practical. When I was writing a story about a gold miner in rural Alaska, I spent hours on my dial-up modem laptop in chat rooms about sluicing, pulling up pictures pixel-by-pixel of dredgers and screen sifters, trying to understand from my cold, Kelly-green carpeted apartment in Moscow what a lone miner might do with his days in another frozen landscape I'd never visited but imagined from the other places in Alaska I had been. My research about the natural world took the form of natural history, logging patterns, and insect invasions that might have impacted the horse-packing family that figured in all my stories set at the edge of the wilderness.

Natural history, and field experience, I suppose, were what really brought me to the shores of Isle Royale. I had been a student on outdoor leadership courses—mountaineering, backpacking, usually for a month at a time—when I was young, then an instructor for the same schools for the last decade. I worked as a naturalist for a couple years in Northern California before I went back to school to write stories. I liked being in beautiful places, liked being challenged by weather and group dynamics. I was good at it. When everyone had frozen feet and we were struggling to tie our tent down in spitting snow above treeline in July, I sang. I got the stove running, hot drinks into mugs, and cheesy salty food into our bellies. Somehow I associated where we were and the opportunity to be there with the better me that emerged in challenge, simplicity, and beauty. Generous, kind, reflective and grateful. I suppose I was all of things in my daily life, too, but not nearly as consciously. And especially not as confidently, or at least not as sure about what I needed to do to become competent, to feel safe, to take care of the people around me. Still, after years of chasing the mountains as a clerk in gear shops, with a pot of hot lemon in a sunny guesthouse in Nepal, on long, long bus rides down to the tip of Argentina, I knew there was something more than just being in these places that mattered, or even taking students into them and hoping—often succeeding—they would feel the same thing too.

I learned all sorts of natural history because knowledge about place felt like magic to me, like an entrance into the secrets of the landscape that gave us things to look for as we hiked, stories to make up, ways to understand what happened when we weren't there. It allowed me to make sense of the overwhelming complexity that surrounded us, and as a humanities student who had long ago given up on higher education science classes because they were tailored to the memorization necessary to get into medical school, not the thoughtful, curiosity-driven questions about truth and phenomena we had explored—and I had thrived in—during high school, natural history knowledge was my entrance to ecology, however limited.

The funny thing was that all of my natural history learning on the California coast and in the mountains of Alaska didn't come in handy at all when we hiked that first year in Isle Royale. Sure, I recognized a few things from the boreal forests in Alaska, like the spongy mounds of club moss

and the crusty tufts of reindeer lichen, and a few more things from the Maine coast where I had been sailing with my dad for a few years, like blueberries, of course. But I hadn't really learned the full story or the interconnections between the things I had memorized. So I knew some cool stuff about some neat places, but I didn't see the big picture. I realized this when we hiked with our ranger friend Val that first year. I was pulling worms out of a hole; she was weaving a narrative. And here was where I saw the threads of my old life needling their way into the framework I was crafting as my new life, the tangible canvas of what I had yet to learn and why I was here. I was here to tell a story, but I didn't yet know the characters. I had been introduced, but we were not yet in relationship.

And here, too, the core of my work, the relationship. What does it require to form a relationship with place? How does it change the way we inhabit our experiences when we consider ourselves as partners in relationship with natural systems, nonhuman others, and human communities, rather than walking in them, observing them, or having fun with them? What happens when being in the wilderness becomes not about me and my experience, or even about us as a group sharing an event, but about how we might be in all places, all the time? What is the difference between an experience and an ethic?

*

I had thought these thoughts before I walked on the naturalist loop in Windigo with Val five years ago, but I had not felt them so tangibly. In the midst of my creative writing thesis, while I labored over pretty sentences to capture the grandeur of the landscapes in which my dramas took place—the wilderness itself a character throughout the fictional narrative—I read a book by Kathleen Dean Moore called *Pine Island Paradox*. It was, I guess, my lightbulb moment. For in her braided collection of nonfiction essays—a genre I found myself drawn more and more to after obsessing over Annie Dillard and Joan Didion and realizing the power of the research-driven memoir—she not only captured pretty landscapes and told engaging, tension-driven stories, but she argued for a particular relationship with the natural world, a way we ought to live in order to honor our obligations to people, places, beings, and systems. She used words like love and care. She

mocked, either by name or by association through their lifestyle choices, the nature writers I had both revered—Thoreau, David James Duncan—yet also felt somehow strangely distanced from for a reason I couldn't put my finger on. I think she put her finger on it. They run away and preach from above, from the far, far wilderness places, about how glorious nature is away from humans. But where is the responsibility to our collective presence on this planet when one escapes to live a life not everyone is invited to share? It is condescending in a way, and certainly privileged. And it doesn't make sense. For our obligations to the natural world are not just relegated to our special places, and they are not just to nonhuman nature but to all communities, human and natural, for systems and places and beings and boundaries are ever-changing, related, fluid, and interrelated. Moore struggled with wanting to live a life in these faraway places because of the wide open feeling they inspire—the same feeling I was still running to every summer—yet she was tied to the city by responsibilities both practical and moral. I realized when I read her book that my pretty sentences could do work, too. And in fact they should. I should write on behalf of the places and communities I care about in ways that help other people care, too. So I came back to school to learn more about those communities, and that learning led me to Isle Royale.

In *Pine Island Paradox*, Moore writes about a field philosophy class she teaches in Oregon, where students have the opportunity to interrogate their relationships with the natural world in the presence of those relationships, which are at once being developed, challenged, deepened, and experienced. She doesn't explain what happens to or for those students when learning environmental ethics and literature in the natural world, or how. She only implies that their experiences are transformational and that something special happens when we take philosophical learning out of the classroom and into the field. I was curious about how we might observe, understand, explain, and assess those student learning—and perhaps ethical—shifts. To do this I was going to have to learn to do research. So here we are. In Isle Royale, collecting said 'data'.

*

One of the nested teaching and research goals of the Isle Royale course is to help the students develop or deepen their sense of empathy. The ethic of care literature tells us that our

moral obligations often emanate out from our closest, most dear relationships outward to more distant friendships, acquaintances, communities, all the way out to abstract ideas and faraway communities we might never know personally. We learn how to be in relationship in place and in context—by being with, sharing, caring, loving, challenging and being challenged—so that we might call upon these feelings and experiences when acting ethically in less tangible relationships. This idea—I think of it as the puddles in a pond notion of moral obligations—mirrors the Darwinian concept of evolutionary ethics, in which ethical obligations arose in the family unit first, for restrictions on one’s actions to live well with others in a group resulted in safer, better fed, more nurturing, successful families. As these behaviors were evolutionarily rewarded—if that’s even the right language—with the survival and health of the people who exhibited them, they were passed down generationally as successful traits. Family groups grew to tribes, tribes grew to villages, villages grew to nations, grew to the global society we live in now. Our obligations widened and deepened as our communities expanded, stretching to large, large rings in a large, large pond. The rings are connected, a piece of one whole, so our obligations do not lessen as they extend, nor can one cling only to the center pebble, for doing so would drag the whole spiral down. This is what Leopold is talking about when he says its time we extend our ethics to include the soils, the land, the systems that sustain us. Evolutionarily, that’s the next step. Our ethics need to extend to the natural world; we need to love it as we love our kin. I think, too, that’s what he’s talking about when he says we need to see, feel, love, have faith in anything to be ethical toward it. We know ethics in our most concrete relationships. Ethics are responsibilities for the goodness, the integrity, and the beauty of those things we love. We must know love in place and body before we can extend it to the unseen or the unknown.

So one exercise we do on Isle Royale aims to make students responsible for each other³². Sure, we are all theoretically responsible for each other as a learning community and as a camping group, but the impacts of one’s actions on the others in our community can be diluted by our

³² See Appendix G for the point of view and lenses exercise lesson plan.

numbers—and by those of us that overwork to pick up the slack of those who do not. We do this exercise in the first half of the week and we tie it into a literary lesson about lenses and points of view, drawn from Annie Dillard’s story³³ about microscopes and swans and binoculars, beauty and awareness. It’s simple enough. After discussing the essay, the students pair up and one student is blindfolded. The other partner takes this student’s hand—for many 20-somethings, a closeness and a contact that is uncomfortable with new friends—and leads the blind partner on trails, across lawns, down the road, to the dock, through the woods, wherever he or she wants to go. But as they move, the sighted partner is responsible for describing what they are seeing to their blind partner. Put textures in their hands, I tell them. Hold beautiful things to their nose. Warn them when the ground becomes unstable. How might they experience what you are experiencing? How can they see the world through your eyes, and you through theirs?

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There is a process to graduate school, and it differs between departments, across universities, and from discipline to discipline. I understood what was expected of me in Idaho and we were all in the same boat doing the same thing. Workshop, some literature and techniques classes, a thesis that would be a collection of a genre you labor over for all three years. A defense, which is more of a celebration than a grilling. You can try to publish or not. Writers are weird, so weirdness is encouraged. People don’t show up for days at a time and we say, “Oh, he has social anxiety and is off his meds. He’ll be back in a few days,” or “She’s on a bender,” which didn’t mean substance-induced, though it could have. Instead it meant a writing binge that lasted three days or longer. These were both feared and relished, and we all had them. It’s different here in a science department. More hoops. Particular classes are expected and lots of these can come from across the university. Everyone’s program is different and dictated by his or her advisors and committees and research. The hoops serve to unite us under some shared process. Makes sense. But my advisor and I were both new, not just to Michigan State, but to science departments, and we

³³ Dillard (1982)

didn't quite know the rules. So we did the best we could and some stuff we made up. And thank god.

Apparently it's standard to write and defend a proposal to a committee a year or 18 months into one's doctoral project. This gives students a platform to explain their research goals, describe their methodology, justify the hole in the scientific research their project will fill, and receive some feedback to make sure they are on the right track before they are in too deep and disappoint their committee, fail to graduate, and waste everyone's time. Well, I didn't do a proposal, and in fact my committee changed right up until my comp exams, which weren't all that traditional either. One of them, in fact, allowed me to develop my method, read and write about qualitative methodology, and practice coding some data. This was crucial learning for me, but learning I probably wasn't ready for the year before when I would have had to write my proposal. I was still defining my research questions then, which I didn't refer to as such yet, because it turns out I didn't know how to write a research question until last year, really. That's not language we use in English Departments, even though that's what we're doing, and we never test anything, so the idea of doing that was totally foreign to me. I derived my method from the three years of data I had collected—before my comps, before I had chosen a method or really knew what a methodology was, before I had anything but a vague and broad research question. I wouldn't have it any other way. My method fits my data and tells the story I needed to tell.

