Narratives on nature beauty and public land: A search for an elusive environmental ethics

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NARRATIVES ON NATURE, BEAUTY, AND PUBLIC LAND:
A SEARCH FOR AN ELUSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

by

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Ethics has been a topic of inquiry for over 2,000 years. In general the continuing project of ethics has attempted to determine what is right and wrong or good and bad with respect to our fellow humans. More recently, a new breed of philosophers, environmental philosophers, have attempted to reconsider the scope of ethics as prescriptions concerned either directly or indirectly with non-humans. Various iterations of environmental ethics have been proposed in the past 30 years. Positions including animal rights, ecosystem ethics, Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism represent four of the standard views today.

Very few empirical treatments of environmental ethics have been done and even fewer have attempted a more pluralistic approach to the topic. For instance, one of the persistent views in environmental ethics is that of justice-based obligatory ethics. While this view may be reasonable, it excludes other, perhaps, equally deserving views such as care-based ethics and supererogatory ethics. In an attempt to address these underrepresented areas of ethical inquiry, this study explicitly attempted to document the opportunities when both justice and care as well as obligatory and supererogatory ethics emerged from narratives. These narratives were constructed in reference to natural areas of varying familiarity.

Four themes emerged from the data that go some ways towards documenting the nature of environmental ethics discourse. These four themes are: 1) Beauty in Nature; 2) Responsibilities to ‘The Other;’ 3) Public Lands; and 4) On Becoming a Moral Agent. Each theme individually highlights some aspect of environmental ethics discourse that is in need of further consideration. Collectively the four themes combine to paint a picture of how environmental ethics is discussed by a sample of people in southeastern Kentucky. But more, this collection of themes questions some of the foundations of existing environmental ethics positions.

The four themes do not simply deconstruct the edifice of environmental ethics, rather they offer a new hope for overcoming some of the challenges environmental ethics continues to face. Beauty in Nature and Public Lands are two themes of environmental ethics in that they exist within the boundaries of the field. Responsibilities to ‘The Other’ and On Becoming a Moral Agent are themes about environmental ethics because they combine to challenge those boundaries.

Collectively, the four themes are features of a moral filter. Recalibrating the moral filter is one means to overcoming the challenges faced by environmental ethics today. In detailing how this moral filter might be recalibrated, a new iteration of environmental ethics is proposed.
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We are products of those closest to us in the sense that the person I am today has been constructed from countless people with whom I’ve had some experience or interaction. I am, of course, my father’s and mother’s son, my wife’s husband, and my daughter’s father. I am a student and a teacher. I am apprentice and master. These things and many more define who I am. I do not intend to give some full accounting of all of the ledger entries that, when summed, provide a perfect total of all the contributions to my life. The point of this first digression is in some sense to recognize all of those people who have helped to bring me to the point of completing this document and this degree. Their influences on me have been of varying degrees, but they have combined to produce the person who has authored this manuscript. It is with this in mind that, with much gratitude, I acknowledge that the words and thoughts set down on these pages are as much theirs as they are mine.

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Seemingly from the pages of some Dickens’ work, the irony, coincidences, and culmination of circumstance have combined to paint a surprising picture of my academic destiny. Whether my education has been an end in itself or a means to achieve the approval of a man I’ve only recently come to know and love, to some extent I’ve used the academic benchmark he set to validate my own worth. And it has been an attempt to live up to some, most likely imagined, expectations that I pushed forwards in my schooling so that I might too claim the title Doctor of Philosophy—a title shared by two generations of Alfred Jackson Stenner’s.

My mother and father stood behind me with enthusiastic encouragement as I left their home to pursue my own interests nearly 20 years ago now. They have been endless donors of support and assistance that I can never hope to fully repay. As I noted at the outset of this lengthy acknowledgment, I am my mother’s and father’s son. And it is primarily through them that I have been given the wonderful and fulfilling opportunities in my life. Regretfully, my father did not live to see the conclusion to my formal education, but I know he took pleasure in the life his son has chosen to live. I have little
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Ethics has been a topic of inquiry for over 2000 years. Throughout this time, a number of ethical theories have been advanced in an attempt to conclude how people should behave with respect to other people. In more recent years, the focus of ethics has expanded to include considerations for non-human entities—what we might collectively refer to as the environment. It is these environment-directed ethics that are the focus of this research. Specifically, the intent was to study how the theoretical framework an individual uses to articulate their ethic is contingent upon their relationship with the piece of environment in question. Prior to the data collection, there were three topics of interest in this study: ethical theories (care vs. justice), ethical orientations (obligatory vs. supererogatory); and finally the degree of familiarity someone has with a certain place. In an effort to explore in greater detail each of these three topic areas, visitors to the Cumberland Falls State Resort Park in southeastern Kentucky and people local to that area were interviewed about their ethical relationships to this park as well as to less familiar parks. During the course of the interview process and the data analysis, four primary themes emerged which seemed to capture each of the original topics. Additionally, these four themes further illustrated a depth and complexity of the ethical relationship people have with places. The four themes discovered in this research are: 1) Beauty in Nature, 2) Responsibilities to 'The Other,' 3) Public Lands, and 4) On Becoming a Moral Agent.

This research is generally one of ethics, and more specifically environmental ethics. That ethics exist in some form for the most part is not questioned. What is questioned is
how we know ethics when we see it. The empirical traditions of the moral development theorists, Kohlberg and Gilligan guided the portions of this research dedicated to understanding how the ethical theories are revealed. However, little prior empirical attention has been given to discerning between different ethical orientations with regard to the environment. That said, some information was gleaned from two researchers (Kahn, 1999; and Swearingen, 1989) who adopted a Kohlbergian approach to documenting environmental ethics.

1.1 Definition and Discussion of Terms

Minteer and Manning (1999) noted that empirically measuring ethics has an extremely limited tradition. With the notable exceptions of Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan, relatively few other researchers have attempted to scientifically study ethics in any context. Even fewer have attempted a study of environmental ethics. Rather most investigations into environmental ethics have been philosophical and descriptive ventures. Swearingen (1989) and Kahn (1999) are two who have empirically studied environmental ethics; however, their conception of environmental ethics was entirely that of an ethic of justice (as theory) and ethics as obligatory (as orientation). As I will explain in the literature review section, this singularly narrow view of environmental ethics may severely limit the scope of what some people consider environmental ethics. As such, my intent was to study environmental ethics from two ethical theories—justice and care, and two ethical orientations—obligatory and supererogatory.

It is suggested that the degree to which people express concern for and care about natural areas is partly dependent on their overall relationship with nature and how this
relationship has developed over time. To wit, there cannot be just one environmental ethic
for all people across all situations. Ethics, in the scope of this study, is interpreted as
doing what is right (read: required) and doing what is considered by most people to be
good (read: not required, but discretionary). Within this domain of doing what is right
reside the ethical theories of justice and care. While one is generally considered a
universal proscription (justice) and the other considered context-dependent (care), both
can be said to follow the maxim: Do the right thing. Another class of ethics concerns
doing what is good rather than what is right. Doing the good thing flows from the work
of Aristotle in his *Nichomachean Ethics*, which outlines a virtue-based ethical theory. The
distinction between the ‘right’ and the ‘good’ will be taken up in greater detail in the
literature review. However, at this point, note that doing what is ‘right’ represents one
class of ethical behaviors and doing what is ‘good’ represents a different class.

In the search for definition, environmental ethics have been variously considered a
simple extension of prevailing social ethics to a reformulation of fundamental
responsibilities. However, any pre-requisite to an environmental ethics is the recognition
of a relationship between the human and the natural world. Sylvan (1998) suggested that
environmental ethics might be constructed in one of three ways: 1) Extend a prevailing
ethic to include non-human entities; 2) Incorporate environmental values into the
dominant tradition; or 3) Create a new ethic. While Sylvan’s typology provides a clarity
of environmental ethics approaches, this three-part recommendation does not really
explain what environmental ethics might be in its definitional sense. For this I offer the
following definition which encompasses a range of ethical theories and orientations.
Environmental ethics represent those responsibilities and inclinations which humans have towards elements beyond the exclusively human world.

To date, the most consistent approach to environmental ethics has been the rights-based perspective. Someone who promotes extending rights to non-human entities can be said to advocate an ethic based on principles of justice. Rick O’Neil (2000) suggests that a traditional justice-based environmental ethics works well where the object of concern is something that can be considered aware of its interests (read: sentient). Our conception of rights tends to be rooted in the ability of a being to recognize paths which lead away from pain and toward the absence of pain (or in some cases pleasure). That is, beings have rights to the avoidance of pain (and, perhaps the pursuit of pleasure or happiness). Additionally, these rights generally flow to beings that have moral standing, or are a member of the moral community. All creatures possessing a central nervous system generally have the ability to sense pleasure and pain and act in ways that promote the former and reduce the latter. This class of creatures is known as vertebrates.

However, this definition of environmental ethics which draws the line at vertebrates is quite limited in that there are countless more creatures that have little or no ability to feel pain. Moreover, there are collections of things which do not feel pain and pleasure in the traditional sense; things such as species, ecosystems, and ‘nature’ are not sentient in the same way that a lowland gorilla or a coyote is. As a result, the rights-based perspective, wherein rights are bestowed based upon sentience, excludes the majority of things that might be enveloped in the class of things belonging to nature. The question then arises, how should we deal with those objects that lack awareness of their interests? The conception of this question is designed to set apart individuals with real interests from
individuals, collections or systems which lack these interests. This is a necessary distinction in this study because the general focus of this research is on environmental ethics that are directed towards non-sentient collectives: specifically different natural areas.

In an effort to accommodate the need for another, perhaps more expansive type of ethic, O'Neil goes on to say that “care is also essential to an environmental ethic” (p. 186). In this sense, care picks up where a rights-based theory leaves off. That is, a care-based ethic extends the moral community beyond the membership found in rights-based ethics built on sentience. The most common conception of a social rights-based ethical theory is a theory of justice. Immanuel Kant in the early 19th Century and John Rawls in the latter half of the 20th Century have argued most persuasively for these justice theories. Justice-based ethical theories work well with objects that possess moral standing; care ethics seem better suited to objects with intrinsic value. Moral standing and intrinsic value should not be interpreted to be mutually exclusive. However, they each imply a different class of expectations. A more detailed discussion on the distinction between moral standing and intrinsic value will follow in the literature review.

Care ethics grew out of a dissatisfaction with traditional ethical theories (specifically ethics of justice) to address interpersonal relationships. Talking about the rights of one’s spouse, parent, child or close friend ring hollow and insufficient when compared to the strong emotions that frequently guide our actions towards those with whom we are closest. That is, our notion of what is right behavior is based more on sentiment than on a reasoned analysis of moral community membership. From this some would suggest that there are specific natural areas that we hold deep attachments to, and
thus, our ethical relationships to those areas may be better expressed in terms of care rather than justice.

Justice and care are not the only two ethical perspectives, however, they do represent two well-defined and competing, if not contrasting, approaches to ethics. Additionally, numerous writers have suggested the appropriateness of either a justice or a care approach to environmental concerns (Booth, 1998; Collins-Chobanian, 2000; Curtin, 1996; Dustin, 2000; Field, 1995; King, 1991; Manning, 1981; O'Neil, 2000; Plumwood, 1998; Szagun & Mesenholl, 1993; Warren, 1998). As justice and care seem to provide such a canvassing endorsement of much environmental rhetoric, I therefore chose these two theories as the lens through which I analyzed the narratives that people gave to various questions associated with protecting public lands. A curious outcome of this widespread endorsement is that to my knowledge, no researchers have attempted an empirical evaluation of environmental ethics allowing for both care and justice perspectives. This then was one of my goals of this research.

Additionally, I questioned people about their overall environmental ethical orientation (right vs. good), which is designed to gauge the force and clarity of ethical options. So a second goal was to determine if and when people thought environmental ethics meant doing something that was right, or when they thought environmental ethics was doing something that was good. Where ethical theories (justice and care) presume different criteria, principles, and foci of concern, ethical orientations, in this work, represent a distinction between doing what is right versus doing what is good. Doing what is right is the moral minimum. Doing what is good is going beyond the moral minimum. Obligatory ethics is the term that will be used to describe those things that are
meant to achieve 'the right.' 'The good' is that which is results from one's supererogatory ethics. Thus, obligatory and supererogatory ethics represent another contrast. Obligatory ethics are essentially the moral minimum—they are not intended to encourage any sort of exemplary or ideal behavior. On the other hand, supererogatory ethics compel us beyond the moral minimum to pursue those courses of action that would be viewed by others as heroic or ideal. The reason for including both obligatory and supererogatory orientations is simply to allow for a more complete picture of environmental ethics to emerge. Ethics of justice and care both are essentially obligatory ethics in that they both prescribe with some, although varying degrees of, clarity what one must do in a given situation; they both outline the morally minimum requirements. Yet, little research has attempted an approach to environmental ethics which allows for supererogatory ethics. Kahn (1999) is the one notable exception to this; he made an explicit recognition of the bias towards environmental ethics being conceived of solely as a list of obligatory ethics. An in depth treatment of supererogatory ethics is given by Bernard Williams (1985) and it is this work upon which Kahn relies in his analysis.

Were this a quantitative multivariate study we might consider the ethical theories of justice and care and the ethical orientations of obligatory and supererogatory as dependent variables. One independent variable would be degree of familiarity with a place. But familiarity is a vague term and how it is defined can depend as much upon who is defining it as what is being defined. For the purposes of this research, familiarity is concerned with how well someone knows a particular natural area.

The contrast between familiar and unfamiliar areas provides a unique opportunity to understand the ways that people express their environmental ethics. One hypothesis
that has been advanced is that urban and suburban residents tend to care more for and recognize greater value in certain idealized natural areas such as National Forest Wildernesses than for the more mundane natural areas closer to home (Cronon 1995). However, this hypothesis has been challenged by others (Waller 1998). Further, it would appear that the degree of familiarity with forest resources affects how the public relates to the resource. That is, how familiar people are with certain resources may determine their ethical orientations to those resources and this in turn dictates their support for and expectations of forest areas. My proposal is that people who are more familiar with areas used for recreational pursuits are more likely to voice a situationally-based ethics such as care for the land. While those who are less familiar with some area may rely on justice-based reasoning which is, by nature, abstract and not dependent on particular circumstances. Similarly, familiarity may affect how one perceives his/her environmental orientations—as either obligatory or supererogatory.

The familiar and unfamiliar has been touched on in a number of recent writings dealing with notions and ethics related to place. For instance, Smith and others (1998) note the progression of familiarity in discussing the phenomenon of turning space into place. And Robert Sack (1997) posits that as we become more familiar with the places we inhabit, so we become more familiar with ourselves. Yet, noted sociologist, Clifford Geertz (1996) recognized the troubling aspect of studying those things with which we are most familiar, noted “It is difficult to see what is always there” (p. 259). In the context of this research, the familiarity people expressed about specific parks was neither quantified nor standardized in any sense. Familiarity was treated as a subjective evaluation from which might flow differing degrees of or variations in moral concern and/or commitment.
The four main terms defined here are: ethical theories, ethical orientations, familiarity and environmental ethics. Within ethical theories, brief descriptions of both justice and care were provided. And within ethical orientations, obligatory ethics was defined as 'the right' and supererogatory ethics was defined as 'the good.' Familiarity was explored as a term that might go some ways towards explaining the previous two. A more detailed analysis of these terms will follow in the literature review as will a more thorough discussion of ethics and environmental ethics as defining these two concepts is beyond the scope of this introduction.

1.2 Problem Statement

This study concerns the ethical relationship that people express in reference to specific places. Specifically, this is a study of environmental ethics, where environmental ethics may include theories of justice and care as well as obligatory and supererogatory ethical orientations. The tendency to couple justice with abstraction and care with context in social dilemmas would seem to apply to instances of environmental ethics as well. To the extent that this coupling exists, we might expect people to express justice-based environmental ethics in reference to more abstract examples of nature. On the other hand, we might expect people to express more care-based environmental ethics where the object of concern is quite familiar. Two general goals of this study helped to direct the original research questions: 1) understanding justice and care in reference to parks of varying familiarity, and 2) understanding the roles of obligatory and supererogatory environmental ethical orientations as they relate to parks of varying familiarity.
While the original problem to be addressed was the relationship between familiarity with a resource and the expressed ethical theories and orientations, preliminary data analysis revealed additional problems which became objects of inquiry. Specifically, higher order questions arose about the nature of environmental discourse in general. And a number of assumptions, beyond the aforementioned obligatory and justice biases, were challenged. These challenges ultimately reflect the nature of discussing environmental ethics in general. One example of these challenges occurred during the discussion of whether environmental issues truly qualify as moral issues in the sense that they represent issues of extreme importance. (A more detailed discussion on defining morality/ethics will follow in Chapter 2.) Another example of one of these challenges occurred when distinctions were made between environmental issues on public lands versus private lands and on parks versus other resource classifications. The assumption that environmental ethics presumes some uniform treatment for all instances of natural resources was laid bare and ultimately discarded.

Thus, two paths converge in identifying the problem statement for this research. On the one hand the original focus of study was the attempt to encourage under-represented areas in environmental ethics. In this regard, language reflecting both care-based ethics and the supererogatory ethical orientation were considered as possible outcomes of the dialogue especially when the context shifted from the familiar to the non-familiar. The second path, involves the inadequacy of standard environmental ethics approaches to correspond necessarily to the discourse on natural resource issues. Both of these paths combine to inform the problem statement of this research, which in previous empirical attempts at studying environmental ethics have too severely limited the scope of
the research. In doing so, these earlier attempts have neglected some important aspects of environmental ethics and they have failed to question some assumptions upon which shaky foundations were erected. The most accurate statement of the problem then can be expressed as a search for and a documentation of the nature of environmental ethics discourse.

1.3 Justification

Ethics is considered the overriding theory of human behavior and often guides other decision-making principles (Williams 1985). To wit, an understanding of environmental ethics as they relate to specific places is essential to informed management of natural areas. Leopold (1949), too, recognized the power that ethics have over one's approach to the land. To Leopold, viewing our obligations to the natural world simply as a proxy for economic considerations results in an object—the environment—which is bereft of any moral value. In the economic model, land as property, in fact, discourages moral commitments because it tends to confound clear prescriptions of right, wrong and good and bad. More, viewing the natural world through only the economic lens renders a sterile vision of should's and ought's. Indeed, the vision is clouded when an ethical lens is added; yet this additional lens is increasingly needed as more and more people begin to recognize the validity of the many difficult choices arising from competing uses of the natural resource.

Yet, as stated previously, there is no single environmental ethic. Managers who encounter resistance to certain actions may fall victim to appealing to principles of justice when principles of care are more appropriate. Additionally, managers who hope to enlist
support for their area may find greater sympathy in encouraging people's supererogatory environmental ethics rather than presupposing an obligatory environmental ethic. And on another level altogether, managers may fail in defining resource issues as moral issues when portions of their publics subscribe to purely anthropocentric ethical systems.

Numerous authors (Driver et al. 1996) have called for a greater understanding of a more inclusive set of land management ethics. Peterson (1996), for example, suggests a "human value framework needed to achieve ecosystems management" (p. 25). List and Brown (1996) emphasize the need for managers to hear and understand a broader array of ethics and values. And as a wider segment of the public participates in land management decisions, managers "need to understand how different kinds of citizens define and relate to the public lands. Resource management [today] must become profoundly pluralistic and must reflect the many relevant voices in this country" (p. 460). I suggest that a greater understanding of the ethical relationships that the public has towards their public lands will help managers see and appreciate the depth and diversity of conviction that the public has towards these resources. Additionally, ethics of care and supererogatory ethical orientations have been marginalized in the public sphere. In this respect, this research purposefully allowed for expressions of care and supererogatory ethics.

Over 50 years ago, Aldo Leopold called for all of us to develop a land ethic as a means to temper human influences on our natural resources. One job of forest recreation management is to build knowledge of natural processes and receptivity for management actions in the mind of the American public (Dustin et al. 1995). However, in order to build this receptivity, land managers must first understand a number of filters that people bring with them when considering land management issues. Certainly one of these filters
is one’s ethics. In advocating the appropriateness of care ethics in public discourse, Margaret Urban Walker suggests that “we need not make our obscurity to each other worse by unnecessarily unilateral decision[s]. We might just try turning to each other: talking and listening and imagining possibilities together” (Walker, 1995, p. 143). Her words seem to offer endorsements for two aspects of this study: its plural (rather than monist) nature, and the desire to discover meaning and understanding through a discursive methodological approach. Walker recognizes that much ethical discourse presumes just one approach to ethics (in her example, justice). Additionally, she seems to suggest that ethics are best articulated when it emerges from a dialogue. 

Thus, the goals of this research (to understand how obligatory/supererogatory and justice/care are expressed in environmental ethics) play an important role in natural resource-based recreation management in that these ethical orientations and theories may well inform how people perceive their obligations and commitments to those lands open to recreation.

1.4 Summary of Research

This study explored the role of environmental ethics of people who visit and are familiar with a local park, yet also express concern over how distant, less-familiar parks are managed. Secondly, this study documented to some extent the use of ethically-based language in reference to natural areas and specifically, public land. The depth and complexity of commitment to environmental ethics is generally poorly understood, particularly as one’s environmental ethics relates to places of differing degrees of familiarity. Kaplan (1978) hinted at this briefly when he discussed the trouble we have of
ever knowing anything very well, to the extent that all our knowledge is incomplete.

Primarily, this study addressed ethical theories and ethical orientations in reference to a specifically familiar park and one that is less familiar.

This research was first and foremost exploratory in nature. To my knowledge, no one else has conducted a study of environmental ethics that explicitly allows for accounts of justice and care based ethics as well as the orientations of obligatory and supererogatory environmental ethics. Furthermore, this study explicitly considered the role of familiarity in acknowledgement and discussion of ethics towards the natural environment. I believe this is an important oversight in the field of empirical ethical inquiry and in the field of environmental ethics—a more complete picture of any ethics, including environmental ethics, must allow for a plurality of perspectives. As such, the implications for this research are potentially wide reaching.

This study used an interpretivist testing logic in which the researcher analyzed narratives and discourses on ethics generated by guided interviews. These interviews were guided by questions designed to solicit information on ethical theories of justice and care and ethical orientations of obligatory and supererogatory and the role of familiarity. Thus, it was hoped a concise and convenient conclusion to the study would reveal primary themes consistent with the three original topic areas. However, this was not the case. While a number of insights were discovered with respect to the original topic areas, the four primary themes that emerged ultimately yielded a more coherent explanation of the phenomenon of discussing environmental ethics in reference to areas of public land. Further, the four primary themes subsumed the original topic areas in a nested hierarchy that, in the end, gave greater meaning to ethical theories, ethical orientations and
familiarity. In other words, ethics of justice and care and obligatory and supererogatory orientations seemed to make more sense when considered in the context of the four primary themes. Viewed in this light, the interplay between ethical theories, ethical orientations, and degree of familiarity combined to provide the door through which more meaningful environmental ethics themes could be accessed.

In summary, the four primary themes to emerge from the narratives were: 1) Beauty in Nature; 2) Responsibilities to The ‘Other’; 3) Perceptions of Public Lands; and 4) On Becoming a Moral Agent. These four themes are not perfectly discrete from one another, particularly with respect to some of the subthemes that seem to subtly drift back and forth between different thematic meanings. Nor do these themes individually or collectively canvass any meta-ethical view of the environment. However, each primary theme is robust in its core and the general meanings each is meant to convey. The common element binding all four of the themes together is that they all relate in some way to an ethical relationship to a place. So, what we are left with now is a pre-interview conception of the study boundaries and a post-interview analysis of the phenomenon.

In diagramming how the pre-interview topic areas relate to the post-interview themes, it is important to note that this evolved understanding is less a failure of the research process as it is an insight into the nature of discussing environmental ethics. Whereas, the pre-interview topics were focused on specific theories and bound by conventions of previously conducted research, the post-interview themes emerged as valuable objects of ethical inquiry which shed light on the general phenomenon of discussing environmental ethics in the context of familiar and unfamiliar places. More, the post-interview themes expanded beyond the boundaries of the original study in such a way
that one might conclude that within the themes resides more relevant aspects of environmental ethics. This last point will be returned to numerous times in the final three chapters of this document.

![Venn diagram](image)

Figure 1: Venn diagram illustrating the relationship between the original pre-interview topic areas and the post-interview, emergent themes.

The Venn diagram is meant to be roughly accurate in terms of scale between the pre-interview topics and the post-interview themes. The domain of interest in this figure represents the evolution and direction of my understanding of the general phenomenon of environmental ethics as it relates to specific places. Note that the set containing the original, pre-interview topics does not fall entirely within the set of the post-interview emergent themes. This might suggest one of two things: 1) that a portion of the pre-interview topics was inaccessible through the interviews; or 2) that the narratives led to a somewhat different path of inquiry as that originally conceived around the pre-interview topics. I will return to this discussion in the Results chapter (Chapter 4) and again in
Chapter 6 in which I discuss the nature of environmental discourse and how well this research reflects some of the traditional positions. However, at this point I’ll suggest that both inaccessibility and new directions of inquiry resulted in the relationship illustrated in Figure 1.

1.5 Outline of Remaining Chapters

The singular purpose of this manuscript is to document all aspects of the research conducted for this study. One challenge in presenting a lengthy yet coherent document from beginning to end is to maintain consistency throughout. However, as just mentioned, those topics that framed the study proposal, were enveloped and overshadowed in the course of the data analysis by the four primary themes. So, the question then, is how to integrate both these topics and the themes into one document? Had the themes been coincident with the original topics, all could be covered sufficiently in the literature review. Yet, there is enough substantial difference between them, that I have opted to maintain a different literature treatment for each. In an effort to attend to the vastly different resources of supporting literature, I will partition the theoretical literature across two chapters. In Chapter 2 of this document, I will present and discuss the literature relevant to the original three topics. As these topics were foundational to the study and to the extent that they represent current notions of environmental ethics, their treatment through the literature remains necessary. At the same time, the four emergent themes deserve their own supporting literature, although for different reasons. While I searched the literature to justify the original topics as objects of inquiry, the themes demanded some attention to the literature to put into context this new information. I have, therefore,
opted to present the theme-associated literature in Chapter 5 of this document to fully elucidate and explore these emergent themes of ethics of natural areas.

Chapter 2 is the literature review devoted to much of the important points associated with the ethical theories of justice and care and the ethical orientations of obligatory and supererogatory. Additionally, a review and guide to the standard environmental ethics positions concludes this chapter. Chapter 3 is devoted to the iterative methodology of this study—iterative due to the evolution of the interview guide. The interview guide with which I began this research evolved into a different series of questions as more was discovered about this phenomenon. Additionally, attention will be afforded sampling and methods of data analysis. In Chapter 4, I present the results of the analysis of the narrative interviews. The results are essentially excerpts from transcripted interviews where each excerpt is meant to illustrate a specific point. Collectively, these points come together to make subthemes, which themselves coalesce into one of the four primary themes. Chapter 5 returns to the literature informed and interspersed with commentary on the relevance of the emergent themes. Finally, this document ends with Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations. In this last chapter, I offer a multi-part discussion of this research and what direction future empirical studies might take. Additionally, I will survey the contribution of this research to the broader field of environmental ethics by determining the extent and scope to which this research relates to the standard environmental ethics positions. And finally, I explore my own evolving understanding of many of the aspects of this research, environmental ethics, and outdoor recreation.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The question of how and why people express an environmental ethic can be broadly conceived of as a study of environmentalism. Any number of researchers have approached environmentalism as a topic worthy of inquiry, however, very few have attempted an empirical treatment of the ethical aspects of environmentalism. For the purposes of this research, I began with a focus at the intersection of familiarity with different parks, the ethical theories of justice and care and the ethical orientations of obligatory and supererogatory. While this research is not historical, per se, the discussion of narratives which follow in the results need to be juxtaposed with the common, but different ways that nature is considered today.

In an effort to set the context for a discussion of the narratives, in this chapter I will outline a number of different ways in which the human relationship with nature has informed and contributed to the variety of approaches in environmental ethics. It is far beyond the scope of this work to catalogue all notable meetings between the human world and the natural world. That said, there are a few important landmarks worthy of discussion; these landmarks will be noted in the first large section of this chapter. In total, four large sections make up this chapter: 1) Relationships between Humans and Nature; 2) Knowing Nature (An Ontology of Familiar and Unfamiliar Natural Areas); 3) Standard Contemporary Views in Environmental Ethics; and 4) A Consideration of Ethics. The first section is meant primarily as a review of several major junctions in the human-nature relationship. It is less a comprehensive survey as it is an identification of the more noteworthy shifts in thinking about how humans view the natural world. The second
section explores the notion that nature or the environment may not be a uniform thing, but rather it varies in meaning and importance depending on how familiar one is with it. The extent, that unfamiliar nature is somehow different (in meaning, value, etc.) from familiar nature, provides the basis for the suggestion that ethical prescriptions may vary accordingly. The third section of this chapter is devoted to a treatment of the various views of environmental ethics as discussed in the literature today. The first two sections invariably inform the third, yet the third section should be considered as that which is most germane to an analysis of the narratives in this study. It is with these standard views in mind that one evaluation of the contribution of this research can be made. In other words, one measure of the value of this research is how it relates to the standard positions in environmental ethics. (This evaluation will follow in the last chapter of this document.)

The final section explores the specifics of justice, care, obligatory and supererogatory orientations as well as the more general notion of ethics.

Collectively, the four sections in this chapter are intended to outline the history, scope and domains of interest of this thing called environmental ethics. As this research is fundamentally one of environmental ethics, the subsequent literature review should offer a clear and complete picture of environmental ethics. And finally the conclusion of this chapter should lay the foundation for the research approach and results of the narratives which follow.

2.1 Relationships between Humans and Nature

As mentioned previously, simply because there exists a human-nature relationship does not presuppose that this includes an ethical relationship. However, the existence of a
relationship is necessary for some formulation of environmental ethics. Much has been written on the evolving perspective of our relationship with the natural world. Therefore any attempt to give a complete account of this relationship would suffer from thinness given the focus of this study. However, what may be useful is a brief overview of some of the more noteworthy events in recent human history each of which is a legacy to some aspect of current environmental thought. Modernism is one such important turn in how the natural world is perceived and defined.

The tone and type of settlement seen on the North American continent was both an indicator and a harbinger of a relatively new way of looking at the natural world. Borgmann (1992) identifies the 17th Century ideas of Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, and John Locke as the foundations of modernity. Perhaps this era of modernity was nowhere more apparent in the processes used to create settlements out of untamed land. That is, the settlement of North America can be viewed as a prime example of the ushering in of the modern era. The modernist view of nature saw the wilderness, for example, as objectively knowable, and an incomplete work awaiting human improvement. More, Locke (1690/1952) prescribed some of the ‘rules’ of conquest in turning the unowned land of North America in parcels of personal property. This notion of ‘settling the wilderness’ persists in this region through which Daniel Boone passed over 200 years earlier. Indeed, this idea of civilizing nature emerged as a subtheme in the narratives, and will be discussed more in Chapter Four.

The documented history of this settlement varies across fields of interest, but a number of common themes seem to emerge across the different accounts of early-American history. First, the strength of the individual eking out a living on unfamiliar and
occasionally, inhospitable ground was valued as a virtue. Thus, a good or ethical relationship to nature had an emphasis on human perseverance in the face of a harsh and hostile natural world. As far as this idea goes, there is perhaps no more clear an application of the premise of natural law than that process involved in creating property written by John Locke. In *The Second Treatise of Government*, John Locke (1690/1952) wrote that,

> God, when he gave the world in common to all mankind, commanded man to labor, and the penury of his condition required it of him. God and his reason commanded him to subdue the earth, i.e., improve it for the benefit of life... (p. 20).

With this statement, Locke firmly affixes his belief that the natural world exists in order to be used by humans. Further each human, individually, carries the responsibility of taking the rawness of the uncivilized earth and making some part of nature fit for his own survival.

This individualism evolved into a type of centering of humans in the natural order which then gave way to the idea of Manifest Destiny. This human-centered view was essentially an extension of religious beliefs, specifically the Christian perspective that humans were God's premier act of creation. If, in fact, God created humans to sit atop the throne in the natural world, then the natural world held lesser status. When Locke noted that God commanded and circumstances demanded that all of mankind labor in order to survive, this charge was founded on the voice of a supreme authority. And it was this appeal to a divine authority that gave good reason to treat nature purely instrumentally and as a means to both worldly and other-worldly ends. Nash (1982)
similarly explores this line of thinking in his book *Wilderness and the American Mind*, where he discusses the Puritan notion of wilderness.

The Puritans, seldom forgot that civilizing the wilderness meant far more than profit, security, and worldly comfort. A manichean battle was being waged between 'the clear conscience of the Gospell' on the one hand and 'thick antichristian darkness' on the other. Puritan writing frequently employed this light-and-dark imagery to express the idea that wilderness was ungodly (pp. 36-37).

In this reading, European colonists in North America did not view the wilderness as just an impediment to progress but was moreover a symbol of the absence of God. Thus, a good or proper relationship with nature reflected efforts to reclaim chaotic evil wildlands and baptize them holy through godly pursuits.

A second theme of relationships between humans and nature grew out of the first: humans on the one hand and everything else on the other hand. For example, this distinction was echoed in the early 1900's by Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, when he noted that "There are only two things in the world, humans and resources." Central to this perspective is the philosophy of utilitarianism, where the moral community spreads no further than human beings and as such, resources should be used to maximize the good for only those within the moral community.

Thirdly, the European settlement of North America was perceived to have primarily advanced through science rather than superstition. European settlers carried with them the legacy of Columbus' successful navigation of the Atlantic and Bacon's *New Atlantis* to remove the dark mystery of what lay beyond the horizon and expel the fear that once was hidden within a simple woodland. Referring to the Enlightenment, Borgmann (1992) paints it as "the liberating dawn of reason that dispelled the darkness of medieval
superstition and dogmatism, oppression and authoritarianism” (p. 25). However, as a result, the natural world was seen as some object to be used, conquered or ignored, as evidenced in the first two themes. An unfortunate byproduct of an objective science has been the fervent separation of fact and value, which some have suggested has lead to diminished capacity to discuss matters of moral import (Sack, 1997). Despite the permeation of science into the cultures during and following the Enlightenment, religion continues to play a prominent role in the lives of many people, particularly when one searches for the source of one’s ethics. It was this centrality of religion that led Lynn White (1967) to suggest that European settlers, carrying with them an embedded Christian tradition, used their theology as a justification for the “control of nature.”

Clearly these three historic views of the natural world do little to support our present fascination with the environment. At the core of all of those views is the idea of nature possessing only pure instrumental value. So why introduce them at all? Well, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, some of these perceptions of nature (human/nature dichotomy, individualism and property ownership) remain in the consciousness of at least a few of the people interviewed in this study. In many ways, nature continues to exist as something apart from us and further it exists first and foremost for human benefit. As some approaches to environmental ethics will illustrate, one’s ethical relationship to a specific place may contain backward glances at one or more of these three historic views. For instance, an environmental ethic anchored in human utility (e.g. “I care about this place because it is therapeutic to me”) may suggest a view of nature as something that exists primarily for human use, albeit a use that engenders a thoughtful and caring approach.
Given our rather dismissive outlook on natural areas, until relatively recently, it would seem almost absurd that so many Americans now place such high value on nature for, arguably, non-instrumental reasons. Recreational use of National Parks, National Forests and other natural areas is at an all-time high (Zinser, 1995). A recent national survey conducted by the US Forest Service indicates that well over 95% of Americans participate in some outdoor recreation pursuit during the past year (NSRE, 2002). Every year countless Americans flock to local, state and nationally managed natural areas. This rise in appreciation for natural environments might be attributed to any number of factors, including the associated environmental movement and the Biophilia Hypothesis, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Conversely, the increasing popularity of various environmental causes may be attributed to the steady increase in outdoor recreational pursuits following the Second World War (Douglass, 1999). As a result, both issues of environmental concern and outdoor recreation find themselves following similar paths of growth in American consciousness.

2.1.1 A Brief History of Environmentalism and Outdoor Recreation

Certainly there are many aspects of environmentalism ranging from local concerns such as zoning for open space and cleaning up a littered park to more global concerns such as protecting the rainforest and reintroducing keystone species into ecosystems. The intersection of environmentalism with outdoor recreation has been a confusing one. On the one hand outdoor recreation is the most convenient means through which we come to know an area. On the other hand, there do not seem to be strong correlations between outdoor recreation participation and environmental ethics. A number of earlier
researchers have attempted to illustrate connections between participation in outdoor recreation activities and environmental concerns (Dunlap & Heffernan, 1975; Geisler, Martinson, & Wilkening, 1977). To date, no association has been statistically substantiated concerning this relationship. More recently, Nord, Luloff, and Bridger (1998) found only weak associations between frequency of visits to forested areas and environmental concerns.

Hays (1987) distinguishes between the conservation movement during the early part of the 20th Century and the environmental movement that gained prominence only after World War II. It is well known that utilitarian ethics characterized the first half of the 20th Century; it is less well-documented what ethical theories have defined environmentalism since then. Assorted positions from animal rights to ecocentric holism to ecofeminism to deep ecology all rest upon different, and sometimes competing, ethical foundations. And therefore any ethical relationship to place, if reflective of an overall environmental stance, may rest upon any number of differing ethical foundations. However, any treatment of environmentalism must consider factors beyond just ethics, because environmentalism, as a movement, draws its strength from many aspects of human life not just our ethics. One of these other aspects was the changing ways that Americans were living in the post war years. The rise in environmentalism during the second half of the century was coincident with the creation of suburban America and the desire to retreat from crowded housing developments in the urban centers. Hays (1987) suggests that the years immediately following World War II were characterized by changing values associated with natural areas that were tied to concerns for quality of life. “Millions of urban Americans desired to live on the fringe of the city where life was less
congested, the air cleaner, noise reduced, and there was less concentrated waste from manifold human activities” (p. 149). Leopold (1949) happily noted that many Americans consciously sought out outdoor recreation during those post WWII years; yet he was equally disappointed in their mode of travel: “to cap the pyramid of banalities, the trailer” (p. 166). Notwithstanding the critique of a vacuous suburbia, or the “pseudopastoral landscape” (Borgmann, 1992 p. 129), suburban America indicates a conscious shift in preferences for what people consider more aesthetically pleasing. Other writers have suggested that those natural areas we envelop in our cultural worlds are prime examples of the beauty we value in unbounded nature (Eaton, 1997; Meine, 1997; Nassauer, 1997). That beauty and environmentalism are linked is not surprising, however, I will offer a more complete treatment of beauty in Chapter 5.