I'm not saying this because the system failed me. In fact, I'm saying this because I think my experience has been exceptional for the opportunities I have had for discovery, creativity, problem-solving, and growth in the process of learning to be a researcher and scholar. It wasn't because I was stupid that I didn't know these things—I've been a 4.0 student for 8 years of graduate school, both in the humanities and the sciences—or because I'm lazy, because my work ethic is perhaps problematic if anything. I am a product of educational silos and an experiment on behalf of the future of scholarship. I consider myself now an environmental scholar—not a literary scholar or a writer necessarily, not a philosopher, not an educational researcher or a human dimensions scholar, though I am all of these. I am an ethicist trained in a science department, a

nature writer trained in the hills, a student of the human/nature relationship who is both human and nature. I am interdisciplinary through and through, and this kind of training depends on a different set of rules. These rules might be more gummy than we're used to, or even comfortable with, and people might fall through the cracks if there aren't clear lines to cross and hoops to jump through. We need to keep our eyes out for these people and offer them a lifeline. Because this kind of scholarship is here to stay, and it is important. With eyes trained to look for questions and problems, not holes in the literature, we offer a fresh approach insiders might not notice. We ask weird questions at collaborative tables without knowing they're weird, know lots of things about lots of things, but not everything about one thing, and hopefully, we are good listeners who can bridge the gaps in vocabulary, process, and practice that exist between the disciplines so we might all work together more effectively on the big ideas and big problems that really need our work.

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I have had excellent mentors, and from them I have learned how to be a good mentor for my students. They have trusted me and my process, supported me when I have grown dizzy with expectations or idea juggling, encouraged me to build other relationships when their skills couldn't offer me what I needed. They have been my friends, my bosses, my colleagues, my intellectual family. We laugh together, work hard, push each other. I also have a real family who is ridiculously supportive, who believes in me, loves me, encourages my work, and genuinely cares about what I do. Their cushion has made me feel safe to take risks. And while we cannot create this amazing family network for future interdisciplinary scholars, we can take lessons on mentorship, prioritize it, coach it, and reward it. Turns out, collaborative scholarship is a lot more fun than sitting by yourself behind a closed door all the time, and the scholarship is a lot smarter, too, when there are more minds at the table than just one. Collaboration is a lot more likely in environments of mentorship.

And here's the crux of my story. My experience and my research tell me a couple of things. Relationships matter. They matter in the teaching and learning context. They matter ethically. They matter for mentoring, advising, the development of scholarship, the success of graduate students, and the work-life balance of professors. Relationships thrive with time and space for connection

and knowing, in small-group interactions, when work and play overlap. So when I said my experience has been exceptional, I mean it. Forgoing some of the hoops of the graduate process to enable my organic growth as a scholar in ways that were attentive to my individual learner's needs has enabled me to get to this point. In the same way, the experience of my Isle Royale students is exceptional, too. They spend an entire week, 24 hours a day, with 6 other students and their professor. They see me in the mornings in my pajamas without my coffee, swim together in the icy waters of Lake Superior, lay bare their insecurities in discussions and on the stove as camp chefs. We are real with each other in a way the ethics classroom on campus cannot be, and in this learning environment I can tailor my approach as an educator to each of the learning styles of my 7 students, check in with them individually to make sure their needs are met, trouble with them over challenging ideas, or point them in the direction of resources that might root them when they are feeling overwhelmed. I'm not exceptional in doing this. The experience and the opportunity are. What I mean is that the other thing my graduate school experience and my research have taught me is that other people want these opportunities too, but the system doesn't allow it. I have been lucky. We are generally not rewarded for developing special relationships with our students, our mentors, our peers, or the ideas outside our declared fields that may overlap or add substance to our work. We are rewarded for getting out quickly. Jumping through hoops. Making money for the school or to support your work. I can do these things, and for the most part I'm good at them, except maybe the money part. But we need to start asking ourselves not just as individuals—though we can start here—but as units, campuses, institutions of higher education, what we care about and how we're going to get there.

I believe in our role to impact students' lives, and each others'. I believe in education and in the good environmental ethics can do in the world and for environmental decision-making. I want my students to go into the world and to do something meaningful, be a part of something larger, make connections, change lives, contribute beauty and meaning to their communities, whether as environmentalists or as environmental citizens in whatever field they pursue. My way of doing these things is by encouraging my students to do so and giving them the tools to do it well. But these

things don't just happen. We need to think about how our systems are structured to enable relationships and ideas to flourish.

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I work primarily between two camps: environmental education and environmental ethics. This position gives me occasion to observe both sides, and what I see is that they care about a lot of the same things. Foremost, they care about the places and the systems that sustain us, that give us joy, inspire us, restore our spirit, and connect us to something larger than ourselves. For the most part these are the places we picture when we hear the words nature or wilderness, but in the last bunch of years, both of these camps have started thinking about our near places, too, the urban environments where we live and work, our neighborhoods, our farms. This they have in common, too. They care enough about these places that they think about them in a braided whole, both the near and the far, the familiar and the sublime. One could say both of these groups do what they do because they want other people to care about these places, systems, beings, and ideas, too. But they do this work in different ways, and this is where they diverge. From my standpoint, on the middle line that connects, it seems that they both work toward the same distant goal on lines that will not converge.

The ethicists get tangled in theoretical arguments, in the *shoulds* and the *oughts*, in the books and the articles, but not so much in the actual environment. This makes sense, because the ways they get people to care about these places, beings, and systems—the thinking, the writing, the dialogue—require time, which leaves little room for frolic and engagement in the natural world. But often, the values-speak and the ethical prescriptions they work so hard to craft, these things don't reach the people who are playing outside or using the resources, they don't tell a story that matters to the people who need to care. Sometimes the ethicists even get the *is* wrong

because they're so focused on the *ought*, or they don't describe the world in a way that makes sense to the educators in place or the students and learners beyond the walls of the university.

On the other side, the environmental educators, they get tangled in the on-the-ground urgency, the knowing and interpreting of things in place, sometimes as these things tie to other places or other systems, but not always. There's a whole lot of *is*, not so much *ought*, except for the '*you should care*' admonitions we shout louder, demand with more beautiful pictures, or horrifying ones, as we try to get people to listen. THIS species is endangered. THIS landscape is threatened. THIS bug eats this plant as it perpetuates its invasion of your backyard. Here, kids, pull up *this* plant because it is bad and the others are good. But why should anyone care? It's hard to get to the *ought* from the *is*. Impossible really. Meanwhile, the simultaneous work of both of these camps goes unnoticed by the other.

Seems to me everyone's working on knowing and doing, but not as much on being, at least beyond the moment of the classroom or the course environment. And this goes for both groups. We spend a lot of time in environmental ethics classes describing and prescribing, but not so much linking what these things mean to being in the world in an everyday sense. What does it look like, as our students go to work and run to the grocery, cook dinner with their friends or road trip for the weekend, what does it look like to live their lives as moral beings, as environmental citizens? They might know really well how to describe the difference between intrinsic and utilitarian value. They might roll their eyes at the anthropocentric argumentation of politicians or corporations. But what does it mean to act on their values, to employ their environmental ethics learning in the world? And what is their obligation to do so?

The environmental education folks probably learned what some of this sustainable action looks like in practice, because these things have become the rules of the road for responsible

environmental behavior: recycle, eat less meat, vote for green politicians. The environmental ethics students might even get some of these things too, just by being engaged in the course material and seeing a correlation. So is this enough? Have we done our job if our students act in these ways? If they recycle, vote for the ‘right’ person, can they sit back and feel good about themselves because they’ve contributed and the world is a better place? I don’t think so. Not yet.

What I’ve learned in these field philosophy classes is that blurred lines matter. In the hazy places between the disciplines—in the fog that hovers over us during a dockside conversation, or under the gaze of the moose who emerges from the trees and stops everyone mid-sentence—we sit with things. When the way straightforward becomes less clear because disciplinary methods don’t make as much sense as they used to, or because the world offers us something so beautiful we are powerless to do anything but watch, we sit with things. And in this sitting, we do good work. We make sense of the tangled threads, we say things that might not seem ‘right’ according to how we’ve been trained, but feel ‘right’ nonetheless. We engage and invest in the learning experience itself.

Down time matters too. Making space for awe and beauty, emotion and care, self discovery when the self means more than just the brain that writes the paper at the end of the semester—these things need to be part of the curriculum, because they are teachers, just like the authors in our course pack, the voices of our peers, and the lessons of our educators. Environmental education often does a nice job of providing some of these things. Good programs encourage play, observation, imagination, and stories. Personal investment matters. As much as our ethics are socially-bound, they are also so very personal; ethics are nested in everything we’ve known and experienced before, the people who have shaped us, the places we have inhabited. I find that students’ environmental ethics, as they develop and shift, are rooted in

their childhood yards, the creeks behind their schools, their pets, their summer vacations, their grandfathers' love for fishing, their fear of worms, or of the dark. These things—their own ideas about nature—matter as the students think through Emerson's ideas about nature, Dillard's, Lynn White Jr.'s, and Leopold's. They are the framework upon which the students' new ideas are cast. So we need to give students the space to do this re-framing and encourage them to draw upon their past ideas as we offer them new ones to complicate what they thought before was a pretty simple concept: nature. Environmental ethics often does a good job at this: providing multiple points of view about the same ideas to complicate previously straightforward ideas and answers.

Perhaps, then, acknowledging the dialogue and shared goals between the camps (more directly, because of course this is happening in places and pockets) would be a good place to be. We can take the lessons about awe and beauty, imagination and natural history from environmental education into our environmental ethics classes. And we can take the lessons about metaphors and perspectives, values and argumentation, into the field. This interplay would go a long way to helping both groups to work more effectively toward the same end. Without it, we're doing our students, and ourselves, a disservice.

Don't get me wrong. There's good learning being done in both camps. I am a product of both camps. But what I'm saying is it's not just about learning if we really are going to work to create the world we want to live in. It's about caring, committing, loving, and becoming. These things are more than knowledge. They have to do with ethics. So environmental education without an ethical component—and yes, ethics work is something kids can do too—probably isn't doing enough, or the right stuff, just as environmental ethics without the emotional component, the practical application, and maybe even the natural history or field exposure, probably isn't doing enough, or the right stuff, either.

I read a story the other day about an ocean scientist, Wallace J. Nichols, who believes in love. He's big time—TED talks, lectures at Stanford—and he thinks love and happiness are the keys to conservation. At a large public lecture in 2009 Nichols passed out blue marbles and asked the audience to hold their marbles at arm's length. "That's what the Earth looks like from a million miles away—a water planet," he said. "Now hold it up to your eye and look at the sun. If water were inside, it would contain virtually every element. Now," he implored them, "think of someone who's doing good work for the ocean. Hold it to your heart: think of how it would feel to you and to them if you randomly gave them this marble as a way of saying thank you."³⁴ While initially off-putting, the marble game worked. There's a website where anyone can buy marbles or share their marble stories³⁵. A million blue marbles are out there in the world now, being traded, shared, passed on as bits of gratitude and awareness from hand to heart and back again. They are talismans to remind their holders about what they care about, reminding them to share that love and passion, to live like it matters. And it does. What we care about matters. So for a second, imagine you are holding in your hand your most special place, your most dear nature moment. Who do you give it to? Who would you share it with? How would you feel if you dropped it, or worse, if you lost it?

What's most remarkable is that Nichols did this in a lecture. A lecture! He didn't take his audience to the ocean, although they were at an aquarium, or tell them about all of the terrible things we do to our oceans. He gave a lecture and he passed out marbles. So you see, it's not about the indoor or outdoor classroom, not about the domain of science or the humanities. It's about emotional connections to places and ideas, relationships to the people now or in the future,

³⁴ Roberts (2011), p. 68

³⁵ See <http://bluemarbles.org/>

about beauty and love and happiness. There are ways these things can inform our everyday practice of teaching and scholarship. We just need to be thoughtful about our methods, our audiences, and our goals.

So for a second, let's get back to the 'being' piece. If we are too caught up with the knowing and doing, how might we go about re-connecting with the being, both in the moment of learning and beyond? I think we might be attentive to teachable moments, the surprising questions spawned by curiosity that don't fit into our lesson plans, or the relevant events that happen outside our classroom walls. We might invite these inside to blur the lines of appropriate subjects of study. We might also attend to awe. What makes the students' jaws drop? Ask them. Send around a piece of paper and ask what single thing they have seen, discussed, or read in class so far that has made them think, helped them best understand course ideas, or captivated them. Then do more of it. If class is the same everyday, this will be a less interesting exercise, so mix it up. Show a video. Take a field trip. Encourage the students to bring in outside media that captures course ideas in a new way. Allow everyday experiences from the students' lives to count as evidence. Or poetry. Encourage them to make links between their world and their coursework. Encourage them to care. Help them develop skills that matter to this bridge-building: observation, attentiveness, and relationship building, in addition to the argumentation and criticality, the memorization and quantification. Reward curiosity. Be aware of borderlands, of the places and ideas and cases that trouble student notions of black and white, right and wrong, costs and benefits. It is in these spaces that students begin to claim their own voices, a step of empowerment and investment. Pass out marbles.

*

On the Isle Royale trip every summer we exchange gratitude. We pick a name out of a hat on the second night of our course and spend the week thinking of a way to give gratitude to this

person on the last night³⁶. I encourage the students to make something for their partner or to prepare something to say, and this is how the night usually starts, though by the end we all end up being grateful for lots of people and lots of things. I approach gratitude as an ethic, a particular way to inhabit our relationships with each other and the natural world. This is consistent with the literature the students read for the class and the pedagogy I have designed for the course, which is derived from the ethic of care, an approach to morality that sees an act as right if it contributes to the flourishing of relationships between carers and cared-for, rather than prescribed rules for good and bad and right and wrong. It is a relational ethic, rather than a list of rights and principles.

In this vein, we can understand gratitude as a kind of reciprocity within relationships, both with other individuals and with the natural world as a biotic community; it is a way of recognizing and accepting provided care. As an environmental ethic, gratitude plays an important role in traditional ecological knowledge, a useful model for meaningful environmental and social relationships rooted in scientific, spiritual, ethical, and community awareness and engagement. We see this in the scholarship of Robin Kimmerer, who writes about the *minidewak*, the Potawatami word for the ‘giveaway.’ She tells a story about the gift of berries the bushes share with us and with the animals, and then she describes the gifts her tribe shares with each other in their giveaway ceremony. “A gift,” she explains, “is different from something you buy, possessed of meaning outside its material boundaries. You never dishonor the gift. A gift asks something of you. To take care of it. And something more”³⁷. Receiving, and giving, gifts is a moral act, a way of being in the world, honoring those around us and the relationships that sustain us. It is a way of being grateful.

³⁶ See Appendix G for the lesson plan for this gratitude exercise.

³⁷ Kimmerer (2010), 143

Gratitude ties to a feminist, care-informed environmental ethic through the work of Kathleen Dean Moore, who asks: “[I]s gratitude a moral obligation? I would say it is....To be grateful is to live a life that honors the gift. To care for it, keep it safe, protect it from damage”³⁸. Gratitude acknowledges the other as a knowledgeable partner in a relationship. It recognizes the relationship itself as a living entity, receives care given and offers care in return. It seems safe to consider issuances of gratitude, especially in the teaching and learning environment, as acts of confirmation, which, Noddings describes, is, “an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others”³⁹. So on the last night of our course, we sit in the dark beneath a smattering of stars—or clouds, or even the mist of rain—and affirm and encourage the best in each other.

I didn’t know how this would go that first year. I wondered if my teaching goals might be a little hokey for these upper-level science students, as I was pulling together techniques from my field teaching days with ideas from our ethics curriculum and hoping a week was long enough for them to feel something special about each other and their experience of learning philosophy in the wilderness. But they loved it. They told funny and thoughtful stories, dug deep to come up with meaningful gifts for their gratitude partners. In fact, in each of the four years I have taught this course—regardless of the different group dynamics, personalities, backgrounds, or learning styles—this exercise always brings out the best in the group. Every year our discussion on the dock is filled with love, warmth, attentiveness, and yes, sincere gratitude. We also laugh, and some people cry. Sometimes there is sporadic dancing. Students relish the opportunity to create something, share a story, and feel received by the group.

³⁸ Moore (2004c), 232

³⁹ Noddings (2005) citing Buber (1958), 25

They have written each other poems, made picture frames out of birch bark, given away their most treasured spoon, the giver of sustenance in our backcountry kitchen. They read quotes from our course pack, parody personality quirks, weave bracelets from invasive flowers, and paint pictures of the landscape. Someone took home a jelly jar of lake water for her love of daily, frigid Lake Superior swims. We take only that which the island will not miss. And the gifts themselves are but trinkets to capture the feeling of giving and receiving gratitude, of attending to the gifts our community shares with us and honoring the gifts we share in return. This isn't traditional academic learning, but it is. Because when you read the student journals, you see the thinking that goes into such raw sharing with the group.

Presenting gratitude on the last night of our course requires the students know natural history knowledge, for they need to know what they can pick and remove from the island and what they cannot, and why. We trouble over the language of ecological metaphors—invasive, superorganism, community, the balance of nature—for a good part of our course, so employing this knowledge as they attend to the forest floor while looking for craft supplies is philosophical and literary work. They read and re-read their course packs and the books in the ranger center to capture the essence of their gratitude partner in a few poetic words. This encourages a much closer reading than the pre-course summary/response essays demand, as well as the application of literature to their everyday lives. The power of poetry is often new learning for these science students. They attend to the aesthetics of place, develop their observation skills, and practice nature journaling when they draw or paint each other pictures—all elements of the literary and philosophical tradition in the natural world, as well as skills related to the tasks of field biology. The act of gratitude also encourages the group to understand our relationships in place in the

context of all of our relationships, a way to take the course learning home into our daily lives. It is a way to understand ethics as a practice, not just a discipline.

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So what am I grateful for? Oh gosh, so many things. I'm grateful for the word data, which I inhabit so comfortably now. I'm grateful for my students who write things like Jen did in her final on-island reflection, which both made me laugh and broke my heart:

It almost feels like a prank this gratitude idea. Let me explain: you give us this task of appreciating someone. Someone you are forced into up-close, personal contact. We stew on ideas, attempt to give meaningful gifts and all along we can't figure out the message. When you know you have to show gratitude towards someone you have to look at them in a whole new light. Duh! You should be doing that with all people in almost all circumstances. SHOULD. Respect is the task. The joke is on you when you realize that it takes making it a task in order to do it. And you finally notice that your life could be functioning totally different if you simply made it a habit. Cruel joke, Lissy....I feel like one piece of my puzzle has been put into place. Conscious growth. Yes, I feel like I have grown up but please don't tell anyone. And also thank you. After three years of college finally a class has brought out the human in me.

Hallelujah. I am grateful for her growth. I am grateful for the scholars who have believed in me enough to push me harder, but not write me off. I am grateful for yoga, which has taught me balance in a world that honors product over process, for my friends who remind me to laugh, for cooking with beautiful vegetables and my time at the farm where I can see them grow. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn every day, to share my learning with my students and my colleagues, and for the personal growth this learning has catalyzed. I am grateful for wide-open

skies and wind in the sails. I'm grateful for all the stories that have come before and contributed meaning to my world. I am grateful for the opportunity to spend time in the natural world for work and for play. It is this relationship that fuels me. It is what is at stake in all the work I do.