Although Leopold used natural beauty as an ecological indicator, much discussion of natural beauty confines any ethical prescription as that which is decidedly anthropocentric, meaning beauty in nature is good only because we say it is. The utilitarian outlook of nature as a thing to please our visual senses may seem at odds with more contemporary views of environmentalism. However, it can be argued that the subtle changes in lifestyle preferences represent a prerequisite for any culturally cohesive environmental ethic. It is also valuable to note that pro-environmental opinions in general are “stronger in the city than in the countryside” (Hays, 1998 p. 70). The suggestion is that urban and suburban residents not only have stronger opinions about the natural environment, but also through their conscious decisions to mold urban and suburban landscape they imprint the expectation of natural beauty into lawns, parkways and outdoor playgrounds. As a result, our parks and natural areas open for outdoor recreation are
themselves manifestations of environmental ethics and simply based on utilitarian arguments.

The migration of Americans from the cities to the suburbs was not just an indicator of health concerns. Outdoor recreation too became an integral component of a good life for many in the post World War II years. The importance of outdoor recreation in America is perhaps best illustrated by the quick appearance of research devoted to this topic in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s (Manning, 1999). Runte (1997) traces the evolution of America’s National Parks and this review further illustrates the growing popularity of outdoor recreation during those years following the Second World War. Catton (1971) too provides a thorough summary of the evolution of outdoor recreation over the years. Clearly natural areas were viewed by many beginning in the post WWII years as tremendous sources of recreational value.

2.1.2 Grappling with “Unnatural” Nature

Part of our human-nature relationship concerns identifying and assigning membership into the category of nature. This is not as simple a task as it might appear. Questions arise as to what is nature and what features must be present in a landscape, park, or open area for it to be considered nature. This debate is informed by distinguishing the natural from the unnatural, as the former gains membership into the class of nature, while the latter tends more towards that class of things human. In order to understand how this distinction between the natural and unnatural occurs, it may be helpful to consider under what circumstances people come in contact with different parts of nature and from this how that contact informs values. To contextualize the following
discussion, I will offer the term wilderness as that which is largely defined as being natural. So wilderness ends up being our template for the natural and it is from here that we can work our way outwards towards those things less natural.

Wilderness, like Yellowstone, is often set upon some pedestal high above other ‘less-worthy’ icons of environmental concern, such as state parks, county forests, and greenways. The importance many people assign to wilderness speaks to the value they assume is inherent in all wilderness areas: naturalness. This discussion of wildness is not specifically about those approximately 91 million acres in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS); however, the contrast between familiar/nearby and unfamiliar/distant inevitably reduces to some such comparison particularly where the people interviewed for this study have very limited access to what might be unequivocally considered a truly natural area.

The population distribution of the United States puts approximately 62% of the people east of the Mississippi. This same area contains less than 6.5% of the lands in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) (Hendee, Stankey, & Lucas, 1990). Lands east of the Mississippi have generally known industrialized settlement longer than lands in the western half of the country have. Thus, by many criteria the land included in the NWPS are found more frequently in the western half of the country. One of the preeminent criteria for wilderness is naturalness (P.L. 88-577). But naturalness is an elusive term particularly when the converse, ‘artificial’ presumes some level of human manipulation. Few areas described as natural, can boast of no human influence in some sense. Environmental philosophers have leapt onto this distinction and the terms natural and artificial have been used widely to debate the varying degrees of moral commitments
that each might have (Elliot, 1998; Katz, 1997; Michael, 2001). In brief, some feel that
greater responsibilities are owed to natural areas because, by definition, they cannot be
created and are thus a dwindling resource. Others contend that natural areas have intrinsic
value while unnatural or artificial areas have only instrumental value.

What is familiar (using geographic distance as a proxy) to many people in this
country might also, in some sense, be artificial, or at least less natural as a result of a
simple equation whereby most people in the U.S. do not live near wilderness areas. By
the same token, what is less familiar to many people might be described as natural, or
lacking in human influence. Indeed, this is the case with the lands in this study. When the
Cumberland Falls State Resort Park was established in 1931, several commercial
enterprises had previously operated on the lands in and around what is now the park. The
land was clearly used, manipulated and altered through these commercial ventures.
However relative a term ‘naturalness’ is, it may well correlate negatively to the familiar
and positively to the less familiar for those people interviewed for this study.

2.1.2.1 The Legitimacy of Restoration

Some philosophers have attempted to draw distinctions between different types of
“natural areas” based on the role humans have assumed working on and with the land
(Elliot, 1998; Katz, 1997). While the main concern for both Elliot and Katz is the
legitimacy of environmental restoration, their arguments can contribute to the discussion
of familiar and less familiar above. Katz (1997) strongly criticizes attempts to consider
humanly manipulated environments in the same way we conceive of completely natural
areas. In short, he considers areas that have seen human manipulation of or intervention
into natural process as artifacts. And as artifacts these areas are ontologically different than natural areas. In the context of this study, nearly all the land in and around Cumberland Falls would be considered as an artifact and therefore ontologically and morally distinct under Katz’ framework. In drawing a distinction between natural areas and artifacts Katz considers artifacts to lack moral considerability. To wit, if Cumberland Falls lacks moral considerability, but less-familiar areas out west are appropriately considerable, a problem of ethical comparison would arise. However, there is ample evidence to consider all the natural areas in this study as objects of like ethical concern. In other words, Katz’ critique may not apply to the comparisons in this study.

Using Katz’ terms of artifact and natural, many of the less familiar natural areas, such as Yellowstone, would likewise be considered as artifacts since management efforts to control fire, to reintroduce certain species and to rehabilitate areas where recreationists have impacted the resource have been the norm since the Park’s inception. Krieger (1998) further notes the gradations of naturalness (and not its absoluteness) by stating “[w]hat is considered a natural environment depends on the particular culture and society defining it” (p. 218). Thus, considering the variety of cultures and societies, “naturalness” as advocated by Katz does not necessarily represent a real thing in the world. Perhaps the most persuasive argument against Katz’ position is articulated in recent discussions in the journal, Environmental Ethics. Lo (1999) presents three arguments against Katz’ position: 1) that restored natural areas need not be considered different from other areas; nor 2) should they be considered artifacts lacking intrinsic value; and 3) that there is no basis to assume that a restored natural area is in any way morally inferior to a natural area. In brief, Lo’s argument challenges Katz to explain why some human activity seems benign
or even good and why human benefits seem to trump all other benefits. In other words, the instrumentality of nature as artifact which is so odious to Katz is without basis.

2.1.2.2 Authenticity and the Natural

Another interpretation of this argument is one of authenticity. Dovey (1989) extends the concept of authenticity to the natural world by suggesting that "natural" areas can be classified as authentic or inauthentic with the inauthentic representing something morally inferior to the authentic. In this study, some might argue that Cumberland Falls is somehow less authentic than Yellowstone for example, and therefore less worthy of moral consideration. The difference in this case is not a function of geography but one of scale and history. Cumberland Falls is substantially smaller and has a more checkered history of human influenced change than does Yellowstone. Less-familiar areas out west, conversely, are viewed by many as sufficiently large in size to represent intact ecosystems (e.g., Yellowstone) and they lack the history of human manipulation that some might consider a sign of inauthenticity.

In response to this concern, Dovey notes that the inauthentic or "fake" need not be entirely dismissed as a bad thing. In reference to the inauthentic, he says "fakes often have quite authentic aspects about them, most notably their role in protecting the truly authentic" (Dovey, 1989, p. 48). This argument has been used as a justification for zoos in protecting animals in the wild. However, this justification is not without its critics (Jamieson, 1985/2001). This conception of authenticity puts the inauthentic in an unenviable role of the means by which the truly authentic is protected. However, I'd suggest that this level of intellectual analysis may not come up in the lexicon of many
people’s ethics. Nonetheless, this seems to be another possible response to the concern of some ontological difference between the familiar and less familiar nature, which will be taken up shortly.

Taking a slightly different argument, Field (1995) explicitly states that people can and do have moral relationships with artifacts and thus any distinction between the natural and non-natural is, pardon the pun, artificial. Peterson (1999) offers a concise conclusion to the subject of the natural, as well as this overall discussion of the human-nature relationship:

Nature can be understood as socially constructed in two senses: in different cultures’ interpretations of the nonhuman world and in the physical ways that humans have shaped even areas that they think of as ‘natural.’ Both understandings are important for environmental ethics insofar as they highlight the diversity of ways of viewing and living in nature (p. 339).

In this analysis, a social construction of nature presumes some attention to naturalness and/or authenticity. Rightly or wrongly, if naturalness and/or authenticity correspond to degrees of familiarity, then we might identify a difference in moral evaluations between the familiar and the unfamiliar.

Up to this point, the focus has been on understanding the nature of different natural areas. Much, though not all, aspects of environmentalism are place specific. This, despite the notion that place may not always be this grounded concrete entity, rich with specificity and meaning. Kunstler (1993) suggests as much in his aptly titled, *The Geography of Nowhere*. In this book, Kunstler suggests that some nefarious monoculture form of development has swept aside any notion that places can be truly distinctive any longer. Yet, as stated earlier, this is a study about environmental ethics with regards to natural places. Kunstler’s concern was with commercial and residential development, less
with parks. Therefore, conceiving of different parks as different objects of moral concern may leave us immune to Kunstler’s charge that places have become essentially indistinguishable by means other than longitude and latitude.

Allowing for the possibility that parks are perceived differently by different people gives us the freedom to consider variations in environmental commitment. With this we can examine how we come to know specific places. After all, the process of knowing an area is informed by and informs our ethical commitments to that area. Further, knowing nature is serendipitously tied to a discussion of the familiar and the unfamiliar.

2.2 Knowing Nature (An Ontology of Familiar and Unfamiliar Natural Areas)

The contrast between the familiar and the unfamiliar allows for different expressions and emphases of underlying ethical relationships. Throughout this study, distance was used as a proxy for familiarity. It is not a perfect correlate, however, the responses in the interviews tended to uphold this assumption. Thus, implicit in my intent to interview people at Cumberland Fall State Resort Park was the belief that they would be more familiar with this area than some other area at a greater distance. Yellowstone was used as the example of the distant (read: less-familiar) resource for nearly all of those interviewed. Yellowstone is perhaps the best example of an archetypal mythical west and perhaps symbolic of what nature should be to some extent. Yet, in order to understand how people respond to specific examples of nature, we should gain some perspective on the essences of those places people are discussing.

Ontology is concerned with questions of existence or reality. True to the nature of ontological questions, they do not lend themselves well to experimental research or
unwavering proof. Rather, these questions attempt to cut to the essence of a thing which may or may not even exist (Palmer, 1996). Here, the question surrounds a difference between familiar and unfamiliar natural areas. Within this question rest assumptions about the meanings, values and expectations of the familiar and the unfamiliar. Considering that the familiar and unfamiliar are the objects of concern here, we end up with a curious blending of the ontological with the epistemological due to the fact that familiarity is, at its core, a function of knowledge (Kaplan, 1978). Drawing on Plato’s (1956) Simile of the Line, the familiar and the unfamiliar represent concepts in the Intelligible World. For the purposes of this research, we presume that the familiar and the unfamiliar are, indeed, real and distinct things. This premise is based on the belief that no one can ever know (in the epistemological sense) everything. Thus, all of us should be able to describe which things are familiar and which are unfamiliar, particularly when pairing two things together. For example, asking someone if they are more familiar with baseball or soccer should yield an intelligible response. By the same token, asking someone if they are more familiar with Cumberland Falls or Yellowstone should yield a similarly intelligible response. It is important to note that unfamiliar is not coincident with lack of any knowledge about some object. Familiar and unfamiliar represent but varying degrees upon a single axis.

The research task of separating the familiar from the unfamiliar is a challenging one. Kaplan (1978) writes,

But to say, then, that people in fact know little or nothing is hardly helpful. The long-time resident of a given city ‘knows’ a great deal that the first-time visitor does not, even though this ‘knowing’ is necessarily flawed (p. 55).

Similarly, the frequent visitor to Cumberland Falls may know much more about that area than he or she does about Yellowstone. Psychological researchers have noted that
frequency of exposure to some object results in the mapped storage of that object into memory (Attneave, 1957; Bruner, 1957). In an effort to draw on the psychological traditions associating knowledge with frequency, this research substituted geographic distance as a proxy for familiarity.

At this point, we might ask philosophically whether nearby nature can even be compared with distant nature or are these two things of different types altogether? In general terms, in order for a local resource to be ethically comparable to a more distant resource both should be, at a minimum, objects of moral concern. Justice accounts of morality tend to erase boundaries and distances. In this respect, nature is nature is nature and duties toward one example of nature would lead to duties to all examples of nature. Thus, a duty that one might have to Cumberland Falls State Resort Park would be no different than a duty to Yellowstone National Park, so long as both are considered on equal moral ground. Conversely, an ethic of care would not attempt to erase boundaries or distance, but would instead recognize and embrace distinction. Caring for a nearby area presumes some relationship with that area, which may not be available when someone considers caring for a distant area that one has never previously visited (Booth, 1998; Curtin, 1996; Field, 1995; King, 1991; O'Neil, 2000; Warren, 1998). In this view, the distant is unknown and unfamiliar, thus, care (in the ethical sense) cannot be truly achieved until one is able to know that area in the same way that one knows the local area they spend a good deal of time in.

But geographic distance is certainly not the only feature that distinguishes Cumberland Falls State Resort Park from Yellowstone National Park. The issue of scale was another point of departure: Cumberland Falls is approximately 1,800 acres compared
to Yellowstone’s 2.2 million. Is there anything to suggest that a larger area is somehow morally considerable whereas a smaller area is not? Or perhaps that a larger area is more morally considerable than a smaller area? This distinction may bear on one’s moral outlook both directly and indirectly. In the direct sense, a large area may seem more morally considerable because it’s largesse results in its membership of a very small fraternity. Very few areas of the size of Yellowstone National Park exist anywhere in the world. Thus, the scarcity of areas this size creates value in them because of their small numbers. Measuring Cumberland Falls in acres yields nothing too impressive. The effects of both geography and scale will be taken up again in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

2.3 Standard and Substandard Views in Environmental Ethics

Focusing the discussion downward from a general treatment of environmentalism, I now turn to a review of the handful of standard and substandard positions in environmental ethics. The following discussion will focus on four standard views and two substandard views. The term substandard is used to indicate that these views have yet to receive the attention of the other four more standard views; yet this may just be a function of discussing these ever-evolving views as a snapshot frozen in time. While this research will only address a portion of these standard views, all are offered as a reference to the diversity of thought that has contributed to the nascent field of environmental ethics. Moreover, environmental ethics is not so narrow a field that a single term means the same thing to all people. In fact, environmental ethics is sufficiently broad so as to capture sometimes conflicting responsibilities to nature: witness the tension between animal rights and ecocentric ethics (Callicott, 1980).
This review of six different views is intended to provide the reader with a sense of the scope of the overall field of environmental ethics. As mentioned previously, environmental ethics is not a monolithic concept. To suggest otherwise would be akin to suggesting that "religious" is a sufficiently descriptive term to understand someone's belief in a higher power and the afterlife. Clearly Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and Buddhists all might be described as religious, but there is little agreement between some of the most fundamental aspects of their respective belief systems. Shifting back, to affirm that one has an environmental ethic informs the dialogue little. What is needed is a specific treatment of the varieties or flavors within environmental ethics. This section is divided into six subsections—four devoted to the standard views and two devoted to the substandard views—each of which is meant to underscore the distinctiveness of different environmental ethics views.

Richard Sylvan (1973/1998) provided some much needed direction to the burgeoning field of environmental ethics in the early 1970's when he thoughtfully asked the question, "Is there a need for a new, an environmental, ethic?" Sylvan noted that basic human chauvinism is essential to all of the big western ethical theories. To overcome this chauvinism, he recommended three ethical options: 1) extend a prevailing ethic to include non-human entities; 2) incorporate environmental values into the dominant tradition; or 3) create a new ethic. Accordingly, different views within environmental ethics can be classified into one of these three options. Following which, I will use Sylvan's possibilities to clarify each of the four standard views and the two substandard views.

Discussing standard views in environmental ethics seems a peculiar notion—that there are any standardized views in a field with a mere 30 or so years of discourse.
Despite the youthfulness of environmental ethics, a brief review of three popular anthologies revealed a few thematic consistencies. These thematic consistencies appeared as either stand-alone chapters or as entire sections within each of these three books. As such, I have treated these consistencies as standard views in the field of environmental ethics. Table 1 illustrates standard views as they appear in each book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zimmerman et al. (eds.)</th>
<th>Pojman (ed.)</th>
<th>Van de Veer and Pierce (eds.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual-based ethics</td>
<td>Animal Rights</td>
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<td>Holistic-based ethics</td>
<td>Biocentric/Ecocentric Ethics</td>
<td>Biotic Community Ethics</td>
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<td>Ecofeminism</td>
<td>Ecofeminism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Ecology</td>
<td>Intrinsic Value</td>
<td>Social Ecology</td>
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Table 1: Comparison of environmental topic areas across three environmental ethics anthologies (Pojman, 1998; Van de Veer & Pierce, 1998; Zimmerman, Callicott, Sessions, Warren, & Clark, 1998).

Adjusting for slight differences in language, the four standard views are:

- Animal Rights/Liberation
- Holistic/Community-based Ethics
- Deep Ecology
- Ecofeminism

Despite a personal fondness for political/social ecology, I have not chosen to treat this view as one of the standard views for two main reasons. First of all, political/social ecology is not as concisely packaged at the four views listed above. This view incorporates vastly different perspectives from free-market capitalists to green socialists,
from bioregionalists to ecoterrorists. In short, the common thread to this view is not as 
straight and well-defined as the other four threads. Secondly, some elements of the 
political/social ecology view can be found in the other “standard” views. For instance, 
pieces of Gary Snyder’s and Kirkpatrick Sale’s bioregionalism can be found in deep 
ecology and ecofeminism as well as a holistic ethics.

In addition to these four “standard” views, I would suggest that there exists at 
least two other “substandard” views that deserve some mention:

- Environmental Pragmatism
- Ecological Virtue Ethics

Environmental pragmatism might be defined as an urgent call to action, less a denial of the 
standard views, than an imperative to cease with the theorizing and “just do it” so to 
speak. I offer this view in light of its contributions to a contextually-dependent 
environmental ethics giving rise to an ethics of care. As I will explain more fully, 
environmental pragmatism is an important, albeit fairly recent, approach to environmental 
ethics that should not be neglected simply because it lacks the history of some of the other 
views. Further, as implied by its defining terms, environmental pragmatism is prepared to 
deal with a substantial range of environmentally ethical issues including: animal rights 
(Rothenberg 1996), wetlands protection (Schiappa 1996), and Leopold’s Land Ethic 

Ecological virtue ethics represents a bridge between the Ancient Greek conception 
of ethics and the contemporary field of environmental ethics (van Wensveen 2000). This 
“substandard” view is included in this discussion for three reasons. First, within the four 
standard views, one finds hints of virtues. In some instances, these virtues are explicit as
in the case of Leopold’s “integrity, stability and beauty” (Shaw 1997). In other cases, though, virtues are encouraged as an ideal character trait or behavior but are not explicitly acknowledged as virtues (Hill Jr. 1983). The second reason to include this discussion of ecological virtue ethics is the relationship this view has with a supererogatory ethical orientation towards the environment. All virtue ethics are very much self-directed, rather than act or other directed. In this sense, the ‘good’ that comes about from practicing virtue ethics extends to others only as a byproduct of what one does for oneself. By this measure, environmental virtue ethics are very much anthropocentric. Lastly, there exists a close association between a virtue-based ethic and a care-based ethic (Spelman 1991; Groenhout 1998).

2.3.1 The Four Standard Views

Environmental ethics, like the general field of ethics, has a definitive reactive component to it. In other words, ethics might be viewed as a discipline of iteration, addition and reformulation. Ethical theories seem to grow from someone’s dissatisfaction with some other theory. As a result new views are continuously advanced. This is plain to see when collectively examining the four standard views. However, it is not correct to consider one view as necessarily growing out of the one(s) preceding it. For example, it is not entirely accurate to consider the Holistic/Community-based ethics as naturally evolving from the Animal Rights/Liberation view. Rather the former view is, in some respects, a response to the latter view, yet ill-defined, and uncertain holistic views predated much of the work done on animal rights. Thus, a temporal, linear relationship should not be inferred by the order in which these four views are presented.
2.3.1.1 Animal Rights/Liberation

I use the term Animal Rights/Liberation only for convenience. The three positions explained within this subsection all share a common concern for the well-being of non-human animals. The choice to refer to a standard view in this way was made in an effort to capture and identify a more recognizable term than that which more precisely defines this standard view: an emphasis on individual animals. Thus, the views discussed in this subsection may be more precisely defined as Individually-Based Ethics.

This view really spans two rather different, but related, perspectives. The perspective that non-human animals possess rights and the perspective that non-human animals can experience pain are the bases for this view of environmental ethics. In addressing the different conceptions of this view I will primarily draw on the works of three authors: Peter Singer, Tom Regan, and Paul Taylor. The common thread that unites each of these writers and their respective positions is their emphasis on the individual animal rather than groups or communities of creatures. This point will become clearer through a comparison to the Holistic/Community based ethic in the next subsection.

Recalling Sylvan’s “three possibilities” for an environmental ethic, each of the positions presented in this section on Animal Rights/Liberation attempts to extend the moral community beyond Homo sapiens. Thus, Singer, Regan and Taylor all attempt to overcome basic human chauvinism by giving non-human, living creatures moral consideration. However, the degree to which each writer’s community extends depends on his conception of the primary criteria needed to be morally considerable.
2.3.1.1 Peter Singer's Animal Liberation

Consider the work of Peter Singer. Singer is fundamentally a utilitarian who wants to extend moral considerability to all of those entities that can experience pain (Singer 1998). Singer does not maintain that no differences exist between humans and other animals; however, he does not contend that any of those differences count towards a difference in basic moral considerability.

There are important differences between humans and other animals, and these differences must give rise to some differences in the rights that each have. Recognizing this obvious fact, however, is no barrier to the case for extending the basic principle of equality to non-human animals (Singer 1998 p. 27).

According to Singer, what makes someone or something morally considerable is its ability to experience pain. Traditionally, measures of pleasure and pain relate to human experiences. More recently, it has been acknowledged that other creatures most certainly do experience pain based on our knowledge of the central nervous system which is the defining feature of all vertebrates. This use of pleasure and pain as evaluative tools judging rightness or wrongness of an action refer back to the lucid treatise by John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism. In this essay, Mill notes that:

The utilitarian doctrine is that happiness is desirable, and the only thing desirable, as an end; all other things being only desirable as means to that end (Mill 1861/1991).

It should be noted that happiness is often misconstrued to mean simply pleasure. In fact some have illustrated that happiness as an ethical state is not the same as happiness as a psychological state (Adler 1985). Conversely, the antithesis of happiness need not be confined just to aspects of physical pain. That said, Singer's conception of moral considerability lies exclusively with a subject's ability to experience physical pain.
Singer’s views, like those of all utilitarians can be described as consequentialist. Consequentialist ethics rest not on principles derived from reason, but on expected outcomes. A consequentialist ethic eschews rights-talk in favor of discourses of good and well-being and benefit. The founder of utilitarianism, Jeremy Bentham (1843), thought that ethics that were non-consequentialist or based on notions of abstract right and wrong were nothing but “nonsense on stilts.” Thus, utilitarianism stands in marked contrast to other ethics, particularly those espousing rights for members of the moral community.

2.3.1.1.2 Tom Regan’s Subject of a Life

Tom Regan differs from Peter Singer in that he rejects the consequentialist nature of utilitarianism in favor of a deontological theory in which non-human animals are assigned rights. While Regan doesn’t disagree with convictions of Singer and other utilitarians, he simply believes that their argument lacks rigor when held up against a rights-based justification (Regan 1996; Regan 1998). Regan also disagrees with the Kantian admonition against harming animals because it makes one more prone to harm human beings. However, Regan does not dismiss Kant entirely as I will show in the following paragraph. Finally, Regan disagrees with the suggestion that harming animals is simply an expression of cruelty. In his view, people who purposefully inflict pain are not necessarily cruel—witness the actions of doctors, dentists and veterinarians, all of whom must harm in some respect in order to help.

Instead, Regan’s position hinges on what he has alternatively referred to as inherent (1998) or intrinsic (1985) value. Regan uses these two terms interchangeably, however, others have drawn a distinction between them. Norton (1991) in particular
considers inherent value to require a human valuer, whereas intrinsic value exists absent any entity that can assign value. This distinction notwithstanding, Regan notes that “the fundamental wrong in the system is that it allows us to view animals as our resources” (Regan 1985 p. 46). Treating animals with only such an instrumental value is in direct conflict with allowing them inherent or intrinsic value. Stated this way, we can glimpse Regan’s return to one interpretation of Kant’s Categorical Imperative: “Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end” (Kant 1801/1964 p. 96). Said another way, I should never treat other morally considerable beings only as means but always at least as an end.

But how does something come to have inherent/intrinsic value? According to Regan, this value is coincident with being a subject-of-a-life—“each of us, a conscious creature having an individual welfare that has importance to us whatever our usefulness to others” (Regan 1985 p. 50). This criteria of a subject-of-a-life extends the moral community further than that of Singer. However, consciousness, or self-awareness that defines the subject-of-a-life seems a bit more arbitrary. To a certain extent, Regan seems to recognize this fuzziness and the problems that go along with it, but he still maintains that this position where “rights are based on the value of the individual” (Regan 1998 p. 50) is superior to some confusing and complex notion of utilitarian calculus.

While Regan finds gaps or insufficiencies in Singer’s position, others have been critical of the “strong” approach taken by Regan. Specifically, Mary Warren (1998) suggests that a “weak animal rights theory” is much more tenable in light of Regan’s reliance on inherent value. This weak position differs from Regan in that Warren identifies
"compelling realities" that sometimes require that we kill other animals where we could not justify killing another human being. For example, consider a scenario where two people are stranded on an island on one of the people decides to kill a feral pig rather than the other person so that he/she can eat. Singer would cry "speciesism" (akin to racism or sexism at the species level) with this example, but Warren believes that humans are qualitatively different in a morally relevant way from other animals. Warren seems to embrace Kant a bit more than Regan does in that she returns to the value of human reason as a morally relevant condition that sets humans apart from animals to a certain degree (i.e., animals are less morally considerable since they lack the capacity for abstract thought). Although, she does concede that the "weak animal rights position may seem an unstable compromise between the bold claim that animals have the same basic moral rights that we do and the more common view that animals have no rights at all" (Warren 1998 p. 55).

In application, the primary difference between Singer and Regan can be illustrated with a fundamental difference between utilitarian ethics and deontological ethics: means versus ends. The consequentialist nature of utilitarianism allows for morally specious means so long as the result, or the end, is a state of maximized happiness/pleasure/good, or alternatively, minimized unhappiness/pain/bad. Conversely, deontological ethics are decidedly non-consequentialist. That is, it matters not what the end result of someone's actions are so long as they were done for the morally right reasons. A convenient example illustrating these two approaches can be seen in a case of lying. A utilitarian ethic may allow someone to lie if one suspects that the outcomes following the lie will result in a greater good than if the lie wasn't told. With deontological ethics, lying is wrong in all
circumstances because it is wrong in principle and no amount of justifying will make the lie a moral, or even a non-moral act.

Where both Singer and Regan appear to fall short (Singer more so than Regan) is in their respective attempts to define the moral community. Recall that Singer’s criteria rests on what he termed sentience, referring to a creature’s ability to experience pain through the central nervous system. Thus, Singer draws his line of consideration somewhere between a shrimp and an oyster. Regan’s subject-of-a-life refers to an entity’s ability to experience a sense of identity. With this definition, Regan would include more creatures than Singer in his extended moral community, such as mollusks and sea anemones. However, neither of these two positions are ideally or practically tenable in that they are not able to adequately deal with non-sentient, non-self aware beings: specifically insects and plants. This, then, leads us to Paul Taylor’s biocentric egalitarianism.

2.3.1.1.3 Paul Taylor’s Biocentric Egalitarianism

Taylor avoids using terms such as “interests” because this implies consciousness. Also, he disavows sentience as the determining factor in moral considerability. In each of these respects Taylor is reaching substantially farther in extending the moral community than either Singer or Regan do. Taylor’s position might appear misplaced in this individually-based ethics section; however, a closer examination of his biocentric position simply expands the moral community to a wider range of individuals and not to any holistic concept of morality. In fact Taylor is quick to point out that a holistic environmental ethic directed towards ecosystems or some such thing carries no moral
weight—there is no normative power in promoting the protection of something as abstract as an ecosystem.

The 'balance of nature' is not itself a moral norm, however important may be the role it plays in our general outlook on the natural world that underlies the attitude of respect for nature. I argue that finally it is the good (well-being, welfare) of *individual* organisms, considered as entities having inherent worth, that determines our moral relations with the Earth’s wild communities of life (Taylor 1998 p. 71). (emphasis added).

Taylor relies on Albert Schweitzer’s concept of “reverence for all life” as a guiding principle in his biocentric egalitarianism. Note that biocentric should not be confused with ecocentric. The former refers to a life-centered perspective where all things living are of importance, while the latter refers to a system-centered perspective, specifically ecosystems. As a result, Taylor remains grouped with the individually-oriented theorists such as Singer and Regan.

Taylor, too, uses the term inherent value in much the same way that Regan employs it; Taylor simply believes that value inheres in all things living. Thus, all things living possess inherent worth. This point is echoed in a four-point stance that Taylor refers to as “The Biocentric Outlook on Nature.” The four points of this outlook are as follows:

1. Humans are thought of as members of the Earth’s community of life, holding that membership on the same terms as apply to all the nonhuman members.
2. The Earth’s natural ecosystems as a totality are seen as a complex web of interconnected elements, with the sound biological functioning of each being dependent on the sound biological functioning of the others.
3. Each individual organism is conceived of as a teleological center of life, pursuing its own good in its own way.
4. Whether we are concerned with the standards of merit or with the concept of inherent worth, the claim that humans by their very nature are superior to other species is a groundless claim and, in the light of elements (1), (2), and (3)
above, must be rejected as nothing more than an irrational bias in our own favor (Taylor 1998).

Rather than explain each of these four points in more detail, I'll simply offer that these four points collectively constitute Taylor’s biocentric outlook that necessarily leads to foundational attitude of respect for nature, which in turn leads to an ethic.

The actual ethic that Taylor proposes plays out in four parts as well. First, he proposes a **non-malfeasance** rule of conduct. Essentially this is a negative duty to do no harm to things that have a teleological center of life (things that can pursue their own good, in their own way). The second component is a **non-interference** rule of conduct. This too is a negative duty that tells us we must not interfere with individuals that are pursuing their own good. **Fidelity** is the third component and this can be either a positive or a negative duty. In the positive sense I am compelled to maintain established, dependent relationships (e.g., act so as to protect critical habitat). The negative duty compels me not to deceive something that can be deceived. Finally, the fourth component of this ethic is **restitutive justice**. Essentially what this means is that if any of the first three rules of conduct are violated, I am obliged to undo the damage.

### 2.3.1.1.4 Summary of Individually-based Ethics

All three of the positions represented in this subsection are somewhat internally inconsistent in terms of two important points. First of all neither Singer, nor Regan, nor Taylor are able to adequately explain why there is a difference between pain experienced, or rights violated in the wild and these same events occurring in the domestic arena. All argue against humans mistreating animals, particularly domestic ones. However, none of
these three positions sufficiently deals with the problem of pain or a violation of rights in the wild between two animals. Citing the fact that only humans can act morally or immorally seems wholly inadequate when responding to real world situations. While Singer and Regan mostly concern themselves with injustices heaped upon domestic or laboratory animals, Taylor most of all seems overly concerned with the well-being of wild plants and animals. As a result, Singer and Regan are largely silent on issues concerning wild animals and Taylor largely silent on domestic animals, which he considers to be artifacts, and thus less worthy of moral consideration. The second point where all three of these perspectives waver is in reference to the establishment of a more integrated ethic that does not focus solely on the individual but rather focuses on the system. Taylor, perhaps most clearly explains why a holistic ethic is not needed, but one can’t help feeling that an ecosystem is something greater than the sum of its parts and as a result might be entitled to some consideration. Additionally, it isn’t exactly clear if an environmental ethics (a term itself elucidating a collection) can ever be achieved by focusing our efforts and energies on such a fraction of the entire picture.

A final point about Singer and Taylor. It might be tempting to extend Singer’s utilitarianism or Taylor’s biocentric egalitarianism to apply towards ecosystems as well. However, doing so requires several leaps of logic each resting on a number of questionable assumptions. First with Singer’s utilitarianism, the notions of pleasure and pain must be expanded to include terms more suitable for the units in question: ecosystems. Few people would argue that ecosystems can and do become damaged from various human activities: acid rain, overcutting of forests, and displacement of keystone wildlife species. If these ecosystems can become damaged, they do not function as they
would otherwise. One could extend this line of thought to say that if they do not function as they would otherwise, then they are not functioning as "optimally" as they should (note the normative evaluation here). "Optimally" here refers not to energy output, but rather to some concept of telos. At this point we are required to move beyond Singer's concept of harm to something more akin to Taylor's concept of "good". In essence, we require another leap to say that an ecosystem is harmed, if by harm we mean that it is inhibited from achieving a natural telos, or its good. Conversely, ecosystems that are undamaged by human actions can be said to functioning normally. Of course this whole supposition is premised on the belief that there is indeed a telos for ecosystems. The science of evolutionary biology has all but answered this question in the negative by considering both species and ecosystems as naturally occurring responses to environmental changes, but neither can be said to be progression towards some optimal or perfect end. Michael (2001) takes up this argument in much more detail in his work on the morality of interference with objects and systems in the natural world. Clearly, this metamorphosis is far removed from Singer's and Taylor's original focus on individual animals, but it is useful to set the context for the next standard view: Holistic/Community-Based Ethics. In the next section consider the comparison between an environmental ethics that focuses on the well-being of individuals versus one that focuses on the well-being of collections or groups of things.

2.3.1.2 Holistic/Community-Based Ethics

This holistic or community-based view is in direct contrast to the individually-oriented views proposed by Singer, Regan and Taylor. Within this subsection, we find the
focus is much more on systems or collections rather than on individuals. Recall that the Animal Rights/Liberation positions represented an extension of the prevailing ethic to include non-human entities. The positions presented in this subsection, all essentially argue for a new ethic altogether. The most obvious choice for inclusion in this subsection is Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic. In fact, the Land Ethic holds a prominent position in the writings of the other three people to be discussed in this subsection: Holmes Rolston and his multi-scalar application of intrinsic value, Kenneth Goodpaster with his concept of Ecocentric Holism, and J. Baird Callicott's Darwinian approach. However, let's begin with a brief review of Leopold's Land Ethic.

2.3.1.2.1 Aldo Leopold's Land Ethic

Perhaps the most concise and eloquent statement to date of an environmental ethic can be found in Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*:

A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise (Leopold 1949 pp. 224 - 225)

It is this simple phrase that shifts the singular attention away from individual interests to community interests. As a result, the land ethic is something that compels moral agents to act in such a way so as to preserve the complex system that comprises the 'land' also known as the biotic community. Tallmadge (1987) suggests that there are three archetypal images in *A Sand County Almanac*, 1) Land as community; 2) Nature as language that we can listen to; and 3) Leopold as an example of how we ought to live. These three images combine to illustrate how we can and should interact with the natural
world. In reference to this term community, though, some concern has been raised. Community entails boundaries (something within the community and those things outside the community). If indeed these boundaries are real, then the argument could be made that the land ethic is not truly holistic, because it necessarily excludes some things. I don’t agree that this is a significant criticism due to the fact that there is no reason that community boundaries cannot be as fluid, flexible and nebulous as ecosystem boundaries.

In writing about Leopold’s intellectual heritage, Roderick Nash refers to the work of Charles Darwin and how Darwin broadened the meaning of kinship (Nash 1987). It is this broadened sense of kinship that Leopold attempts to emphasize throughout his book. That is, that humans are a part of the natural community and not apart from it. However, problems arise with this notion of kinship. Are there degrees of kinship? Are some other beings closer kin with us? And if so, then do we have different sorts of obligations to them?

Although A Sand County Almanac, in general, appears to offer unflinching clarity, it is not above scrutiny. In fact, the simplistic beauty of Leopold’s prose has allowed any number of people to second guess the meanings behind the words. What exactly does stability mean? How does one observe integrity? By what standards should we measure the beauty of the biotic community? Each of these represent troubling questions in reference to applying this land ethic to policy decisions. Certainly Leopold’s land ethic is not alone in this respect, however, the problem remains: ought implies can. Stated another way, if I ought to act so as to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community, I should have clear choices that will allow me to do that. The critiques of Leopold generally center on this ambiguity. However, others have discovered more
theoretical differences of interpretation. For instance, Callicott (1987) and Norton (1996; 1996) interpret the land ethic very differently. Table 2 illustrates their respective viewpoints.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Callicott</th>
<th>Norton</th>
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<tr>
<td>The land ethic is essentially biocentric</td>
<td>The land ethic is essentially anthropocentric</td>
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<tr>
<td>The land ethic is based on inherent value</td>
<td>The land ethic is based on instrumental value</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holism is normative considerability</td>
<td>Holism is descriptive, not normative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concedes a problem in duties to close kin</td>
<td>Admit that it’s okay to have multiple duties</td>
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Table 2: A comparison of Callicott’s and Norton’s interpretations of Leopold’s Land Ethic.

Another criticism of holistic/community based ethics in general, and specifically the land ethic, is a tendency towards misanthropy or ecofacism. In brief, Leopold has been accused of ecofacism which occurs when a human-based ethic attempts to include other beings. More precisely, ecofacism occurs when the interests of the individual are always considered after preserving the integrity of the whole. However, the reply is that we do not necessarily abandon all of our other human-centered ethics. As a result, it is not entirely accurate to label Leopold an ecofacist.

Above all, Leopold felt that ethics was evolutionary, moving from an ethics of individuals, to a social ethics, and we now find ourselves on the verge of an ecological ethics. However, like Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1968), it is suggested we cannot progress to the next level until we have satisfied the lower level. So, we have not satisfied our social ethics and therefore we are held back from successfully meeting an ecological ethic. Some might argue that this just represents an extension of the prevailing ethics rather than the creation of a new ethics. However, Leopold notes that with the land
ethic we are redirecting our sentiments to include the biotic community. It is this shift in sentiments that makes this a new ethic.

In terms of philosophic traditions, Leopold draws some from Lockean notions of the land as property. Clearly, Leopold finds much fault in these notions, as evidenced by another oft-cited phrase:

In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it (Leopold 1949 p. 204).

John Locke relied on Natural Law Theory to outline four basic premises that ultimately resulted in the perception of land as property.

1. (a). One has the right to one’s own body.
   (b). If (a), then one as a right to one’s labor.
   (c). If (b), then one has a right to the fruits of one’s labor.
2. God has given the earth to mankind in common.
3. God commanded (and circumstances demanded) that man labor in order to survive.
4. God commanded man neither to destroy nor to spoil or waste.