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Last summer we lined up on the dock on Isle Royale to board the ferry back to Minnesota and the scraggly ferry guy greeted me by name. He asked about our week, we chatted about their season on the new boat they bought last winter, this one white and low on the water. My students loaded our bags in the hold and then we posed with moose antlers held to our heads around the Windigo sign. We took photos with the Isle Royale researchers, with our ranger friends, and as a group with our arms around each other. My comfort here in this scene captures for me the growth and learning that is contained in these pages. I chased the mountains and they brought me here, to a windswept island in northwest Lake Superior, 11 miles from the Canadian shore, to a boreal forest with a mining, fishing, logging, and Native American history. I am a teacher. I am a writer. I am an ethicist who researches appropriate relationships with the natural world. I use data and words, take photos and lead hikes. I am a storyteller and this is my gift.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ISLE ROYALE OUTDOOR PHILOSOPHY COURSE SYLLABUS (2011)

Outdoor Philosophy: Isle Royale
NSC 490/FW 491 Summer 2011
June 25th–July 2nd
Lissy Goralnik (goralnik@msu.edu)

This class will be a rigorous and embedded introduction to environmental philosophy and nature writing. While we will engage the ecology and the ecological research of Isle Royale National Park, we will be doing this through the lens of the humanities. We will be base-camping, cooking on camp stoves, and living and working outside in all weather, together learning from and with the natural environment. Through an examination of the concepts environmental ethics, place-based natural science and natural history, and environmental literature, and guided by writing, discussion, group exercises and outdoor exploration, our goal is for students to develop an understanding the ideas about the natural world while simultaneously developing a connection with the landscape of Isle Royale National Park. We will be developing a relationship with this beautiful place through multiple lenses: individual and group; with the rangers, the researchers, and with each other; humanities, science, traditional ecological knowledge; reading, writing, drawing, exploring, hiking; microcosm and macrocosm; sight, sounds, smell, taste. As in all relationships, there will be challenge and there will be joy. Pre-course reading and a post-course project will serve to make this connection to the academic material more concrete, though the focus of the class will be on developing personal and collective relationships to place and ideas, for the heart of environmental studies lies in the very environment we study.

Field courses offer unique challenges. The readings and assignments for this course are extensive and intense, instructor expectation and enthusiasm runs high, and an entire semester worth of study will be compressed in to a short time frame. Students should expect a full week of deep and intense thinking, collaborating, reading, discussing, and writing. You will get from this class what you put in, both with the reading/writing assignments, and also on the island. I encourage you to dig in, dig deep, and let yourself be vulnerable to the process. You will be rewarded.

One good reason for going to the woods is to leave behind many of the presuppositions, limitations, and boundaries that constrain academic life as we know it. This class is quite intentionally designed to subvert the distinctions between the humanities, the fine arts, and the sciences; to break down the differences between student and teacher and community member; to reduce the role of ‘authorities’ in philosophy and literature; to expand the confines of ‘philosophy, properly understood’; to make writing as much a part of our lives as thinking and talking; and to bring together theory and practice. What we will preserve are the notions of quality and rigorous thought. In our experience, incredible things happen when you get out in the woods with a small group of philosophically minded people. A community is created in which the dynamics are rich, complex. In addition, there is a private thread which is the individual

before and after the course, and the individual away from the group at times, alone by the lake or under the stars. Finally, there is the reading and course work, ideas and questions interesting enough to lose sleep over.

The assignments for this class are varied. You will be responsible for reading and responding to the course pack reading before you come to the island. You will also read and write a response paper about the philosophical personal essays of *The Pine Island Paradox* before you arrive. We will use a blog to share ideas and thoughts about this reading and writing process before we meet for the ferry. While on the island you will keep a course journal for writing assignments, drawings, reflections, and notes; you will also be responsible for a 10-minute class and a 3-5-minute “Nature Nugget” you will present to the group. Lastly, you will turn in a final project 10 days after the course ends. The assignment grade percentage breakdown is as follows:

Participation, group contributions, leadership, coaching, and expedition behavior: **10%**

Student class and nature nugget: **15%**

Journals—pre-course, blog, during-course (+ 3 page final reflection), and *Pine Island* paper:

55% **pre-course: 25%, blog: 10%, during course: 15%, Pine Island paper: 5%

Final Project—**20%**

There are a total of 100 points available for the course.

Assignment Specifics: Reading responses should include a short summary of the article and a response based on your thoughts, reactions, and connections you make to other reading you have done. These should be typed in a Word document (1/2 - 1 page single-spaced each). Three entries are due to Lissy over email by June 8th so I can read them and give you feedback on your ideas and writing before we go to the island. You need to submit your entire pre-course journal electronically to Lissy (Goralnik@msu.edu) by 5pm June 22nd. Please print a copy of the whole summary/response document out to bring to the island for discussion. See the rubric for further guidance on the format and expectations of this assignment.

Before we meet for the ferry you also need to read *The Pine Island Paradox* by Kathleen Dean Moore (see Amazon or any other online bookseller to purchase this; I am not ordering it for the bookstore), and write a 2.5-3 page response paper, which you should also submit by 5pm June 22nd, as well as bring a copy to the island with you to refer to in discussion. This short paper should discuss the argument Moore crafts through story about what she considers a right relationship with the natural world. What does this relationship look like? Why is it important, or even necessary? Is she persuasive? Why/why not? How? What kinds of techniques does she use to make her argument, who is she writing to, and how might it relate to your life or to our upcoming experience on the island? Please use examples from the text to discuss her work, your reactions to it, and how/why the book works as an argument and as a series of personal essays. While I hope you enjoy the book, this response is more about the ideas and less about your personal reaction, so please root all of your reactions and thoughts in evidence, either from the text or from your life, or both.

You can access the blog at <http://isro2011.blogspot.com/>. Everyone is expected to post at least twice a week (a hearty paragraph long or more), and each of these posts should include a pointed question that your peers can respond to in their own posts about the reading. The content of the

blog should take the form of a fluid dialogue driven by honest and open thoughts about the texts, the ideas, and the relevant course themes that emerge in the reading. In addition, Jess or I will pose a question probably every other week, either directly related to the reading or reflective of the themes from the reading, that everyone needs to respond to. This required work will start the week of May 16th and everyone is allowed 1 week off between May 16th and June 22rd, the day before most of us will leave for the island (though you are still accountable for responding to the questions from me or Jess, even if late). The posts can start earlier if you are ready, but everyone should have 10 good posts spread out across the assignment timeline, as well as responses to the questions posed by me or Jess (3 official questions, which will be marked as such). Of course, you can share more than this, so use this space as a way to work out your ideas, ask for feedback from the group, or make connections across readings or to other experiences in your life. Please feel free as well to also use this space to make plans for course travel, share ideas for gear purchase, and anything else course related. Everything here should be respectful, readable, and appropriate. This is a safe place for sharing, growth and exploration. The blog is a new project, so if necessary I will make adjustments to this assignment as we go.

During our week in Isle Royale you will work in a course journal. Everyday the group will write, draw, take notes, and respond to activities in your journals, and this work, combined with the essay responses you do before you arrive, will make up the bulk of your work for this class. In addition to our group and individual activities, you are expected to write a 15-20 minute personal reflection everyday. This is a graded activity, so please label and date these and make sure you carve out the time you need during the day to make this happen. There are no specific expectations for this time, except that you are alone and that you are writing. Use it as a way to decompress, take some alone time, explore your connection to the course ideas, place, or process, or think about the group dynamic. There are no right answers to these reflections, or for any of your work on the island. It is all graded presence/absence. If you engage the activities and the assignments and this engagement shows up on the page, then you get credit for an assignment. If you don't, then you won't get credit. Therefore it is easy to get 100% for your graded portion of the on-island work. A scanned copy of your journal will be due 5 days after your return from the island (July 8th). When you turn this in you should also craft a 3-page final reflection about your experience, what you learned and how you learned it, and how/why this learning is meaningful for you. Again, no right answer. This, too, is graded presence/absence, so if you do it, meet the expectations, and engage it sincerely, you will get full credit. As you craft this reflection, perhaps use your journal entries, *The Pine Island Paradox* and the other readings, and your personal experience to make connections across conceptual and experiential learning. Did your reading of the book and/or articles change or grow through this experience? How has your relationship with the natural world developed or changed? Does your writing capture your connections to the ideas and the landscape? This reflection is due at the same time as your journal and should be a typed Word document.

While on the island you will be expected to teach a 10-minute class to the group on a subject that relates to our course and is interesting to you. This can stem from your other studies or background knowledge, or it can be something you learn about through reading on the island. But it must be sparked by a question you have about wilderness, Isle Royale, or something specific you and/or the group has (or could potentially) experience(d) while we are on the island. The key to this assignment is its root in curiosity, its grounding in your academic interests, and

its appeal to your audience—the rest of the class. Additionally, each student will do a “Nature Nugget,” or a 3-5 minute mini-lesson on a flora, fauna, geological formation, or historical point of interest that we see in Isle Royale. These should cover basic natural history information, as well as interesting facts, relationships, or fun facts. In addition, your Nature Nugget should include a quotation from one of the class readings (or other nature literature) that relates to the focus of your nugget or captures what you determine is the essence of your study object, either literally or figuratively. Please make your notes/plan for your Nature Nugget and your class in your journal (and mark them as such) so I can see your thought process have something to refer to while grading. The intention is that all of our Nature Nuggets will respond to the same part of trail so that collectively we create an interpretive experience for an area of the park.

The final project will be due electronically July 23rd by 5pm. The final project can be a traditional research paper based on the themes and concepts we work with on the course, or the project can take a more creative approach. Options include, but are not limited to: a photo diary accompanied by narrative, a poster series or pamphlet series for the Park Service (see me for this because you will need to work during the course on this, and also consult with the rangers directly), poetry, creative personal narrative, a video (I expect to get a video camera from Study Away that we can use on course), painting (with explanative reflection), a children’s book, or a poster or presentation that you can show at a research fair. I encourage you to find the voice that best expresses your experience and learning and that tells a meaningful story about the concepts as experienced you. I will provide a rubric, but this project should reflect your learning from the literature, group discussions, and through experience, so even if it is creative, it should be driven by and respond directly to the intellectual themes of the course. If you have questions or ideas, please check in with me or Jess and we can help you shape your project in a way that satisfies our expectations and your intentions.

Your participation and leadership grade will be based on your interactions and contributions to the group in discussion, on-trail, and in camp. Expedition behavior refers to your willingness to pitch in and the quality of your interpersonal interactions as we live and learn in a group atmosphere. Being able to coach other students who have different background knowledge than you do is an important skill. Are you kind and generous with your knowledge, encouraging and open in discussion, gracious to our guests, curious, patient, growth-seeking, humble, and helpful? These things are learning goals in a field course. Some people will have spent more time cooking or camping than other people, and I don’t expect everyone to be comfortable in the same situations. But I do expect that everyone give 100% for the 1-week of our course. I expect everyone be willing to learn new things, to take themselves out of their comfort zones, and to explore new concepts, both intellectually and physically. I also expect you to be challenged and to learn and grow from this challenge, so expedition behavior is a dynamic characteristic. In this vein, I expect everyone to be tolerant and generous of each other’s learning and growing processes.