These four premises, particularly the first two, exhibited revolutionary thinking in the 1690’s. However, over the course of a couple hundred years, they became fairly entrenched into western, and especially American, society. As a result, when Leopold wrote *A Sand County Almanac*, urging people to view the land not as property, but rather as a member of a community, this represented another radical shift in people’s thinking.

2.3.1.2.2 Holmes Rolston’s Systemic Value

Holmes Rolston III has taken the fundamentals of Leopold's holism and offered substantial depth to it. Rolston continues with the theme of intrinsic value as evident in individuals. However, in order for Rolston to be considered a holist, he must expand this
notion somehow. He does this through an ontological account of ecosystems (Rolston 1987). In this essay, Rolston explains how ecosystems are real things and from this that they have value. The context of ecosystems along with animals, organisms and species becomes clearer in a subsequent essay (Rolston III, 1998). The following diagram illustrates Rolston’s framework.

![Diagram of progression of value](image)

**Figure 2: The progression of value. Adapted from (Rolston 1998).**

In this framework, Rolston refers to higher animals as participating in an “I-Thou” relationship, or a relationship that exists when each member takes note of the potential of the other. He notes this by the presence of something that returns our gaze. At the organism level, Rolston offers a three-part reinterpretation of DNA: 1) DNA is a linguistic molecule with instructions; 2) DNA is propositional offering potential; and 3) DNA is normative, containing a moral ought. Rolston differentiates organisms from species by referring to tokens and types respectively. Types are more important than tokens because tokens, or individual organisms, are ultimately just representations of a type, or species, which spans space and time. At the ecosystem level, Rolston suggests that ecosystems are real things, in the sense that any organization that “shapes the behavior of its members” can be considered something that is real (Rolston 1998 p. 139).

What does all this mean in terms of Rolston’s holism? Rolston is a moral realist in that he believes that values actually exist in the world—they are real things. In this sense, things (individuals, species, ecosystems) can be said to have value. Rolston differs from Callicott and Norton on the notion of inherent versus intrinsic value. Rolston does not
believe that it takes a human to assign value to something. However, Rolston does
acknowledge different types of values: instrumental, intrinsic, and systemic. Instrumental
value naturally deals with the relative utility of something. Rolston distinguishes between
intrinsic value and systemic value in that intrinsic values tend be associated with
individuals, where a systemic value seems to apply to composites of things.

Rolston avoids charges of ecofacism that were leveled at Leopold by maintaining a
fairly significant split between culture and nature. For Rolston, human-human
relationships are fundamentally different than human-nature relationships. Culture is richer
than nature and humans have the most qualitatively rich experiences. However, Rolston is
not without his critics. One criticism of Rolston is his tendency to run roughshod over the
naturalistic fallacy. A simple statement of the naturalistic fallacy is that “no ought can be
derived from an is.” Stated another way, one cannot determine a normative prescription
from a factual description. While it is true that violating the naturalistic fallacy is a
consistent problem in environmental ethics, Rolston seems to lead the charge. Recall his
contention that DNA is normative as witness to this problem. A growing criticism
directed towards Rolston is similarly directed towards a host of environmental
philosophers, but Rolston’s fuzzy logic of intrinsic and systemic values seems to be the
most recognizable target. This criticism mostly comes from a group of environmental
pragmatists who feel that any talk of intrinsic values unnecessarily stymies productive
efforts to solve real environmental problems (Norton 1991; Light and Katz 1996; Norton
2.3.1.2.3 Kenneth Goodpaster’s Ecocentric Holism

The ecocentric holism of Kenneth Goodpaster (1998) is included here primarily to clarify how an ecosystem can be viewed as morally considerable. His theory on this matter is far less developed than either of those by Leopold or Rolston, but he does contribute something towards conceiving of ecosystems as something of moral value. Goodpaster suggests that we consider certain distinctions that should help us see the potential of including ecosystems in our moral community. These distinctions can be reduced to four different suggestions.

1. We should recognize the distinction between moral rights and moral considerability and opt for moral considerability as that which offers clearer guidance in ethical dilemmas.
2. We should distinguish between a criterion of moral considerability and moral significance. Moral significance allows for comparative judgments of moral “weight” in cases of conflict.
3. The third suggestion surrounds our ability to differentiate what we say is morally considerable and what is in fact morally considerable.
4. Finally, it should be acknowledged that there are cognitive and psychological thresholds beyond which we become morally blind.

These four suggestions of Goodpaster contribute to a clearer ethical direction in instances where abstract entities, such as ecosystems, are recommended to become a part of the moral community. He seems ready to concede that there are real-world limitations and true gradations between things. As a result, one might argue that Goodpaster is a practicing pragmatist as well.

2.3.1.2.4 J. Baird Callicott’s Evolutionary-based Ethics

Callicott’s holism rests firmly on the foundation of Leopold’s Land Ethic. However, Callicott blends a healthy measure of evolutionary theory into his ethic. The
contributions of evolutionary theory to environmental ethics have been slow to come. This hesitancy might be attributed to the recurrent dangers of the naturalistic fallacy or it might simply be a failure of some philosophers to embrace the natural sciences as a source of value rather than simply a descriptive list of the way the world is.

Callicott (1987a) at once acknowledges the power of the Land Ethic and the tension it causes when coupled with Darwinian evolution.

...given the unremitting competitive ‘struggle for existence’ how could ‘limitations on freedom of action’ ever have been conserved and spread through a population of Homo sapiens or the evolutionary progenitors? (p. 189)

Since, evolutionary theory would seem to discourage ethics as an inhibitor to survival, how can ethics ever be considered evolutionary? What isn’t directly acknowledged is the evolutionary benefit of ethics. It is inaccurate and presumptive to consider ethics, any ethics, as simply some rein on freedom which prevents individuals from pursuing their natural fecundity. Quite the contrary, ethics, as a tool for social functioning can often promote greater reproductive success than a system in which individuals act more Hobbsian in their social commitments. Any social tool that discourages decreased reproductive success can be said to be evolutionarily valuable.

In discussing the work of Darwin, Callicott suggests that ethics became an outgrowth of natural sentiment that one has towards other like beings. And further, ethics could very well be “naturally selected, by the advantages for survival and especially for successful reproduction, afforded by society” (Callicott, 1987a p. 191). And far from being a genetic quirk that we unwittingly propagate, ethics need not be just egoism disguised as altruism; rather, “altruism and eventually ethics may have evolved to serve selfish genes, but that fact does not necessarily limit them to the purpose for which they
evolved" (Callicott, 1998 p. 154). Therefore, all that we have sentiment toward, be it our own kin, a single elk, the species *Canis lupus* or an ecosystem, can rightly be understood as an object of our moral consideration. Yet, true sentiment as a function of attachment or relationship seems somewhat ill-fitting when applied to species or ecosystems. In other words can humans verily feel a connection to an entire species or an ecosystem in the same way we feel connections to individuals?

2.3.1.2.5 Summary of Holistic/Community-based Ethics

While a holistic ethic seems to offer a more advanced ethic when compared to individually-based ethics, there exist some fundamental problems in just how a holistic ethic is supposed to work. In reference to the ecofascism charge leveled against Leopold, privileging the group over the individual to such an extreme is distasteful at best to many people. And at worse it seems to strike at the core of what it means to be human—an autonomous individual. Further, the holistic or community based ethics suggest that all we must do is redirect our sentiment towards these greater collections of things. This is a task, I submit, that is easier said than done. If Callicott is right, that ethics may indeed be an evolutionary adaptation, it does not stand to reason that we can simply choose to have a sentiment towards species or ecosystems. On the other hand, if Rolston is correct, and systems have their own intrinsic value, then how do we prove this any more than we prove the existence of intrinsic value in anything? The holistic/community-based ethics of Leopold, Rolston, Goodpaster, and Callicott offer a new ethical system whereas the ethics of Singer, Regan and Taylor can be said to extend the moral community to include non-
human entities. Similarly the next two subsections of Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism will likewise illustrate new ethics.

2.3.1.3 Deep Ecology

Over a decade ago, Kirkpatrick Sale (1990) wrote about a division within the environmental movement. On the one hand were people concerned with overpopulation, nuclear power, air and water pollution among other things. On the other hand were what Sale called the “new ecologists,” soon to become the deep ecologists. These were people who questioned the assumptions under which human-nature relationships had evolved during the industrial age. Foremost among this latter group were those associated with Deep Ecology: Arne Naess, who coined the term “deep ecology” and George Sessions and Bill Devall, who went on to author a book of the same name. Gary Snyder is sometimes likewise grouped with these “new ecologists” however, since his focus is more towards bioregionalism, his ideas will not be discussed in any depth here.

According to Naess, (1998) deep ecology contrasts with, so-called, shallow ecology on a number of practical fronts. Table 3 illustrates these contrasts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deep Ecology</th>
<th>Shallow Ecology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pollution is evaluated on the scale of the biosphere</td>
<td>Pollution is managed though the use of technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources and habitats should be available for all life forms for their own sake.</td>
<td>The emphasis is on resources for humans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive pressures on the planet’s life forms stem from the human population explosion.</td>
<td>Human “overpopulation” is primarily a problem in developing countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect cultures in non-industrial countries.</td>
<td>The Western model of industrialization should be the goal of developing countries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Contrasts between deep and shallow ecology (Adapted from Naess, 1998).
Deep ecologists' most potent argument is a challenge of the anthropocentrism of Western ethics. They support this argument by pointing out that “throughout the long existence of the human race (say approximately 1.2 million years) only a minority of humanity has held an anthropocentric view of the universe. Most hunter-gatherer societies had ‘ecocentric’ religious views involving a sacred sense of the earth” (Palmer 1996 p. 300). This anti-anthropocentric stance is evidenced through the, now well-established, Eight Point Platform.

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent worth). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantially smaller human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires a smaller human population.
5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
7. The ideological change will be mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be profound awareness of the difference between bigness and greatness.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes (Naess 1998 pp. 196 - 197).

Each of these eight points has been subject to much scrutiny. However, at this point I will simply offer a few comments on some of the more controversial statements. In reference to the first point: Naess encourages us to take a “more comprehensive, non-technical” view of the term ‘life’. In this respect, life is not just limited to the traditional definition
but also includes letting things live such as rivers, mountains, landscapes and ecosystems. The term ‘vital need’ in point number three, “is left deliberately vague to allow for considerable latitude in judgment” (ibid. p. 198). As one can imagine, this ambiguity has received much criticism. The call towards downsizing the human population, point number four, is expected to take hundreds of years. In the fifth point, the term “non-interference” does not imply that humans should not modify some ecosystems, as do other species. “Humans have modified the earth over their entire history—at issue is the nature and extent of such interference” (ibid. p. 199).

While these eight points lay out the deep ecology platform fairly clearly, the deep ecology movement is characterized by a wider set of assumptions. It can be described as a logical progression through four different levels where consistent, “deep”, questions are urged throughout the progression.

- **Level 1: Ultimate premises and ecosophies**
  - (e.g., Buddhist, Christian, Philosophical).
  - Or other personal maxims: “Do God’s will”, “Find peace in oneself”

- **Level 2: The Eight Point Platform of Deep Ecology**
  - As listed above

- **Level 3: General normative consequences and “factual” hypotheses**
  - (e.g., “Preserve wilderness” or “Protect biodiversity”)

- **Level 4: Particular rules or decisions adapted to the particular situations**
  - How ultimate premises are operationalized
  - This represents a specific behavioral direction.

The complexity of deep ecology should not undermine its applied potential. Hidden within are a number of important features. First of all, Naess “rejects the fact/value distinction as an arbitrary philosophical conceit” (Palmer, 1996, p. 303). In the sense that Naess believes values are hidden within facts, he is (arguably) able to avoid the naturalistic fallacy. (Note that Rolston too embraces this union of fact and value). A
second contribution of deep ecology is the reconsideration of the skin as the boundary that separates ourselves from the rest of the world. In Naess’ view, our skin is a sensuous surface connecting us to the rest of the world rather than separating us from it. This is fundamental to the idea of self-in-Self, where we see ourselves as a part of a larger whole. In other words, each of us as individual human beings are more importantly considered parts of something of greater identity—the earth. Finally, the Aristotelian notion of self-realization plays a central role in deep ecology which allows for the traditionally staid field of virtue ethics to creep back, however, slightly, into environmental philosophy. Despite these strengths, deep ecology is not without its critics. Most notable among these critics are Murray Bookchin and Ramachandra Guha.

Bookchin’s (1998) criticisms of deep ecology are pointed and forceful and are primarily rooted in its supposed ignorance of real social problems (ecofeminists too attack deep ecology on this point). This point is concisely stated as, “deep ecology, despite all its social rhetoric, has no real sense that our ecological problems have their roots in society and in social problems” (Bookchin 1988 p. 13). Bookchin accuses deep ecologists of a kind of eco-brutalism that views humanity as a cancer and famines as nature’s population control. He goes on to refer to deep ecologists as “deep Malthusians”, after Thomas Malthus who sounded the alarm of overpopulation in 18th Century Great Britain. Bookchin though, identifies the dark side of Malthusianism—that of an often explicit endorsement of social Darwinism where those in power (typically white, Western, males) are more fit to be on top and efforts to assist those disenfranchised is morally wrong. This last point is designed to underscore the tendency of deep ecologists (Dave Foreman, in
particular) to view human tragedies, such as famines and AIDS, as convenient culling devices and we should let nature take its course.

Another pointed critique of deep ecology comes from Ramachandra Guha (1989) who notes that it is a distinctly American idea and would be harmful if exported, particularly to Third World countries. Four points help to flesh out Guha’s critique:

1. The shift from anthropocentrism to biocentrism is unhelpful and irrelevant because it doesn’t consider militarization and overconsumption (both uniquely associated with developed countries).
2. Deep Ecology is excessively concerned with the preservation of wilderness. This can be especially harmful to people who live in countries where there is not a lot of potential for wilderness. (India’s Project Tiger has benefited the elite and the tourists at the expense of the locals).
3. Invoking Eastern belief systems is irrational and divisive. Eastern peoples have just as poor an environmental track record as the west. Also, holding up the “Eastern” view as the other unnecessarily sets up an Us/Them dualism.
4. Finally, there is a question whether or not deep ecology is truly radical. They seem to just want to preserve land (wilderness) and there’s nothing new about that.

Both Bookchin’s and Guha’s criticisms are social in nature. Ecofeminists, too, have their own criticism of deep ecology.

2.3.1.4 Ecofeminism

In 1974, Francoise d’Eaubonne coined the term ecofeminism to describe a growing feminist interest in the environment. Where deep ecology focused on anthropocentrism as a fundamental problem, ecofeminism focuses on androcentrism, or male-centeredness. However, ecofeminism is not nearly as codified as deep ecology with its eight point platform. Further, according to Karen Warren, (1998a) there is no single type of ecofeminism just as there is no single type of feminist. Yet, there is one issue where all ecofeminists agree: “that there are important connections between the domination of
women and the domination of nature" (ibid. p. 264). For a general frame of reference, though, we can identify three types of ecofeminists. The first type might be referred to as Liberal Ecofeminists. Their position is simply to give women and nature equal treatment as men and culture. The second type are Cultural Ecofeminists who suggest that we consider other values such as care and love and elevate nurturing and trust. In their view, no substantial overhaul is needed, tweaking the current system should suffice. Most of the ecofeminists discussed in this section would fall into this category (i.e., Karen Warren, Val Plumwood and Jim Cheney). The third type are the Social Ecofeminists who believe that those people who would dominate nature are the same people who dominate other people, in particular women. Murray Bookchin, while technically a social ecologist, recognizes that domination of women is a subtly nuanced deviation of hierarchy.

Warren suggests that the “philosophical significance of ecofeminism is that it challenges feminism to take environmental issues more seriously, environmental philosophy to take feminism seriously, and philosophy to take both seriously” (Warren 1998b p. 264). This evaluation of the place of ecofeminism in the realms of environmentalism and philosophy indicates that there remain ontological questions to be answered. What is an individual? What is the difference between two individuals? And what is the relationship between a species (such as humans) and its environment? Val Plumwood (1998) believes that these questions must be considered in addition to questions of ethics.

As ecofeminism is so closely tied to feminism, a review of their similarities is in order. Karen Warren (1998a) outlines eight boundary conditions of both ecofeminism and feminism.
1. Ironically, nothing that promotes an “ism” can be a part of either ethic.
2. The ethic must be contextualist.
3. There is a denial of “one voice”, the ethic must be structurally pluralistic (pragmatic).
4. The ethic can change over time, it is emergent and evolutionary.
5. Because the ethic is contextual, pluralistic, and emergent, it is inclusive.
6. There is no privileging of an “objective” point of view.
7. The ethic centralizes values like love, care, trust, and friendship.
8. We should reconceive of humans as beings in relationships.

These eight points do not necessarily precisely describe ecofeminism, however, they do illustrate the conceptual similarities to feminist ethics, such as an ethic of care. And as Plumwood (1998) suggests, environmental philosophies that have not learned to incorporate feminist concerns are doomed to be incomplete.

There are two major features of Warren’s (Warren 1998a; Warren 1998b) conception of ecofeminism—it should involve both the ethic of care and a narrative voice. The care ethic perspective allows a person to approach a moral situation with a loving eye rather than an arrogant eye. The difference being that a loving eye is open to the dignity of the other, knows the scope and boundary of the self, and wants to embrace the power of that which is between the self and the other. Conversely, the arrogant eye is not open to the other in any real sense.

The emphasis in the narrative approach does four things. First, narratives give “voice to a felt sensitivity often lacking in traditional analytical ethical discourse” (Warren 1998b p. 332). Secondly, narratives allow for the expression of often under-represented perspectives in mainstream ethics, such as care. Next, the true nature of ethics as emergent out of particular situations and contexts is most clearly revealed through narratives. And finally, “to contextualize ethical deliberation is, in some sense, to provide
a narrative or story, from which the solution to the ethical dilemma emerges as the fitting conclusion" (Cheney 1987 p. 144). This refers to the dialogical nature of narratives where appropriate ends are worked out through discourse. This narrative approach is also fundamentally one that identifies epistemological components of a given dilemma in that we question one another how we come to know certain things.

Returning once again to the distinction between the arrogant eye and the loving eye—Val Plumwood clearly has this contrast in mind when she critiques other environmental ethical views. Specifically Plumwood criticizes the positions of Regan, Taylor and Deep Ecology. Her main critique is the emphasis on rationality and on dualisms, such as reason/emotion, mind/body, and culture/nature (Plumwood 1998), although she seems to criticize Regan more for his inconsistencies. Regan’s emphasis on rights implies a strong individual separation of rights-holders. Further, it is ambiguous how we, humans, as rights-holders are obligated to behave when we see one wild animal in the process of killing another. Recall that Taylor’s account is rooted in the Kantian tradition of reason, as such, Taylor treats “care viewed as ‘inclination’ or ‘desire’ as irrelevant to morality” (ibid. p. 293).

Plumwood’s critique of Deep Ecology is a bit more comprehensive. She repudiates three important aspects of deep ecology: indistinguishability, the expanded self and the transcended self. Plumwood suggests that ecofeminists should disagree with the indistinguishability aspect of deep ecology because it erases differences and doesn’t recognize the natural boundaries between the self and other, or self and nature. In reference to the expanded self, Plumwood notes that it did not arise as a “result of a critique of egoism; rather it is an enlargement and an extension of egoism. It does not
question the structures of possessive egoism and self-interest; rather it tries to allow for a wider set of interests by an expansion of self” (ibid. p. 302). Finally, the transcended self serves nothing more than a means to distance us from the particulars of place and the context in which real environmental dilemmas arise.

Plumwood does offer two suggestions for dealing with the shortcomings of other views. First we should reconceive of the human being not simply as a rational agent but also as an emotional and sensuous being. This should help in overcoming dualisms. Secondly, the problem of discontinuity can be addressed by thinking of ourselves as Self-in-Relation. This is clearly a suggestion in reference to the self-in-Self concept advanced by deep ecologists. A Self-in-Relation does not attempt to erase boundaries between humans and non-humans, rather this person thinks of nature as that with which I have a relationship.

Despite these well-thought critiques, ecofeminism is not beyond questions. As mentioned at the outset of this subsection, the one thing that all ecofeminists agree on is the connection between a domination of women and a domination of nature. This is not accepted as a complete enough explanation by some. Here, we return again to the social ecologists, namely Bookchin, who would argue that focusing on gender inequality is but one aspect of a much large system that encourages social inequality (Bookchin, 1988). Additionally, it has been noted that ecofeminism fails on many of the same fronts which have plagued deep ecology: setting up needless dichotomies, lack of context, and ambiguity (Levin & Levin, 2001).
2.3.2 Two "Substandard" Views

Substandard in this sense should not imply a lesser view in terms of worth or validity. Rather, here substandard means simply that these two views have yet to find the strength and force of the four standard views. Both of these views are newer in terms of thought and literature, yet they both appear to count growing numbers of devotees. The essence of the thought in each of these views in not at all new; pragmatism traces its roots back at least to the early part of the 20th Century and of course virtue ethics first gained prominence with the works of Aristotle in the fourth century BC. What is new with both of these positions is in their application to environmental issues and concerns.

2.3.2.1 Environmental Pragmatism

Environmental pragmatism is a fairly recent addition to the field of environmental philosophy, although it relies on John Dewey's criticisms of philosophy back in the early part of the 20th Century. In the 1920's Dewey argued that philosophic reasoning is often too abstractly removed from the real problems people face in their everyday lives (Dewey 1985). Further, this non-contextual approach tends to stymie policy decision-making. More recently environmental philosophers and writers have updated Dewey's challenges to apply to issues of environmental concern. Most notable among these new, environmental pragmatists are Bryan Norton, Andrew Light and Eric Katz. The latter two edited a book published in 1996 titled Environmental Pragmatism.

Norton (1991) describes a humbling situation when one day he confronted a young girl and her mother gathering heaps upon heaps of sand dollars from the ocean. He felt it was wrong for them to be taking these living creatures from their home and so many of
them at that. However, his attempt at a persuasive animal rights-based argument was answered by the young girl who responded, “We can get a nickel apiece for the extras at the craft store.” This exchange emphasized to Norton that arguments based exclusively on foundational ethical positions often fail in the face of real world considerations—in this case money. What Norton hopes for is a more practical discourse where genuine solutions can be found for real environmental problems.

On the opposing side to the pragmatists are those philosophers who search for fundamental ethical theories to guide our interactions with the natural world. These philosophers seem chiefly concerned with intrinsic or inherent value, specifically Rolston and Callicott. Pragmatists contend that the fuzziness or spookiness of intrinsic value is simply too far removed from that which the overwhelming majority of people find themselves able to relate. Minteer (1998) suggests that there are three additional flaws to a foundational approach. First, foundationalists or monists (as opposed to pluralists) tend to ease off or backpedal when push comes to shove in matters of specific environmental policy; Minteer contends that Callicott is guilty of this. Monists subscribe to a single foundation upon which they build their environmental ethic. In most cases, this single foundation is intrinsic value. Secondly, there is no opportunity to account for social and biological variability across different geographic regions. Specifically Minteer offers the opinion that “Yellowstone is not Central Park, and this speaks to specific ecological, social and ethical circumstances; factors of central importance to the justification of our commitments to the natural world” (p. 342). This type of contrast was fundamental to this study as well—particularly when those interviewed attempted to wrestle with differing feelings for and levels of knowledge of Cumberland Falls and Yellowstone. It is this
recognition that nature here and nature there may not be so easily transposed. Lastly, there is the sense that a monistic perspective undermines the democratic approach to problem solving.

Callicott (1999) responds to these criticisms mainly by suggesting that his words have been misinterpreted. However, he does not back away from encouraging a monastic approach to environmental theorizing. Where Callicott best clarifies his position is in reference to the differences between a moral philosophy, an ethical theory, and moral principles. Callicott advocates monism at the levels of moral philosophy and ethical theory, but supports pluralism at the level of moral principles. This distinction is noteworthy, because in one sense it tends to support Norton’s convergence hypothesis. The convergence hypothesis suggests that over the very long term, considering all relevant variables, it matters not if someone is an anthropocentrist or an ecocentrist, the result will be the same management policy. In other words, Norton believes that quibbling about different moral philosophies is a waste of time, because in the end both types of people want the same things—preservation of the natural resource.

What most monists find so troubling about pluralists is that “without some kind of epistemologically basic justification for our moral stances toward the natural world, we will slip into the morass of relativism and its accompanying seductions” (Minteer, 1998, p. 336). However, there is hope against this fear. In Charles Taylor’s book The Ethics of Authenticity, he argues for what he calls ‘horizons of significance’. These horizons allow individuals to be “embedded in matrices of meaning that owe their character to our membership in families, social institutions, and the traditions of the larger community”
This grounding presumably prevents a slide into absolute relativism.

The other concern with a pragmatic approach is that pragmatism essentially returns to arguments based on utility which so many environmental ethicists find distasteful. So we seem to have come full circle debating the appropriateness of arguments based on human utility versus arguments based on more biocentric or ecocentric approaches.

The importance of this discussion is the emphasis on pragmatists to consider context. In this respect they are quite similar to the ecofeminists and those who advocate care ethics. While, pragmatists do not necessarily hold any great attachments to concepts such as care, the loving eye, and relationship, the point that they embrace context and the particular is worthy of consideration.

2.3.2.2 Ecological Virtue Ethics

Perhaps the oldest ethical tradition in western thought is that of virtues. Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* outlined his version of the “Good Life” as that which centers on virtuous behavior. Virtue ethics primarily derive from those things that Aristotle felt we (or in his case, white, free men) should strive for. It may seem, then, an odd connection to relate Aristotle’s notion of a good life with environmental ethics. However, there is much to be gained by allowing these two to blend.

Recall Sylvan’s three suggestions: 1) extend a prevailing ethic to include non-human entities; 2) incorporate environmental values into the dominant tradition; and 3) create a new ethic. Bringing environmental concerns into the language of virtue ethics represents an example of number 2—incorporating environmental values into the
dominant tradition. In this discussion none of the other views have attempted this approach.

To begin with, let's consider virtue ethics in general. Aristotle's concept of the Golden Mean between two vices yields a virtue. For example, bravery is the mean between the vices of cowardice and recklessness; generosity is the mean between the vices of stinginess and wastefulness (Aristotle 1985). The process of negotiating the virtuous life is the pathway which leads us to a fulfilled life. In other words, for Aristotle, "moral goodness and enjoyment of life are pretty much the same thing" (Stevenson, 1998 p. 62).

The pursuit of these virtues and others mentioned by Aristotle give few clues to an ecological virtue ethic. However, this is because Aristotle was only concerned with those virtues that would be conducive to allow men to achieve their full potential in the city state. Therefore, one only had virtues that were other people directed. In order to realize an ecological virtue, we must consider our actions towards non-human and in some cases non-living things.

Hill (1983) suggests a few other virtues that we might consider in reference to our treatment of nature: humility, self-acceptance, gratitude, and seeing the good in others. These 'new' virtues can still advance the cause of human excellence, they just broaden our responsibilities. Hill notes that some type of appreciation toward nature is not the same thing as valuing nature instrumentally; he suggests that "learning humility requires learning to feel that something matters besides what will affect oneself and one's circle of associates" (ibid. p. 220). This point is echoed in reference to another writer's application of virtue ethics to Leopold's land ethic (Shaw 1997). Shaw suggests three ecological virtues of respect (or ecological sensitivity), of prudence, and of practical judgment as
means towards achieving/maintaining the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. Shaw further reinterprets the concept of the “good” in reference to the land ethic, “Leopold envisions ‘the ultimate good’ not as happiness but as harmony within the biotic, or living, community” (ibid. p. 55). As with Aristotle, these virtues are still other-directed. However, the other in this case is not another human being, but the natural environment.

With these two brief examples one wonders if there are other ecological virtues we might turn to for guidance. Louke van Wensveen (2000) has done just this. She catalogued nearly 200 ecological virtues including awe, care, curiosity, sense of place, warmth and wisdom. Clearly her conception of ecological virtues is much broader than anything we have encountered before. At this point it may be worthwhile to examine just what criteria are used to make something an ecological virtue. Van Wensveen calls on four Aristotelian boundary conditions for this purpose.

1. The Repression Test
2. The Alienation Test
3. The Guilt Test
4. The Fetishism Test

The repression test refers to “the judgment of a repressed psyche is not a good standard for determining what is virtuous” (van Wensveen 2000 p. 90). This refers to the tendency of many early virtue ethics advocates to repress the value of some things. The example cited by van Wensveen is sensuousness. For a long time these sensory-based inclinations were to be suppressed lest they turn into base animal desires. This should not suggest that any inclination that was at one time suppressed should now become a virtue.

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Van Wensveen turns to a suggestion by Bookchin (1982) who acknowledged the value of prudence. "Since prudence is corrupted by inappropriate levels of fear or desire, we could say that these levels function as negative boundary conditions for the life of virtue in Aristotle’s ethic" (van Wensveen 2000 p. 90).

The alienation test refers to “the judgment of an alienated consciousness is not a good standard for determining what is virtuous” (ibid. p. 92). This test is designed to give priority to context and connection to a particular situation. More so than just the hope to reintroduce context, the alienation test also cautions against using terms that are empty of real meaning. The example given by van Wensveen is “love of nature”. She cautions that this expression far too often is simply a wish for such a state rather than any true connection with nature. Alienation implies lack of connection with one’s situation, which leads to various mistakes in judgment.

The guilt test is largely self-explanatory. It is designed to illustrate that “the judgment of a guilty conscious is not a good standard for determining what is virtuous” (van Wensveen 2000 p. 93). Van Wensveen suggests that we are all at one time or another saddled with a guilty conscience in terms of environmental problems. However, she cautions against creating a virtue in the presence of this guilty conscience because the guilty conscience overcompensates and skews the mean to some unreasonable alternative.

Finally, the fetishism test refers to the tendency to allow thin and shallow definitions to replace historic meanings. She cites Bookchin again who offered the evolution of honor as a term that is now more “important as a credit rating than a sense of moral probity” (Bookchin 1982 p. 71). In short, an ethical term becomes replaced by an unethical one which cannot then be considered a virtue.
These four criteria (repression, alienation, guilt and fetishism) combine to guide us towards those things we can consider virtuous with reference to the natural world. One of the most important aspects of these criteria is that the lengthy list of virtues compiled by van Wensveen was not thrown together willy-nilly. She was prudential (to borrow a virtue from Aristotle) in her selections. The concern with her virtues, and indeed all virtues, is that it is not clear how one goes about practicing them. In essence, it is not clear exactly what one must do to be brave, generous, humble, or thoughtful. This then leads to uncertainty in commitment since there does not exist clear prescriptions for behavior.

All six of these views (four standard and two substandard) represent nearly all of the perspectives in environmental ethics today. A few views were specifically excluded for assorted reasons, however, the treatment given to these six views now provides the background with which a discussion can be advanced on the more specific features of this research: ethics of justice and care, and obligatory and supererogatory ethics. It is to these more specific topics that I now turn.

2.4 A Consideration of Ethics

Following the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980), Gorsuch and Ortberg (1983) found that ethical bases proved to be an important predictor of intentions in situations where the topic was considered one of morality. Further they concluded that in ethical decision-making scenarios, ethics may be the strongest predictor of intentions. In this way, the commitments expressed with regards to natural areas may assume an ethical component in addition to any existing attitudinal or normative pressures.
This seems to be an important point particularly in the context of environmental ethics, where some disagreement likely exists between cases in which there is an unequivocally clear moral obligation and cases in which there is a vague moral 'ought' but it is less clear how to fulfill that 'ought', and perhaps less required of us that we do fulfill this 'ought'.

In a nutshell this is the distinction between the ethical orientations of obligatory and supererogatory. The distinction between the ethical theories of justice and care is not concomitant with the distinction between obligatory and supererogatory though. Both of these theories can be said to rest within the arena of obligatory ethics; where they differ is in reference to the nature of the obligation.

2.4.1 Ethical Orientations: Obligatory or Supererogatory

Ethics can be defined and described in any number of ways. To begin with, let's consider that ethics can be both a practice and a theory. As a theory, ethics is that which is the overriding theory of human behavior, overriding because any action or behavior can produce the question, "But is it right to do that?". However, ethics as a theory is not appropriate for this study which requires ethics as that which can be empirically measured; ethics as practice does just this. As a practice, we consider ethics as appropriate behavior. People can be identified as acting ethical or unethical based on their behavior. From an empirical perspective, there are clear implications in developing appropriate measures to study ethical behavior. This follows the line of thinking proposed by Babbie (1995), when he suggested that anything can be measured. However, Babbie's approach in measuring concepts such as ethics is limited in some important respects, namely developing an adequate understanding of the complexity and inter-relationships of this phenomenon.
In addition to being defined as a theory and a practice, ethics can further be described in orientation as either obligatory or supererogatory. This distinction will be useful in considering the relative priority that environmental ethics have to some people. Obligatory ethics, also referred to as ethics of perfect duty are those duties that each of us are bound to follow under all circumstances. That is, we are obligated to follow our duty. These are typically framed as negative duties: Don’t steal, don’t violate someone’s rights, don’t physically harm someone, etc. In general these are the proscriptive “judgments that are also universalized, not contingent on rules, laws, and conventions, and justified based on moral considerations of justice and human welfare” (Kahn 1999 p. 70). Gewirth (1978) defines morality as a “set of categorically obligatory requirements for action…” (p. 1). Nearly all of the empirical work devoted to ethics or moral development has assumed this obligatory view of ethics.

Supererogatory ethics, also referred to as discretionary ethics (Kahn 1999), or ethics of imperfect duties, are those ethics that we practice above and beyond the call of perfect duties. Generally this perspective has followed from the work of Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle was less concerned with actions such as stealing, lying and doing harm to others. His focus was on those traits that define humans as being exemplary people: courage, generosity, mildness, etc. Aristotle’s “golden mean” signified the perfect balance between two vices that produces a virtue. Collectively, all of Aristotle’s virtues lead us to more fulfilled existence.

We might now consider if environmental ethics, for most people, are either obligatory ethics or supererogatory ethics. I would submit that treating environmental ethics simply as a “new” set of obligatory ethics is poorly conceived. Moral obligation is
thinly veiled as social coercion buttressed by fear of recrimination. In other words, demanding compliance in terms of a new set of obligatory ethics fails to consider the foundation of the new set. I would further offer that many, if not most, people perceive of environmental ethics as supererogatory ethics, or those behaviors we perform beyond the minimal behaviors required of us. It is the sense that any actions we take to help or improve the environment may well be considered praiseworthy. Yet at the same time, many of those actions we take which in some sense cause harm to the environment are often not considered blameworthy. This contrast is exactly what is meant when we talk about doing what is ‘right’ versus doing what is ‘good’. A diagram may illustrate more clearly the relationship between the obligatory and supererogatory.

![Diagram of Domains of Ethical Assessment]

Figure 3: Distinguishing right from wrong and obligatory and supererogatory ethics (Adapted from Pojman, 2001).

If we accept the view that, presently, a good deal of environmental ethics might be better conceived of supererogatory ethics, this means that they are not necessarily
universally prescribed, and are open to interpretation. Aristotle first listed courage as one of his virtues to be practiced. However, there is no guidance on specific behaviors one should practice in order to be courageous. Different situations would encourage different examples of courage (e.g., going into battle, standing up to one’s unethical superior, discarding immoral traditions, etc.). Similarly in environmental ethics, a virtue might be humility (van Wensveen, 2000). Yet, it’s not exactly clear how one should operationalize humility across all situations. I may choose to walk rather than drive my car as an example of humility, or I may sit quietly and contemplate my small presence in the vastly complex natural world. Thus, walking and thinking would both be considered examples of humility, but I am left without clear direction on which I should do.

Certainly one can identify at least one example of an environmental obligation that counters this claim: the universal obligation not to litter. However, for most other environmental examples, there are nearly always contingencies. Consider the following statements: preserve biodiversity, protect endangered species, act only to fulfill vital human needs (re: Item number three from Deep Ecology’s Eight Point Platform). Clearly there are ample instances in which each of these examples can be contested based on some contingency. At what scale should biodiversity be preserved? Are we to protect endangered species at the cost of all human welfare? Are all vital human needs universally agreed upon? With these ambiguities comes the notion that these are ethics which cannot, and perhaps should not, be practiced by everyone all of the time in the same way that not stealing or not violating someone else’s rights should be. Thus, an obligatory ethics seems ill-fitting. Of course on the other hand, when it comes down to practicing supererogatory ethics, at some point I will likely say, “Enough is enough, I have my own needs to take
care of an my own personal interests to pursue.’ That is, there are personal costs involved in helping others, and these costs presumably affect conceptions of whether one is morally obligated to help” (Kahn 1999 p. 72). This statement is at the crux of the distinction between obligatory and supererogatory ethics, or stated another way: doing what is ‘right’ and doing what is ‘good’.

In thinking about the contrast between doing what is right and doing what is good, it seems that there is important variable at work that fundamentally changes the nature of being ethical. The variable of concern is opportunity. Once again, doing what is right, in my conception, refers to following universal proscriptions on behavior. For example, I should never steal. I should never kill an innocent. I should never violate someone else’s rights. Doing what is good, I attest, is more like practicing contextual prescriptions such as courage, charity, or humility.

The difference between the right and the good is not just a shift from the universal to the contextual. Nor is it just a change from negatively worded proscriptions to positively worded prescriptions. There is a difference in the opportunities to do what is right and opportunities to do what is good. An extreme statement of doing what is right might be considered as consistent vigilance against unethical behavior. That is, there are constantly opportunities to not do what is right. It is constant because in normal life I am always surrounded by opportunities to steal something, or to kill someone, or to violate another’s rights. As Hobbesian as this sounds, with echoes of lives that are “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” ringing in our ears, the previous sentence appears accurate. So long as I exist in some social system I will always have the opportunity to steal, to kill
or to do wrong. These opportunities simply exist in the same way that property, life or (arguably) rights exist. Opportunities for me to be blameworthy always abound.

In contrast, there are not consistent opportunities for me to do what is good. Opportunities to practice courage do not surround me in the same way that opportunities to steal do. In order to practice courage, I must first be presented with an opportunity in which courage may be required. In theory I may never experience an opportunity to practice courage. Granted, this may be indicative of a very dull life, but it is at least possible. Similarly, Aristotle's virtue of mildness requires that I be confronted with an opportunity to overreact in anger or to be less angry than I should. Presumably, these opportunities do not surround me all the time either. Other examples of doing what is good seem less obvious as to the specific opportunities required for them. I suppose I could always find some opportunity to practice charity, but it will likely become cumbersome or burdensome as stated earlier. Yet not stealing doesn't become cumbersome or burdensome. With these examples, opportunities for praiseworthy behavior must be encountered if not specifically sought out. Thus a fundamental difference between obligatory and supererogatory ethics reflects opportunity.