Academic Honesty: The all-university policy on academic dishonesty includes several regulations applicable to this class. First, “no student shall [...] claim or submit the academic work of another as one’s own,” “complete or attempt to complete any assignment or examination for another individual without proper authorization,” or “allow any examination or assignment to be completed for oneself, in part or in total, by another without proper authorization” (*Spartan*

Life 77). Furthermore, “[i]f any instance of academic dishonesty is discovered by an instructor, it is his or her responsibility to take appropriate action. Depending on his or her judgment of the particular case, he or she may give a failing grade to the student on the assignment or for the course” (108). The student’s academic dean may also be notified of the reasons for the failure (ibid).

I take all cases of academic dishonesty seriously. In environments such as this field course, the stakes are even greater, for the heart of the course lies in the honest and sincere engagement of everyone in our community. Plagiarism and dishonest scholarship in any form will not be tolerated.

Evaluation: MSU utilizes a 4.0, 3.5, 3.0, 2.5, 2.0, 1.5, 1.0, and 0.0 grading scale. Since there are 100 total points for the class, a total score of 92 and higher will be a 4.0; a grade of 88-91.5 will be a 3.5; 82-87.5 will be a 3.0; 78-81.5 will be a 2.5; 72-77.5 will be a 2.0; 68-71.5 will be a 1.5; 62-67.5 will be a 1.0. Everything below a 62, or a D-, will be recorded as a 0.0.

*** Smoking will be tolerated only in impacted areas of the park (near the ranger station, the pavilion, and the dock). Of course, if you choose to smoke, you are expected to treat your butts with great care, aware of both fire hazards and proper waste disposal. There will be no smoking in camp or on group hikes. There is a zero tolerance for drinking and drug use on the course. Even if you are legal age, the use of these substances disrupts the group dynamic and dampen the authenticity of the community and personal experience. Please expect to experience the island with all your senses alert and intact, and save these other experiences for when you get home.

Course Materials:

1. Course pack
2. *Pine Island Paradox* by Kathleen Dean Moore
3. Lined journal, writing utensils, and a Ziploc to keep them in
4. Folder or binder to organize the printed essays and handouts

Gear List:

TOPS

- 2 t-shirts (one should be polypro, not cotton)
- 1-2 synthetic long underwear shirts/long sleeve (not cotton) shirts
- 1 fleece/wool sweater
- 1 warm jacket (heavy fleece, down, poly-fill, wool)
- 1 vest (down, fleece)—optional
- 1 long sleeve windshirt/bugshirt (thin shell, needs to be mosquito proof)
- 1 waterproof rain jacket (MUST BE WATERPROOF!)

BOTTOMS

- 1 pair of shorts
- 1 pair of synthetic long underwear
- 1 pair of fleece pants - optional

1 pair of waterproof shell pants/rain pants
1 pair of jeans/workpants/hiking pants/zipoffs

HEAD/FEET/HANDS/UNDER

3 pairs of socks (synthetic/wool)
underwear
1-2 bra/sportsbra (women)
1 warm hat (knit or fleece)
1 sun hat (wide brim or baseball style or visor)
1 pair of hiking boots
1 pair of camp shoes (sturdy sneakers, Crocs, sport sandals – something that will dry quickly and that you don't care about getting muddy)
1 head net
1-2 bandanas
1 pair of gloves (fleece or wool)

EXTRAS

Journal (spiral bound, exposition style—needs to be lined)
Folder/binder (to hold course materials you print off of Angel/email and bring with you)
Pens/pencils (bring several so you are never without—pens should be black/blue)
Several Ziplocs (big ones for your journal and organization of gear)
Several trash compactor bags (or giant size Ziplocs with handles)—to waterproof clothes
Headlamp w/ Extra batteries
Bug spray (we recommend either Cutter w/ picardin, citronella, or eucalyptus)
Daypack (big enough to wear for an extended day hike...school backpack is fine)
Backpack/duffel bag that all of your stuff fits in (minus the day pack)
Sleeping bag (at least 20-degree; if buying Campmor brand or similar we recommend 0-degree – nights can be cold on ISRO, even in mid-June)
Tupperware/bowl (the lid is nice, but it should at least be unbreakable material)
Spoon
Mug (preferably thermal with lid)—if you drink coffee, you need to bring your own and have a way to make it (a bag/week); consider a French press mug (my favorite backcountry system)
1 liter water bottle (at least 1; we recommend 2)
Sunglasses
Playing cards (opt.)
Reading book (opt.)—we have the course library, so there should be plenty to read there
Watch with alarm (or travel alarm)
Spending money (for travel to/from the island and treats at the store)
Packtowel (opt.—quick drying, super absorbent towel)
Sleeping pad (inflatable or Insulite foam pad)
Lazy Creek or similar camping chair (no legs, needs to be carried in/on your daypack to be useful)

TOILETRIES (these should be VERY limited)

Toothbrush

Toothpaste (get a small travel tube)
Hairbrush (opt.)
Dental floss
Sunscreen
Bug spray (I recommend Picardin, which is safer than DEET, not smelly, and totally works)
Deodorant, face cleaner (opt.)
Contacts and solution (if necessary)
Extra glasses (if necessary)
Prescription medication (please let us know what you take in case you need medical attn.)
Epi pen—bring 2!! (if you have a known allergy—please let me know where it is at all times!)

PLEASE! Do not bring ipods, cell phones or other electronics. Their use will be greatly discouraged, and there is no cell phone coverage on the island. One of the joys of island life is engaging fully with your senses the sounds and silence of the island. Embrace it.

***you may want these for your drive, which is fine. You should leave them in the car when we travel to the island.**

Lots of the gear on the list can be borrowed or acquired at thrift stores or Army surplus stores. Many online outdoor stores also have outlets, which are great sources for reliable gear. Don't feel like you need the fanciest stuff out there. Think functional—warm, dry, durable. If you need some ideas about where to find stuff, let me know. I have a lot experience researching and buying outdoor gear.

GEAR SITES:

If you need to purchase some of this gear, I recommend the following sites in terms of returnability, the potentiality for free shipping, and the cost. Sleeping bags should be at least 20-degrees, nothing less. I recommend a 0-degree bag if it is not from Sierra Designs, North Face, Marmot, Mountain Hardware or another of the big and hardcore brands. I use a 0-degree bag all year, even in the height of the summer. I personally prefer inflatable mattresses (Thermarest, etc.), but the foam ones are fine and nearly always cheaper, so if you don't think you'll be backpacking or doing a lot of camping in the future, foam will be more cost effective and can be other things when cut up. Check out these sites:

www.Campmor.com

www.Backcountry.com

www.backcountryoutlet.com

www.sierratradingpost.com

www.moosejaw.com

www.rei.com/outlet

Here's a basic schedule, adapted from our schedule last year. The days are very full. Rarely will you get more than an hour of free time during the day. That said, the classes are varied and active, and fun! We want to take advantage of our time on the island.

Table 2. Schedule 2011 Tentative

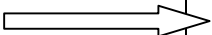
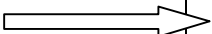
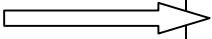
	MORNING 9-12ish	Lunch 12:30-1:30	AFTERNOON 2-5ish	Break 5-6 Dinner 6:30	EVENING 7:30-10ish
SATURDAY 6/25	Ferry 8:30am (be at ferry dock 7:45), arrive at Windigo around 10:00 and set up camp, lunch from coolers		Peruse gear/ literature, orient in Windigo, intro ranger hike (1 hour), initial journal entries: special places and expectations (wilderness arg. I)		Discussion about special places, expectations for the course, goals, fears, reason for being here. Brainstorm words = wilderness
SUNDAY 6/26	Day hike to Grace Creek Overlook (1.8 miles from ranger station): TEK class, tree cookies (where am I in the wilderness?), art nugget		Bring lunch. Return to camp late afternoon. 4-5: wilderness arguments I (if not on Day 1)		Evening ranger talk, follow-up discussion; Introduce group gifts/gratitude activity
MONDAY 6/27	Wolf/Moose learning with Leah Vucetich: radio telemetry, salt lick, natural history		Ranger Program: management values and practice (Lucas)		Evening discussion. Student Classes (if they're ready)
TUESDAY 6/28	Day hike to Minong Ridge (3 miles from camp): Annie Dillard, art nugget, solos		Bring lunch. Return to camp late afternoon. 4-5: Possible ranger program: human history (?)		Student classes. Fire hangout.

Table 2 Cont'd. Schedule 2011 Tentative

WEDNESDAY 6/29	Plant walk and invasive remediation 9am (Val) Work on classes, nuggets, free explore if extra time		The ethics of long term ecological research with Michael Nelson		Student classes. Transference discussion
THURSDAY 6/30	Full day hike on Huggenin Loop: Metaphors, Symbols and the Ecological Scavenger Hunt		Bring lunch. Return to camp late afternoon.		John's Ranger Talk
FRIDAY 7/1	Wilderness arguments part II		Canoing		Gratitude activity
SATURDAY 7/2	Nature Nuggets. Paperwork. Final Reflective Journal.		Ferry at 2:00, be ready by 1:00 and eat lunch at ferry dock		Arrive in Grand Portage 3:30

APPENDIX B

METHODOLOGY

My research is grounded in constructivist philosophy. This project aims for a nuanced and relevant understanding of a phenomenon—field philosophy—as it is experienced for the participants in the study. The understanding and the knowledge we learn from this research is co-constructed by the participants and me, the researcher, in a shared experience reflective of the time, place, context, and conditions of our learning. Like Wolcott (1994), “I do not go about trying to discover a ready-made world; rather, I seek to understand a social world we are continuously in the process of constructing” (368). The focus on power and inclusion in the knowledge-construction and meaning-making process in this work also aligns my research with feminist discourse. “If there is a dominant theme in feminist qualitative research,” Oleson explains, “it is the issue of knowledges. Whose knowledges? Where and how obtained, by whom, from whom, and for what purposes” (129). I push this farther and move beyond gendered experience to argue for the inclusion of all voices in the construction and sharing of knowledge. Thus ecofeminist philosophy lies at the theoretical core of this work. I attend to the logic of domination (Warren 1990) that has influenced our relationships with each other and with the natural world by honoring unheard or un-listened to voices (including emotion and nonhuman nature) as holders of value and meaning.

I have approached the data collection and analysis of this research through the lens of grounded theory (Charmaz 2006, 2011). Creswell explains that,

Grounded theory is a good design to use when a theory is not available to explain a process. The literature may have models available, but they were developed and tested on samples and populations other than those of interest to the qualitative researcher....On a

practical side, a theory may be needed to explain how people are experiencing a phenomenon, and the grounded theory developed by the researcher will provide such a general framework. (67)

But there are elements of traditional grounded theory that do not fit the research goals and philosophy of this study. Charmaz argues that the traditional model of grounded theory “emphasizes positivist empiricism with researcher neutrality while aiming for abstract generalizations of independent of time, place, and specific people” (2011, 365). In addition, the goal of traditional grounded theory—which is rooted in the framework developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967)—is to develop theory about a phenomenon. But I am not interested in crafting stagnant and universal theory. Instead I aim to create “thick description” (Geertz 1973) of a phenomenon I have experienced, documented, analyzed, and interpreted. I hope to develop an understanding of field philosophy that might guide and inform other researchers, scholars, and practitioners who are interested in how students develop, shift, or deepen their relationships with the natural world. For this reason, my research is grounded in a constructivist version of grounded theory, which “assumes that people construct both the studied phenomenon and the research process through their actions. This approach recognizes the constraints that historical, social, and situational conditions exert on these actions and acknowledges the researcher’s active role in shaping the data and analysis” (Charmaz 2011, 360).

In the grounded theory tradition, I have analyzed my data—student pre-course summary/response essays, course journals and daily reflections from the field class, and 3-page post-course reflections—using a conventional content analysis (Hsieh 2005), specifically the technique of the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss 1967) (IRB approval #X08-185). Hsieh (2005) describes “qualitative content analysis as a research method for the subjective

interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (1277). It is an iterative process of data coding, reflection, memoing, and categorizing.

I started with open coding, during which I inductively coded 25% of the data (6 out of 24 total journals) and identified emergent themes. I organized these themes, merged related or repetitive themes, and developed a codebook, which included descriptions of each of the codes and examples from the data to ground them in evidence. I met regularly with two committee members during this process to peer debrief the ideas emerging from the data, as well as my ideas about the relationships between categories. This process contributed a fresh perspective, allowed me a chance to articulate emergent themes, and provided an opportunity to get out of the data and think about the big picture. I then co-coded a different set of un-coded journal reflections with each of the same two colleagues, during which we refined the descriptive language of the codes, merged several codes, and demonstrated the need to add new codes. After making these changes, I deductively coded the rest of the data using this codebook, adding new codes as they emerged and refining the descriptions of existing codes to reflect new data. When I finished all of the journals, I returned to the original 25% of the data I coded first and re-coded them with the revised codebook, then went back through all of data to make sure the codes were saturated and reflective of the language and experience of the participants. After the codes were saturated, I ‘coded-on’ the data, or split the most interesting codes—those most related to my research questions about relationships, nature, experience, ethics, and learning, as well as those that suggested surprising or relevant insights about the field philosophy experience—into subcategories, which were multiple threads that helped provide an understanding of the story within the story. When I was comfortable with the categories that I had identified in the data, I

began the process of axial coding, or assembling the data hierarchically to understand the relationships between the codes. To facilitate this process I developed a logic diagram, or a concept map that described the process of learning and ethical development as described by the data and the codes that emerged. This process helped me identify a central phenomenon—that of the social learning experience—upon which all of the other codes relied. Understanding how the other codes enabled or disabled this process, while also explaining the contexts and conditions that allowed these relationships, helped me understand and articulate the story of the experience for the participants more clearly, as well as explain how, why, and when the process of field philosophy is effective or successful based on our theoretical goals (process adapted from Creswell 2007). This explanation has led to the descriptive and interpretive understanding of the phenomenon of field philosophy I present here.

I memoed (Bringer et al. 2004, Glaser & Strauss 1967, Lincoln & Guba 1985, Miles & Huberman 1994) continuously, first with thoughts about the challenges of the research process, then about emerging themes and their relationships, and finally about the relationships I recognized across themes. These narrative memos, combined with the links to particular nodes (or open codes) I created within NVivo, the qualitative data analysis software I used for organization and data management, helped me document the process and progress of my thinking over time, as well as capture the story of the data as it emerged linked directly to the evidence. This paper trail makes my process transparent, which helps to establish the validity of my research, though I hesitate to use the word validity, which lacks some meaning for the kind of qualitative work I am doing. Wolcott (1994) captures my feeling about the word validity, which is a remnant of the positivist paradigm, and which in the qualitative world can suggest a desire to be accepted as rigorous, as if without it our work cannot stand on its own. I trust the

rigor of my work and thus claim Wolcott's language of understanding, instead. He writes:

A concern for validityseems not only an unfortunate choice of objectives but a dangerous distraction. What I seek is something else, a quality that points more to identifying critical elements and writing plausible interpretations from them, something one can pursue without becoming obsessed with finding the right or ultimate answer, the correct version, the Truth. Perhaps someone will find or coin qualitative research's appropriate equivalent for 'validity'; we have no esoteric term now. For the present, *understanding* seems to encapsulate the ideas as well as any other everyday term" (366).

The 'validity' and goodness of my work is rooted in the trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln 1994, 114) of my process—it is transparent, reflexive, and well-documented. I include a large quantity of primary data in my research narrative both "to give readers an idea of what my data are like [and] to give access to the data themselves [...and to let participants] speak for themselves" (Wolcott 351). During my analysis and writing process I returned to my field site—in fact taught the field philosophy class again to a new group of students—to conduct what Wolcott (1994) calls a "field check" of my data, or to make sure the account I was creating made sense and accurately reflected the place, context, and situations I was working to reflect.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that qualitative researchers can establish credibility for their work by peer debriefing, prolonged engagement in the field site, persistent observation of the study phenomenon, and triangulation of data sources. I have done all of these things in this research. In addition to the student writing data I collected a pre- and post-course surveys from all of the students, made instructor observations and took field notes, experienced the courses alongside my students, and have engaged informal follow-up relationships with the students. While all of these things have served to integrate me into the research process, teach me the

methods, tie me to a tradition, and provide readers with a clear sense of my process, I think the best testament to the goodness of my research is its ability to make the reader feel something, to think about field philosophy in the context of environmental and ethical learning, and to use this work as a way to think about, perhaps re-conceive their own practice and scholarship. Wolcott explains the tension between documenting the process with adequate disciplinary rigor and the actual process of qualitative field research:

Terms like *triangulation* and *multi-instrument approach* may strike neophytes as ample safeguard against error in qualitative research, but anyone who has done fieldwork knows that if you address a question of any consequence to more than one informant, you may as well prepare for more than one answer. I try to report what I observe and offer an informed interpretation of those observations, my own or someone else's. Only the most central issues in one's research warrant the thorough probing implied by triangulation. We are better off reminding readers that our data sources are limited, and that our informants have not necessarily gotten things right either, than implying that we would never dream of reporting an unchecked fact or underverified claim. (350-1)

St. Pierre follows this by appreciating, but also recognizing the limitations of, the steps we take to make our work 'valid' to outside readers. Peer debriefing and member checks, she explains, "lend credibility to the qualitative research projects by bringing the outside—the outside chiefly in the form of members and peers—into the process, but only to a limited extent. The notion that there is some correct interpretation out there that the researcher can reproduce and that members and peers can recognize and verify, however, is suspect in postpositivist research" (St. Pierre 184).

While my research here is not autoethnography or personal narrative, except for perhaps

my conclusion, it is narrative work, a story about characters who share an experience that holds meaning for them and hopefully the reader, in which I—the first person—figure as both narrator and actor. Therefore Laurel Richardson's (2000) description of the factors she uses to evaluate the validity of personal narratives is particularly meaningful for me and this research project.

Richardson's criteria are:

- (a) Substantive contribution. Does the piece contribute to our understanding of social life?
- (b) Aesthetic merit. Does this piece succeed aesthetically? Is the text artistically shaped, satisfyingly complex, and not boring?
- (c) Reflexivity. How did the author come to write this text? How has the author's subjectivity been both a producer and a product of this text?
- (d) Impactfulness. Does this affect me emotionally and/or intellectually? Does it generate new questions or move me to action?
- (e) Expresses a reality. Does this text embody a fleshed out sense of lived experience? (Richardson 2000, 15-16 as qtd. by Holt 2003, 12)

I hope my work expresses the reality of the Isle Royale field philosophy experience for these students in a way that affects readers emotionally and intellectually. I hope readers see me in here, from the crafting of the research questions to the development of the curriculum, from the field stories to the data analysis and coding. This is a deeply personal story, even while it is rigorous and thorough research. I hope my work is not boring. I hope it is beautiful, spurs questions or starts a discussion, and inspires reflective practice for other environmental, ethical, and field teachers. I hope I tell a good and meaningful story reflective of the truth of our experience.

APPENDIX C

Table 3. ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS FRAMEWORK

Ethical System	What Counts?	Major Thinkers	Some Concerns
Anthropocentrism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow • Broad 	Humans only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humans in isolation • Humans in ecological context 	<p>Traditional ethics: most thinkers located the basis for ethics in human ability to reason and cognitive abilities: Aristotle, Mill, Kant</p> <p>Modern ethics: John Passmore; pragmatists such as Ben Minteer, Bryan Norton, Eugene Hargrove and Andrew Light prefer to discuss ethics in a way that appeals to the wide public and policymakers, who are generally swayed more effectively by anthropocentrist rhetoric</p>	Anthropocentric ethics and reductionist science are often blamed for the worldview that has allowed the environmental crisis in the first place. If only humans matter morally, and if all other beings and systems have only instrumental value for humans, then we have little reason to care about or treat other beings with respect unless we serve to benefit from this respect. A nuanced anthropocentrism would argue in response that ecologically humans are dependent upon and embedded within all other beings and systems, therefore making decisions that are good for humans will inevitably also serve all other elements of the environment, as well.