This distinction between obligatory and supererogatory ethics has much to offer to a consideration of environmental ethics. Consider that the very limited but predominant approach to an empirical examination of environmental ethics follows Kohlberg. Further consider that Kohlberg's focus was on obligatory ethics (more specifically, Kohlberg was a Kantian and developed his theory of moral development as essentially one of justice). As such, the empirical approach to most environmental ethics studies favors a view of environmental ethics as obligatory ethics. This bias towards obligatory ethics is also both
explicit in terms of Swearingen’s (1989) and Kahn’s (1999) work and implicit in terms of any number of studies related to environmental concerns (Dunlap and van Liere 1978; Borden and Schettino 1979; Szagun and Mesenholl 1993; Comunian and Gielen 1995; Gebhardt and Lindsey 1995; Howe et al. 1996; Manning and Valliere 1996; Zimmermann 1996; Manning et al. 1997; Seguin et al. 1998; Widegren 1998; Schindler 1999). So, since Kohlberg’s system is decidedly slanted towards obligatory ethics and if, in fact, environmental ethics may be more properly conceived of, at best, a balance between obligatory and supererogatory ethics for many people, then a Kohlbergian-based methodology may be flawed from the outset, like trying to fit a round peg into a square hole. This analogy is suggested because I can likely get a round peg to fit into a square hole, but the corners of the hole would not be filled—these empty corners then represent the supererogatory orientation which is left out of most considerations of environmental ethics. As a result, it is important to consider the limitations of conceiving of environmental ethics only as obligatory ethics.

2.4.2 Ethical Theories: Care or Justice

The contrast between ethics of care and ethics of justice is another guiding framework for this research, where care represents a certain class of environmentally friendly obligations and justice represents another class. The care-based class of obligations are built upon lived relations and sympathetic feelings. The justice-based class of obligations are built upon a prior established principles of right and wrong. What is worth noting at this point, is that care should not be aligned with supererogatory ethics, or simply those ethics we practice above and beyond the moral minimum. Care ethics, in

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Gilligan’s conception, do carry with them universal obligations to care. However, the direction that care takes is situationally-dependent, and therefore it may be thought of as an ethic with less clear prescriptions. In this respect, care does share a certain openness with supererogatory ethics, but again, where supererogatory ethics represent an ethical ideal and obligatory ethics represent an ethical minimum—care ethics and justice ethics both illustrate a moral minimum.

Thus, the care ethic as described by Gilligan (1982) illustrates another aspect of obligatory ethics that has similarly received little empirical attention in environmental ethics. Care ethics are no less binding (read: no less obligatory) than justice ethics. Noddings (1995) wrestles with the idea of an obligatory caring. Where obligation has typically been conceived of as the result of some cognitively-reasoned approach to a moral dilemma (a la Kant), Nel Noddings suggests that, with the exception of the pathological person, we all experience a powerful feeling expressed as “an inner voice saying, ‘I must do something’” (p. 11). It is this “I must” that aligns ethics of care with an obligatory ethical orientation.

It has been argued that “the scope of environmental philosophy reaches beyond ethical issues and includes diverse metaphysical, epistemological, cultural, and political issues as well” (Zimmerman, et al. 1998 p. 3). Thus, we can care about any number of people and things and to varying degrees (Gilligan 1982; Gilligan 1995). To clarify care, a number of authors have attempted to parse out the intricacies of this term. Blustein (1991) identifies at least four different interpretations of the concept of care: 1) to care for, 2) to have care of, 3) to care about, and 4) to care that. Blustein is also quick to note that in varying situations people can experience any and all four of these types of caring.
O’Neil (2000) refers to a framework of Deane Curtain to distinguish between caring for and caring about and this further extends the realm of caring. In their conception, caring for occurs when someone is in “direct relatedness to others” (p. 187). On the other hand, caring about results when one is not in any direct relation to the object of care. For the purposes of this study the former parallels the idea of familiarity to some natural area and the latter to those areas with which one is not familiar. These theoretical groundings of care are intended to represent the necessary and sufficient conditions to analyze the narratives provided by the interview subjects in this study.

Ethics of justice are often considered to be an amalgam of different western ethical theories in which people (and in some cases things) possess rights and as holders of rights other moral agents are obligated to respect those rights. The philosophic traditions of Immanuel Kant (1785/1964) and, more recently, John Rawls (1999) provide the bases for ethics of justice. In contrast to ethics of care that are derived from the uniqueness of some dilemma, ethics of justice are established prior to and independent of any ethical dilemma. The following table distinguishes various characteristics of each ethic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethic of Care</th>
<th>Ethic of Justice</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Particular</td>
<td>Universal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency</td>
<td>Necessity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situatedness</td>
<td>Abstraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 4: Contrasts between ethics of care and justice.

Mary Raugust (1996) outlines seven characteristics that describe an ethic of care.
1. The central priority of ethics is not the concept of individual rights but of relationships with other human beings.

2. The principle goal of ethics is not autonomy and liberty of individual humans, rather it is "the giving and receiving of care appropriate to specific persons and their situations."

3. Interdependence over individualism.

4. The "other" with whom one deals morally must be distinctly personified and not an impersonal faceless abstraction.

5. Moral judgments emerge from actual situations and are not derived by applying logical formulae to general principles.

6. Feminists ethics are "accepting rather than transformative."

7. Feminist ethics will be a morality of virtues rather than primarily one of justice.

Raugust clearly has in mind relationships between two or more human beings and it is not apparent from her list how natural areas can step in and assume the position of the "other" in the relationship. At the same time, it could be argued that the human-human perspective needlessly narrows the moral community. The majority of Raugust's points are consistent with many of the criticisms directed towards ethics of justice: they are separatist, isolationist and abstract, that they ignore the particular and the context of the dilemma.

In discussing how a care perspective is more fundamental to our notions of right and wrong, Noddings (1984) suggested that relationship is ontologically basic, meaning that we have to recognize that our existence is *prima facie* defined as one in relationship with others. Conversely, an ethic of justice deliberately seeks to eliminate any relationship which might encourage some bias.

Care ethics need not assume, as ecofeminism does, that male domination of nature and women are the primary factors of concern. One characteristic of the care ethic that is
frequently misrepresented is its exclusivity to females. While it is true that Gilligan (1982) set out to respond to a methodologically flawed study of moral development (Kohlberg 1971), it was not her intent to create an ethic, of, by, and for only women. Similarly, the care ethic is often referred to as a feminist ethic, this terminology reflects its origins rather than its application. In fact, it was found that in the five years following college, women and men both used the care ethic in attempting to resolve moral dilemmas (Gilligan and Murphy 1979). Additionally, Gilligan (1993) emphasized that “the care perspective in my rendition is neither biologically determined nor unique to women” (p. 209). Therefore, any conception of the ethics of care by ecofeminists as being essentially female is denied here.

The one criticism that remains with care ethics might be referred to as a critique of insularism (Hoagland 1991). This criticism illustrates the potential of care-based ethics to collapse upon itself in a narrowly defined moral community. At the root of this criticism is an ambiguity on how to deal with those with whom we are not in direct relationships. The example most often encountered is how should we deal with starving people in a distant land, particularly in those cases where we (our culture) might be said to have been partially responsible for their dire conditions. Hoagland (1991) suggests that the care ethic, as generally conceived of is inadequate in this respect. That is, care may work well in situations when we are somehow tied to the other people in the dilemma; however, it works less well, or not at all, in cases where those in the dilemma are distant and not in any genuine relationship with us.

Consider this criticism from the perspective of caring for nearby and distant natural areas. The logical connection would suggest that we are unable to care for that which is
distant. Under these circumstances, the care ethic does not give us adequate guidance. However, perhaps this is where a justice ethic is more conveniently articulated. Although Hoagland entreats us to develop a more comprehensive care ethic to replace an ethics located in principles and duty, others do not share the view that a single ethical theory based on care is necessarily preferable to a pluralistic approach to ethics where the ethic of care is neither superior nor inferior to any other ethics and multiple ethical theories can be used. Recalling Noddings (1984), it is true that we are born into and exist with respect to a variety of relationships. However, we are not born into nor do we exist in relationships with everything. And it is from this point that one can contend care ethics may be insufficient to resolve all moral dilemmas in the same way that ethics of justice are similarly limiting.

Neither justice nor care can be expected to work perfectly in all situations. Just as ethics of justice seem awkward or cumbersome when applied to instances involving people in close relationships, ethics of care seem misplaced or hollow when applied to dilemmas involving distant strangers. Thus, neither ethic is presumed to be better than the other. Rather, they both have value albeit in different situations. In the context of this research distance of natural areas serves as a mildly imprecise proxy for familiarity. From this discussion on care/justice, it is suggested that care ethics may be more appropriate for those natural areas where one is more familiar and ethics of justice may be more appropriate when directed towards those areas we know less well.
2.4.3 Ethics or Convention or Etiquette?

The previous discussions on obligatory/supererogatory and justice/care have helped to shape some of the interior of this thing called ethics. Yet, the contours identifying the boundaries of ethics still requires some defining. The general question, just what is ethics will guide this subsection. In Chapter 1, I offered a few definitions of ethics—mainly involving language associated with obligation. What may be needed is some further explanation to distinguish ethics from other aspects of social life, such as convention or etiquette. Where this distinction becomes clouded is when some action or behavior is indeed moral, or if in fact, it is simply convention, personal preference or a matter of etiquette. Stated another way, what is it about a given dilemma that makes it moral rather than something else?

While, some have outlined those features that distinguish ethics from other things, this is not as simple a distinction as it may seem. In fact, Turiel (1983) suggests that Kohlberg himself confounded conventions with morality. Callahan (1988) offers a nice summary of those differences between ethics, convention, and mere opinions and taste. Her conception required that ethics be reflective of the underlying principles and values as they might affect the interests and/or welfare of others, while conventions, opinions and taste do not cut so deeply into the social fabric. This gives us some guidance toward identifying what is ethics from what is social convention from what is personal preference, but it remains less than satisfying as an evaluative criterion. Further, how should we conceive of etiquette as it relates to ethics?

Etiquette is a curious phenomenon in light of a discussion of ethics. It would seem that behaviors associated with etiquette can be both moral and non-moral (not immoral).
Consider the act of giving up one's seat on the bus to an elderly rider. This act may take on moral qualities because the welfare of another may be at issue. However, consider the example of poor table manners at a dinner party; poor table manners may be considered impolite, but likely of little moral consequence. A general rule for etiquette as it relates to ethics might be the degree of importance to another's welfare. Burtness (1999) takes up this argument in great detail with his term "degrees of moral density." And Pojman (2001) suggests that "morality distinguishes itself from law and etiquette by going deeper into the essence of rational existence" (p. 5). To explore an example of etiquette in environmental ethics, consider the act of littering. Is littering really unethical? What is the harm and to whom does it apply? Let's assume we are just talking about a discarded bag and drink cup from McDonalds. If the environment, or at least part of it, is of moral consideration, then I might talk in terms of harm to the environment. But have I really "harmed" the environment by my act of littering. (I am purposely avoiding Kant's Categorical Imperative here to focus on a singular act). Considering the fact that McDonalds has switched to using more "eco-friendly" materials in their packaging, I feel confident saying that discarding that bag and drink cup did not harm the environment in any real sense, in fact a number of little creatures may benefit in some way from some of the littered items. However, what about my action in reference to other people? Here I can envision littering as an unethical act because the psychological, and perhaps, emotional welfare of other people may be negatively affected by witnessing my litter and thus returns to being a moral issue. This, then, represents littering as a non-moral issue of etiquette as well as an issue of moral import.
Hart (1961) discussed cardinal features that distinguish moral situations from non-moral ones. The first relevant feature is “importance”. The person considering the dilemma must feel that his or her choice and its consequences are significant and not trivial. This first feature deserves further comment. A decision or behavior can be said to be important if it has far reaching or extended implications. Anything that is far reaching has the potential to affect other people’s welfare. However, this is a necessary, but not sufficient condition of the ethical realm. The second feature described by Hart is “immunity from deliberate change”. Unlike rules for a game, moral rules cannot be made up or altered. In Hart’s view, moral rules transcend situations and time, they should not waver depending on context. Third, a “form of moral pressure” exists—obeying moral rules is not done solely for utilitarian or authoritarian factors but rather because we should have respect for these rules in and of themselves. It is with this feature that ethics is often distinguished from religious codes, since the latter are frequently grounded in the authority of the supernatural while the former are grounded in reason (Pojman, 2001). Hart clearly conceives of ethics as obligatory and most likely justice-based, thus leaving open an opportunity to define ethics as that which also encompasses supererogatory orientations and care perspectives.

Another novel suggestion in distinguishing moral from non-moral is to turn to the emotional reactions that some behaviors invoke. This is the approach of some psychologists who contend that violating moral codes differs from violating social conventions in the resulting emotions. The three emotions of shame, embarrassment and guilt are believed to follow from when one’s own behavior is against the moral code (Rozin et al. 1999). The three emotions of contempt, anger and disgust result when one
observes another moral agent violating the moral code (ibid.). This may be a helpful tool, but it is backward looking in that the emotions follow from some behavior. Further, it too is slanted towards obligatory ethics. It is easy to see how stealing might elicit shame, embarrassment, and guilt. However, if we also are concerned with environmental ethics as supererogatory ethics, it does not follow that not practicing charity should elicit those three emotions as well. A preferable course would be to determine if some behaviors are ethical in and of themselves, irrespective of the subsequent emotions felt by the moral agent. All of the preceding descriptions of ethics are enlightening, but what is needed at this point is a more precise tool that will differentiate ethics from these other things.

To do this, we should conceive of some criterion or criteria that will at once define ethics and distinguish if from things like convention, preference, and etiquette. To this end, I return to Hart (1961), Williams (1985) and Aristotle to propose the following guidelines. Ethics (as practice) encompasses those important behaviors that, following supererogatory ethics results in the agent being perceived by others as praiseworthy and violating obligatory ethics results in the agent being perceived by others as blameworthy. Neither behaviors associated with social conventions, etiquette, nor personal preferences would result in either praiseworthy or blameworthy evaluations. While this definition is satisfying in many respects, it too lacks rigor, particularly when one considers that blame and praise only work when others agree on applying those evaluations in specific situations. As will be discussed in the final two chapters of this document, environmental ethics suffers from a lack of unifying principles or starting points and this, in turn, results in uncertain beliefs if some action should engender blame, praise, or neither of the two.
A final note about this last subsection, the distinctiveness or obviousness of environmental ethics came up in the course of the interviews. I am content with the preceding descriptions of ethics, convention, etiquette, etc. as they stand. However, I will return to some of these ideas in Chapter 5 of this document. A more detailed discussion will follow there in which the question about what differentiates the moral from the non-moral is considered. It seems that environmental ethics in particular took on a very different meaning for some people interviewed for this study perhaps reflecting the ambiguous nature of the concept as well as environmental ethics existing as anything anchored in real life dilemmas.

2.5 Concluding Ethics

The inclusion of the various sections in this chapter are meant to illustrate the tremendous variety of this thing called environmental ethics. Animal rights is no more a comprehensive view of environmental ethics than is deep ecology. And from this comes the suspicion that querying people about their environmental ethics with regard to specific parks will yield a wide range of prescriptions. Additionally, with the first two sections of this chapter, I intended to show how environmental ethics has not sprung up fully formed in our collective consciousness. Rather, a number of social and political factors contributed to and continue to contribute to our view of environmental ethics. Through engaging people in narrative interviews about environmental dilemmas, it was hoped that some of the multiplicity concerning environmental philosophies, commitments, and perspective would emerge. It is from this standpoint that I turn now to a discussion of methods.
Chapter 3: Methodology

To date, environmental ethics has largely been relegated to the domain of philosophers with little attention given to it by researchers. An empirical treatment of any object presupposes a few general criteria: that the phenomenon is sufficiently tangible or real that it can be observed at least indirectly, that observations can be collected in accordance with some testing logic, and that interpretable results will follow from an analysis. Ethics by their very nature represent a complex amalgamation of influences ranging from one’s religious background to one’s cultural norms to one’s first-hand experiences in addressing moral dilemmas. It is due in large part to this complexity that I followed a qualitative approach in order to better understand the relationship between ethics and the way(s) that people relate to natural areas.

In this chapter, I will discuss all aspects of the empirical research process from formation and subsequent modification of the interview guide to data analysis and the steps in between. Additionally, I will briefly address the nature of my qualitative research approach. It is here that I begin this chapter.

3.1 Research Approach

Despite the fact that most studies of environmental ethics have relied on survey methods, ethics are not algorithmic, in that they do not readily lend themselves to a reductionist or even multivariate analysis. Ethics, while often fundamental to a person’s worldview, exist mainly in the background. Yet, this background residence should imply neither secondary status nor a lack of importance. Rather, our ethics diffuse through
everyday life, often without much conscious thought. This is even more true when the
object is environmental ethics—a topic which is still beginning to percolate through the
public consciousness. A more holistic understanding is needed particularly in the realm of
environmental ethics, where practically no empirical research has been conducted.
Additionally, it has been noted that environmental ethics is often expressed inconsistently
(Borden & Schettino, 1979; Dunlap & Heffernan, 1975) or awkwardly (Howe, Kahn, &
Friedman, 1996; Schindler, 1999). Thus, the ambiguity of people’s environmental ethics
requires a negotiation between subject and researcher in order for questions and responses
to be better understood. When survey methods have been used to corral the range of
responses, narrow, a priori assumptions about the extent of environmental ethics have
already been made by the researchers, which inevitably neglected other rightful aspects of
environmental ethics (Manning, Valliere, & Minteer, 1997; Minteer & Manning, 1999;
Szagun & Mesenholl, 1993). In an effort to understand an elusive and fundamentally
broad topic, environmental ethics, I proposed the use of a qualitative methodology.

Previous research purporting to study environmental ethics relied on some form of
survey methodology (Dunlap & Heffernan, 1975; Dunlap & van Liere, 1978; Gebhardt &
Lindsey, 1995; Manning & Valliere, 1996; Minteer & Manning, 1999; Schindler, 1999;
Swearingen, 1989; Szagun & Mesenholl, 1993). In those rare instances when a qualitative
approach was used, the researchers restricted their conception of environmental ethics to a
narrow and monist definition—that of a class of obligatory and largely justice-based
theories (Howe et al., 1996; Kahn, 1999; Shanahan, Pelstring, & McComas, 1999). As a
result, there exists a gap in how we define environmental ethics and more how we have
chosen to study it. In an attempt to address this gap in the empirical study of
environmental ethics, I chose a qualitative methodology which allows for a pluralistic definition of environmental ethics: obligatory and supererogatory as well as theories of justice and care.

In an effort to negotiate unfamiliar (due to lack of empirical study) terrain and at the same time achieve a more complete understanding of a meagerly researched topic of inquiry, a hermeneutic methodology was selected. In addition to the rational for qualitative research presented above, several additional factors suggested a hermeneutic approach to this study would be most appropriate. First, Patterson and Williams (2002) identify hermeneutics as a technique that draws its strength from knowledge gleaned through traditional literature reviews as well as leaving open the possibility for new and previously unexplored themes to emerge. Second, my goals and objectives can be condensed to developing a more thorough and complete understanding of the nature of environmental ethics with regards to specific places. This can be achieved through the production of narratives in which the respondent and I negotiate a shared understanding of this phenomenon. Rather than starting each interview from a blank slate, I relied on my familiarity with previously attempted studies in ethics and environmental ethics. These previous empirical studies provided the door to access a portion of the relevant information. However, more is needed than just access through this door. Here, the nature of a dialogue between two or more people will serve as the vehicle to come to some understanding of environmental ethics.

A third reason for selecting an hermeneutic approach is that the nature of this research does not lend itself well to hypothesis testing or working propositions or some other such testing logic, due to the fact that this research involves at least three fundamentally
complex variables: ethical theories (justice and care), ethical orientations (right and good), and place familiarity. None of these variables lend themselves well to hypothesis statements which imply bounded, concrete dimensions. Indeed, in instances where beliefs, values, meanings, and traditions all converge, as they do in a discussion of ethics, an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon as gleaned through interviews is the most appropriate research protocol (Patterson, Watson, & Williams, 2001).

In selecting an hermeneutic testing logic, traditional criteria for evaluating the adequacy of the test are not applicable. The research approach is not driven by a desire to identify p-values, or statistically valid correlations, or some regression-based model of environmental ethics. Rather, the research approach is driven by the motivation to reveal meanings and relationships between different aspects within the general field of environmental ethics.

Clifford Geertz (1976) uses the term "thick description" as a means to achieve a rich understanding of some phenomena or experience. A qualitative research approach is the means by which the end of rich understanding was reached. In discussing the nature of interview methodology in general, Steinar Kvale (1996) draws the analogy of the interviewer as a miner where the "nuggets of essential meaning" are discovered through the interview and the whole research process. Elsewhere, Kvale suggests that "the aim of the qualitative research-interview is not to end up with unequivocal and quantifiable meanings on the themes focused. What matters is rather to describe precisely the inherently contradictory meanings the interviewee expresses" (Kvale, 1983 p. 177). And as others have noted, our ethics may often be internally inconsistent or contradictory (MacIntyre, 1984; Rawls, 1999).
3.2 Goals and Objectives

Any research approach should be driven in large part by the goals and objectives of a study. This was amply true in the case of this study. Consider the nested qualities of purposes, goals and objectives. Purposes can be viewed as encompassing general goals which in turn can be viewed as containing more specific objectives. The singular purpose of this study was to engage people in discussions about environmental ethics with respect to certain places. As stated earlier, there were two primary goals of this study that reflected its exploratory nature:

1. To understand justice and care in reference to parks of varying familiarity; and
2. To understand the roles of obligatory and supererogatory environmental ethical orientations as they relate to parks of varying familiarity.

These two statements represent the most general articulation of what this research study was about. Yet, in order to meet these goals (and ultimately the broader purpose), a few specific objectives were used to chart the path.

As a result the three objectives listed below might be conceived of as guiding statements which emerged following a review of the literature. These three objective-statements more precisely gird the scope of the research and the questions in the interview guide. Following each statement is a brief explanation and in some cases a justification for it.
3.2.1 Objective 1: Engage people in environmental ethics discussions where principles of justice and care can emerge.

- Ethics of justice and care both make assumptions about the fundamental nature of relationships between people. These ethical theories may similarly illuminate the fundamental nature of relationships that people have with natural areas. Care for a natural area must be consistent with language used to express relationships of one person caring for another person. Ecofeminists believe that such human-nature relationships are a natural extension of our community (Zimmerman 1987). Following the logic of Rick O’Neil (2000), caring for something and caring about something represent two very different aspects of caring with the former more consistent with care ethics and the latter more aligned with an abstraction such as what might be considered in an ethic of justice. King (1991) questions whether caring for nature can be concisely expressed in meaningful ways consistent with care ethics. Primarily his concern is in reference to reciprocity and what benefits accrue to nature through caring for it. This concern will be answered, I believe, in a line of questioning that encourages people to talk about how their actions (or lack thereof) have helped (or harmed) some natural area. Field (1995) and Warren (1998) both suggest that real benefits can be realized by non-human others. Warren goes on to clarify that moral relationships can and do exist when only one of the parties is a moral agent. As such, it takes just one moral agent to create a moral relationship. Most certainly moral relationships exist with two
or more moral agents, but Warren's point is noteworthy in that it allows a moral relationship to exist between a person and a place.

- In contrast to the language typical of ethics of care (reflecting relationship and responsibility and concern for the wellbeing of the other), language expressing justice principles will refer to concepts outside of the particular circumstances behind the moral dilemma. Arguments based on rights are, perhaps the most typical of these. Concepts such as fairness and equality typify much of the focus on rights. John Rawls' (1999) thorough treatment of justice as a moral theory, however, provides little guidance on how humans should behave justly in reference to nature. In fact, others have concluded that a Rawlsian approach may not be a suitable foundation for a long-term environmental ethics based on anything other than a prudential use of resources for future human generations (Manning 1981; Thero 1995)—which is essentially the argument of the environmental pragmatist. In this respect our ethics is, once again, other-person directed rather than nature directed. However, Rawls does not stand alone in the justice camp. Thus, I will refer to the work of other justice-oriented researchers and theorists to anchor some of the questions in this study. The framework developed by Kohlberg (1971; 1983) will provide this foundation. Additional insight can be gleaned from others who have followed the Kohlberg tradition in studying environmental ethics (Howe et al. 1996; Kahn 1999). Finally, the arguments offered by rights-based theorists such as Regan (1985; 1996; 1998) and Taylor (1998) can provide further guidance on rights-based language.
• In focusing the study this way, I propose the use of the competing perspectives of justice and care. Justice and care are not just two among many different ethics; they are more fundamental in that they illustrate two different aspects of relationships: equality/inequality and attachment/detachment (Clement 1998). In this respect, I will study care and justice as opposed to all other ethical theories.

3.2.2 Objective 2: Engage people in environmental ethics discussions where obligatory and supererogatory ethical orientations can emerge.

• Ethical orientations might be either obligatory or supererogatory; that someone subscribes to one orientation more than the other in reference to environmental concerns suggests the force and clarity of pro-environmental behaviors or commitments. An ethical relationship to natural areas will therefore inform the values we assign to nature and those responsibilities which we have to the same. If someone describes their environmental ethic as one of obligation, then are they advocating a strong deontological ethic (read: justice) where what is right or wrong never changes across time and place? Or, are they advocating a somewhat softer or more fluid type of obligatory ethic (read: care) where a general, universal obligation exists, but each person is free to determine the best course of action based on the particularities of each unique situation? On the other hand, if someone describes their environmental ethic as supererogatory, then they might be said to promote environmental ethics as those actions we perform above and beyond the call of duty. Supererogatory
ethics are ethics of an ideal morality, contrasted to ethics of a moral 
minimalism.

• Within the scope of supererogatory ethics, we might want to consider if people 
feel pro-environmental behaviors are at all behaviors of moral consequence or 
simply behaviors dictated by other conventions, such as norms, personal 
preferences, or etiquette. Additionally, people might suggest support for 
natural areas based on reasons of human utility (e.g., medical benefits, clean air 
or water, or simply as places to recreate, etc.) In these instances the object of 
moral consideration is other people, not the place itself. Therefore, I gave 
people opportunities to discuss nature in whatever terms they felt appropriate 
(e.g., as an object of moral concern itself, or perhaps only as a resource for 
human use).

3.2.3 Objective 3: Provide people with opportunities to distinguish familiar natural 
areas from less familiar natural areas.

• The familiarity a person has with a particular natural area likely influences the 
way that this area is viewed in terms of ethical obligation. “Through 
interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through 
appreciation, protection,” Tilden (1977, p. 38) offers this concise phrase to 
describe the gentle, but powerfully positive effects of environmental 
interpretation. The idea of familiarity is the firmament upon which Tilden’s 
phrase rests; for understanding, appreciation, and protection combine to reveal 
a progression in familiarity. The suggestion is that the more familiar someone 
is with something, the more they will act towards protecting that thing. In
reference to the discussion of environmental ethics, if someone is more familiar with a specific area, then they may rely on a different arsenal of ethical theories and orientations than if they were less familiar with an area. A hallmark of care-based ethics is the emphasis on the familiar—that care is, in some sense, required for those with whom we are familiar. Conversely, the less familiar someone is with a particular area, the more they may rely on ethics of justice. As obligatory and supererogatory orientations relate to familiarity, I might suggest that supererogatory ethics may be more appropriate when directed toward areas of lesser familiarity because the individual may feel a less pressing need to act in a pro-environmental way and his/her options may be less clear towards areas he/she knows little about.

3.2.4 The ‘Unexpected’ Objective

Any qualitative approach leaves open the door for unexpected information and/or connections to occur. With regards to this research it is not surprising that unexpected information and connections did emerge. In fact, it may be fair to say that there was even an unexpected objective to the extent that I was at least aware that the justice/care and obligatory/supererogatory parameters might not neatly confine the ethical narratives. The four themes to be discussed in Chapter 4 (Results) can all be said to exist beyond the scope of the original questions. This is not to suggest that the original questions were without value; far from it, in fact. The responses to the original questions simply revealed broader categories in which more revealing meanings could be found. The interpretivist testing logic I used allowed this nature of discovery and exploration. A fine example of
the unexpected came up in respect to the notion of beauty in nature. This theme emerged fairly early in the interviews and as a result I began asking questions in latter interviews that were designed to explore the concept of beauty more completely. I'll expand on this in the section titled, Interview Guide(s).

In reviewing the shift from the three objective statements listed above to the ultimate discovery of the four themes, it is worth noting that the primary domain of interest in this research remained the same—exploring the notion of environmental ethics with respect to different places.

3.3 Study Sites

Interviews were conducted at three different sites: Cumberland Falls State Resort Park, Dr. Thomas Walker State Park, and the Union College campus. These three locales present themselves not as unique places receiving special sorts of visitors, rather these three places present themselves as convenient opportunities to explore the phenomenon of interests. That is, these study sites provided me access to people who could discuss environmental ethics with regards to the southeastern Kentucky area as well as distant, and lesser known natural areas.

As a state resort park in the Kentucky State Park system, Cumberland Falls boasts a number of amenities that compare somewhat to National Parks such as Yellowstone, although they ultimately differ greatly in scale. Cumberland Falls has an historic hemlock-framed lodge overlooking the Cumberland River. Within the lodge are guest rooms, a large dining area, visitor's center and museum as well as common areas with large stone fireplaces. Walking through the lodge it compares quite nicely to the lodges at
Yellowstone or Glacier National Park. Overnight guests at Cumberland Falls can also choose their accommodations from traditional campgrounds to furnished cottages with their own full bathrooms, dining rooms, and kitchens.

The Kentucky State Park system distinguishes among the units within the system largely by the amount and type of amenities found at each park. The Kentucky State Park system has four classifications of parks: Resort Parks, Recreational Parks, Historic Parks, and one Interstate Park (jointly administered with the Commonwealth of Virginia). Cumberland Falls and other State Resort Parks are designed to be the most amenity rich. Some of these parks have golf courses, tennis courts, and water slides. Cumberland Falls has tennis courts and a pool near one of the cottage clusters. The centerpiece to the park is the 125-foot wide, 60-foot high waterfall, known locally as the “Niagara of the South.” The falls also contributes to another visitor attraction—the moonbow. The moonbow is found nowhere else in the Western Hemisphere and occurs only on clear nights when the moon is full. In addition to this central, eponymous feature of the park, there are more than 20 miles of hiking trails with additional miles available for equestrians.

In many respects, Cumberland Falls and Yellowstone are comparable. Both parks are identified by some central feature, both cater to a range of visitor types from those preferring four walls and a bed to those who’d rather pitch their tent on the ground. And both parks are surrounded by National Forest lands. However, clearly Cumberland Falls and Yellowstone are not the same in some other respects, the most obvious of which is size. At over 2 million acres, Yellowstone is one of our nation’s largest parks, while Cumberland Falls is less than a thousandth of this size at 1,776 acres. Further, Yellowstone claims world-wide fame as a World Heritage Site. And while Cumberland
Falls is one of the jewels in the Kentucky State Park system, its renown spreads little beyond the state’s borders.

The interviews conducted at Cumberland Falls were all done in the area adjacent to the Falls. This is the most popular place (in terms of visitor density) in the park and it provided the easiest access to many people. Moreover, upon entering the park via state route KY 90, the Falls is one of the first features one comes to. In this respect I felt that my pool of potential interviewees would be greatest at this area near the Falls.

In addition to Cumberland Falls State Resort Park, I also conducted interviews at Dr. Thomas Walker State Historic Park. Dr. Thomas Walker State Historic Park is approximately 30 miles due east from Cumberland Falls and is a day-use only area. Although the focus of Walker Park is different from Cumberland Falls, this second, study site was selected for a combination of its proximity to Cumberland Falls and the types of visitors it draws. As a day-use park, many of the visitors came from the surrounding area and were, therefore, relatively familiar with Cumberland Falls. The need to go to a second and then a third “study site” will be taken up in greater detail in the next section, Sampling Principle. Suffice to say, at this juncture, my first study site was proving to be less efficient in terms of time spent there.

The third and final place where I collected data was on the Union College campus where three long-time residents of southeastern Kentucky were interviewed. To borrow a term from traditional hypothesis testing, the independent variable across all the interviews was familiarity with Cumberland Falls. All three “study sites” provided me with a pool of people from which I was able to select those with some familiarity with Cumberland Falls State Resort Park.
3.4 Sampling Logic

Patterson and Williams (2002) employ the terms “richly, deeply, and thoroughly” as a means to understanding some phenomenon. Ultimately the goal is to capture “the range of experiences (or as diverse a range as possible).” When this range of experiences is achieved, the sampling process is concluded. At the same time, a trade-off must be made between the representativeness and analyzability of the data. Analyzability specifically refers to being able to understand and work with a qualitative data set that is not beyond the scope of anyone’s mental abilities. As such, a specific sample size cannot be identified precisely. That said, any qualitative sample should be sufficiently large to provide real insight into some phenomenon and at the same time be limited to a small enough number so as to be manageable to the researcher before he/she becomes cognitively overwhelmed. This balance occurred over the course of 22 interviews conducted with 28 people. Six interviews were conducted where there were two people present and contributing to the construction of the narrative.

Clifford Geertz (1976) uses the term “thick description” to refer to the function of narratives to provide depth and meaning rather than a simple, thin or cursory treatment without much substance. Thickness, in this sense, infers some measure of validity in that themes are built around shared ideas and concepts. Over 20 years ago, Kelly (1980) made the observation that due to the complexity of the phenomenon of leisure, no single methodology can do it justice. I would echo this statement for ethics in general and environmental ethics in particular. Prior to any data being collected in a qualitative study, there exists in the future a foggy sample size. How many will ultimately end up in this
sample is unknown. Arguments can even be made for as few as one person in the sample (McCormick, 1996). However, to focus on the number of people in the sample misses the objective of qualitative research which is to understand some phenomenon. Understanding a phenomenon is not coincident with a large sample, but rather is more reflective of the comprehensiveness of meaning. Of course this raises questions of reliability and validity. Yet, reliability and validity are not solely determined by sample size, independence, and randomness. Other criteria may be employed to illustrate the merits of the results. Some of these criteria will be discussed in Section 3.7.3: Evaluation of Analysis.

Books and articles on qualitative research often contain phrases such as "thick description," "lived experience," "emergent themes," and "detail rich." Generally, these terms are meant to convey, in some sense, the complexity and depth of some phenomenon. In this study, ethics and the environment both proved to be complicated concepts, frequently embedded into other aspects of the interviewee's life. As such, my attempt to study somewhat narrowly conceived of environmental ethics topics resulted in emergent themes that arose through sometimes, tangential thick descriptions.

3.5 Sampling Criteria—Familiarity

From late April to early June 2001, I traveled to Cumberland Falls State Resort Park to contact visitors. The first several people I contacted were first screened for their familiarity with the area they were visiting. Upon approaching a prospective interviewee, I would introduce myself as a faculty member of Union College and that I was conducting a study on how people talk about different parks. I would then ask them if they had been to...
Cumberland Falls before and if they considered themselves familiar with it. If they acknowledged some degree of familiarity, I would then ask them if they were more familiar with Cumberland Falls than with Yellowstone National Park.

Of the 22 different interviews conducted, the first 12 were conducted at Cumberland Falls. The remaining 10 interviews were conducted at two other sites in Knox County, Kentucky. As the summer vacation season progressed, local residents seemed to make up a smaller and smaller percentage of the overall visitation to Cumberland Falls. As a result, I was having a harder and harder time finding visitors who were decidedly familiar with Cumberland Falls. I then made the decision to expand my sampling resources to areas outside the boundaries of the park itself. Interviews were conducted at another state park that is more of a picnic/playground/day-use site (as a result its visitors are overwhelmingly local) and at Union College. Appendix A gives a more detailed description of the other two interview sites and which people were interviewed at each site. Despite traveling to different sites, the questions I asked remained consistent. In other words, I continued to query people on Cumberland Falls and less familiar lands out west.

So, what criteria would differentiate a familiar from a non-familiar resource? Short of asking someone directly about their familiarity with ‘A’ versus ‘B’, it is difficult to sketch a boundary of those things that would contribute to one’s knowledge of something or some place. Even a direct question such as this has its own problems as well because who is to say what familiarity means. Consider the person who has never been to Yellowstone, but has heard about it through news stories over the course of 15 years. And perhaps this same person moved to the area near Cumberland Falls State Resort Park.
a mere three years ago, but has visited this park a few times in those three years. Can we
definitively say that this person is more familiar with Cumberland Falls than with
Yellowstone? I don’t think so. Nonetheless, geographic proximity was one criterion that
served as a convenient, if imperfect, proxy for familiarity and there is some evidence to
suggest that geographic distance may relate to one’s moral perspective. This, after all, is
one of the bases for ethics of care, particularly those nature-directed ethics of care.

Because I had no prior empirical evidence to suggest that different people
interviewed in different locations would differ from one another in their ethical
perspectives, the primary screening variable I used when deciding if I would interview
people was their familiarity with Cumberland Falls. So long as they were familiar with this
park, I decided that it didn’t matter as much if I was on site at Cumberland Falls to do the
interview. The ‘variable’ of interest was not presence at Cumberland Falls, rather it was
familiarity with Cumberland Falls. Also, there is no observable characteristic that ensures
a distribution of obligatory/supererogatory and justice/care. Thus, the degree of
familiarity with different natural areas was intended to capture the diversity of ethical
perspectives. While this is somewhat purposive, the representativeness of this sampling
method should not be confused with the concept of proportionality or an unbiased
estimator for some population. Here, I am referring to the representative nature of ethical
perspectives as they relate to people’s relationships to place. In brief, using familiarity as a
screening criterion, I hoped to canvass a representative range of ethical perspectives which
included care/justice and obligatory/supererogatory.
3.5.1 Selecting the Sample

Everyone in the sample had some level of familiarity with Cumberland Falls State Resort Park. This was really the first and only filter I used when determining if I would interview someone for this study. Obviously there were varying degrees of familiarity and the term familiarity can mean different things to different people. For instance, one person who I interviewed, Sharon, had been to Cumberland Falls more times than she could count from her early childhood continuing through her adult years. In another interview, I spoke with a young married couple who grew up in the area just a few miles away from Cumberland Falls, however, Jon had only been to Cumberland Falls 3-4 times and Amy, his wife, had never been to the park before. Yet, all three of these people agreed that they had some familiarity with the park. Thus familiarity was acknowledged even in absence of an actual visit, but rather due to a life-long presence in the immediate area surrounding Cumberland Falls. In essence this variation of experiences that contributes to some level of familiarity provided the richness and depth needed to explore the nature of people’s relationships with Cumberland Falls and other natural areas. Ultimately the variable of familiarity with Cumberland Falls was a self-assessment and likely varied across people. However, that Sharon may have been more familiar than Amy (in some objective sense) is not as important as the idea that both Sharon and Amy considered themselves more familiar with Cumberland Falls than with Yellowstone.