Table 3 Cont'd. ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS FRAMEWORK

Ethical System	What Counts?	Major Thinkers	Some Concerns
Zoocentrism	Some animals, based on shared human traits (such as sentience)	Peter Singer, who advocates a utilitarian (Bentham, Mill) approach for animal liberation, and Tom Regan, who argues for animal rights, a deontological (Kant) approach	Membership in the moral community requires possession of particular traits, which draws the boundaries at sometimes arbitrary places based on current scientific knowledge, e.g. if membership relies on sentience, only animals we know experience pain and pleasure belong, while others we do not (yet) have the tools to understand remain valuable only instrumentally; some argue the boundaries established through this lens are not wide enough. Welfarists might respond that we cannot recognize the experience of a thing we do not or cannot know or understand.
Biocentrism	All living individuals, membership qualification is only that a thing must be alive	Kenneth Goodpaster and Paul W. Taylor	The widest extension of traditional individualistic ethics casts a wide net, but isolates the individual living being from its context, therefore excluding wholes—ecosystems, habitats, the biotic community—from the moral community. How can a being exist without its context, and is it the same being if it is separated from the relationships that define it? Biocentrists argue that wholes are no more than a collection of individuals.

Table 3 Cont'd. ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS FRAMEWORK

Ethical System	What Counts?	Major Thinkers	Some Concerns
Ecocentrism (Holism)	Individuals and wholes count	Aldo Leopold, J. Baird Callicott, Val Plumwood, Freya Mathews, Kathleen Dean Moore, Arne Naess and the Deep Ecologists, James Lovelock	Wholes exhibit emergent properties that allow the whole to be greater than the sum of its parts. With the inclusion of wholes into the moral community, some critics worry that the individual loses standing in matters of ethical conflict. Do species matter more than individuals? Do the needs of society overwhelm the rights of individuals? Proponents of ecocentrism would point out that individuals and wholes are both included in the moral community through this lens; communities rely on individuals to thrive.
Universal Consideration	Everything might matter morally, therefore we ought to consider organic individuals and systems, as well as inorganic objects, such as rocks and mountains	Thomas Birch	If everything counts, how do we order our lives in order to act in ways that demonstrate this valuation of the world? How do we approach conflicts, or even survive, if the very act of survival requires impacts on our world and other beings? Birch would argue that this system does not grant entrance into the moral community, rather a re-consideration of all things in context.

APPENDIX D

THE WIDENING MORAL COMMUNITY: PUDDLES IN A POND

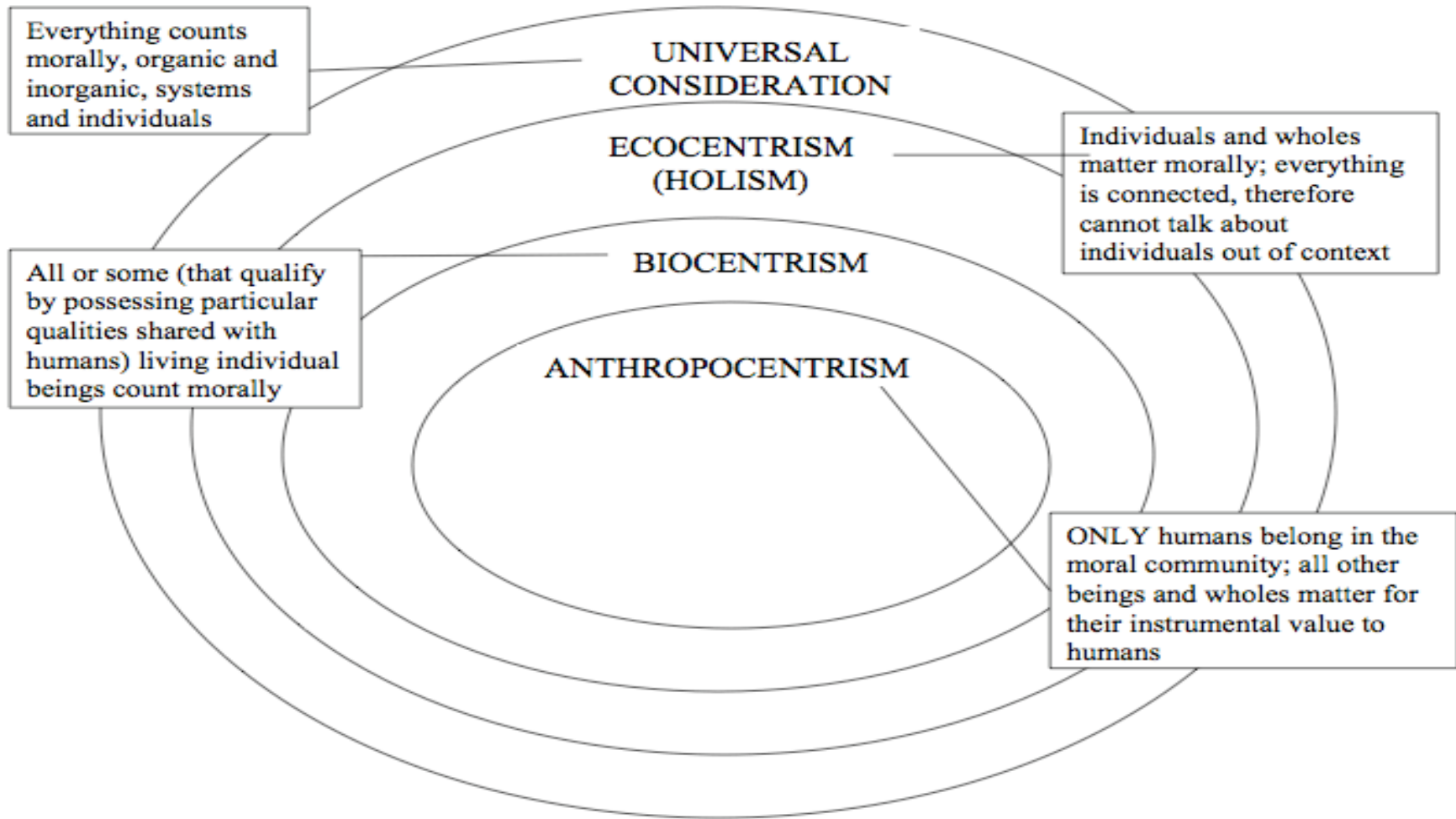


Figure 1. The Widening Moral Community: Puddles in a Pond

APPENDIX E

CONCEPT MAP OF EMERGENT DATA THEMES

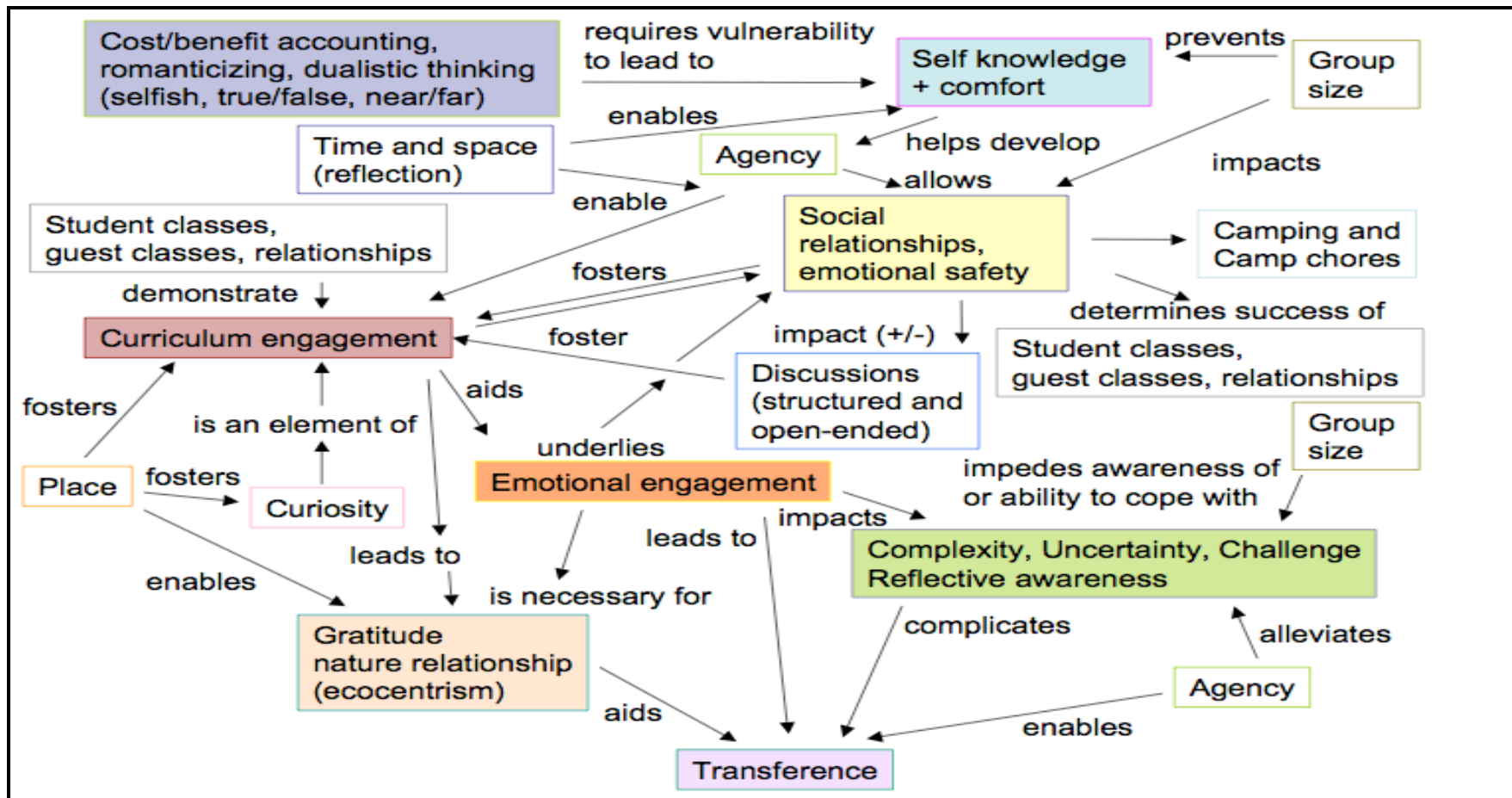


Figure 2. Concept Map of Emergent Data Themes

*For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this dissertation.