Using this approach, 45 people were identified as potential interviewees. However, 17 people who were identified as potential interviewees were not, in the end, interviewed as part of this study. The reasons these 17 people did not make it into the sample were varied. First, 8 people (three couples and two individuals) did not feel
comfortable being tape recorded and were also concerned that they would not be able to give me the type of information I was looking for. When I attempted to explain that their opinions were as valid as anyone’s and that I was genuinely interested in what they had to say and their words would not be connected to their real names, they still declined. Two other people (both individuals) declined to participate in an interview because of an unwillingness to commit the necessary time. Seven people (all individuals) were not interviewed due to their admitted unfamiliarity with Cumberland Falls State Resort Park. Following my contact with a number of people who confessed that they were not familiar with Cumberland Falls, I walked through the parking lot and noticed the obvious absence of any vehicles indicating a local residence. Kentucky license plates carry on them the name of the county where the car is registered. Knox, Laurel, and Whitley Counties are the three most adjacent counties to Cumberland Falls State Resort Park. While I did not make a detailed accounting of cars’ license plates, I would guess that at least two-thirds were non-Kentucky plates and many of the remaining third were from outside the Tri-County area.

Over the course of approximately six weeks, I conducted interviews at three different sites: Cumberland Falls State Resort Park, Dr. Thomas Walker State Historic Park, and Union College. The days for these interviews included both weekends and weekdays and were conducted as early as 9:00 a.m. and as late in the day as 7:00 p.m. No interviews were conducted on the Memorial Day weekend. During those six weeks, 22 interviews were conducted with 28 people. Yet it is not accurate to consider these 28 people the sample in this study. Rather, the sample is more rightly conceived of as the 22 narratives as produced through interviews. The 28 people interviewed were a necessary
condition for achieving a representative sample; however, ultimately the sample resides in
the words spoken and not the people speaking them. To clarify, the data produced
through this research was a function of the respondents' ability, or more rightly inability,
to articulate an environmental ethics. Thus, the words used to construct each narrative are
more indicative of the nature of environmental ethics discourse than they are indicative of
a rigorous and personal environmental ethics.

3.5.2 Justification of Sample

"The purpose of a sample is to represent the larger phenomenon being studied in
some manner because it is too large to be characterized in its entirety" (Patterson et al.,
2001 p. 6). Indeed, this is the case with the phenomenon of environmental ethics. The 22
narratives that make up the sample may be considered small by standard positivist
approaches to science. However, this study did not follow the traditions of positivist
inquiry. Patterson and Williams (2002) discuss in some depth the notion of
representativeness with regard to justifying one's sample:

The purpose of sampling is to represent the phenomenon being studied using some
subset of its elements because it is too large to be characterized in its entirety. Therefore,
the central concern in any approach to sampling is representativeness; a sample is intended to represent the larger phenomenon being studied in some
manner. The concept of representation can be conceived in different ways and at
different scales. For example, representativeness may be conceived as being a
question of whether the results are "statistically generalizable to" the population.
A closely related perspective conceptualizes representativeness in terms of
obtaining an "unbiased estimator" of a population parameter. But
representativeness can also be conceived as a question of how well (richly, deeply,
thoroughly) the findings represent the actual subject or individual being studied (p. 4).
With regards to this study, representativeness is best understood as a measure of richness, depth, and thoroughness of the subject being studied, in this case environmental ethics with respect to specific places. Determinations of these three factors (richness, depth, and thoroughness) are based on the ability of the researcher to analyze the narratives for meanings and condense those meanings into themes and subthemes. The three objectives listed in section 3.2 represent the means by which the important information in this study was accessed.

The 22 narratives represent a representative sample of the richness, depth, and thoroughness of environmental ethics. Those words uttered and ideas expressed through the 22 interviews document the way(s) that environmental ethics is expressed by some people. Insofar as environmental ethics is a valid topic of inquiry which can be accessed through interviews, the 22 narratives did produce data insightful into the nature of the topic.

3.6 Data Collection

The production of a narrative between two or more people marks the first appearance of data. In total, 22 narratives were produced. The process of producing narratives was governed by both an interviewing logic and a series of interview guides. The interviewing logic informed both the choice of data collection as well as the ultimate interview guides.

3.6.1 Interviewing Logic

Some interview approaches view the questions asked as a stimulus-response model (Mishler, 1986) in which each individual receives the same input stimulus and the output is
thought to vary only as a consequence of the differences among individuals. This approach may be well-suited to studying phenomenon where individuals are responding to questions with clear and, perhaps, unambiguous answers. However, ethics does not lend itself well to this sort of approach due to the fuzziness of its boundaries and the lack of clarity in its commitments. In fact, Des Jardins (2001) cautions against expecting too much precision in determining the one right path in environmental ethics.

The concern with the precise boundaries of environmental ethics (anthropocentric vs. biocentric vs. ecocentric, individual vs. collections, etc.) gains force when paired with another concern—the youthful nature of the field. Environmental ethics, as an area of inquiry which has only begun to penetrate public discourse, suggests that it may not be appropriate to consider a single clearly operationalized model prior to any interview. Therefore, in this instance, what is needed is an approach that focuses the general topic of inquiry—environmental ethics—but allows the individuals to explore their own ideas and feelings about this topic. Kvale (1983) describes this type of interview as a means to enter into a dialogue of themes, without the interviewer prescribing the bounded meanings of various concepts. “Under this model, the interview structure is variable to accommodate the way a respondent understands, structures, and communicates about phenomena” (Patterson et al., 2001 p. 7).

### 3.6.2 Interview Guide(s)

Data were collected by conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews with visitors to the three study sites. The following list of questions was designed to guide my understanding of the intersection of different types of ethics and the relationship that
people have with different natural areas. Although this can be considered a structured interview, the prompts and follow-up questions posed to each person varied. For instance, in many cases I asked the respondents to explain why they felt the way they did. Specifically, respondents were encouraged to provide more detail and clarification than may have been originally presented. In some cases the probing was designed to reveal specific ethical commitments, such as principles based on justice or care. In other cases, probing was simply used to solicit more information. Of course the challenge with probing is to guard against producing answers that may exist only as they relate to the questions of the researcher, but have a tenuous attachment to life outside the interview. This may be especially true when the researcher is searching for responses to hypothetical dilemmas. Another challenge of the probes with this research concerned the tendency to persist in questioning until a ‘sufficient’ answer was given—an answer that reflected either justice principles or care principles.

The following questions are not necessarily listed in the order they were asked, they are presented in the context of the three different objectives listed earlier in the chapter. Patterson and Williams (2001) draw the distinction between interview guides and interview schedules with the former allowing for a less rigid procedural protocol to the questions being asked.

Although the semi-structured interview remained the vehicle through which environmental ethics was discussed, new and unexpected information necessitated the development of a second interview guide. The questions in the original interview guide were used for the first few interviews. Upon beginning my analysis of these first few interviews, I concluded that these questions were not generating the type of data I had
anticipated. As a result, a revised interview guide was constructed. This second interview guide was used for the remainder of the interviews.

3.6.2.1 Original Interview Guide

1. Questions related to Objective #1 (Care/Justice).

- What does the word ethics mean to you?
  - Adapted from Gilligan and designed to determine the boundaries of what someone considers ethical.
  - Likely prompts will attempt to discern a distinction between ethics and other things, such as conventions, preferences, and/or etiquette.
- What kinds of things do you think about when making ethical decisions?
  - Adapted from Gilligan and designed to determine the criteria (justice vs. care) that someone uses when evaluating ethical situations.
- Overall, do you think this park (Cumberland Falls)/Yellowstone/other park (of their choice) is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?
  - (Assuming they respond affirmatively, proceed to the next question).
- What is it that makes this park (Cumberland Falls)/Yellowstone/other park (of their choice) important?
  - This question is designed to encourage people to articulate the values they may associate with each park (i.e., recreation, haven for wildlife, scenery, etc.).
  - The belief is that arguments for intrinsic, or at least non-anthropocentric, values may suggest more abstract ethical reasoning.
- Since parks are, by definition, publicly-owned resources, shouldn't all people have an equal say in determining how they are managed? Or is it more appropriate for those who know the area best to play a bigger role than those who don't know the area as well?
  - This question is designed to test the equal treatment argument advocated by justice-based ethics and the equal consideration argument advocated by care-based ethics.

2. Questions related to Objective #2 (Obligatory/Supererogatory)

- Do you do anything to protect or preserve this park (Cumberland Falls)?
  - Adapted from Kahn and designed to determine the level of obligation one has to a more well-known area.
- Do you do anything to protect or preserve Yellowstone/another park (of their choice)?
• Adapted from Kahn and designed to determine the level of obligation one has to lesser-known areas that might simply represent an abstraction.

• Whose responsibility is it to protect or preserve parks?
  • This question is designed to determine the level of obligation someone feels for park protection as a class of ethical behaviors.

• What kinds of things should be done to protect or preserve this park (Cumberland Falls)/Yellowstone N.P./other parks (of their choice)?
  • Designed to identify the clarity of options for pro-environmental behaviors and commitments.
  • Clear options would suggest a more obligatory orientation, while less clear options would suggest a more supererogatory orientation.

• Do you think your friends and family would be proud of you if you decided to work towards protecting this park (Cumberland Falls)/Yellowstone N.P./other parks (of their choice)?
  • Designed to gauge how praiseworthy protecting natural areas of varying familiarity is; and as a result, if protecting these different areas is a supererogatory ethical behavior.

• Do you think your friends and family believe that it is your duty to protect this park (Cumberland Falls)/Yellowstone N.P./other parks (of their choice)?
  • Designed to gauge how blameworthy not protecting natural areas of varying familiarity is; and as a result, if protecting these different areas is an obligatory ethical behavior.

3. Questions related to Objective #3 (Familiarity)

• Tell me a little bit about your experiences here at Cumberland Falls State Resort Park.
  • Designed to gauge further the level of familiarity someone has with Cumberland Falls.

• How familiar are you with this area compared to Yellowstone National Park?
  • Designed to gauge the relative level of familiarity someone at Cumberland Falls has with Yellowstone N.P.
  • The idea behind this question is to set up a contrast in familiarity between two areas that might be used to illustrate a difference in ethical theory and ethical orientation.

• Do you have different responsibilities to this park (Cumberland Falls) than to Yellowstone?
  • Adapted from Kahn and designed to gauge the difference (if any) in ethical responsibilities between the familiar and non-familiar.
Although the previous list of questions was not generating the types of responses I had anticipated, they were contributing to the production of a number of interesting paths worthy of further exploration. It was this evolving nature of the research that necessitated a new set of questions to guide future narratives. As a result, I altered the interview guide to allow people to discuss certain topics more freely. This amended interview guide is listed below. My initial contact with each person remained largely the same as the first several interviews. And although some of the questions in the second interview guide were quite different from earlier questions, the general rubric of studying environmental ethics with regards to specific places remained the same.

3.6.2.2. Revised Interview Guide

1. Questions about Experiences and Thoughts about Cumberland Falls
   • These questions were once again designed to gauge familiarity with Cumberland Falls. Although there was a screening question used prior to this one ("Would you consider yourself familiar with this area/Cumberland Falls?"), this additional familiarity question was designed to reveal degrees of familiarity through stories that people could tell about their experiences at Cumberland Falls. As degrees of familiarity with an object may influence ethical obligation towards that object, this line of inquiry was maintained. Additionally, questions were asked about the values that people express in reference to Cumberland Falls. These expressed values may then lead to follow-up questions regarding ethics and obligations to protect or preserve those things of value.
     - Tell me something interesting about your experiences at Cumberland Falls.
     - What do you like about this place? Why?
     - What do you dislike about this place? Why?

2. Questions about Other Natural Areas
   • In asking questions about Yellowstone and other natural areas, the intent was to set the context for a potential difference in obligations. Further, these questions were asked in the hope that respondents would, themselves, compare what they know about Cumberland Falls and what they know about Yellowstone.
- What do you know about Yellowstone National Park?
- How is Cumberland Falls similar to/different from Yellowstone?

3. Questions about Ethics
- In the questions from the original interview guide, ethics proved to be a tough nut to crack. In other words, I felt I was unsuccessful in accessing information about people’s ethics with the original ‘ethics’ questions asked. What seemed to be missing was the nature of right/wrong and good/bad for people, both in general and with regards to environmental concerns. These questions then were designed to cut more to the essence of morality.
  - What does the word ethics mean to you?
  - What kinds of things do all moral questions have in common?
  - Is it ever hard to do what you know is right?
    - What prevents you from doing what’s right?
  - How do you know right from wrong?
  - Do these things ever change?
  - Where do you look for answers in deciding right from wrong?

4. Questions about Environmental Ethics
- These questions were meant to both focus more closely on the topic of environmental obligations and to gauge the nature of the commitment that people might feel towards specific places. Additionally, some of these questions were designed to determine the difference, if any, between environmental ethics and simple park rules or laws.
  - What do you know about how this area should be treated?
  - What kinds of things can and can’t you do here?
  - Are there things that are allowed here that maybe you shouldn’t do?
  - Is it important to protect places like Cumberland Falls?
    - Why or why not?
  - Is it important to protect places like Yellowstone?
    - Why or why not?
  - Do you feel personally responsible for making sure that these places are protected?
    - Why or why not?
  - Does it make a difference if we’re talking about public land or private land?
    - Why or why not?

The intent of this revised interview guide was twofold. In some sense, I took a different approach with the questions in order that people might respond better, in terms of responding with more meaning and detail. Secondly, the new interview guide was
constructed with the knowledge that themes different from the original topics of the study were emerging and more richness may be revealed through a modified series of questions. It should be noted that the revised interview guide was not constructed all at once, but rather represents an evolution of my questioning. As such no single person was asked all of these ‘revised’ questions, however, several people were asked many of them. Finally, some themes emerged quite stealthily. For instance, through about the first half of the interviews, I asked no specific questions about public versus private resources. However, once I began analyzing the responses from the first several people, I noticed that various scenarios and contingencies came up which related to the nature of public land ownership. Following this discovery I began asking people if what they thought about ethics would change depending on who owned the land. I will return to this discussion in the next chapter, but it is important to acknowledge here this progression of understanding as it inevitably altered my methods.

With regards to how the interview guide evolved and the data that was produced from it, I would note that the overall domain of interest remained throughout the study. Specifically, the goal of engaging people in discussions about environmental ethics persisted across interview guides. The second guide simply made accessing this information a bit easier and more applied to the language of the respondents.

3.7 Data Analysis

Interviews ranged in length from a little over 12 minutes to 45 minutes. The average time for all 22 interviews was 28 minutes. Each interview was analyzed idio graphically and nomothetically. Thus, while each interview was coded and analyzed...
on its own, in the end, each interview was considered as a component of a larger production—the outcome of which was the four primary themes and their assorted subthemes. More specifics on these analyses will be given in the following two subsections on Coding (3.7.1) and Theme Identification (3.7.2).

The foundations of this research followed the work of others who all employed both idiographic and nomothetic level analyses on their interview data. Consistent with the seminal work of Kohlberg (1971; Kohlberg et al. 1983; Colby et al. 1987) and Gilligan (1982; 1993), as well as that of Kahn (Howe et al. 1996; Kahn 1992; 1999), interviews were analyzed by developing a qualitative organizing system (Tesch 1990). Stated another way, “the process of developing and organizing system is the analysis, while the final organizing system is the product of analysis” (Patterson and Williams, 2002). This organizing system is particularly important in revealing connections and relationships between different concepts. The organizing system is constructed of themes that weave throughout each individual interview and across all interviews. For the most part, none of these themes can be said to be mutually exclusive or independent of all others. Indeed the relationships among the main themes and among the subthemes are at least as important as the themes themselves. Themes are those broad ideas that rein in coded meaning units developed during the coding process. In other words, the themes serve as context which give meaning and insight into the more specific meaning units. In general terms, the analysis of qualitative data can be broken into two broad categories: coding and interpretation, with a number of steps defining each.

Coding is a central term in qualitative data analysis and it refers both to a technique of interpretation and a means towards pattern recognition. Stated another way, coding is
the process by which interviews are broken down into discrete units (somewhat coincident with sentences), questioned and compared and ultimately understood (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These discrete units are similarly used to discern patterns or commonalities within and across interviews. This process of coding is necessary to condense shared themes, perhaps expressed in different language, into meaningful terms. Analyses of qualitative data generally follow fairly standardized formats beginning with an interview followed by a system of coding and ultimately concluding with a thematic interpretation. I roughly followed a seven-step process of data analysis as outlined by Patterson and Williams (2002).

1. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Immediately following transcription, all interviews were proofread for accuracy.

2. I coded all of my transcripts by hand rather than using a software program. As a result of the manual coding, I, instead, printed out each interview at this step. I will explain the process of coding in greater depth in the next subsection.

3. Following the printing of hard copies of each interview, I re-read each for accuracy. In other words, this was a second proof reading.

4. Meaning units (typically groups of sentences) were identified and marked. Although meaning units cannot stand independent from the rest of the interview, they do represent thoughts that are understandable on their own, and represent the basic unit of analysis.

5. As meaning units were interpreted, I identified themes. These themes represent my own interpretation of what people are saying in the interviews.
Themes offer flexibility in that they can be used to group multiple meaning units across several individuals who all use different language.

6. As stated previously, the relationships between themes is critically important. At this stage these relationships will be identified and explained. This explanation leads to the early stages of a discussion on results. This was done idiographically (within interview) and nomothetically (across interviews).

7. The formal write-up of results was the natural conclusion to this analysis. Ultimately, this write-up is interpretive rather than a simple listing of meaning units and themes.

3.7.1 Coding

Open coding essentially represents the first of two efforts in the general realm of data analysis. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe this type of coding as the process when “data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomenon as reflected in the data” (p. 62). My method of coding was to make notes about specific portions of narratives in the margins. From these notations in the margins, I produced a separate list of my own comments for each interview. These comment sheets were used to facilitate my own organization of the data into more manageable units.

During the coding, sentences, phases and even paragraphs were examined for meaning. Often key words were identified as noteworthy and these keywords were then used to code the sentence, phrase, etc. For example, one interviewee made this comment following my question about the universality of natural beauty.
“Well if something is a park, then it is there for a reason and that reason is probably to protect something that is beautiful.” (Chris)

I originally coded this response as ‘Scenery/Beauty.’ To the extent that this sentence conveys the notion of natural beauty, the code word chosen seems quite appropriate. Also, often the original word is derived directly from the text. However, these code words are not static and immutable. Quite the contrary, the first code word can be slightly altered to one that is more refined or it may end up being radically changed in light of further insight gleaned from elsewhere in the interview or even in other interviews. In other words, once a portion of text is coded opportunities remain to reconsider the appropriateness or applicability of that code word. Consider the following example of how a code word can change following new insight gleaned from other interviews.

The first person I interviewed, Michael, spoke of doing what is right and wrong with regards to certain natural areas. He said,

“Well... because we should always try to protect things that are beautiful. I mean, I would never do anything to take away the beauty of this area, or any area, because I... it would just be wrong.”

I originally coded these two sentences as ‘Obligatory Ethics’ which I then slightly modified to ‘Always right/wrong.’ However, ultimately this passage was coded first with the word ‘Beauty’ and secondly with the phrase ‘As a Duty to Be Upheld.’ This first and second ordering of terms reflects the nature of primary themes and subthemes respectively. Thus, ‘Beauty in Nature’ became a primary theme and ‘As a Duty to be Upheld’ became a subtheme beneath ‘Beauty in Nature.’

The example just given with Michael’s excerpt is characteristic of a number of passages from the first few interviews. My efforts at coding the first few interviews were
driven largely by the objectives of the study as described in earlier in this chapter in section 3.2: Goals and Objectives. In light of this, I attempted to find instances of obligatory or supererogatory ethics. I was similarly searching for terms indicative of ethics of justice or care. It wasn’t until I noticed the frequency of the occurrence of the concepts beauty or scenery that my coding choices became more solidified. It is through this solidification process that themes emerged and were identified. Thus, theme identification is the second step in the data analysis.

3.7.2 Theme Identification

Coding and theme identification are not discrete steps in qualitative data analysis. While the first efforts at coding occur prior to any identification of themes, once the data has begun to be analyzed, coding and theme identification occur in concert. In addition, each informs the other throughout the data analysis. Patterson and others (1998) liken coding as the process of developing an organizing system, while final organizing system represents the found themes. It is this process of discovering and identifying the themes, as informed by coding, which ultimately yields the results of the study.

Identifying themes is an iterative process whereby transcripts are read and reread. Coded meaning units are re-examined in light of further understanding gained elsewhere. Ultimately, the themes which represent the “final organizing system” are the culmination of multiple reviews of the data and attempts at contextualizing each person’s words within the entirety of their whole interview and subsequently across the interviews of others. This is done, so that in the end, the themes themselves tell a larger story than simply a collection of anecdotes as first identified in the early stages of coding.
The theme ‘On Becoming a Moral Agent’ is perhaps the best representation of this iterative process and the ultimate revealing of some bigger picture. It is well-documented that hermeneutic approaches to research resist partitioning interviewer from interviewee(s). Each contributes to an overall production of knowledge. In this way, biases and preconceived ideas are allowed to influence the production of data. My biases were evident in the line of questioning whereby I presumed not only the existence of moral dilemmas, but also of the moral agency of those whom I was interviewing. (I will revisit this bias and its implications in the final chapter of this document.)

My belief in the existence of real environmental, moral dilemmas and in the moral agency of those interviewed guided nearly all of my questions. Further, this belief guided the coding process, such that when keywords were chosen during the coding process they were selected as referents to moral scenarios. However, it was only through the data analysis that I was able to discover greater depth to the factors determining when, and indeed if, people subscribe to an environmental ethics. It is this, my final theme, ‘On Becoming a Moral Agent’ which reflects the identification some fundamental questions about environmental ethics which may have been glossed over or even ignored in previous empirical treatments of environmental ethics.

When Thomas made the following statement my first inclination was to reinterpret his words in terms more aligned with an supererogatory ethics.

“My ethics don’t really include anything with the environment, I think you do those kinds of things (pro-environmental behaviors) just to be polite or helpful, but not because God says you have to.” (Thomas)

Considering a supererogatory environmental ethics, Thomas is simply expressing the idea that doing good deeds with regards to the environment is not required beyond the call of...
duty. However, I think this interpretation is less accurate. Thomas does not express a supererogatory environmental ethic. He considers those things environmental as existing beyond the moral realm altogether. Therefore, in identifying this theme, I had to step back and question my own preconceived notions of environmental ethics and the nature of the dilemmas I was asking people to respond to.

In the end, theme identification followed from the earliest forays into the coding process. Occasionally, themes developed quickly and obviously as in the case of ‘Beauty in Nature.’ In other instances themes developed slowly and begrudgingly (from my perspective) as in the case of ‘On Becoming a Moral Agent.’ Collectively all the themes and subthemes represent an organizing system which combine to characterize the nature of environmental ethics with regards to specific places. Chapter 4 will explore in some detail the essence of these themes and subthemes.

3.7.3 Evaluation of Analysis

Qualitative data analyses are not comparable to traditional measures of evaluation in quantitative approaches. Therefore, p-values and variance explained are not appropriate evaluative tools. I propose that my results be evaluated on the basis of two criteria outlined by Patterson and Williams (2002): persuasiveness and insightfulness. The first criterion is not coincident with some misrepresentation of findings to suit the purposes of the researcher. In other words, a persuasive theme must be built on strong data and a believable representation of reality. Further, persuasiveness is a criterion whereby the excerpts are presented to tell a story that is at once accurate and meaningful. Persuasiveness refers to the strength of my conclusions based on representative excerpts.
from the interview texts. In short, persuasiveness should allow the reader to conclude that
the themes and subthemes are accurate representations of excerpts presented. Two rules
of thumb guided my persuasiveness criterion. In some cases the subtheme was best
illustrated by presenting a range of responses that gave an indication of the overall
variation in what people said. In other cases, many people said about the same thing, and
in those cases I selected those excerpts that seem to articulate most clearly the idea in
question.

The other criterion—insightfulness—is less easy to objectively evaluate
particularly in the short time that has passed since the data analysis. Insightfulness, in this
evaluative context, refers to illuminating the phenomenon of how people describe their
relationships and responsibilities to nature to a greater degree than any reader previously
possessed. Stated another way, insightfulness is a means by which the data further an
understanding of some topic or phenomenon. We might ask the question, “But what more
do we know now following this study?” In this respect, I do think this research will hold
up to the insightfulness test. From my own knowledge of reading numerous
environmental ethics articles and books, it seems clear that this research has shed light on
some shaky foundations. In other words, through this research, a few assumptions
concerning the study of environmental ethics may be called into question.
Chapter 4: Results

Over the course of 22 interviews with 28 different people, four primary themes documenting the ethical relationship that people express towards specific places emerged. These themes are 1) Beauty in Nature; 2) Responsibilities to 'The Other'; 3) Public Lands; and 4) On Becoming a Moral Agent. Previous discussions in Chapter 2 have illustrated the non-discrete nature of environmental ethics. That these four primary themes emerged indicates further that when people attempt to explore their own environmental ethics they occasionally explore curious backroads that are less well-mapped. These curious backroads are evidenced in the form of many of the subthemes. Mapping these subthemes within broader primary themes ultimately provides greater clarity to one portion of the general field of environmental ethics and the more specific focus of this study: expression of ethics for natural places.

In this chapter, I will outline each of the four main themes as well as all of their respective subthemes. My discussion will be interspersed with appropriate excerpts from the transcripted interviews. Collectively the quotes do not represent the entirety of any single narrative. The quotes are normally a sample of the perspectives expressed regarding each theme and subtheme. When reading this chapter consider the following question as a guide: How does this finding inform the field of environmental ethics? While this chapter will offer a review and a documentation of the themes and subthemes, a more in-depth and thorough interpretation of these themes and subthemes will not be found in this chapter, however. This level of examination will follow in Chapter 5: Discussion.
This additional treatment of the themes and subthemes is offered in an effort to determine if and when existing literature supports these findings.

To begin with, I have outlined the four main themes and their respective subthemes in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beauty In Nature</th>
<th>Public Lands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As an Intrinsic Natural Property</td>
<td>Intent of (Creation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a Subjective Evaluation</td>
<td>Preservation/Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a Duty to Be Upheld</td>
<td>Purpose of (Existence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Responsibility</td>
<td>Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessary for Outdoor Recreation</td>
<td>Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural versus Created versus Restored</td>
<td>Land Tenure in Appalachia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrete versus Continuous Variable</td>
<td>Gifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nostalgic for past beauty</td>
<td>Commodities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a proxy for health</td>
<td>Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equals integrity and stability</td>
<td>Bigger is better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health is a normative commitment</td>
<td>Bigger is more real/authentic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Big cannot be artificial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibilities To 'The Other'</th>
<th>Big-scale mythology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obligatory</td>
<td>On Becoming A Moral Agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supererogatory</td>
<td>Not My Problem to Solve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on Justice</td>
<td>Taxpayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on Care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Heritage</td>
<td>Origins of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other community members</td>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future generations</td>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology, Evolution, Naturalistic Fallacy</td>
<td>Morals versus Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural vs. Artificial</td>
<td>I was not the cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exculpatory evidence (Milgram)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Familiarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not enough information to act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not my place to judge/criticize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This is Not a Question of Morals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Themes and subthemes in nested illustration.
4.1 Theme 1: Beauty in Nature

This theme comprises a number of subthemes all of which speak to the appreciation that people express for seeing natural areas. Indeed, beauty in nature is overwhelmingly an expression of an appreciation of the visual aspects of nature. Scenery and experiencing natural beauty are both long-standing and well-documented motivations for outdoor recreation (Schreyer, 1986; Williams, 1986). This suggests that seeing the wonders of nature is often fundamental to our choice of outdoor recreation pursuits. It was interesting to discover that a number of those people interviewed spoke of natural beauty as a real thing in the world and further as a thing that was worthy of moral consideration. As a real thing, beauty can become an object of attention, value, and ethics. With the axiological turn, when beauty is assigned value it becomes an object of moral consideration. Frequently during the interviews, a number of people opined that beautiful parts of nature should be protected. Contained within this simple expression are a number of different justifications, each rich and ripe with meaning.

The following subsections illustrate the subthemes resident in the primary theme Beauty in Nature. Further, while this theme is presented first, there is no intended priority to the presentation of themes in this chapter. Rather I am presenting the themes simply in the order that I discovered them, yet order of discovery should neither imply importance nor extensiveness/prevalence. The subthemes are presented in an order of my own contrivance. Where one subtheme seems closely related to or contrasted with another they are presented one after the other. For instance Beauty as an Intrinsic Natural Property and Beauty as a Subjective Evaluation contrast nicely and thus are offered consecutively.
4.1.1 Beauty as an Intrinsic Natural Property

The first indication I had that beauty might develop into a theme of its own came early in the interview process following statements made by a number of different people about the nature of natural beauty. This subtheme is more an ontological treatment rather than a direct treatment of moral considerability. However, this subtheme and the one which follows will both inform how and why people express an environmental ethics for specific places. The sense behind the subtheme, Beauty as an Intrinsic Natural Property is that beauty actually inheres in nature. When people speak about natural beauty, they do not think of beauty as being in the eye of the beholder, but as something real and nearly tangible. Howard said this:

"...well even if you can't explain what looks nice in nature, everyone knows what it is anyway. I mean, when someone says, 'Man that sure was a beautiful sunset or a beautiful meadow' everyone will make their own mental picture of a beautiful sunset or meadow, but it will be pretty much the same thing for everybody."

Howard goes in to more detail with this idea of beauty following my request to explain how he knows that everyone has pretty much the same idea of natural beauty.

"Because when you're with someone else and they say, 'Isn't that beautiful?' No one ever disagrees with them. So that tells me that some things in nature are beautiful to everybody no matter where you go or who you are talking to. I know this sounds like it contradicts the old saying, 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder' but maybe people aren't that different after all. Or really, maybe there just is something about parts of nature that everyone pretty much agrees on. Like the color green—when someone tells you, that that leaf is green and you agree with them, you might actually see two different shades of green, but it's still green and not red or purple or white. So, I guess I think natural beauty is the same way, we may have slightly different interpretations of what beautiful means, but for the most part everybody agrees on it."
One of the most interesting aspects of the ‘Beauty’ statements by Howard came from the fact that Howard is blind—he couldn’t see any of the scenery at Cumberland Falls.

However, he lost his sight gradually over about 10 years (at the time of the interview Howard was 43 years old and had been totally blind for about 7 years) and thus relied on his memories of what beauty was when people would describe something to him. To me this was an extraordinary insight—that a blind person could articulate information on beauty in nature and what it means. Howard described beauty in very specific detail with almost photographic-like vividness and imagery.

Chris was the wife of a husband and wife pair that I interviewed together. This is how she described a common attribute of all parks and the intrinsic permanence of beauty.

“Well if something is a park, then it is there for a reason and that reason is probably to protect something that is beautiful. We don’t make parks to protect ugly parts of nature, we have parks to protect beautiful areas. Every park I’ve been to, and I’ve been to a lot of parks, has had something really beautiful to see. And I know what you’re thinking, it’s not just beautiful because it’s in a park; it was beautiful before there was a park to protect it. You know, parks can come and go, but what’s beautiful will always be there.”

Another quote from Howard and one from Sharon compliment each other on the exact nature of beauty as an intrinsic moral quality and not something that humans just arbitrarily assign to different areas.

“Well if something looks nice or pretty, you know that it has things that make it that way. One tree or one cliff may not be beautiful, but when you put things together in a certain way, then they all become beautiful. That’s what scenery is all about. When I told you I like going to Cumberland Falls because of the scenery, it was because there are so many things that all together make up a beautiful place. The scenery is just there and it’s made up of everything, like the Falls and the river and the mountains... and the moonbow. I guess what I’m saying is that the scenery
isn’t my idea; I mean nature put all the pieces there together to make the scenery so beautiful.” (Sharon)

What is curious about the notion of beauty in nature is that it seems to transcend place. This became particularly apparent when I asked people to talk about what they knew about other places they thought to be beautiful.

John: “Oh, Yellowstone is beautiful too. They’ve got… what’s it called… Old Faithful right? Yeah, that’s pretty awesome. I used to have a bunch of pictures, like from a calendar or something from all sorts of different places and Yellowstone was one of them, so was some place in Hawaii and that big waterfall at Yosemite and Devil’s Tower. All those places are beautiful.”

Interviewer: “What is it that makes them all beautiful?”

John: “It’s just nature you know. Nature is beautiful and so wherever you see nature you see something beautiful. You asked me what I liked about this place and I told you I liked it because of the scenery. It’s the same thing with all those other places, I like them because they’re beautiful. Even though I’ve never been to them before, I know they are beautiful because I’ve seen the pictures and I know National Parks protect beautiful areas too.”

That beauty is transcendent of place suggests that it is of a higher order of things. The place just happens to be the vehicle for bringing beauty to us. Tammy and Nicole who were interviewed together both touch on this portable idea of beauty as well.

Tammy: “It’s easy to see why so many people go to Cumberland Falls, because it’s beautiful with the mountains and the river and the waterfall.”

Nicole: “Yeah, it’s just like a lot of other places you see that you like. They are beautiful too… and even if this was the first time someone came to Cumberland Falls it would still be beautiful because they know what nature is supposed to look like.”

Tammy: “Yeah, I know what beautiful means in terms of nature and it doesn’t matter if I’m talking about Cumberland Falls or, what was that other place—Yellowstone. All these spots are beautiful even if they don’t look the same.”

Nicole: “Mmm hmm, I don’t think you can have just one definition of beautiful. Nature is beautiful and nature looks really different in different places, like the
jungle and the desert and Cumberland Falls all look different, but they’re all beautiful too.”

A statement by Nathan seems to sum up the idea that beauty in nature is something intrinsic and real and that people everywhere generally understand what it means to say that someplace is naturally beautiful.

“It’s not like you don’t know what someone is talking about when they say, ‘Man you should go to so and so because it’s beautiful.’ When I hear that someplace is beautiful, I don’t need someone to explain to me why it is beautiful, I just know it is.”

Within this subtheme, there are a couple additional points worth mentioning. First, there is a rejection of anything resembling the social construction of natural beauty. A number of people whose words appear in this subtheme avow that beauty in nature just is—it was not created by us, nor is there much disagreement on what natural beauty is. Secondly, although beauty was discussed within the context of specific places (Cumberland Falls and Yellowstone), natural beauty to these people was not simply within these parks, rather it was above and greater than these parks. I used the term ‘portable idea of beauty’ to express the transcendent nature of beauty. There may be a curious moral corollary to this idea of the park as the vehicle for natural beauty. If the place is just that, a vehicle to display natural beauty, this might suggest that any subsequently expressed obligation to some place could vanish if the natural beauty were no longer there.

4.1.2 Beauty as a Subjective Evaluation

Anecdotally, most people everywhere seem to subscribe to some concept of beauty being entirely subjective. We often hear the phrase that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Well, this alternate perspective was offered quite readily throughout the
interviews. A number of people made appeals to natural beauty that they didn’t expect
other people to agree with. While not contradictory to the previous subtheme, Beauty as
a Subjective Evaluation does eschew notions of natural beauty being something
completely concrete and firmly affixed as some objective property. Beatrice said,

“I don’t think that my views are the only ones. I mean just because I really like
going [to Cumberland Falls] and looking at the falls doesn’t mean that everyone
does.”

Mike S. and Trent both expand on this idea by saying,

“Some people really like going [to Niagara Falls], but I’ve been there and it was
big and cool and all that, but I didn’t think it was all that beautiful—not like
Cumberland Falls. Cumberland Falls, even though it’s a lot smaller it’s a lot more
beautiful a place, but others may have their own opinions.” (Mike S.)

“When I think of nature’s beauty I think of sunsets and mountains with snow on
them. But I’ve also tried to convince people who have never been to Cumberland
Falls before that this place is really beautiful. But when they see it they usually
seem a little let down or disappointed. I guess it’s because some people think
bigger is more beautiful, but I think it’s just that different people think different
things are more beautiful than others. It’s like they say, ‘beauty is in the eye of the
beholder.’” (Trent)

Judy describes the way that she has changed what she thinks is beautiful.

“When I lived out west (near Portland, Oregon), I thought the mountains out here
were just little hills and I didn’t think they were very impressive, I guess. But now
that I live out here now, I think I see them different than I saw before. I’m not
saying that everything is the same, you know, the same level of beautiful, but I
think maybe you just need to really be around it to appreciate it a lot.”

What strikes me with all of these quotes which support a contextualized or
subjective conception of natural beauty is that they all seem to suggest an attitude that
beauty is for humans as much as it is created by humans. Thus, when those interviewed
began to weigh in on moral commitments as tied to natural beauty, these commitments
seem to reflect a consequentialist objective that considers human pleasure in viewing
landscapes. So, beauty was important to the extent that humans would benefit from it. However, the first subtheme, Beauty as an Intrinsic Natural Property seems to indicate a different set of duties to protect natural beauty.

4.1.3 Beauty as a Duty to Be Upheld

Many of the same people who described either the intrinsic quality of natural beauty or the subjective view of beauty, then went on to explain the corresponding duties that we have to these beautiful areas or in some cases duties to other people who might want to see the beautiful areas as well. Note that the selected quotes that follow in this subsection not only illustrate the nature of beauty as something worthy of moral consideration, but they also illustrate the fuzziness of moral commitments, with regard to whom or what is deserving of moral consideration. That is, the boundary between what is, and what is not morally considerable is not clear cut. The first few quotes should also illustrate the difficulty I had in getting people to affix their ethics to something, whether that something was justice or care, or to a person or to another thing.

Michael talks about the tragedy of losing beautiful natural areas.

"... I don’t know, I guess what bugs me is when you see how messed up places get when we don’t take care of them. Even here, this place used to be a lot nicer, not so much garbage. The scenery now is not as good as it used to be because of the pollution and garbage. It’s just wrong when people mess up the scenery like that. You said you wanted to talk about ethics—well it’s unethical when you turn something that used to be beautiful into something that’s ugly."

My follow up question to Michael was, "Why is messing up the scenery unethical?" To which he responded:

"Well... because we should always try to protect things that are beautiful. I mean, I would never do anything to take away the beauty of this area, or any area,
because I... it would just be wrong. If someone wanted to come in here and clearcut that whole area (motioning to the hillside across the river), that would just be so sad because it wouldn’t be as beautiful anymore.”

My second follow up: “Would it be sad or wrong because people wouldn’t be able to enjoy the scenery like before or because the scenery itself is important regardless if anyone ever sees it?”

“Umm... both I think. I would be mad if I knew that a place I really liked to go to and enjoy was getting messed up. But I think God made certain areas beautiful for a reason and even if a lot of people never see them, it’s still a sin to ruin that beauty. I guess it’s kind of like that old saying, ‘If a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it does it make a sound?’ I’d say yeah, the tree makes a sound and the forest is beautiful too, even if no one is there.”

Thomas, Chris’ husband of a husband-wife pair that I interviewed together, took a very similar approach to the duty to protect beautiful areas.