APPENDIX F

WILDERNESS ARGUMENTS EXERCISE

1. Spread each argument around on tables and surfaces, close enough that they seem connected and related, but far enough apart that people can read them individually.
2. Ask students to find 5 natural objects they find beautiful, interesting, wild, or neat
3. Students move from argument to argument and read them, make notes in their journals, think about them. For each argument, please write in your journal:
 - a. 1-2 sentence summary of the argument
 - b. Is this argument persuasive? Why, how, and for whom?
 - c. Should this argument be persuasive? Why and how?
4. Encourage students to take some time away from the arguments to make sense of them. Find somewhere to sit and look at their notes and really weigh the emotional strengths, the logical strengths, and the political strengths of the arguments.
5. Rank the arguments on the blank basketball bracket I pass out.
6. Do not vote until they have read and thought about each one!
7. Decide which argument they find has the most emotional strength—which one they like, or love, the most. Vote for that argument with one found object by placing the object on the border of the argument.
8. Decide which argument they find the most intellectually sound. Which argument holds together the best logically? Which one are they most convinced by? Vote for this one with their second object.
9. Decide which essay they find the most politically viable. Which argument would best be sold to the larger public? Which one would be an effective tool to get other people, who might be less interested in wilderness than they are, to care?
10. Use the last two objects on the two other ‘winning’ arguments from their bracket, or can double vote for one of the top 3 if they want to.
11. Spend some time explaining their choices/decisions in their journals. Why did you choose the arguments that you did? What about them was particularly effective? Could you imagine weaknesses with them? What might a critic say? What story or characterization of wilderness do those arguments rely upon. Were there other arguments you found persuasive that you wanted to vote for but didn’t? Why did you ultimately

decide away from those arguments? What were the holes or weaknesses, or why were they less appealing than the ones you chose?

12. As a group travel around and see which arguments got votes. Count votes and see which 3 arguments had the most votes.
13. Break for free time and dinner. Return for evening discussion. OR, Do the exercise first on Day 1 (2 hours), then revisit the exercise on Day 6 (1 hour) and in journals, explain why/how their votes shifted from the beginning of the week. Demonstrate changes on the basketball bracket. Break. Meet for discussion.
14. Discuss: First, why did they choose their voting objects? What drew them to the natural objects, and how did they decide which object to use for which vote?
15. Discuss the arguments, their effectiveness, and their appeal. How did people decide on their votes? Do they wish they could change any of them? Which arguments are hanging around in their heads still, either that they voted for or didn't? Why do they suppose they're still thinking about them?
16. (How did your votes change from the first day of our course to the last day? Why? What about the week gave you different ideas about values, argumentation, wilderness or the natural world?)
17. What is the role of wilderness in society? Is it necessary? Is it optional? How would our immediate world change if we took wilderness away? How would their lives change individually? How would we change culturally? How would the land change?

APPENDIX G

LENSES EXERCISE

Making the familiar unfamiliar: point of view, responsibility, and the sublime

Bring course pack, journal, writing utensil, camera if you have one, bandana

*Kant's sublime: "Nature considered in aesthetic judgment as a power that has no dominion over us is dynamically sublime. If nature is to be judged by us as dynamically sublime, it must be represented as arousing fear....Bold, overhanging, as it were threatening cliffs, thunder clouds towering up into the heavens, bringing with them flashes of lightning and crashes of thunder, volcanoes in their all-destroying violence...make our capacity to resist into an insignificant trifle in comparison with their power. But the sight of them only becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, as long as we find ourselves in safety, and we gladly call these objects sublime because they elevate the strength of our soul above its usual level, and allow us to discover within ourselves a capacity for resistance of quite another kind, which gives us the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent all-powerfulness of nature....[T]he irresistibility of its power certainly makes us, considered as natural beings, recognize our physical powerlessness, but at the same time it reveals a capacity for judging ourselves as independent of it and a superiority over nature on which is grounded a self-preservation of quite another kind than that which can be threatened and endangered by nature outside us, whereby the humanity in our person remains undemeaned even though the human being must submit to that dominion. In this way, in our aesthetic judgment nature is judged as sublime not insofar as it arouses fear, but rather because it calls forth our power (which is not part of nature) to regard those things about which we are concerned (goods, health and life) as trivial, and hence to regard its power (to which we are, to be sure, subjected in regard to these things) as not the sort of dominion over

ourselves and our authority to which we would have to bow if it came down to our highest principles and their affirmation or abandonment. Thus nature is here called sublime merely because it raises the imagination to the point of presenting those cases in which the mind can make palpable to itself the sublimity of its own vocation even over nature.”

1. If the sublime is the anticipated relationship with nature, or the pinnacle of a natural relationship, then what do we make of the less dramatic experiences with nature? If wilderness represents the sublime and the faraway, then are our close interactions with more mundane elements of nature less valuable or intellectual? Look at Near/Far in *Pine Island Paradox* (130-143) and talk about the nature writer living in the wilderness versus the nature writer living in town.
2. Take out “Living Like Weasels” and read aloud. Whenever the text ‘dives down’ into the water, students make *swoop* noise.
3. Discuss the interaction of the sacred and the mundane. Does the sublime figure into this essay? Reactions to the essay?
4. Spend 15-20 minutes writing about a memorable ‘moment’ or experience you’ve shared with an animal. It can be a pet, a wild animal, a squirrel in your yard, a farm animal—any animal of a different species than human. Explain the relationship, describe it, respond to it. Or, write it from the animal’s perspective.
5. Spread out and try to find an animal to observe—a bird, an ant, a moose, whatever. Spend 15 minutes watching, recording details. Take a picture. What does the environment you are sitting in look like from that perspective? If you can’t find a critter to watch, pick an animal that might live here and explain where you are sitting and your immediate environment from that POV. What do you see? Smell? Hear? Feel? How is this different than your own experience?
6. Meet back and do POV drawings. Gather around blown-up picture of skeleton postcard. Everyone cup eye with open fist (telescope-style) and draw a micro-image of the drawing, whatever you see through the hole of your hand.
7. Talk about who drew what section of the postcard, and why. We all see the same things in our own way and bring a piece of ourselves to what we see, read, experience. While we are all sharing this trip and place, we are all seeing the experience in our own ways.
8. Tag-team read “Lenses.”
9. Partner ‘hike’ with a blind partner, and a sighted partner. Let someone else ‘see’ for you. Walk your partner somewhere neat. Help them over obstacles. Coach them through tight spots. Find objects with interesting texture, describe them to your partner, put them in

their hand and let them ‘see’ them with their hands. Walk your partner somewhere cool—to the water, to a creek, to a clearing, to a moose (!). Describe what you see. Let your partner ask questions for clarification, for more information, for specifics. Respond. Each partner lead for 10-15 minutes, then return to the group.

10. How was it? What was frustrating? Liberating? Did being a better ‘blind’ person make you a more empathetic leader or give you new awareness about your (past) role as a leader? How can this experience transfer to other types of experiences?

APPENDIX H

GRATITUDE EXERCISE

1. Night 1
 - a. Introduce our gratitude exercise
 - i. Pick names out of a hat. Explain that gratitude will be a theme of study and reflection for the week, so spend some time thinking about the ways you are grateful for the person's name you just pulled as our week progresses. Who are they in the group? What roles do they play? How would our group be different without each of its members? What makes this person laugh, think, feel? What do they find beautiful, or challenging? I encourage you to do this thinking for all of the members of our group, but you are personally responsible for this one person. On the last night of our course we will express our gratitude for each other. While there are lots of ways to do this, I generally encourage groups to prepare something for their gratitude partner. You can make something from found materials (only invasive species, plant life that is dead and on the ground, etc.), draw, paint, write something, tell a story, act out a scene—be creative! The goal is to recognize your partner, attend to his or her contributions to our group and this experience, and reflect seriously on the role of gratitude in relationships, our daily lives, and ethics more generally.
2. Day 3 or 4
 - a. Journal exercise, then share with the group if there is time; use this as a jumping off point to discuss thankfulness and gratefulness in theory and in our lives; a meaningful way to tell personal stories and get to know each other.

Gratefulness and Thankfulness Journal Exercise

“For a moment I lost myself – actually lost my life. I was set free! I dissolved in the...high dim-starred sky! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life...to Life itself!” (Eugene O’Neil)

Assume this is gratefulness: “the full appreciation of something altogether unearned,” the mystical experience of belonging to a oneness that excludes nothing. Thankfulness, on the other hand, is the thoughtful appreciation that breaks that oneness down into giver and receiver. (Oriah quoting Brother David Steindl-Rast)

Clearly thankfulness and gratefulness are both things that enrich our lives. When I express my appreciation for a friend’s presence in my life and particular things she does that enable this appreciation, I am expressing my thankfulness. But, if I let this thankfulness be fueled by an on-going awareness of gratefulness- an experience of my belonging to something larger than myself- I will be able to appreciate it all: both the small things that frustrate me in the relationship and the small moments of beauty we share; I can appreciate beyond the moments to the whole. Gratefulness, because it opens us to the mystical experience of the unity of being,

helps us hold it all with appreciation.

Write about a moment of gratefulness in your life, a moment when beauty took your breath away and reminded you of a mystery beyond our small knowing. This is a tough one because in these moments we generally have no words. Know that your words can only point to what that experience is like, but write them anyway. How did it feel in your body? How was it different from the moments that came before and after? What was in front of you, around you, within you?

When you have finished, reread the story and sit with it. Does it convey the feeling at of the center of that experience? If not, find the words that do. Go deeper. Remember. Taste the experience again and write it on the page.

Reread it again and then think of the people in your life who touch and effect you. Now write about your thankfulness. Thinking of things you are thankful for with each person repeatedly complete the phrases, I am thankful for. . . . or I appreciate. . . .

3. Night 7, the final night of the course

- a. Sit in a circle, pick a name out of a hat to see who goes first (or ask for volunteers), and begin the process of sharing gratitude. The gratitude receiver then gives gratitude to his or her partner, etc. unless a pair has each other. When everyone has received gratitude from a partner, open the discussion up to gratitude more widely. Is there anyone or anything else you'd like to express your gratitude for? Let's use this sharing as an opportunity to revisit moments from the trip, learning, gifts we have received from the natural world, each other, our island educators, and this place. How might these things apply to your world at home, and how might you bring the lessons of this course—course-related or otherwise—with you on the ferry tomorrow? What are you grateful for in your home life and what kinds of opportunities do you have to express it?

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