“... since I’m Catholic, you know, I believe that God created all of this for a purpose and I hate it when people say, well what’s wrong with cutting down all those trees, because a mall might be just as beautiful to someone else. That doesn’t make sense to me. Like she (his wife) said, I don’t think we decide what is beautiful, God creates what is beautiful and he wants us to protect it.”

To which, his wife responded:

“Yeah, God tells us to take care of what He created. So it is definitely going against God to ruin nature for no good reason.”

However, when I asked both Thomas and Chris to explain to me why it seems okay to ruin some areas and not others, they responded this way.

Thomas: “Well, I don’t want to come off sounding like some environmental wacko. I mean everybody knows that we have to use nature too. It’s not like we can never cut down any trees or kill any animals, you know...”

Chris: “Yeah, I know that we have to have homes and buildings and we get these things from nature, God just wants us to be careful with how we use these things.”

Thomas: “I think what he’s getting at is why is it okay to ruin that area but spare this other area if they are both beautiful. Is that right?”
Interviewer: “Yep, that’s pretty close.”

Chris: “Oh, well, I think maybe there are shades of what looks nice. I mean all nature is beautiful but we can spare some beautiful areas because we’ve got others that are more beautiful.”

Thomas: “I think it’s just that we protect those beautiful areas that are really unique. You know, we don’t protect every waterfall, only those that are unique. That doesn’t mean that the other waterfalls are ugly or not beautiful, but it does mean that a lot of areas don’t really stand out in their beauty.”

Stuart worked for the U.S. Forest Service in Idaho for a number of years before moving back to Kentucky and he espoused a very pragmatic perspective on morality and beauty.

“The only reason to preserve areas is because that’s what the majority of the people want. It doesn’t really matter if I think this area is great, if everyone else wants to turn it into a shopping mall then that’s what should be done. The same thing goes the other way, if everyone thinks that some area is really beautiful, then we should protect it for them to use and enjoy.”

Judy, who compared her experience appreciating the Cascade Mountains in Oregon and the mountains in and around Cumberland Falls State Resort Park, had this to say about a moral duty to protect beautiful areas.

“It’s not like I wouldn’t care if some postcard kind of place got developed, but I don’t think it really is a moral thing. I might be upset if Wal-Mart stopped carrying my favorite brand of cookies, but that’s not moral. I guess I’m saying that if something is moral, I mean ethical, then that means it is important to God. So, I don’t think God cares if some place that I think is pretty disappears.

Immediately after this statement, I asked Judy if morals and ethics were always about what God thinks or says. To which, she replied,

“Yeah, like I just said if you do something right you are doing something that God wants you to. If you’re doing something wrong, you’re doing something that God doesn’t want you to do. Now the Bible tells us that we should be careful about how we use nature, but that’s different than saying God wants you to keep everything pretty.”
While a number of the people referred to God as an anchor for their morals particularly as they relate to beauty, a few other people say beauty and ethics are something apart from religious teachings. The husband and wife Tom and Carol offered a two-part obligation to protect beautiful natural areas, neither appeal resorting to a divine command. They suggest that beautiful areas should be protected because it will make more people happy and it will produce a better kind of happiness because it will be longer lasting. Here is what Tom and Carol had to say about why we should ethically protect beautiful areas in nature.

Tom: “Well, if the choice is between protecting an area that is very scenic or developing it into a shopping center or something, then I think we should protect it because it would be the better thing to do.”

Interviewer: “What do you mean it would be the better thing to do?”

Tom: “It’s always better to preserve beauty in nature because that’s what people really enjoy. I would think you would be making more people happy by keeping an area scenic than if you turned it into a shopping center.”

Carol: “Yeah, it’s like more people will enjoy this area as a park than they would if it were a strip mall. I think it’s also a different kind of enjoyment too. The type of enjoyment I get when I come to places like this is really different from the type of enjoyment I get when I go shopping. Because shopping is just something I convince myself I enjoy because I have to do it, you know everybody has to shop for stuff. But when I come here, I do it because I really want to and my enjoyment is more special because I could be doing anything, but I really want to do exactly what I’m doing.”

Tom: “Just to add to something she just said: I also think that enjoying nature is something different than enjoying whatever else might take its place because it’s longer lasting. When you buy a new pair of shoes or a new car they both make you happy for some time right after you buy them, but when you enjoy a park like this place it seems to be something you remember and think about for a long time.”

Likewise, Don who earlier described himself as a soft atheist, had this to say about ethics and beautiful areas.
“There are a lot of really beautiful places, but I don’t think we should protect something just because it is beautiful you know. I mean, beauty shouldn’t be a requirement… um I mean prerequisite for protection. Because, then we shouldn’t have developed any part of nature.”

After articulating why he thought beauty was a nearly tangible thing, Howard offered this two part duty after I asked him if places should be protected just because they look nice.

“Sure, because if there isn’t beauty then what’s the point of caring about anything. Maybe you misunderstood me earlier, I wasn’t saying that we should only protect beautiful places, because I think all of nature is beautiful, but obviously we have to get rid of some of it to make buildings and roads. My point is that first, we should protect those areas that are really spectacular. And again, even though I just said one word, ‘spectacular’ I think most people would feel the same way about those areas. Then we should protect whatever else we can because spectacular beauty isn’t necessarily a better beauty.”

Duty to protect beauty rested on a few different foundations: making other people happy, the ‘just because’ argument, and a divine command. The because God says so seems most prevalent, however, I will resist creating a sub-subtheme here to describe these different foundations of beauty. Further, note that the role of religion is discussed again in other subthemes.

4.1.4 Management Responsibility

The idea that beauty was something worth protecting in an ethical sense appeared not just in terms of individual responsibility, but a few people expressed the feeling that managers too have an ethical responsibility to protect beautiful areas. Beatrice made this comment following my question, “Who has the responsibility to see that pretty areas are protected?”

“Like I said before, I think it’s everybody’s responsibility, but of course the people in charge [at Cumberland Falls] have the most responsibility. Even if they don’t
think they should be taking care of the scenery, they really should because a lot of people really like to just go there and look at how pretty nature is.”

Stuart followed up an earlier comment on beauty with this statement about what land managers should do ethically beyond what the law says.

“Land managers like the ones here or with the Forest Service are public employees, so they have to listen to what the public wants. So if the public wants some scenery to be protected but the law doesn’t give any guidance for how to protect scenery, the managers should still do it. I guess that is the ethical thing to do.”

And Nicole, a college student from Lexington suggested that managers have more ethical responsibility than do visitors.

“Yeah, I guess it is ethical for me to pick up other people’s trash, but I think the owners of this place have more responsibility than me, but not just because it’s their job. You know. I think they should do more than just the average person because they can. It’s hard for me to come down here from Lexington and pick up trash everyday, but the people that work here should do it all the time even if it’s not part of their job.”

4.1.5 Necessary for Outdoor Recreation

When asked a question on the order of, “Why do you like Cumberland Falls?” at the top of the list for most people was the scenery. Scenery or natural beauty is often an easily accessible response to why people go to parks, not just Cumberland Falls. It is one thing to consider scenic beauty as a popular reason to go to a park, it is another thing to consider it as a necessary condition of outdoor recreation. However, two people did seem to think that scenery was in some sense required for their own participation in outdoor recreation at Cumberland Falls.
"I wouldn’t come here if it wasn’t a nice place to be, you know. It’s not like I couldn’t go someplace else that was pretty too. If I’m going to be outside on my days off, I want to go someplace nice.” (Ed)

“We don’t go to Cumberland Falls a lot, but we do like going places where it’s nice. I always try to take my girls someplace nice so that we can have fun. We always have more... a good time in nice places, pretty nature.” (Laurie)

While neither of these quotes are a ringing endorsement for recreating in magnificent areas, they both seem to speak to the necessity of natural beauty for quality outdoor recreation options. It may be curious that no other interviewee made explicit mention of the necessity of scenery for outdoor recreation experiences. However, I’d suggest that it was implied in the context of many people who weighed in with opinions on natural beauty.

4.1.6 Natural versus Created versus Restored

As previously discussed in the literature review, a number of writers have made a case for a moral distinction between naturally occurring nature and artificially occurring nature (see Elliot 1982 and Katz 1997). As detailed in the previous subthemes, the depth of moral commitments in reference to beauty was not perfectly clear. In other words, many people suggested that natural beauty carries with it a moral imperative, yet it was not always clear what that imperative was or to whom or what it was directed. Yet, a number of those interviewed did identify as important the distinction between natural versus created versus restored nature. Laurie, recalls a lesson she learned about native and non-native plant species and how each affected her conception of ethics and beauty.

"I went to Haleakala in Hawaii a few years ago and I remember the ranger telling us that most of the trees and bushes were not supposed to be there. I mean they did not normally, you know, grow there on their own. That was weird because I
thought National Parks were supposed to protect like endangered species and things, but instead Haleakala kind of protects the stuff that hurts the endangered species. Native, that’s the word I was looking for. A lot of the plants growing in Hawaii are not native plants, so people brought them there. So when someone who doesn’t know much about Hawaii looks at the scenery at Haleakala and says, ‘Isn’t that beautiful?’ They’re really talking about something that isn’t the way it should be. But it’s still beautiful, it’s just so green and you don’t realize how many different colors of green there are until you see something like that. It’s amazing. I loved going there and I’d go back again too. But back to my point. I think knowing that something is kind of natural makes a difference, because then it’s just like your own yard. You know, what kinds of things were in your yard before grass? Probably not the same grass that’s growing there now. But you can still have a nice looking yard, it’s just different than how it would have looked before someone took all the trees and stuff out. You’ve got me thinking about stuff now that I hadn’t really thought of before. But I’m thinking that maybe there are different things that should be in different places, depending on if we’re talking about a place that should be like just natural or if it should be like a park where there’s grass and just a few trees. I think that makes a difference. You know, the native plants should be more important than the stuff that’s not native, because that stuff that is not native can grow anywhere, but the native things might be able to only grow in that one place.”

Michael talked about how purposeful planting of native trees is a good thing.

“I noticed a bunch of new trees in the entrance up there. Those weren’t there last year, so they must have planted them…. but that type of thing doesn’t bother me because those kinds of trees probably would have been there anyway if humans didn’t build a road there in the first place. As long as they plant good trees then I don’t think there’s anything wrong with that…. Well, the good trees are the ones that belong there, not like those damn magnolias. Everybody who visits here from someplace else, loves the magnolias, but they don’t grow here naturally, you know. Somebody just thought they’d look nice, but they don’t belong here.”

And Stuart, the forester, offered a somewhat textbook response to the natural/unnatural debate.

“Well, you’ve got to make sure that the area stays natural or else you might as well just start farming. I just wish more people knew what a natural forest was supposed to look like, then there wouldn’t be all those problems with cutting down trees.”

However, John and Julie, a husband and wife couple, didn’t seem to care if certain landscapes were natural, created or artificially restored.
Julie: “I just like looking at the pretty flowers and trees.”

John: “Yeah, both of us do, that’s probably the main reason why we come to parks like this.”

Interviewer: “Does it matter to you if the place you’re visiting is all natural or if someone purposely planted all the trees and flowers?”

Julie: “Oh I don’t really care, it’s just nice to see them. Maybe it would be different if I knew something about what used to be there before, but I think people usually plant bushes and flowers that look pretty anyway. So I don’t think it matters.”

John: “Uh huh, yeah. In fact, a lot of times it looks better after somebody gets rid of all the weeds and stuff that might be there. That’s really what we like about being outside.”

4.1.7 Beauty as a Discrete versus a Continuous Variable

Two competing premises are at work in this subtheme. On the one hand is the premise that beauty is a discrete variable; either something is beautiful or it is not. In this conception, there may be different kinds of beauty, but not degrees. That is, a child’s smile can be beautiful, as can a sunset, a waterfall, or wolf dashing across a meadow. All of these examples represent different kinds of beauty. In contrast when beauty is conceived of as a continuous variable, then there may or may not be different kinds, but there are certainly degrees of beauty. In this way, one landscape may be more beautiful than another, or one vista is more visually pleasing than another. Note that discrete versus continuous is not a rehash of the intrinsic versus subjective subthemes. Theoretically, whether someone subscribes to beauty as an intrinsic natural property or as a subjective evaluation holds no bearing on viewing beauty as a discrete or a continuous variable.
These first few quotes illustrate a conception of the continuous nature of beauty.

Consider how Beatrice used a superlative to describe the scenery at Cumberland Falls.

“Well, it’s one of the nicest places around. There are even other falls in this area, but Cumberland Falls is probably the prettiest.”

Similarly, Laurie made the following observation:

“It’s not like [Haleakala] is the only beautiful place in Hawaii, but that was where I spent the most time. I also went to see Volcanoes [National Park] and some stuff on Oahu. There was really interesting and cool stuff at those places too, but I think Haleakala was the most beautiful.”

And Mike S. offered up this evaluation of the scenery at Cumberland Falls compared to other places.

“Niagara Falls is like the waterfall that everyone knows about, but it isn’t as beautiful as Cumberland Falls, in my opinion. You know, maybe it’s because there’s just all that concrete up there, but when I think of those two places, I think that Niagara Falls is beautiful, but Cumberland Falls is more beautiful.”

On the other hand, several other people tended to articulate beauty as a discrete variable, where places either were beautiful or they were not. The couple Chris and Thomas had this to say about beauty in parks.

Chris: “Just think of all the different parks there are and they’re all there to protect beautiful areas. Sometimes there are beautiful areas that aren’t inside a park, but that doesn’t mean they are not beautiful too. But when somebody says to me ‘park,’ that means pretty.”

Thomas: “Yeah, parks are really for the beautiful areas and the areas that are not beautiful end up going for other things.”

And John made both of the next two comments.

“Nature is beautiful and so wherever you see nature you see beauty.”

“I don’t think one place is more beautiful than another unless, there’s a bunch of garbage out there then it isn’t beautiful at all.”
Judy returned to her comparison between her former home in Oregon and her new home here to make the point about a discrete notion of beauty.

“It’s just different, you know. Sometimes I really miss the Cascades but that doesn’t mean I don’t like the scenery out here too. It’s just different. I really like the scenery at Cumberland Falls and there’s nowhere else like it, but it’s not the same type of scenery at Olympic or someplace like that.”

Lastly, there was this somewhat cryptic statement by Howard, which I’ll try to interpret.

“... spectacular beauty isn’t necessarily a better beauty.”

I think what Howard meant by this is that he believes that beauty can come in different forms, not necessarily degrees. Recall the context in which Howard gave this statement: he was discussing the occasion when some natural areas are turned over to development despite their beauty. He doesn’t seem to be saying that some places look better or worse, or that there is higher and lower beauty. In fact, he is quick to note that “all of nature is beautiful,” but it is this category of spectacular beauty that is set apart from other types of beauty. And to reiterate, Howard disavowed any suggestion that ‘spectacular beauty’ was somehow better. He seems to be saying that this thing called “spectacular beauty,” is itself a discrete variable in much the same way that sublime beauty or powerful beauty or desolate beauty would be too. These types of beauty just speak to different things, different features of the landscape perhaps. And to reiterate an earlier statement by Howard, he believes that all beauty should be protected, but special efforts should be made to protect “spectacular beauty,” presumably because of its relative scarcity.
4.1.8 Nostalgic for Past Beauty

An inevitable outcome of talking with long-time residents of an area is the comparisons to earlier times. And while scenery, at least at the landscape level, seems to be a relatively static property, four people made explicit comparisons to the halcyon beauty of their youth. Lifelong resident of Knox County and frequent visitor to Cumberland Falls, Sharon, made this comment:

“... it’s changed. It just seemed so much nicer when we were children. Of course I still like [going to Cumberland Falls], but they’ve done things that I don’t agree with. Like putting in all that concrete and putting up those railings, none of that was there when I was young and it made the Falls look much nicer.”

Nathan, another lifelong resident of southeastern Kentucky, echoed Sharon’s sentiment on the changing nature of beauty at Cumberland Falls.

“I liked coming here more when I was little. It was just a nicer place to be, not so many people and not so much trash. People seemed to care about the place more, back then. I’ve got some pictures my papa took when I was little and it just looked so much better then.”

Two more long-time, though not lifelong, residents of the area, Debbie and Trent, articulated similar statements on the way the area has changed in terms of beauty. However, both of their takes are slightly different from what Sharon and Nathan had to say.

“I think I look at this whole area different now than when I was a kid. I don’t think I paid too much attention to the trees and how they looked. I kind of wish I had because I don’t like what the trees look like now, all that kudzu and that pine bug make them look ugly.” (Debbie)

“My granddad lived here a long time and he always loved this part of the state. I remember him telling us that this was the most beautiful place east of the Mississippi. I think a lot has changed since then because there’s just a lot of garbage around now and I don’t think of this place as super pretty. It’s just nice.” (Trent)
Sharon and Nathan both seem to have a direct referent about past beauty of the area. They have a clear conception that Cumberland Falls was once more beautiful than it is today. Debbie and Trent on the other hand appear to offer more indirect evidence of past aesthetic value.

4.1.9 Beauty as a Proxy for Environmental Health

If an area looks good or beautiful, then it must be healthy. Health is nearly as troubling a notion as is beauty in terms of searching for agreement on meaning. Arnold (1991) discusses the unsatisfying attempts of the medical field to define sick as the state when “something was not working” (p. 6). However, in the context of the two dimensions of this subtheme, health is meant to convey the sense that 1) forests should be healthy; and 2) health is something real and identifiable. I won’t go into detail here with the problems with both of those statements. However, I will say that neither statement is beyond contention and I will offer a fuller critique in the following chapter.

4.1.9.1 Health equals integrity and stability

No one interviewed made specific reference to Aldo Leopold or his Land Ethic, however I suspect that Stuart’s education and training as a forester put him in contact with A Sand County Almanac, or at least the oft-cited phrase at the end of the book, “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (Leopold, 1949, pp. 224-225). A statement he made suggests a clear Leopoldian approach.
“You can tell how healthy an area is by its beauty. Beauty is a good indication of ecological integrity and stability. So in that way, beauty is important because you can use it as a guide to forest health in general.”

Interestingly, a comment by someone who I doubt has ever heard of Aldo Leopold or the Land Ethic made a somewhat similar statement.

“Well, like we can tell on our woods when something’s not going right stuff starts dying. When the beetle kills the pine trees, you can tell right away, because they ain’t green no more. It just looks ugly and no one wants their land to look like that. It don’t look good and it ain’t good for the trees. And pretty soon you won’t have any trees at all.” (Mary)

While Mary doesn’t specifically wield the terms integrity and stability, her conception of scenery as an ecological indicator does appear to suggest that the health of her trees implies a sturdy ‘rightness’ of things. Mary confided that she and Nathan were married right after they graduated high school and neither ever attended college. Her husband Nathan expressed concern prior to the actual interview that I was some stupid environmentalist who “wouldn’t know a dead tree from a live one.” Their lack of higher education and apparent distaste for environmental thought leads me to think that neither Mary nor Nathan had ever been exposed to Aldo Leopold or his writings. Yet, Mary’s statement bears a marked resemblance to what Stuart said and also what Leopold wrote over 50 years ago.

Neither Stuart’s nor Mary’s words suggest an evaluation based solely on aesthetic sensibilities. Beauty to them does not seem restricted to an absence of natural processes. In this way death and decay are acceptable parts of a larger natural beauty. When death and decay become preeminent as a result of an unnatural occurrence, it is then that beauty suffers. So Leopold’s functional beauty concept still applies. Mary mentioned the effects of the southern pine beetle which has resulted in a more than 85% mortality rate in pine
trees in southeastern Kentucky. It is not perfectly clear if the success of the southern pine beetle is due entirely to natural factors or if human activity has in some way aided it. Nonetheless, the perception of such quick and widespread damage is that it is both unhealthy and lacking in beauty. And this does not seem counter to Leopold's dictum.

4.1.9.2 Health provides moral guidance

There's a curious notion that beauty is a trigger that alerts us to moral action when something is not the way it should be. This idea emerged in several interviews and can be illustrated in the context of one interview in particular. Ed, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employee, offered the clearest treatment of this connection.

Ed: "We've done so much to screw things up in nature, that we've got to start fixing our problems now. And if that means no more gas engines in certain ponds or lakes then that's what we should do."

Interviewer: "How do you know when we've done... when we've screwed something up in nature?"

Ed: Well, usually you can just look at it and if something doesn't look right then you know there's a problem. If you see a bunch of trees dying or fish dying then you try to figure out what the problem is."

Interviewer: "Hmm... okay. So are you talking about..."

Ed: "You know it just looks good and you know that it's healthy because it looks good. Nature doesn't play tricks, it will tell us when something is screwed up. And of course when you know something is wrong and if we're the cause of what went wrong, then we should fix it. It's that simple."

Interviewer: "I'm not trying to be stupid here, but could you just explain why you think we should fix it?"

Ed: "Yeah, we should fix it because we caused the problem if it's overhunting, or pollution, or whatever. Since we messed up, we have to fix it. You know it's just the right thing to do."
This insight referring to our duties to heed the lessons of beauty as an indicator of health may have been more widespread than the interviews showed. The exchange I had with Ed, was the only one of its kind yet I suspect that others may have voiced similar views, if given the opportunity. This idea of beauty triggering some moral response, or more accurately a deviation from beauty triggering a moral response seems particularly cogent to the overall discussion of this primary theme and with regards to environmental ethics in general.

4.1.10 Concluding Thoughts on the Beauty in Nature Theme and Subthemes

The sense of this theme and the subthemes contained within it is one of localized application of a general prescription which is at the heart of any ethical discourse. Beauty should be preserved. Beauty may or may not be some intrinsic natural property, it may or may not be a discrete or continuous variable. What it appears to be to many of the people quoted in this subsection is a feature of nature which encourages some sort of ethic. Just how beauty translates to a specific environmental ethic is unclear. In the end, however, lingers a suggestion voiced by Michael,

“... it’s unethical when you turn something that used to be beautiful into something that’s ugly.”

Clearly we lack precision on terms such as beautiful and ugly, but there is the suspicion that however these terms are defined and however accurately they represent reality, there may a peg to hang an ethical hat on. Some people were able to partition their notions of beauty into different categories and some of these categories were distinguished by degrees of naturalness. Those who referenced naturalness appeared to give a nod to
ecology. The belief that beauty is more apt to be resident in natural areas will appear
again in the treatment given to the next theme. Beauty does seem to be a self-referencing
good (in the same way that health and happiness are). If this is so, then it stands to reason
that those things which promote beauty are good and those things which detract from it
are bad, good and bad being used in the ethical sense. Parsing out these types of
obligations is the task I’ll turn to now.

4.2 Theme 2: Responsibility to ‘The Other’

Responsibility to some other is a valid, if overly broad, description of ethics. From
the standpoint that ethics is a social endeavor, some other must be involved. Those to
whom we have some direct ethical responsibility or obligation can be said to be included in
the moral community. Thus, the responsibility to ‘the other’ simply defines who or what
else should be in the moral community. Traditionally, this community has extended no
further than humans, both present and future as well as those humans who are not moral
agents: infants, severely mentally disabled, comatose, etc. Environmental ethics is “a
principled attempt to redefine the boundaries of ethical obligation” (Rolston III, 1988 p.
125). In other words, there may be more than just homo sapiens in the moral community.
Within this primary theme a number of subthemes are identified. It is within some of these
subthemes that a new boundary is explored.

4.2.1 Nature as ‘The Other’

In general terms, it is the aspiration of many environmental philosophers
(pragmatists excluded) to elevate portions of or the whole of the natural world into the
realm of that which is morally considerable. Much environmental ethics attempts to swiftly shift the boundary of the moral community to something beyond that of humans. Various iterations of necessary and sufficient conditions presume to justify such a move: sentience, subject of a life, etc. Ideally (from the standpoint of this research), there would follow four dimensions to this subtheme: 1) Obligatory Responsibilities to Nature; 2) Nature-related Supererogatory Ethics; 3) Responsibilities based on Justice; and 4) Responsibilities based on Care. However, following my data analysis, these dimensions continue to exist mainly in my theoretical conception of environmental ethics. Stated another way, none of the four dimensions to Nature as ‘The Other’ clearly and strongly emerged from the interviews. However, there were glimmers of these non-anthropocentric ethics. And rather than simply dismissing these dimensions as unworthy of discussion, I present them here in the section numbered 4.2.1. Finally, although these four non-anthropocentric dimensions of environmental ethics guided the initial stages of research, data analysis yielded broader dimensions which subsumed the notions of justice and care, as well as, obligatory and supererogatory. Indeed, this is the case with this primary theme, Responsibility to ‘The Other’ where particular flavors of environmental ethics are best examined in light of some more basic questions about the essence of environmental ethics.

I have, therefore, divided the subtheme, Nature as ‘The Other’ into these four dimensions to reflect one of the original foci of the study. (Note that Nature as ‘The Other’ contrasts with People as ‘The Other’ which will follow in section 4.2.2.) In my previous statement that these dimensions exist mainly in theoretical conception, I did not mean to imply that they could not and do not exist in the environmental ethics of those
interviewed. Rather, my questions did not seem to allow people to speak readily about Nature as a morally considerable other. Further, this is not to say that none of the people I interviewed held a non-anthropocentric environmental ethics, however, I could not find clear evidence to support such an ethics in any of the interviews. Finally, it was apparent from a couple people that they knew what they felt was right or moral, but they also knew they were unable to express their belief in words.

4.2.1.1 Obligatory responsibilities to nature

One of the original goals of this research was to determine the extent that obligatory responsibilities to nature appeared in environmental narratives and whether these responsibilities were somehow tied to the familiarity that one had with a specific place. While a few people were able to articulate some semblance of ethical obligations, many just responded in ways that seemed to skirt the topic of environmental ethics altogether. Additionally, on one occasion I did reach the limit of what a person was willing or able to divulge in terms of their own ethical perspective. To begin with, two quotes appear to indicate the feeling that humans do have some real, non-anthropocentric obligation to nature.

“It’s just the idea that we can do anything we want, that I don’t like. We’re supposed to have respect for all life and you can’t do that if you just go out and trash everything…. Maybe what I’m saying is that we have a responsibility to make sure that some areas are protected and that’s what’s good about having parks like this.” (Beatrice)

“There’s just a lot of arrogance, you know, like we think we know everything there is to know, but there’s a lot about nature we don’t know. We… everyone should all try harder to protect forests and rivers and stuff. It’s not just here for us either, it’s good to take care of these things for the animals that live there too. They’ve got just as much right to be there… maybe more, as we do.” (Sylvia)
My interview with Mike S. taught me that ethics is far from being an anchor point for some people, it is often more of a buoy that tends to mark an arbitrary boundary, but there is little to hold this buoy in place. This passage was one instance where I pushed the interviewee in an attempt to anchor his ethics to some principle.

Mike S. “We’ve got to take care of this planet because it’s the only one we’ve got.”

Interviewer: “So, is the only reason to protect anything here because we might want to use it?”

Mike S. “Yeah, pretty much. I mean... I guess there are some things that we should protect just because.”

Interviewer: “Because why? Why should we protect those things that we don’t need to use for ourselves?”

Mike S. “Just because. I don’t know I can’t explain it, but I know that it’s wrong to cut down a tree and then not use it.”

Interviewer: “But why is that wrong? I mean how do you know that that’s a wrong thing to do?”

Mike S. “I just know it. I can’t explain it.”

In another statement, Mike S. expressed a clear notion that an ethic promoting protection of nature was good because in many cases that’s what other people want us to do. However, as this passage illustrates he remains certain that there are actually clear obligations to the natural world, or at least parts of it. Yet, he was unable to express a notion of why cutting down a tree that wasn’t needed was a bad thing. In other words, he was unable to find firm footing for his justification on why cutting a tree and not using it would be a bad thing. Paul Taylor (1998) might tell us that this tree has a “good of its own.” Holmes Rolston III (1988) might appeal to the notion of intrinsic value. However,
these ideas seemed foreign to Mike S. and he was the only interviewee I pushed specifically in reference to the idea that there exist real and true obligations to the natural world.

4.2.1.2 Nature directed supererogatory responsibilities

Most of the people interviewed felt comfortable with the type of ethical approach towards the environment where our responsibilities were more supererogatory rather than obligatory. However, many of the responses to my examples appeared to be more on the order of agreement rather than any sense of conviction. In other words, the responses to my examples of nature-directed supererogatory ethics were more akin to ‘feel good’ statements, but I remain skeptical that those interviewed actually hold this type of ethical position. I think the attraction of a supererogatory environmental ethics is that it can more easily fit within someone’s overall ethics. A supererogatory environmental ethics almost strives for balance with other aspects of life. Further, people are not demanded to embrace a new set of duties as required by an obligatory ethics. As a result, when people were questioned about cleaning up a park on a Saturday or donating money to some environmental cause, for the most part, they were comfortable in those scenarios. With respect to the environment, most of the people I interviewed had difficulty expressing clear obligatory ethics towards the natural world or at least clear justification for their ethic. All that said, I offer here several different statements that are indicative of the supererogatory dimension.

“Yeah, that [giving up a Saturday to pick up trash] would make my friends proud of me, but that’s not why I’d do it.” (Deborah)
"I don't do those kinds of things, but maybe, if I was feeling really generous or something, then I might donate some money." (Thomas)

"I guess that my parents would be proud of me if I volunteered for clean-up crews and stuff." (Mike W.)

"That would be kind of honorable to do, you know like volunteer work—that's always good." (Steve)

"Well that's like doing a really good deed. You know when you do something that you don't have to do, but you do it anyway. It's kind of like that. I might do some of those things, but I wouldn't do them all the time, because it's just... there's just more important things to do." (Sylvia)

In each case those interviewed identified the supererogatory aspect of certain environmental ethics scenarios. They saw these behaviors as good deeds, but not necessarily things that everyone should do all the time. In this regard, some environmental ethics commitments do not engender widespread acceptance as morally minimal behavior. What may be interesting to determine though is how these supererogatory commitments correspond to other community-based commitments, such as a neighborhood watch or a campaign to make an intersection safer. By this I mean, do these social commitments carry more of an obligatory tone while the environmental commitments carry more of a supererogatory tone?

4.2.1.3 Responsibilities based on justice

Are there clear and unambiguous proscriptions against certain behaviors based on the rights possessed by non-human entities? At the core of justice-based responsibilities owed to non-humans is some conception of rights. On one occasion, Sylvia mentioned that maybe animals have at least as much right to be in nature as we do. On another occasion, Judy made this comment:
"I have a friend who's really into animal rights and stuff and I don't know... It just never really grabbed me you know. I'm not saying it's wrong, but I don't think I like that idea very much."

When I asked her why she didn't like the idea of animal rights, this is what she said.

"It's like I think we are supposed to use animals, not mistreat them or anything, but... I mean, where would we get all our food if we didn't eat animals."

And a bit later, I asked Judy if anything other than humans have rights, to which she responded:

"Besides animals? You mean like nature and trees and stuff? No, I don't think so. But again, we shouldn't mess it up on purpose either, because that's not right... It's not right because, it just isn't, it's like a sin to waste things and that's why it's wrong."

In these few exchanges, Judy came closest of anyone to a sense of obligation to non-human nature, however it is an admittedly weak endorsement. Although, she responds in the negative when asked if other things have rights, I think what was troubling about this line of questioning was the coupling with animal rights along with some idea of intrinsic value in nature from which some other rights might follow. There was a real fear of admitting to anything resembling an animal rights perspective by most people. Two people acted quite surprised when I explained that environmental ethics is not perfectly coincident with an anti-hunting perspective. This was an interesting finding and it deserves a more lengthy treatment than is appropriate here. Therefore, I will return to the misconceptions of environmental ethics at the end of this chapter, in the theme devoted to On Becoming a Moral Agent and again in the last chapter of this dissertation.
4.2.1.4. Responsibilities based on care

As noted in the literature review, care is a term often used in casual conversation. Hanging an ethic of care on the appearance of this word in someone’s narrative would be as misguided as listening for the word “happiness” in a lengthy discourse and assuming that that person is, therefore, a utilitarian. More evidence must be uncovered before any such proclamation can be made. In searching for a care ethic, I was listening for words and meanings across words that would be characteristic of care ethics. As suggested by the literature, things like relationship, reciprocity and equal consideration would be valuable indicators of an ethic of care. However, no such ethic of care was readily expressed with respect to the natural world.

While the word ‘care’ did appear in the narratives of a few people, none of those interviewed could be said to have expressed an ethic that described an intimate relationship with Cumberland Falls, or any other place for that matter. Neither for that matter did any of those interviewed, even genuinely consider that nature, or parts of nature, be clearly worthy of moral consideration at all. The clearest acknowledgement of care was in something that Deborah said when talking about making decisions between areas one knows well and areas one doesn’t know well.

“I can see how the decisions that you make close to home are harder. And that they might… that even though you want to focus more on them, they also make it harder to make at times. And you may not follow your own ethics as much as you would with something that is far away, your ideals, I guess.”

In this passage, Deborah is clearly struggling with complexities of making tough decisions when one is in the midst of a situation. This type of embeddedness is essentially demanded of care ethics and Deborah recognizes this. However, it does not appear that
her concern is necessarily for nature, rather it is for all of those people who might be affected, as indicated by something she said shortly after the previous quote. Deborah noted that,

“Even though I may be against the logging and drilling, I kind of see myself as removed from those things even though I drive a car and stuff. But I do know that people’s lives would be affected if a bunch of us got together and put a stop to the coal mining around here or the logging. That’s my biggest concern on the other side of things.”

In this respect, Deborah seems to subscribe to an ethic of care where other people are the appropriate object of moral concern. This passage was preceded by a long discussion on drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the people who would be affected by a decision not to do it.

The following brief quotes are instances of where the word ‘care’ appeared in the narrative, but without accompanying language suggestive of a care ethic.

“... I care about all nature things. It’s just like you don’t want to see things get ruined because then nobody would go there.” (Mary)

“Most people who live here care what goes on in the park since we come here a lot.” (Howard)

“... I don’t know, I guess what bugs me is when you see how messed up places get when we don’t take care of them.” (Michael)

“It’s just like they just don’t care about what other people might think about seeing that there.” (Michael)

“It’s like if you don’t take care of places like Cumberland Falls, then nobody’s going to get to enjoy it anymore.” (Trent)

If parks need more than that then let my taxes take care of it.” (Thomas)

“Yeah, God tells us to take care of what He created. So it is definitely going against God to ruin nature for no good reason.” (Chris)
“... I don’t care about getting more oil, so leave the Wildlife Refuge alone. It’s easy for me to be firm about these things in Kentucky, but I might not be so sure if I lived in one of those places.” (Deborah)

“So, I don’t think God cares if some place that I think is pretty disappears.” (Judy)

“... people really care about the historic stuff.” (Judy)

“People seemed to care about the place more, back then.” (Nathan)

“... if people don’t start taking better care of things, then it may not be around here forever...” (Tom)

“We’ve got to take care of this planet because it’s the only one we’ve got.” (Mike S.)

“It’s not just here for us either, it’s good to take care of these things for the animals that live there too.” (Sylvia)

“Even if they don’t think they should be taking care of the scenery, they really should because a lot of people really like to just come here and look at how pretty nature is.” (Beatrice)

“... if we don’t take care of places like this, then they won’t be able [to go to Cumberland Falls].” (Beatrice)

Using a word search function, these were the only instances of the word care across all the narratives. I did not include instances where the word care was embedded in another word such as careful or carefree. This list of quotes recalls the distinctions between different uses of the word care as described by others (Blustein 1991 and O’Neill 2000). Blustein’s (1991) four different interpretations of the concept of care are: 1) to care for; 2) to have care of; 3) to care about; and 4) to care that. To care for embodies “liking, having affection for, being drawn or attracted to, or being pleased by” (p. 27). To have care of represents having responsibility for or managing the affairs of, in short, taking care of.

When people care about a person or something, their own welfare is somehow tied to that
person's or thing's welfare. And finally, to care that is propositional where a specific situation is the object of the statement.

For the most part the word care seems to be exercised in ways that suggest humans should take care of nature whenever not doing so might be detrimental to other people either through loss of jobs or diminished recreation experience by ruining the scenery. In other words, care is more properly understood as a something we should do for other people rather than for nature or for the environment. There does not appear to be any clear use of the word 'care' that indicates a position where some non-human is the object to which care is directed. Of course, it should be noted that even in Gilligan's (1982) book-length treatment on care ethics, the word 'care' appears very infrequently in the excerpts chosen. In all of the excerpts found in In A Different Voice, the word care appeared only thirteen times, seven of those times was in a single excerpt where the words "take care of" were repeated over and over, and one time in another excerpt a respondent spoke of choosing to go into the field of medicine where people "care for" people. The word care is not rightly a litmus test for the presence of a care ethic. Rather, the fundamental aspect of a care ethic is relationship with some other and the responsibility that follows from that relationship.

If the hope is to discover care-based ethics directed towards non-humans, there should exist language that reflects the relationships people have with non-humans and their respective responsibilities. However, indications of these types of relationships and responsibilities were not evident in the narratives. In Blustein's (1991) four interpretations of care, it seems that "to care for" guides us closest to real relationship and responsibility. O'Neil (2000) too suggests as much. With regards to non-human nature, perhaps some of
the excerpts related to beauty provide evidence of a relationship. Yet, this avenue poses other problems.

As O'Neil (2000) suggests, objects of aesthetic appreciation should not be considered themselves as objects of moral concern. O'Neil further explains that the difference between someone caring for and caring about some object illustrates the difference between a more fundamental relationship-based caring and a more abstract, principled approach to a moral dilemma. In O'Neil’s view caring for someone or something is the language that gives a better indication of a care ethic. When one cares about something, they seem to be indicating a more distant relationship and the focus of concern is more general and abstract than particular. In this way, caring about might actually be more indicative of a justice-based ethic.

So what we are left with is scant evidence of any care-based responsibilities, with the notable exception of that perspective expressed by Deborah at the outset of this subsection. Yet, recall that Deborah’s care-based responsibilities were not nature-directed, but were directed towards the welfare of other people. With this I’ll turn to a treatment where people are considered ‘The Other’ in moral dilemmas.

4.2.2 People as ‘The Other’

In many respects nature as other proved to be problematic; however, many people recognized that there are responsibilities to other people in environmental situations. Stated another way, we have direct duties to other people and thus, indirect duties to the environment. Therefore, the main theme, Responsibility to ‘The Other’ is most clear and forceful when ‘The Other’ is limited to other people. Generally, the notion of people as
other took one of three forms. These can roughly be divided into obligations to the past, to the present and to the future. While it is more an indirect duty to past generations, it still emerged as an important point.

4.2.2.1 Cultural Heritage

A direct obligation to a past generation might read something like, "I believe that I have a duty to respect the wishes of my ancestors," such as might be the case when one knows that his/her ancestors expressly hoped that some tradition were continued. Of course these sorts of commitments often bleed into commitments we might have to our contemporaries where cultural ancestry might be shared. For instance, I may feel a sense of obligation to protect the homestead in Wyoming that my great-grandmother settled. But having never met my great-grandmother, I’m not sure if my sense of obligation is to her, or to the other members of my family who are alive today and I do know. A number of interesting axiological and ontological questions surround the idea of obligations to history. How and why do we value the past? At what point does something become historically significant? I will offer a more complete treatment of this in the following chapter, in the literature section devoted to Responsibilities to ‘The Other.’ However, at this point, I will just suggest that it is often not clear to whom supposed historical obligations are directed. Are they really directed at past generations or are they, in fact, directed at the current peoples who themselves care about past generations? The following four quotes blur this line.

“It’s really cool to think that Daniel Boone came right through this area. That should be reason enough to protect it... I think we definitely have a responsibility
to protect the historic areas and places, cause it’s part of who we are you know.” (Michael)

“That’s one of the biggest things I noticed when I moved here—that people really care about the historic stuff, like Daniel Boone and the settlers. All over Appalachia that kind of stuff is important. You know, a lot of people’s families have lived here for a long time.” (Judy)

“I had a class last year where we talked all about the history of this area and how important it is to keep the history alive… So we don’t forget what our history is, that’s why.” (Steve)

“I guess I get as much joy out of thinking about all the human history that’s here as the natural history. Not just the Daniel Boone stuff either, because he kind of wiped out the Indian culture in this area, well he was one of the first to do it. I know some Indians and they don’t like all the attention everybody gives to Daniel Boone, but they do like having special places preserved so that they can protect their heritage. To me, that’s what’s really nice about places around here is that we try to respect the past even if we don’t agree with it.” (Don)

With these quotes it is not clear if the value is directly on the history of the area or only indirectly as the history informs and defines the identity of the people who live here. In other words, there is concern over protecting the history of the area because it is a means towards preserving the current culture. Of course the value need not be an either/or proposition, but it remains vague if the injunctions to protect historic areas and places are done to honor the past or the present peoples.

4.2.2.2 Other Community Members

Most often the indirect duties to nature arose from direct duties to other people who might also want to enjoy the natural resource in a recreational way. The idea here is that the nature we were talking about was most certainly for humans and we have a duty to our fellow humans to provide pleasurable outdoor areas for recreational pursuits.
“Well, how would you like it if you went to a park and there was nothing but trash everywhere? It wouldn’t be any good there. That’s the main reason for keeping places clean, because no one would want to go there if they were all messed up.” (Debbie)

“I think it would stink if they didn’t keep this place clean. There’s just too many people who like coming here.” (Amy)

“Well, like I said earlier, since my dad taught us not to mess up nature when we were kids, I still can’t bring myself to litter. Even though I think it makes you look ignorant if you litter, you should still have respect for the other people who want to go [to Cumberland Falls], cause they probably don’t want to see your litter and trash laying around. I know that makes me mad when I see stuff like that.” (Sharon)

“Why do I think it’s wrong to mess up an area this? I don’t know, I guess cause I know that this is a really popular place and lots of people like to come here. They probably wouldn’t like it very much if people started trashing it.” (Steve)

“I feel like punching them in the mouth. I’ve gone up to people who I’ve seen littering and given them their trash back saying, ‘I think you dropped something.’ It’s like they just don’t care about what other people might think about seeing that there.” (Michael)

“Other people kind of let you know when you do something wrong, even if you think it’s okay. I wouldn’t dump my trash out at a park like this because that wouldn’t be nice to the other people who are here. You know, they wouldn’t like that and I wouldn’t like it either.” (Mike S.)

“It’s like if you don’t take care of places like Cumberland Falls, then nobody’s going to get to enjoy it anymore. I think that would be the worst part of it all, you know, not being able to go there anymore. I think most people feel the same way too, it’s just a few people that do all the damage and they kind of ruin it for everybody.” (Trent)

Clearly all of these statements put Cumberland Falls as a resource for human use and the duties we owe to it are only indirect as our direct duties are towards the other people who enjoy using Cumberland Falls themselves. In other words, several people expressed the notion that we have some obligations to nature or that they do indeed care about the park in question, but ultimately these obligations or expressions of care are directed towards
their fellow humans. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this need not be considered a flawed or incomplete environmental ethic.

4.2.2.3 Future Generations

John Passmore (1974) was critical of any aesthetically-based arguments to justify duties to future generations because these arguments presuppose that we know what will be pleasing to people not yet born. There is some value in Passmore’s argument, however, others, notably Eugene Hargrove (1989), disagree with Passmore on this point, suggesting that aesthetic arguments are not nearly the elusive, ungrounded fad as Passmore would have us believe. The few people among the interviewees who did suggest that we have some sort of obligation to future generations didn’t seem to recognize the changing notions of natural beauty that are fairly recent in America.

“I’d like to think that other people would like to go to Cumberland Falls someday and if we don’t take care of places like this, then they won’t be able to. Like it would be a real shame if my grandchildren or great-grandchildren couldn’t enjoy places like Cumberland Falls too.” (Beatrice)

“Well, it’s like we’ve seen the changes here over the past eleven years and if people don’t start taking better care of things, then it may not be around here forever and then those people in the future won’t be able to see what we had.” (Tom)

“Yeah, I think that would make me sad if I knew that we ruined something for other people down the road. Cause they’ve got as much right to come here as we do.” (Carol)

“You should always try to take care of stuff because you never know if you might go there someday. Like I never thought I’d get to go to Hawaii, but I did and I’m glad that people took care of it. Same with my daughters, I want them to be able to go to places like that and maybe twenty or thirty years from now, they will want to take their own kids to Cumberland Falls.” (Laurie)
4.2.3 Ecology, Evolution, and the Naturalistic Fallacy

Ecology “deals mainly with the roles filled by organisms in nature and how environmental conditions affect and are affected by these roles” (Kupchella & Hyland, 1986 p. 4). Evolution has been defined as simplistically as, a change in the gene pool of a population over time (Isaak, 1998). Both ecology and evolution have a bearing on how people respond to environmental ethics dilemmas. In discussing the Round River essays by Leopold, J. Baird Callicott (1987b) suggests that ecology “is the biological science which runs at right angles to evolution” (p. 162). Recall that the naturalistic fallacy tells us that we cannot derive an “ought” from an “is.” In this situation, we cannot prescribe the way the world should be by simply looking through the two lenses of ecology and evolution which tell us the way the world is. Or can we? This blending of ecology, evolution and the naturalistic fallacy come together in the words of a number of the people interviewed. Through their words we might see how our responsibilities to the other of nature come to be. Arne Naess might take pleasure in reading some of the following passages as the people behind them seemed to pay little heed to the naturalistic fallacy, which Naess regarded as something like mental gymnastics for philosophers. Of course, Naess will find no eager devotees of Deep Ecology here, merely people who see no reason not to use scientific descriptions of things and specifically processes to give us moral guidance.

“That’s just the way nature works—the web. We’re supposed to make sure that we keep the web the way it should be.” (Ed)

“I would say that evolution kind of tells us what’s good to do. I know that stuff is evolving all the time so we shouldn’t mess that up. We should just kind of let things go the way that evolution wants them to.” (Don)
“God made everything on earth and He wouldn’t want us to destroy his creation. I don’t believe in evolution or anything like that, but everybody knows that food webs are really complicated and if you break just a corner of it you can break the whole thing.” (Debbie)

“I remember hearing something in school that the mountains around here were the oldest mountains anywhere. I don’t think this is about evolution or monkeys, but there’s kind of this line that everything follows and God doesn’t want us to break that line of things. That’s why we shouldn’t make animals extinct.” (Steve)

“... macro-evolution is wrong—that’s where one species turns into another, like a fish turns into a dog, that’s just stupid. But we know that micro-evolution works, because we can do that stuff in the lab—that’s like why there are a lot of different kinds of dogs—but they’re still all dogs. There’s a lot of stuff about biology that goes against evolution, but biology makes sense... you always know what God wants for the earth by what biology says.” (Jon)

“I think you’ve just got to know about science and biology... uh ecology, because then you’ll know what’s okay to do and what’s not. If something goes against ecology, then it isn’t right because nature kind of sets down the rules. A lot of people forget that they are a part of nature too and when people forget that they usually start messing things up. If people would just remember that we’d all be dead without nature, I think they’d take care of things better.” (Michael)

In the previous passages I don’t think it matters if those interviewed expressed misconceptions about ecology or evolution. What does matter is that they used either ecology or evolution to inform their moral commitments. Ecology and/or evolution tells what’s good and bad, or right and wrong and that we must consider what ecology and evolution tells us is morally right. In these instances, the ‘is’ of ecology and/or evolution clearly illuminates the ‘ought’ of environmental ethics. More precisely, these people seem to say that there is a ‘should’ type of nature that exists independent of human influences and we have access to this ‘should’ type of nature by understanding ecology and evolution. In the next chapter, I will attempt to parse out more of this relationship.
4.2.3.1 Natural versus Artificial

The distinction between the natural and the artificial arose in the context of beauty with some suggesting that a natural scene is more beautiful than an artificial one and others saying that they are both beautiful. The natural/artificial dichotomy is played out again in the general context of Responsibilities to ‘The Other’ and specifically with respect to the notions of ecology and evolution. Consider what Michael said immediately following the quoted excerpt immediately above.

“But that kind stuff changes if you’re just talking about somebody’s yard or something because that’s not natural like this place is. Cause your yard isn’t really natural or anything like that. Cause you made it you know, nature didn’t make it.” (Michael)

So perhaps for Michael, ecology only provides moral guidance when the land is more obviously natural than artificial.

Howard and both Tammy and Nicole suggested that manipulated areas are somehow different in terms of our obligations to them.

“I don’t think it would be the same here if I knew that everything was made up, like a big water park, but still nature-like. Cause that wouldn’t really be nature, it would be more like a garden, just made up... The difference is that what people should do to protect nature is different than taking care of a garden. Mother Nature knows a lot more about what the park is supposed to look like than we do. It’s just a lot more complicated than a lot of folks realize, you know all the different plants and animals and different types of dirt and rocks. You can’t just go ahead and make something natural, cause it’s too complicated; so you shouldn’t even try.” (Howard)

Tammy: “In my biology class last year we talked a lot about the water cycle and why forests are so important to have clean water. Forests are better water cleaners than we are, so that’s another reason to protect areas like Cumberland Falls.”

Nicole: “Yeah, like everything is really connected and complicated so that even scientists don’t understand how everything in nature works.”

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Tammy: “My teacher had this terrarium set up in his office to show how everything worked together and it was amazing.”

Nicole: “Oh yeah, you can’t even imagine how complicated nature is and how easy it is to mess things up. That’s why a place like Cumberland Falls is important, because it is really complicated and it would be impossible to make something like that in a lab. The indoor rainforests they’ve got at museums and stuff are kind of fake because they don’t have all those different things going on like there is in real life.”

4.3 Theme 3: Public Lands

Public lands themselves often carry much ethical baggage. Ethical and political ideals such as freedom, democracy, equality, and community are all woven together in America’s tapestry of public lands, this is certainly true for park lands or lands open for recreation (Dustin, McAvoy, & Schultz, 1995). That is, many of the people interviewed believe that public lands are not neutral in terms of ethical obligation by nature of why they were created and what they currently stand for as well as the means by which they have come to us today.

4.3.1 Intent of Public Lands or Why They Were Created

When the interview turned to specific questions of ethics, such as what should we do with this area here, a few people said that this just begs the question about why this area was created in the first place. The question of legislative intent was first raised by Ed, an employee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Ed: “You can’t really say what is wrong or right unless you know the reasons why an area was set aside. That’s why there’s nothing wrong with harvesting trees in the Daniel Boone (National Forest). The law says that forests are for cutting down trees. So I can’t say what is right or wrong about doing something to this park or any other place until I know why it was established.”
Jim: “So are you saying that the law and ethics are the same thing?”

Ed: “Umm… well, no I don’t think that’s right. I think our ethics come before the law. But when you want to know if developing an area is right or wrong, I guess to me that’s not an ethical question, it’s a legal question because it depends on what the law says is allowed. Now I guess I can see how this might be different depending on if this area was meant for certain things and now the public says that those things are wrong, like four-wheeling or something. A lot of people like to go four-wheeling around here, but some environmentalists want that to stop because they think it’s wrong even though it’s okay to do it (in the Daniel Boone N.F.). So this is one example of where ethics is different from the law.

Stuart, another one with experience as a federal employee had this to say about the creation of protected public areas.

“Well, the way I feel about things today is that all the treasures have been pretty much protected… If you’re asking about additional wilderness areas, additional parks, I don’t think that we need them. Because I think what’s protected is what’s unique and you know I don’t see… unless there’s something out there that it’s been on private property and it’s so unique.”

I then asked Stuart if it makes a difference if something is on private land or public land.

“No, no. If that woodland is on somebody’s private property that I know or don’t know… I believe in private property rights and whatever they want to do with that woodland, if they want to give that tract of land into the Nature Conservancy’s hand or whatever, that’s fine. But I think it’s a private property issue. The thing with public land is that you know exactly why it was set aside in the first place, so that helps you decide what you should be doing with it or allowing.”

In responding to a question about why should we have parks, Beatrice suggested,

“That’s kind of hard to answer because I think there are different reasons. Sometimes it’s important to have parks to keep people away from certain things like the spotted owl, but other times you want to have parks so that people can go there. So, I guess it depends. Like Cumberland Falls, I think they wanted to make this a park to protect the Falls, but now it’s a park so that people can come here and enjoy it. But the Falls is still important.”
4.3.2 Purpose of Public Lands or Why We Have Them Now

None of those quotes in the previous subsection by themselves are terribly enlightening with respect to how perceptions of public land may evolve. However, they seem to take on more meaning when considered against what these same people said when I asked them if things (values, ethics, priorities, etc.) change over time. The purpose of this question and the probes that followed was intended to determine if there is a different set of guidelines for why parks were created and why they might be used now.

“Oh yeah, sure things change all the time. It’s like what I said about the four-wheeling, it may have been okay in the beginning, but more and more people are starting to think it’s a bad idea. I wouldn’t say that things always change. But like at Yellowstone, nobody ever thought there would be as many tourists as there are now. Back when they created it, those guys just wanted to preserve the land from being used up, they didn’t want it to be a park for tourists. But look at it now, I think Yellowstone is more about the tourists than anything else. There’s so many people who go there compared to when it was created, and that should tell you that things change.” (Ed)

“If you’re talking about public land, then yeah I think things change. Even though parks like this are nice, you wouldn’t be able to make another one now, because there’s not enough land. So it was easy to make parks back when there was a lot of land, but other things are more important now.” (Stuart)

“Hmm… maybe that’s it. Maybe keeping people out is the reason for the start of a park, but now more people see how nice they are and decide they want to go visit them. So, now parks are more for letting people in than keeping people out.” (Beatrice)

4.3.2.1 Recreation

Recreation was specifically mentioned by eight different people suggesting that parks exist very much for people’s benefit and pleasure. Two college students, Tammy and Nicole, both believed this to be true.

Nicole: “… you wouldn’t have any parks if people couldn’t come to visit them.”
Tammy: “Yeah, because there’s this park near my house that nobody ever goes to and now they want to turn it into offices or something.”

Nicole: “I just think it would be stupid to have a park that people couldn’t go to and play and enjoy the scenery and just hang out, you know.”

Tammy: Yeah, what’s the purpose of that?”

I asked Thomas and Chris, one of the husband/wife couples, if there was any sense in having areas set aside that nobody could use. This is how they responded.

Thomas: “Never go there? I guess I don’t understand the question.”

Chris: “You mean a place that no one could ever see or anything?”

Interviewer: “Yeah, you could never go there. There would be no recreation.”

Chris: I guess I can’t see it because it seems like it’s just for us to appreciate and to enjoy so I would hate to think that a place was preserved just for itself and not for mankind.”

Thomas: Maybe I don’t understand the question, maybe it’s just too theoretical I don’t understand it.”

Chris: Are you talking about taking an area and closing it down, protecting it so nobody is allowed to go there or see it or anything?”

Interviewer: “Exactly.”

Chris: “I think nature is for mankind.”

Thomas: “Anytime the government would close something off and say ‘Don’t come in’ then something is going on and it ain’t natural wildlife (laughing). If the question is, ‘Is there ever any ground for closing a natural habitat off to humanity and saying, ‘No one comes in. We preserve it as is. We’re not doing anything in there, we’re just preserving it as is and everyone stays out.”

Interviewer: “Right.”

Thomas: “That would be… I’d have to hear some justification for that policy.

Chris: “Yeah.”
Similarly, Mike S. spoke of the greatness of outdoor recreation.

"I love getting outdoors and playing, you know, even if it's just walking around. As long as I'm outside, I'm happy. I don't know what I'd do if I couldn't come to places like this and just hang out and enjoy nature. I really don't. It's not like anything else would be just as good."

Steve made this comment about outdoor recreation in general.

"I think doing things outside is always better than doing things inside, for recreation I mean. You know, that's what places like this are for, so we can get away from work and get outside and have fun."

The final two people, one a former federal employee and the other a current federal employee, noted that the word park itself means recreation. Thus, those areas that are parks must, therefore, be for recreation. Clearly this focus on human recreational benefits preempts or at least shifts the notion of ethical obligations.

"Well, this is a park here, so that tells you it's for recreation more than anything else. You know parks are different from forests that way. Forests can be for a lot of different things, not just timber, but parks are always for recreation first and foremost." (Stuart)

"Different agencies manage for different things. Like I work for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and we manage primarily for wildlife habitat. But this here is a park and I'd be willing to bet that wildlife is not the number one reason that this park was created. Actually, since it's a park, you know it's here for people to enjoy instead of anything else. Parks are for people." (Ed)

4.3.2.2 Protect Wildlife

A few folks clearly identified the role that public lands play in protecting wildlife.

Not surprisingly Ed, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife employee, made this suggestion.

"But even in parks, I'm sure that wildlife is important, it's just not the most important thing. I think just about anywhere that the government owns land, they are concerned about the wildlife." (Ed)
Debbie, too, hinted that wildlife may have been an important consideration in having public lands.

"You've got to keep some areas just without anything there because if you don't then too many people will go in and push the animals out. That's probably the biggest reason for those places (public lands)."

And Beatrice noted her favorite part about Cumberland Falls was not the Falls at all, but rather the sound of the birds when she walks through the woods.

"But you know, the Falls really aren't my favorite part, I like the spray and seeing all the water and everything, but usually it's too noisy and there's too many people. My favorite part about going to Cumberland Falls is walking alone on the trails and listening to the birds. I really like bird watching and it's a good place to see and hear a lot of different kinds."

4.3.3 Ownership

Public lands are a curious notion; as citizens of some area we are constantly told that we, the people, own the land. However, this ownership is vastly different from the ownership one assumes when purchasing a plot of real estate. Ownership of public lands sounds almost fanciful in an idyllic sort of way. Sure the public by definition owns public land, but in what real sense do any of us have a say in what we want to do with this land? Our participatory democracy notwithstanding, public lands seem mostly like museum artifacts that we are encouraged to look at but not touch. Appointed managers ascend to the throne of benevolent dictator to tell us, the public, what we can and can't do with our own land.

The preceding paragraph was purposely presented as an overly harsh hyperbole of the relationship between the public and public lands. Yet, it may not miss the mark by much, Stormann's (2000) recent critique of the direction of public parks echoes some of
these sentiments. I offer the paragraph at the start of this subsection to illustrate that a real sense of ownership seems to be a distant feeling for many people. Many of the people I interviewed saw themselves not as part owners of the land, but as visitors to someone else’s property, where the laws had been laid down and were not to be challenged. (Note that I will return to this a similar idea in the next thematic section: On Becoming a Moral Agent.).

4.3.3.1 Land Tenure in Appalachia

Shortly after my own arrival in this part of the country (in January of 2001), I became aware of the unique nature of Appalachia and those who identified with Appalachia. There is a sad sort of beauty to this area and the people. The land itself has known heavy industry for over 200 years. However, it has not been a consistently productive industry. Coal, water, cattle, and timber have all at one time or another been forces in the economy of southeastern Kentucky. Few communities that exist today have long-term ties to industry; this in opposition to many New England towns that began and continue to exist as timber towns. Many places in this region are awash in apparent poverty; outhouses, dirt floors and corrugated metal shacks remain throughout this region. I have only secondary knowledge of this, from discussions with various people at Union College and two of those who were interviewed for this study. The people who live under this level of poverty were not interviewed for this study, however, two of the people interviewed for this study related stories of their kin who “lived up the hollow” and suggested that their views were real Appalachian views. The ‘Appalachian view’ was not a significant aspect of any of the narratives, however, in those few instances in which
Appalachia was mentioned, a consistent theme emerged. Under the primary theme of
**Public Lands** and the subtheme, **Ownership**, the idea of Land Tenure in Appalachia seems
to speak to the perspectives of four different people.

"I don’t know what it’s like in other places, but we do things different around here. This is coal country and we know how to work with the land because we’ve been doing it so long. I don’t care if I’m here or on company land, the companies probably know how to keep the land better than the government.” (Nathan)

"I was born here and even though I moved away for awhile I’m still Appalachian. So, when someone from Ohio comes here and starts criticizing things, and they’re not from Appalachia, then that’s just wrong. I know all about Appalachia and you have to know the history of the way the land was used and owned before you can start judging.” (Stuart)

"My cousin lives up Stinking Creek and her family’s lived there for probably 100 years or more. They never been here (Cumberland Falls), they probably ain’t never heard of it. So they don’t really care about any of this stuff you’re asking. But you start talking bad about their land and there’ll be trouble.” (Mary)

"You gotta know that this is Appalachia and folks don’t like hearing how bad they’re doing things, cause we’re kind of proud. If you want to find out what people around here really think of nature, you should get up a hollow and talk to some of them folks. Cause, they don’t care about this park, but they’ve been living off the land for lots of years and they know a lot more than I do about the land and stuff. Cause this park isn’t really Appalachia, even though it’s here. You got to get away from the government lands to see what Appalachia is about. We used to visit my mother’s cousins up this hollow and even when I was a kid I was afraid to go there because they had all these mean animals, like this rooster that used to attack me whenever I went near it. It wouldn’t attack anyone else, just me. Then one day my mother’s cousin’s husband got mad at that rooster for attacking me and tore it’s head right off in front of me. I still remember that. But the worst part of the story is when we left, Uncle Aaron, that’s what we called him, gave me this board with the rooster’s legs on it and with the tendons still attached so that you could pull the tendons and the rooster’s fingers would open and close. (shudders) I hated that thing. (laughing) But that’s what real Appalachia is like.” (Sharon)

The sense with all of these quotes seems to be that 1) the people from Appalachia are
somehow different than people from other places; and 2) that real/authentic Appalachian
people are different from people who go to Cumberland Falls. Anecdotally, many people
across many geographic regions seem to enjoy espousing their group’s unique qualities. However, these qualities are often difficult to identify clearly or they turn out to be not so unique after all. Consider how often people describe their group as “independent” or “hard-working.” On the other hand, the descriptions of people in the region who live up the hollows does seem at odds with the types of people I interviewed for this study. Sadly, a full treatment of these differences is far beyond the scope of this study. It may be worth mentioning though, that there appeared to be a sense of defensiveness when some people were asked about doing things around here in a more environmentally sensitive way.

Two points are offered to tie this subsection in with the foundations of the research. First, it is a cogent point to note that those interviewed for this research are not representative of Appalachia, and indeed this was not a focus of this study. However, I submit that familiarity with some other area (not Cumberland Falls) may have proved a more precise measure of value to those folks living up the hollows. Secondly, the near-far dichotomy discussed in Chapter 1, does not appear to reflect an accurate relationship between humans and nature, at least with regards to the types of questions I was asking.

Finally, there may be deeper meanings associated with some of these quotes as well. I did not offer specific follow-up questions or prompts, but there appears to be a richness of meaning embedded in this place people refer to as Appalachia. This richness is glimpsed through comments that people make about knowing the land and the people who live on and off the land. In this way, it is only through understanding the people that one can come to know the land. I would submit that there may be a wealth of information...
about human-land relationships which are best accessible through listening to the stories that people tell about growing up in this area.

4.3.3.2 Gifts

Only three people discussed the way that the public lands were, indeed, a gift that previous generations have given us. Sharon recalled the talks she had with her father in which he emphasized the gift aspect of public lands.

“And my dad was always really good about walking and talking with us, my dad worked for the forestry service for years. And so he was very conscientious of the land and would school us on we shouldn’t litter and we shouldn’t do certain things. And to this day I cannot litter. I mean, I see people litter and I think, ‘Shame on you! How can you throw that out the window?’ because my dad just pounded that in to us that this was something that if we wanted to preserve it for everybody then we have to take care of it. We couldn’t trash it up. So he was very good at telling us about it. Because it’s a gift. It’s a gift that we’ve been given and it is disrespectful to not show appreciation for that gift.”

And later she went on to discuss the obligation that we have once we accept this gift of public lands.

“I have ownership in this place because I come here and have come here—that gives me ownership. And anytime you own something you have some responsibility for it. So in this way of looking at it, I do feel personally responsible for what happens here. I don’t think a lot of people realize this—that ownership means you have responsibility and that visiting a place gives you ownership in that place. Maybe if more people realized this then there wouldn’t be as many problems. Like that person who broke the bottle that I cut my feet on, they wouldn’t do that in their own backyard, because they know they own their backyard, but they don’t know they own this place too.”

Ed, the Fish and Wildlife Service employee said this:

“... the government kind of gives us opportunities to enjoy places like this, but I don’t think a lot of people realize what a privilege it is to have land like this, cause a lot of countries wouldn’t do that.”

And Beatrice made this unique observation:
“Cumberland Falls have been around a long time, longer than there was a park around it. I really like the idea that it’s a park now, because that means that we’ll have something to give to our children and they can give it to their children and on down the line. It’s just like a gift that we keep passing on to future generations. I know I’m grateful that the people before... When was this park made? Anyway, I’m glad that someone earlier thought it would be nice to make this a park so that people today can go there and enjoy it.”

4.3.3 Commodities

Lewis Hyde (1983) offers a book-length treatment on the differences between gift economies and market economies. While a few people articulated Cumberland Falls or other parcels of public land as wonderful gifts, more people suggested that these types of public lands were more akin to commodities to be used, bought and sold. (I will return to a more theoretical discussion of gifts in the next chapter).

“Just because people like coming to this park right now doesn’t mean that they always will. Cause there’s some nice timber in here and if we come up short some year, this would be a good place to come get it. And I don’t see anything wrong with that.” (Stuart)

“Well, we’re trying to figure out where to hold our church retreat, so for us this is just like another place to visit. I mean, I like it and all, but it’s just a piece of land with some buildings on it.” (Jon)

“This is my first time here, but I grew up hearing all about it, so I kind of knew what to expect. But if someone wanted to buy all the land here and make a mall I think that would be okay, because we could use a good mall around here. I mean, there’s a lot of land around here and whoever has enough money can buy it—as long as they don’t really ruin anything that’s okay.” (Amy)

“I think the park should charge money to come here, because they could make a lot of money, just look at all the people who are here today. I’m not talking a big charge, maybe just a dollar or two, but that would really add up over the year. Then they could do a lot more to take care of the area.” (Tom)

“I pay to come here anyway with my taxes. I don’t know if you pay taxes here, but they’re really high and I think we pay enough already. So, if they need more tax dollars to run this place then maybe someone else should buy it and run it better with private money.” (Nathan)
4.3.4 Scale

As mentioned previously, the familiar resource, Cumberland Falls, differed from the unfamiliar resource not only in terms of geographic distance, but also in terms of scale. A number of those interviewed did pick up on this distinction and their comments became the basis for this subtheme. I've identified two dimensions of this subtheme: Big-scale Mythology and Bigger is Better. With both of these the more general theme, Public Lands, remains in the background as the lands being discussed are considered as part of the whole system of publicly held lands.

4.3.4.1 Big-scale mythology

The knowledge that Yellowstone is such a huge park compared to Cumberland Falls was not grasped by everyone. However, two people hinted at the idea that there is something mythical about really big areas (although not specifically Yellowstone). The bigness of an area seemed to inform the admiration that was expressed for some places. The context of the following quotes was in response to my question, “Why do you think people out here care about what goes on in places they don’t live?”

“Mmm... maybe because that’s where all the land is—all the land where there isn’t anything else. When I hear about all that land out west, I think it’s kind of like it was before people got here, you know... It’s really is weird how much land there is and how nobody really lives there.” (Mike W.)

“It’s like the wild west and the cowboys. I think people love the idea of the good old days and all the land that was everywhere. You could just ride your horse to wherever you wanted and make that your home, that was really neat.” (Debbie)
I've discovered in talking with a number of people from southeastern Kentucky (not necessarily as a part of this study), that there is a shared image of ‘the old west’ (whatever that is) as consisting of vast stretches of desolate land and the ghosts of cowboys on horseback galloping across the range. Whether this represents some mistaken image of the contemporary American west is not important. What is important is the feeling of nostalgia that accompanies this image. Nostalgia might be considered the vehicle in which we are able to relate to distant or unfamiliar places. Nostalgia is more than a misty pining for the good old days; here, nostalgia represents the idea that this place—the ‘old west’—is most conveniently described in terms that symbolize what we’ve come to expect of large protected areas. The west continues to exude this aura of the mythical frontier and that is why big scale public lands are necessarily out west.

4.3.4.2 Bigger is better

A few people made a specific comparison between Cumberland Falls and some other place based on the notion that more value resides in larger areas and that only public lands could now be appropriately considered that big. There does appear to be a moral evaluation in the following statements where people employ axiological comparisons, implying that bigger is somehow better or at least more worthy of moral consideration.

Tammy: “I guess you hear about those places because they are so big. If Cumberland Falls was that big, maybe people out west would hear about it too. But it’s not very fair to compare this place to those places out there, because they are so much bigger and that makes them worth more.”

Interviewer: “And what is it specifically that makes them worth more?”

Tammy: “Just because they are so much bigger and it’s hard to have really big areas like that.”
And this from Deborah and Mike S. who both expressed a similar view:

"Anytime you can protect more of something that is better. Even though you can't really compare Cumberland Falls to Yellowstone, just because Yellowstone is so much bigger, I think I'd say that it is more important." (Deborah)

"Yeah, well just think how big this area is compared to Yosemite or something. Those places out west are huge, you know and that's what makes them so special, they're just a lot bigger than the parks we have here. I think it would be great to see some of those really big areas, just because we don't have stuff like that around here." (Mike S.)

While still within the general idea that bigger is better, with two quotes, Stuart suggested that big areas are better because they are more real.

"Yellowstone is an ecosystem, you know. You just can't protect really small areas and expect that they will stay the same, or stay natural. Yellowstone is something like a million acres and that's so that everything that is important is protected. But here, you can't guarantee that Cumberland Falls won't get messed up by someone else, because they didn't protect as much land. You've got to have big chunks of land to protect ecosystems and that means you have to focus on land out west."

And,

"Yellowstone is the real deal, it's the way it should be. Even after those fires, it is the same. I can almost guarantee you that this place isn't as natural as Yellowstone. And this just goes back to because it isn't as big."

4.4 Theme 4: On Becoming a Moral Agent

The idea behind this theme is that one is not always a moral agent. This might be stated in one of two ways. I may not consider myself to be in a position to make a moral decision because someone else is the moral agent. Or, I am not required to be a moral agent in this situation because it is not a situation involving morals at all. In the general sense a moral agent is one who has the ability to recognize a moral dilemma and to act in such a way to satisfy the resolution of that dilemma. As humans are the only species that
recognize the phenomenon of morality, only humans can be moral agents. However, not all humans are moral agents; infants, for example, do not possess the ability to recognize moral dilemmas nor do they possess the ability to act on them.

This final theme, On Becoming a Moral Agent address several different aspects of interview responses. I suspect the interview questions about justice and care were just too abstract for most folks to relate to. And this is no doubt true to some extent; however, I sensed later that I was simply asking such questions wherein I assumed a pre-condition that may not have been there to begin with. The pre-condition was that of moral agent. With some of the interviews, it became clear that a sense of agency was at least as important as any discussion on justice/care or obligatory/supererogatory. While narratives related to moral agency tended to be very widespread, some common elements emerged.

The subthemes that follow illustrate the general tone of five different aspects of becoming a moral agent. That is, the five subthemes in this section represent the range of responses that people gave about why they should or should not do something that I had previously considered ethical.

4.4.1 Not My Problem to Solve

Probably the most convenient response in establishing ethical agency about environmental problems at different parks was something like, "It’s really not my problem to solve." If I do not see myself in a position to act on a moral dilemma, in some sense I am not a moral agent. This is a bit nebulous in terms of a subtheme because it also begs the question, "Why?" "Why" questions throughout this study tended to elucidate somewhat evasive or circular responses. I will offer some examples of this phenomenon in
the final chapter. However, at this point I would suggest that probing questions with
“why” simply end up begging a new set of assumptions. Ultimately asking for clarification
or justification through a “why” question requires interviewees to articulate a response
which answers the question and at the same time is consistent with their previous
discussion. Given the hypothetical nature of these interviews, this may be a difficult task.
On a few occasions people were able to articulate a reasoned response to my probe of
“Why” particularly as the original question pertained to ethics in some form or another.
Within this subtheme, two types of responses seemed to be given, “I pay my taxes, so it’s
not my problem” or “The park pays people to do that kind of work.”

4.4.1.1 Taxpayer

Anecdotally, the taxpayer argument seems pretty widespread when it comes to
various questions about public lands. This argument is particularly popular when
discussing fees on public lands (arguably another ethical debate). However, only two
people offered this type of response as to why they were not required to practice
supererogatory ethics.

“I know this sounds cold and it might not be what you want to hear, but I think my
taxes should be going to solve those types of problems (buying more land, pitching
in on clean-up days). So, no I don’t see any reason to go out do all sorts of good
deeds when I’m there. If parks need more than that then let my taxes take care of
it.” (Thomas)

“... if you’re asking if it’s my responsibility to go out and pick up other people’s
trash, then I’d say no. That’s what I pay taxes for. Either get the tax money going
to what it should or get rid of the taxes and then maybe I’d do that other stuff.”
(Stuart)
In reference to taxes absolving moral agency it seems that if someone pays taxes then this
transfer of money results in a transfer of a moral burden to someone else. This is one
illustration of what Stanley Milgram referred to as “Agentic Shift” (Milgram, 1983).

Milgram’s famous experiment in which subjects thought they were administering painful
electronic shocks to another person seated out of view, but not out of earshot gave us an
illustration of the phenomenon of agentic shift. In Milgram’s study, the person
administering the “shocks” was told by an authority figure to continue with the experiment
despite the escalating pleas of agony heard in the adjacent room where the other subject
was supposedly receiving the shock. Although Milgram was primarily concerned with
individuals giving up their morality in the face of some other authority, the term “agentic
shift” applies here as well where it means simply a phenomenon whereby one is placed in a
situation that shifts his/her moral burden to another person or agent. The act of paying
taxes is this situation. And the shift that occurs from being a taxpayer is just one instance
of agentic shift. By paying my taxes, in a sense I am purchasing an absolution that I
practice supererogatory ethics. Note that examples of obligatory ethics tend to remain.
Thus, I am not absolved of littering or tearing up an area or purposefully polluting. This is
not surprising since supererogatory ethics may be easily overridden by other more pressing
or obligatory needs. What I am absolved of doing is picking up other people’s trash
and/or doing those things that might bring me praise.

4.4.1.2 Park Employees

The park employees argument is another instance of agentic shift, where the
person being interviewed sensed no moral commitment to practice supererogatory ethics
because that would infringe on the job of various park employees. Two different people suggested that one reason that supererogatory ethics are beyond their realm of concern is because park employees would be out of work or some such idea. Yet, in this regard there exists a moral commitment to those whose jobs may be lost.

"Yeah... I mean I guess it would be nice to go out and pick up trash and stuff, but what about the people that work there. I mean that’s their job, right? Maybe there’s a lot of trash, you know, more than the workers can pick up by themselves. So that would make it okay, but I don’t think it’s right to ruin somebody’s job over it.” (Sylvia)

“You mean doing things like the park rangers do? (referring to picking up garbage) No I don’t think I’d do that, that’s what those guys get paid to do. I could even see how that might make them mad, like if I thought they weren’t doing a good job, you know. I don’t litter or throw my trash on the ground, but I don’t think it’s my job to pick up after other people who do—that’s what the park rangers are for.” (Julie)

However, Julie’s husband, John, offered a slightly different take.

“Well, I sometimes pick up trash and throw it away, I don’t think it’s a big deal to the rangers. I also think they work hard doing other stuff and seeing someone help with the trash might... they might like that.”

As with the taxation argument, citing park employees as a reason that one need not practice supererogatory ethics appears to be another illustration of agentic shift.

4.4.2 Origins of Moral Agency

This subtheme is clearly a question for high level philosophical reasoning. A question such as, “How do we know what is right?” is one that has been debated as long as there has been ethics. Searching for the origins of moral agency may be another way to get at that question as this search takes us to that point in time when someone is able to recognize a moral dilemma. However, the questions I asked in the interviews and their
subsequent responses did not approach that degree of self-reflection. The interpretation of my question was, fundamentally, “How did you learn what’s right and wrong?” And subsequently, “How do you know that’s right or wrong?” These questions and their assorted probes were intended to uncover how people tell right from wrong and what foundations they rely on for those judgments. In answering these questions, people were reflecting on their own personal sense of right and wrong, rather than some universally prescribed set of rules. Two clear dimensions emerged from these questions, and there was some overlap between them as well.

4.4.2.1 Religion

Perhaps no other source of morality/ethics came up as often as the invocation of religion. In attempting to understand how people described ethics in a general sense, I also asked them how they know what makes something either wrong or right. Nearly every interviewee had something to say about ethics being a specific application of religious principles. Christianity is a pervasive presence in the area of Cumberland Falls as well as the several counties immediately surrounding this area. Baptists and Pentecostals seem to be the best represented denominations in this part of state. Of the twenty-eight different people I interviewed, twenty-three spoke freely about their religion. A number of folks mentioned with pride the church they attend. Thus, one might surmise that a religious foundation for one’s ethics in these cases is considered securely anchored by those interviewed. In other words, when referring to the Bible or some Divine source of authority, no other justification is needed to explain one’s ethics. Although religion was a topic that emerged fairly readily, I did not make it a theme unto itself, because it was
mostly used to describe reasons for and against acting a certain way and also to serve as guidance in situations of uncertainty. That is, religion became another source of determining moral agency.

I will not reproduce every quote that supports the idea that religion is where one gets his/her ethics; I will simply offer a handful of statements representing the general tone of this idea. The first group of quotes followed a question I asked on the order of, “How do you know what is right or wrong?”

“Well that’s pretty easy for us. As traditional Roman Catholics, you start with the 10 Commandments. And from there you go to the Bible and the teachings of the Church. You can throw out all the laws in the world, but the 2000 years of Church history tells us what’s right and wrong.” (Thomas)

“... there are some (ethics) that I would get from Christianity. Although it’s interesting when you hear how people interpret them in general, they’re not always as they really are in the Bible once you look at it.” (Deborah)

“Just read your Bible. The Bible has all the answers.” (Debbie)

“That’s why there is so much immoral people in the world, because they don’t read their Bible. We read the Bible every day and that always reminds us of what to do.” (Mary)

“If you think something might be wrong, it probably is. God gives us the power to know what’s right and wrong. But you have to listen to yourself... or that voice telling you to look out. That’s God using your own voice to talk to yourself. But some people stop listening to that voice and that’s when they get in trouble. When someone says that they didn’t know they shouldn’t have done something, that’s a lie. They just stopped listening to God telling them it was wrong.” (Nathan)

“You know, even people who don’t know the Bible, still know what’s wrong and right. They know this because God puts that kind of knowledge in our hearts from the beginning.” (Trent)

“That’s what the Bible says. Actually that’s what the Lord says. You know what is good or bad because the Lord tells us so.” (Mike W.)

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"I think if you’re religious, and even if you’re not really religious, but if you have the foundation that you believe in a higher power, then you believe that you have dominion over everything, but a responsibility to everything too." (Sharon).

The sense of these several quotes above is that God is the ultimate source of determining right and wrong. Related to this idea was an interesting exchange on the nature of right and wrong in a discussion with a young married couple, Jon and Amy.

Amy: “When I think of right or wrong I always think of that as a religious type of thing. Religion tells us… well, God tells us when we do something wrong by making us feel guilty. That’s how I know when I do something wrong.”

Interviewer: “So you don’t know if something is wrong until you feel guilty about it?”

Amy: “No, you still know some things are always wrong like murder. I don’t have to kill someone to know it’s wrong. The Bible tells me that it’s wrong in the 10 Commandments.”

Jon: “Guilt is what God gives us to remind us that we made a mistake, but He also already told us everything we need to know about how to live in the Bible.”

4.4.2.2 Parents

While most of the people first identified religion as a basis for their ethics, a large number of people also pointed to their parents or their upbringing as a source for ethics. However, this response was often itself tied to religious teachings, as is evidenced by the first two of the following five quotes.

“I guess, my parents taught me what was right or wrong, just like their parents taught them. So, it kind of gets passed down through the generations. Of course, everyone reads the Bible, so that is really where right and wrong come from.” (Judy)

“Just life experiences and what your parents teach you. They tell you that it’s wrong to steal, so you grow up learning that it’s wrong to steal. I never really went to church, but my parents did, so I guess they got a lot of their morals from going to church.” (Michael)
"My Mom and Dad and my Grandmother, who lives with us. They all taught all of us right from wrong." (Tammy)

"I guess you just learn that stuff from your parents when you’re really young, because I can’t remember how I learned that some things are wrong. Maybe I was just too little to remember.” (Nicole)

"If you are brought up right, then you know what’s good and bad. As long as you’re parents teach you that when you’re young, you will always know.” (Sylvia)

In general, the questions specifically pertaining to ethics elicited fairly brief responses. In other words, people tended not to offer on their own further clarification or explication on ethics questions. Additionally, when I probed or asked for further clarification, more brief responses followed—a frequent conclusion to this line of questioning was on the order of, “I don’t know, you just know it.”. That said, two different people offered fairly lengthy, if somewhat awkward systems of morality. I’ll discuss both of these situations in the next subsection, because they do pertain to when, where and why someone would consider themselves a moral agent.

4.4.2.3 Morals versus Ethics

Two different people developed a curious framework for discussing morals and ethics. Although each person was interviewed separately, and these responses came about through the course of different series of questions, the overall picture of morals and ethics painted by these two people was remarkably similar. The general sense of both Sharon and Sylvia is that morality and ethics are not the same thing. Morality is what God tells people to do or not to do and ethics is what people tell each other to do or not to do. In this sense, ethics appears as a corrupt, jury-rigged tool for an ungodly and imperfect
world. As such, sometimes people act unethically but at the same time they act morally and vice versa. The following example illustrates this kind of thinking.

Sharon: “To me, ethics is different from morals. I can be ethical but immoral. Of course that’s not a good thing to be (laughing), but it is possible. I can also be immoral... ummm... unethical but also moral. So there’s a difference.”

Interviewer: “I’m not sure I understand, could you explain that a little more?”

Sharon: “I think morals come from God. So when somebody does something immoral, they are doing something that God says is wrong. But ethics, like business ethics, God didn’t make those up, we did, human beings made ethics. So, like here’s an example where they are different. I could make one photocopy at work and that’s probably not unethical because it’s just one—it’s no big deal. But that would be immoral, because God would think that is stealing—it doesn’t matter to Him if it’s a little or a lot. It’s still stealing.

Interviewer: “Okay, I think I see. Can you think of an example where someone is doing something unethical but moral?”

Sharon: “I was afraid you were going to ask me that (laughing). Umm... how about... Oh, I know. Like when you asked me about littering. The Bible doesn’t say anything about littering, so that would not make someone immoral if they littered, but ethically, littering is wrong. Everybody knows that littering is wrong, even though the Bible doesn’t say anything about littering.”

Sylvia, who admitted to reading some philosophy suggested that morality is different from ethics for similar reasons as those offered by Sharon.

Sylvia: “The stuff we know that’s wrong that comes from God is just wrong because that’s what God says. But then there’s that other stuff that people say is wrong because we figured out there are problems that go along with it. Like that stuff with DDT back in the 60’s. It wasn’t until fish and birds started dying a lot that someone said it was unethical to use DDT.”

Jim: “You mentioned that you’ve read some philosophy. Does the term ‘consequentialist ethics’ mean anything to you?”

Sylvia: “Yeah, ethics are consequentialist. That’s right.”

Jim: “So, some ethics are consequentialist, like using DDT. That’s only bad because we know it is harmful to other critters. But some other ethics, like what God says, are non-consequentialist...”
Sylvia: “No, what God tells us in the Bible are more like our morals. Ethics are different than what’s in the Bible. I know this sounds weird, but I don’t think ethics and morals are the same thing. Everybody has ethics, but not everyone has morals, because not everyone believes in the Bible. But that’s usually okay because they talk about the same things for different reasons. Like the Bible says ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ Ethics also says people shouldn’t kill, but they don’t use God’s reason. I guess it might be unethical to kill because, you would go to jail and you couldn’t take care of your family or something like that.”

4.4.3 I Was Not the Cause

A refrain commonly heard among young children goes something like this, “But I didn’t do it” and therefore I shouldn’t be responsible for fixing the problem nor do I need to worry about what to do. Apparently this excuse persists into adulthood for different sorts of problems. Although, two of the three people who offered this retort also recognized the childish nature of the argument.

“... if it’s just a pop can or two, that’s probably not that big a deal, but I don’t want to go follow people around with a trash bag. You know, they should pick up their own garbage.” (Michael)

“When one of my girls says, ‘But she did it,’ I usually say, ‘Well, you’ve both got to fix it. That’s kind of the way that I feel about picking up other people’s trash, you know. Who cares if someone else dropped something, people should still pick it up, but a lot of people don’t feel that way I guess, or there wouldn’t be so much garbage.” (Laurie)

“I wouldn’t do those things (participate in a clean up day or help rebuild a section of trail) if I didn’t do any of it. Make the people who did mess up the place go out and fix it. But that doesn’t sound very good, so maybe I would pick up other people’s trash.” (Amy)

Thus, since the issue is whether or not someone has caused a problem, the question of moral agency rests not just on ability to recognize a moral dilemma and ability to act in resolution of this dilemma, but also on who were the parties responsible for this dilemma. Cast in this light, if someone does not see him/herself as responsible for the creation of a
moral dilemma, then they are not obligated to act towards its resolution and are thus not a
moral agent. Obviously there are problems in this interpretation of moral agency,
however, I suspect that it does capture the sense of some people to justify removing
themselves from commitments that they feel are not required of them.

4.4.4 Familiarity

In the original conception of this study, I viewed familiarity as one of three major
variables to consider. However, familiarity seemed to work best not as a source of
determining justice or care, but as a filter for defining moral agency. In the same way that
some people described lack of moral agency in terms of things like, “Not my problem,” or
“I didn’t cause it,” familiarity speaks to the hesitancy of assuming a moral burden. All of
the people interviewed were able to identify Cumberland Falls as a place that they were
more familiar with than some other place (usually Yellowstone). However, nothing
consistent in terms of ethical orientation or obligation followed from this familiarity. In
fact, quite the opposite was true: most people made a point of saying that nature is nature
no matter where it is and how much one knows about it. That said, the next few quotes
illustrate how familiarity did emerge as a subtheme in determining moral agency. This first
exchange occurred between Deborah and I as we talked about what one should do to help
certain areas.

Deborah: “Well, I guess I feel it’s all part of the same thing. Except I can have
more direct influence on what’s right here and so I pay attention more to what’s
here. Although, when I think about some of the parks out west that are really
spectacular and maybe need more protection in some ways. As far as how much
money would be allocated, anything like that, I’m not sure I could make a
judgment about that, because Great Smokey Mountains is the highest attended one
and this is the one I use. So, it’s hard to make choices about that. I guess I’ll just
reiterate what I started out to say, I think it’s all important. For instance the 
Wildlife Refuge in Alaska is very important, and the saltmarsh habitat, and a lot of 
places that are not right here with me. I would be able to donate some money, or 
write about it, or talk to people about it, but I feel like there is enough to do right 
here.”

Interviewer: “So, am I hearing you right when I say that there isn’t any ethical 
difference between what you know a lot about here and ….?”

Deborah: “I think that’s pretty close, although I’d probably say that... Yeah, I 
think you’re definitely paraphrasing what I said very well. You made me think, 
again listening a bit more to my own thoughts, that I would say in all honesty, 
myself and other people, we might be able to be more fanatical about a place like 
Yellowstone, or the wildlife refuge that our lovely administration is planning to 
drill, because it is not our backyard. Because we’re not using it and because we 
are not the people that are right there affected by it. So, sometimes it’s harder to 
make those black and white choices when you’re right there in the middle of it 
because I do see the needs of the mountain bikers, well not mountain bikers, but 
four-wheelers tearing up the trails. And then I think well, we really do need some 
extra land for this or that and we don’t need to cut so much national forest. So I 
can see how the decisions that you make close to home are harder. And that they 
might... that even though you want to focus more on them, they also make it 
harder to make at times. And you may not follow your own ethics as much as you 
would with something that is far away, your ideals, I guess. So, how you treat 
what’s close to you might be a better view of your ethics, than what you think of 
as lofty ideals.”

Amy, who has lived her whole life near Cumberland Falls but was visiting it for the first 
time had this to say:

“I just don’t know a lot about what goes on here, maybe if I knew more I could 
say yeah, that sounds like a good idea. But I just don’t know. A lot of times 
persons talk about things that they don’t know enough about and that makes them 
sound stupid. Like all that talk about evolution, if the people who believe in 
evolution could hear themselves talk, they would see how stupid they sound, cause 
they just don’t know what they’re talking about.”

To which, her husband, Jon, replied,

“Yeah, I never understand those evolution people because they talk so much about 
stuff that they don’t understand. If you don’t understand something, you should 
just keep quiet about it.”
This is a cogent point about staying out of an argument unless one knows the issue or the facts. This is particularly noteworthy when they expressed a hesitancy to get involved in questions of environmental ethics for places and/or issues they knew little about. So without a certain level of familiarity it is difficult to determine the moral issues. Curiously this speaks to another fundamental aspect of care ethics—understanding particulars and context, which I will discuss in the following subsection.

4.4.4.1 Not enough information to act

The point of departure for most folks when abandoning some sort of principled ethical position seems to be when more and more previously unknown pieces of information come into play. In other words, an original ethical position may end up being questioned because new information has come to light. This is hardly a new insight as it recalls the foundations of a care ethic when one of the young girls interviewed by Carol Gilligan was hesitant to respond to the Heinz dilemma without learning more about the situation. And in the following quotes this hesitancy does underscore the tenuous nature of environmental ethics in some cases. Deborah addresses this uncertainty in discussing how she feels about the spotted owl issue in Washington and the Bush Administration’s proposal to drill for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

“I do think we have a tendency to be less realistic about things we don’t know as well... Because I’m not living out west, you know the spotted owl thing—I’m kind of removed from that, so I can support that—yeah, give the spotted owl room. Or I don’t care about getting more oil, so leave the Wildlife Refuge alone. It’s easy for me to be firm about these things in Kentucky, but I might not be so sure if I lived in one of those places.”

She goes on to say:
... I think I would try to understand the situation before I jumped in there and tried to do something. One thing that came about recently was at Pine Mountain Settlement School. It's a historic place that was a school started by some outside women back in the early part of the 20th Century. But it's had this long history of serving the region. They do environmental education for kids out there. They have historic buildings. They do a lot of good work for the region and for people as a whole. They also employ something like forty or sixty people in the area. And they were being threatened by some surface mining that was right around the property. So I felt that this was an issue that I could do more about, that I could feel good about getting out, standing up and saying, 'Hey, this needs to be done this way and for these reasons.' And I felt that way, I think, because I really felt like I understood the... I knew the organization and I knew what they had done, all the good things that they did. I knew the issue of strip mining. Sometimes I hesitate to get involved on things where I don't know the ramifications. Whereas, maybe when I was younger I would have done that more. So, I'm sort of sidestepping this thing because I'm not sure I have a really clear understanding. I feel like I've got to make my decisions based on each case.”

Asking Trent about his level of commitment to different natural areas he responded that things might be different depending on how much he knew about an area.

"Initially I would say I wouldn't be as aggressive. For one, it's just the lack of knowledge of those places and the lack of importance of those places. There are so many other places that might ring a bell when you mention the name but you don't know what's behind the scenes.”

And Tom and Don voiced similar sentiments.

"I don't even know what kinds of problems there are in Yellowstone. So, I don't know what I'd do in a situation. If you tell me about the problems then I could give a better answer.” (Tom)

"... there are just too many unknowns about [Yellowstone]. I mean, I've never even been there so I wouldn't know what's right or wrong. I don't think there's anything wrong with relative morality, because I think it's wrong to make decisions on things that you don't know anything about.” (Don)

With all of these quotes, the basic hesitancy to accept responsibility as a moral agent is rooted in a lack of familiarity with the situation. However, this does not appear to be an insurmountable hurdle towards gaining moral agency. Like Tom said, “If you tell me more about the problems, then I could give a better answer,” meaning that he is willing to
make some recommendations or say what is right or wrong, but not until he feels he has a good understanding, or a greater familiarity with the situation.

4.4.4.2 Not my place to judge or criticize

The idea behind this dimension is that even if the situation is a moral one and even if I know something (though not a lot) about the situation, it is not my place to jump in and make a judgment. Three people expressed this idea clearly, but two of them only in the context of the problem being reversed. The original scenario had people responding to problems at some park out west. The reversed situation involved this park, their park, suffering problems that people from far away were taking an interest in. Sharon and I had this exchange:

Sharon: “I guess, I know I would have that right [to voice concern over the management of public lands away from her home], but I would be less likely to voice it there as opposed to here. Because this is my home, and this is my backyard. And I would feel like probably they wouldn’t want me coming there and barking up their tree about a park I know nothing about. I would think it would be unwelcome and it would not be viewed as helpful or good, but rather as interfering or badgering. And so I would be less likely to say anything on that end.”

Interviewer: Maybe the same example, just switching it around. Somebody from California or New York hears that, ‘Ah, those hillbillies, they just dump their garbage into the river. We should just shut down the whole river and keep people from going to it.’ How would that kind of sentiment strike you?”

Sharon: “Uhh... get the hell out of my backyard! (laughing) Don’t be coming here and telling me that... even though it’s wrong. It’s clearly wrong and you make a very good point. I guess it’s a hard pill to swallow, if someone comes here from somewhere else and says, ‘These hicks down here don’t know how to take care of their natural resources. Look at this garbage,’ It would be offensive to have someone else point that out to us and make it known in any public way, shape or form. And so my reaction would be, ‘Why don’t you keep your affairs in California where you’ve got a stake in something and leave us the hell alone.’ Isn’t that horrible? I never realized I felt that way.”

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Interviewer: “No... no. I think that’s very reasonable.”

Sharon: “I feel like a hypocrite.”

Interviewer: “No... no. Without giving away too much of where I come down on this, I’ll just say I think that’s a very reasonable response. Why do you think you answer that way though?”

Sharon: “Well, because it would be... I would feel like you coming here from California. I would feel like what you said was judging me on something you have no right to judge me on. Like I would never tell another mother how to raise her kids, unless she was doing something really horrible to them, because it’s not my place to do that.”

Nathan and Mary had this to say,

Nathan: “Nobody has the right to come down here and tell us what to do with our land. If you don’t live here, keep your mouth shut.”

Mary: “There are a lot of people from Ohio who come down here and they act like they know everything. But they don’t know anything about this area. So, they shouldn’t say anything about stuff they don’t like. They can just go on home, if they don’t like it.”

For Sharon, Nathan and Mary, the question was not so much if something was right or wrong, but it was more a question of having the right to comment on the rightness or wrongness of the situation. In this case those who don’t live around this area lack membership in the community and this lack of membership is most evident when people show that they are unfamiliar with how people live here.

4.4.5 This is Not a Question of Morals

This subtheme was difficult to identify with specific quotes, however, it became clear upon my recollection of the difficulty that a number of interviewees had with some of the ethics questions. Recall that the overarching theme is On Becoming a Moral Agent.
Well, in order to do this, one must first be in a moral situation. There was a sense among many of the people interviewed that various hypothetical environmental scenarios offered were not moral at all, but were, in fact, something less. I use the term less here to connote that ethics or morality represents a class of proscriptions and/or prescriptions that are, at least, of lasting importance if they do not transcend time altogether. Ethics are neither inconsequential nor immaterial. Those behaviors and beliefs that fall within the realm of ethics are those things that most people would agree are worthy of careful thought or cautious actions. This reflects some of the perspectives of ethics as discussed in Chapter 2 of this document.

There is much presumption in the field of environmental ethics that every issue of environmental concern is therefore an issue of moral import—so long as humans are either the cause of the issue or are affected by the issue. In other words, all topics that might emerge under the general rubric of environmental issues are, themselves, moral issues. Within the broad region of ‘shoulds’ and ‘oughts’ environmental philosophers would argue that humans have near innumerable direct obligations to the natural world or at least indirectly through the people who need or use the environment. These obligations can be either hard or soft, justice-based or care based, deontological or teleological. Whatever they are they effuse through environmental discourse. However, at the risk of leveling the Ivory Tower charge, it appears that a broad chasm exists between the ‘shoulds’ and ‘oughts’ of environmental philosophers and the ‘shoulds’ and ‘oughts’ of the people in this study.

I offer the following quotes to illustrate the uncertainty about when an environmental situation is or is not also a moral situation.
"It doesn’t take a lot to do the right thing, you know you usually know what you’re supposed to do most of the time. Sometimes when I see someone litter, I get upset and think that that person is just rude, but I wouldn’t call that person unethical." (John)

"I don’t mind hunting because I think that we are supposed to use whatever God gave us, but use it in a good way. It doesn’t bother me when environmentalists protest against hunting, I just think they don’t know what it’s about. When they say stuff like hunting is bad and cruel, I don’t think they know where their hamburger comes from and stuff like that. It isn’t good to kill an animal unless you’re going to use it, but as long as you do that, it really isn’t too big a deal. I think there’s a lot more important stuff to worry about than hunting or the environment." (Steve)

"Is this environmental ethics? I thought that was just like no hunting and fishing. I don’t think making parks or keeping parks clean is the same as environmental ethics unless some animals might get killed." (Laurie)

"For me, it’s really not a priority, you know. I like going to parks and everything, but I’ve got bigger things on my plate than if some little forest burns up or gets cut down. My ethics don’t really include anything with the environment, I think you do those kinds of things (pro-environmental behaviors) just to be polite or helpful, but not because God says you have to.” (Thomas)

"It’s like it’s just something nice to do for the other people living there. I don’t think that anyone should expect it though.” (Chris)

In these passages, my examples of ethics seemed to be interpreted as etiquette or just a general rule that if broken yields no lasting reprobation. In the words of these people, there was little sense of obligation or of decisions/actions of lasting importance. Etiquette, of course, can take on a moral dimension during instances when one fails to follow some prescribed etiquette and it is viewed as being disrespectful or even hurtful to another.

That said, I believe that many of the people I interviewed saw environmental ethics as a stretch beyond the boundaries of their own well-worn social ethics.

So the question then arises, are environmental ethics too difficult a topic to articulate or are people just too reluctant to discuss it? I suspect both factors may be at
work. As a number of the interviewees suggested, there is not a clear boundary defining environmental ethics. For this reason, some people may be unable to determine if some issue is or is not an environmental ethics issue. On the other hand, there may be those people who suspect that we do have commitments (either direct or indirect) to the environment, but they lack the confidence in discussing these commitments because it is not something many of us consider on a consistent basis.

4.5 Summary of Results

The four primary themes in this study coalesce into a picture of this more general thing called environmental ethics. Beauty in Nature is that aspect of environmental discourse which seems extremely accessible in the sense that people speak readily of it and in some cases use it as a guide for environmental prescriptions. Attempting to unpack the logic and the language in the theme Responsibilities to ‘The Other’ illustrated a number of difficulties in this type of research. These difficulties will be taken up in greater detail in the following two chapters. However, at this point I will suggest that the essence of understanding Responsibilities to ‘The Other’ rests upon a firm and clear image of the scope of responsibilities as well as identifying candidates for ‘The Other.’ Public Lands, as a theme, yielded some interesting insights into understanding how the fact that something is a park, or a publicly-held resource can confound obligations that we might have to the nature contained within the boundaries of this resource. Finally, the theme On Becoming A Moral Agent laid bare the assumptions I held in defining the limits of environmental ethics.
In the next chapter, I’ll offer some additional commentary on the relationship between these four themes with specific attention given to the meta-themes: Responsibilities to ‘The Other’ and On Becoming a moral agent. Further, each theme is explored in greater detail with supporting literature. The idea it to return to the literature as a means of contextualizing the data from the interviews. Additionally, I will use this brief review of the literature to expand upon my commentary of the themes and subthemes in this chapter.
Chapter 5: Discussion

In laying out the map of this chapter, the reader should consider three primary points. First, the four primary themes as discussed in the previous chapter do not float freely, detached from the general field of environmental ethics. Rather each of these themes directly relates to many of the most fundamental aspects of the field (obligations and duties, excellence, and promoting good). Secondly, this chapter, as a discussion, is not meant to offer ultimate conclusions so much as it is meant to frame the themes with the literature that most informs them. That said, conclusions are essential to finalizing any discussion; therefore, following a literature-based discussion of each theme, I will address the importance and value of each theme as it relates to the literature and offer my own commentary on how my findings might advance our understanding of environmental ethics discourse. Finally, the reader should consider these discussions and conclusions as a means to other ends. The discussions I put forth in this chapter are intended to inform my larger conclusions in the final chapter of this document. That is, do not consider the discussions in this chapter as the final treatment I will afford each of the themes. On the contrary, consider these thematic discussions as the basis for more wide-reaching conclusions in that eponymous last chapter.

The origins of this study rested on the interplay between familiarity with specific places and the possible variation of people's ethics. Chapter 2 of this document provided a review of a number of standard and substandard environmental ethical positions. That review was intended to illuminate the scope of different ethical theories and perspectives. Through the course of the interviews, four central and meaningful themes emerged. These
four themes are 1) Beauty in Nature; 2) Responsibilities to ‘The Other’, 3) Public Lands; and 4) On Becoming a Moral Agent. Collectively, these four themes combine to explain the nature of environmental ethics as expressed through some specific, hypothetical examples. These themes do not parallel the standard ethical positions, nor are they meant to be exhaustive in the sense of fully addressing the scope of environmental ethics. Ultimately, these four themes achieve two things. First, they offer a challenge to some portions of the standard ethical positions. Second, the four themes and their associated subthemes document the process of environmental ethics discourse.

As just noted, the original topic areas, of familiarity, obligatory/supererogatory, and justice/care, laid the foundation for the study and I provided supporting literature for these topics in Chapter 2 of this document. However, I have yet to address the literature surrounding the four primary themes that emerged from the interviews. To this end, I will explore each of these four themes through their respective literature. In doing so, the position of the themes and the validity of existing environmental ethics frameworks can be considered. Note that this is less a second literature review and more a blending of literature accompanied by portions of narratives and interspersed with my own conclusions. In this regard, I will use the literature to complement portions of the narratives and vice versa. Further note that the literature associated with each of the primary themes is vast; however, I will opt for depth rather than breadth in this treatment so as to discuss more concisely the primary points of interest as identified through the data analysis.

Essentially, in this penultimate chapter I intend to illustrate the significance of the data as it stands on its own and as it relates to the current standard positions in
environmental ethics. In illustrating these things, I will review relevant literature and offer my own commentary. And it is through these illustrations that I lay the foundation for the conclusions in the final chapter in this document.

5.1 A Discussion of Beauty in Nature

Recall from the previous chapter that beauty in nature seemed to assume moral qualities for a variety of reasons: because that’s what people want to see, it makes us happy, God created nature this way, and beauty is healthy and healthy is good. Of course the specificity of commitments with regards to protecting beautiful areas differed. Yet, in the end, there seemed to be some agreement that if an area is beautiful, then it should be protected. I’ll refer again to three quotes which seem to drive this point home.

“... it’s unethical when you turn something that used to be beautiful into something that’s ugly.” (Michael)

and,

“Even if they don’t think they should be taking care of the scenery, they really should because a lot of people really like to just go there and look at how pretty nature is.” (Beatrice)

and this one from Howard.

“Sure, because if there isn’t beauty then what’s the point of caring about anything?”

Beauty in the natural world has been a topic of inquiry for as long as humans have talked about beauty itself; although Hargrove (1989) documents that the earliest expressions of positive attitudes towards nature appeared in poetry and landscape gardening in the early 1700’s. And over the years natural beauty emerged as a value in assorted pieces of legislation such as the acts that created the earliest National Parks
(Runte, 1997). And more recently the National Environmental Policy Act makes specific mention of aesthetic values. However, Callicott (1987) notes that “natural aesthetics is a pitifully underworked topic in Western philosophical and critical literature” (p. 159). This may be due in part to the intangible nature of beauty. For such a common term, it seems to be something that resists easy definition. Yet, in an effort to move the discussion forward a somewhat rudimentary definition of beauty is offered: the nature of beauty in this study centers on what is pleasing to the eye when visiting some natural area. And the primary question we will try to answer at the end of this discussion on beauty is: Is beauty a necessary and sufficient condition for protecting natural areas?

5.1.1 Anticipated versus Unexpected Beauty

From here two paths diverge. On the one hand, beauty may arise from instances when one is caught unawares, “as the sudden contact with an aspect of reality that one has not known before; it is the antithesis of the acquired taste for certain landscapes or the warm feeling for places that one knows well” (Tuan, 1974p. 94). Here the recognition of beauty occurs when one encounters something unsuspected. Yet this seems to yield an incomplete account of what people refer to as beauty in nature. Our other path illuminates this conditioned possibility. Here, a part of what is pleasing to the eye inevitably is tied to some concept of the expectation of beauty. Nassauer (1997) suggests that the “picturesque was a cultural idea about how nature looks. It designated recognizable features of nature so that these features could be arranged for human enjoyment” (p. 68). As illustration, this same notion was expressed during the interviews by Howard when he said, “If I know that a park has certain things, then I know it is beautiful.” In this way, the
expectation of beauty becomes a prerequisite for the actual experience of beauty. I'll refer again to something Nicole said to illustrate this even further.

"... and even if this was the first time someone came to Cumberland Falls it would still be beautiful because they know what nature is supposed to look like."

So, despite Tuan’s evaluation of beauty as a sudden surprise, it would be wrong to ignore those instances when our expectations color what we believe a natural area should look like. When expectations and reality meet, a landscape is evaluated positively, or as beautiful. In cases of discord, landscapes are evaluated negatively, or as less than beautiful. The literature devoted to expectations realized and unrealized is more in line with the works of psychologists, and thus, I will opt out of exploring this avenue in any depth. However, I will suggest that features defining expectations of beauty may parallel features that define expectations of ethical behavior as they both depend on the promotion of some good.

This path leading in two directions (anticipated versus unexpected) informs some of the important notions of beauty when considering the words of those interviewed for this study. However, there exist other dichotomous descriptions of natural beauty. And it is through these other dichotomous descriptions that I now turn in an effort to consider some of the other subthemes within the theme of Beauty in Nature.

5.1.2 Fixed versus Fluid Beauty

In an early work on environmental ethics, John Passmore (1974) took a dim view of any aesthetic justification for preserving nature, suggesting that these justifications “rest on the presumption that our descendents will still delight in what now delights only some
of us and did not delight our predecessors" (p. 3). Passmore believes that aesthetic
appreciation of nature may well be a fad imported from older Asian perspectives of nature.
Eugene Hargrove (1989) addressed Passmore’s conception of natural beauty and morality
in his own book and offered the following assessment.

My account differs from Passmore’s in two important respects. (1) I argue that the
aesthetic attitudes toward nature that have developed in the West during the past
three centuries are too well grounded in Western Culture and science to be passed
off as a fad or as an Oriental intrusion. (2) I allow for a greater degree of diversity
in aesthetic tastes in Western civilization than Passmore (p. 79).

It seems that Passmore subscribes to a snapshot, bounded notion of beauty in nature that,
were it true, would be troublesome. Hargrove, on the other hand, allies himself with a
more fluid idea of natural beauty.

This distinction does appear to parallel the divergent paths alluded to earlier. In
this way, Passmore’s beauty suggests an expectation of beauty whereby some specific
natural object represents a type in a larger inventory of things that possess natural beauty.
Conversely, Hargrove’s beauty is more akin to the surprising notion of that sudden
encounter with unexpected.

5.1.3 Discrete versus Continuous Part II

Moving this discussion outward a bit more, these comparisons further relate to
another dichotomous view of natural beauty: as a discrete versus a continuous variable.
Beauty as a discrete variable yields two crisp categories—an object is either beautiful or it
is not. As a continuous variable, certain objects can be more or less beautiful than other
objects.

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Over 200 years ago, Immanuel Kant suggested that there are two ways to talk about aesthetics in nature: as sublime and as beautiful.

Things that are sublime ‘arouse enjoyment but with horror.’ Things that are beautiful ‘also occasion a pleasant sensation but one that is joyous and smiling.’ In order that the former impression could occur to us in due strength, we must have a feeling of the sublime, and in order to enjoy the latter well, a feeling of the beautiful. Tall oaks and lonely shadows in a sacred grove are sublime; flower beds, low hedges and trees trimmed in figures beautiful...The sublime moves, the beautiful charms (Kant, 1763/1965 p. 47).

Although Kant may paint a different picture of what many of us today would consider beautiful, his general point is noteworthy: some features in nature are, indeed, beautiful, other features may not be. Yet, those that are not beautiful are not without aesthetic value. Despite this view that embraces a range of aesthetic taste, beauty remains an either/or proposition. Recall Howard’s term ‘spectacular beauty.’ I offered an interpretation of his term that might differentiate spectacular beauty from other ‘types’ of beauty such as desolate beauty, sublime beauty, and powerful beauty. These categories, though different, yield no indication of superiority between them, nor of gradations of greater or lesser value within a category. Thus, each of these examples would itself be a discrete category. Hargrove, I believe, would appreciate this level of distinction and he would applaud a pluralist view of natural beauty—one that is open to reinterpretation and reevaluation.

Kant’s division between the sublime and the beautiful may hold less force today for the simple reason that our collective view of nature has changed much in the past two centuries. That Kant’s conception of the sublime seems slightly misplaced today suggests that even these subcategories of beauty lack any standardized definition. In this way, aesthetic justifications for preserving nature need not be conceived of as an either/or (is it...
beautiful or not), but rather as means by which many different meanings and associations can follow. Thus, different people (read: generations), contra Passmore, may find different meanings and descriptions of nature, but all existing beneath a larger umbrella of beauty. Peter Singer (1993) is likewise supportive of aesthetically-based justifications, noting that

Arguments for preservation based on the beauty of wilderness are sometimes treated as if they were of little weight because they are 'merely aesthetic'. That is a mistake. We go to great lengths to preserve the artistic treasures of earlier human civilizations (p. 271).

Although he makes no commitment to beauty as a discrete or continuous variable, by explicitly stating that beauty is relevant criterion upon which to base one's preservation ethic, Singer does endorse beauty as a more or less permanent fixture in nature.

5.1.4 Beauty that Divides versus Unites

For the most part, when people discuss aesthetics or beauty in nature, there is a definitive, bounded and easily identifiable object to which these sentiments are directed. It's almost too easy to speak of the majesty of that mountain, or the power of that waterfall or the cool beauty of that stream. Even when some people direct their accolades towards whole vistas, this simply expands the object to a broader collective, but not necessarily coincident with anything on an ecological scale. Discussing natural beauty at this scale and with these types of terms belies the expanse and connectedness of the natural world. In this sense, perhaps problems remain with the idea that natural beauty is a valid starting point.
A few people seem to have identified this shortcoming. Allen Carlson (1979) identified two main ways that people have aesthetically considered nature. In one way, what Carlson refers to as the nature-as-object model, he contends that this approach breaks apart nature into discrete and self-contained units and ignores that these parts all must be a part of a larger organic whole. Carlson likens nature appreciation to art appreciation when he writes,

If to aesthetically appreciate art we have knowledge of artistic traditions and style within those traditions, then to aesthetically appreciate nature we must have knowledge of the different environments of nature and of the systems and elements within those environments (p. 270).

Marcia Eaton (1997) takes Carlson's ideas and works in her own thoughts when she suggests that simple landscape appreciation is incomplete and possibly counterproductive to preservation efforts if it is not informed by knowledge of natural processes. Her maxim involving the twinning of knowledge and efforts directed towards preservation goes, “Knowledge redirects attention, which motivates a desire for more knowledge, which redirects attention, and so on and so on and so on” (Eaton, 1997 p. 89). This brings to mind the maxim offered by Freeman Tilden when discussing the value of environmental interpretation as a tool for instilling the desire to protect natural areas.


In the minds of Carlson, Eaton, and Tilden, hope for protecting beautiful nature rests not so much in the beauty, but rather in the unexplored knowledge that many people have yet to encounter with regards to the natural world and ecology. Eaton (1997) describes this as a knowledge-based theory of nature appreciation. On the other side of the coin, perhaps, is the concern that a decidedly cognitive approach to nature appreciation,
somehow misses the mark particularly when many people express passionate sentiments about preserving areas based solely on the affective reactions encouraged by natural beauty (Carroll, 1995). Flowing from this critique is the idea that there exist many places that do not evoke our passions in the same ways that other parts of nature do. So how to treat these objects or areas?

A couple of years ago, Wayne Ouderkirk (1999) posed the question, “Can nature be evil?” In one interpretation of this question, Ouderkirk supposes that if there is beauty, then surely there must be ugliness too, for how else would we be able recognize the visually pleasing in the first place? Callicott (1987) is concerned that “nonscenic, nonpicturesque nonlandscapes are aesthetic nonresources and thus become available for less exalted uses” (p. 160). So, if there is truth in the notion that some aspects of nature lack beauty, then how are we to treat them? Ouderkirk’s response to this question rests on the writings of St. Augustine who wrote that many natural objects should be seen as but one part of “the anointed order of things transitory” (Augustine, 1977 p. 82).

Augustine goes on to say,

Of this order the beauty does not strike us, because by our mortal frailty, we are so involved in a part of it that we cannot perceive the whole, in which these fragments that offend us are harmonized with the most accurate fitness and beauty.

So, what Ouderkirk suggests, using Augustine’s writings, is that all nature is beautiful and our failure to see that in any one instance or example is more a function of human myopia than any lack of intrinsic beauty in nature.

While Ouderkirk and Augustine were concerned with the inability to see the forest through the trees, so to speak, Kant suggested that some people are simply unable to see any beauty in nature at all. In writing about the beautiful and the sublime, Kant
(1763/1965) recognized the tendency for some people to see beauty while others see nothing at all.

The various feelings of enjoyment or of displeasure rest not so much upon the nature of the external things that arouse them as upon each person's own disposition to be moved by these pleasures or pain. This accounts for the joy of some people over things that cause aversion in others, or the amorous passion so often a puzzle to everybody, or the lively antipathy one feels toward something that to another is quite indifferent (p. 45).

Of course a number of people who were interviewed subscribed to this perspective as well, noting that what pleases them, may not please other people in the same way or even at all. Consider again the words of Beatrice and Trent:

"I don't think that my views are the only ones. I mean just because I really like going [to Cumberland Falls] and looking at the falls doesn't mean that everyone does." (Beatrice)

"... I think it's just that different people think different things are more beautiful than others. It's like they say, 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder.'" (Trent)

So if the notion of natural beauty is, at best, open to interpretation, then what avenues are available to those who would hope to hitch an environmental ethics to conceptions of beauty? I sense that when viewing natural beauty in this light, the question does not lend itself well to a clear and forceful answer. This uncertainty emerged in both the narratives and in the literature. Allen Carlson (1981) and Eaton (1997) may again provide guidance. Carlson suggests we pay greater attention to the many forces that contributed to us being able to appreciate natural beauty in the first place. And Marcia Muelder Eaton's intention is to close the gap between the aesthetically beautiful and the ecologically beautiful, because she sees this gap as counterproductive to any widespread agreement on what beautiful nature is.
5.1.5 Reviewing the Beauty Dichotomies

Up to this point, beauty in the nature has been considered from a number of competing perspectives. We first approached the topic of natural beauty as either a response to the expected definition of what nature should be like or as a response to the unexpected revealing of a previously ‘hidden’ part of nature. In this dichotomy, our evaluations of beauty in nature rests upon one of two personal preconditions. Either we suddenly encounter the unexpected—letting nature take us by surprise, or we approach nature with some formalized expectation of beauty; such that when this expectation is realized, then we recognize beauty in nature. Secondly, Passmore’s and Hargrove’s visions of nature respectively painted beauty as a snapshot and as a fluid and changing property. If beauty in nature is more of a snapshot nature, then this might suggest that we hold some expectation of what beauty in nature is and should be. If, however, natural beauty is more fluid and changing across peoples and times, then we might find ourselves opening up to the unanticipated and anxiously awaiting that sudden surprise. Thirdly, beauty in nature was considered as both a discrete and as a continuous variable. In one sense, any environmental ethic that rests on discrete natural beauty would demand fairly small set of obligations. If ‘A’ is beautiful then it requires us to do ‘B’ or ‘C’ or some other clear prescription. On the other hand, an environmental ethics that follows a continuous perspective of natural beauty may require more complicated directives, since some areas could be said to be more or less beautiful than others and thus there might exist varying degrees of commitments. And lastly, natural beauty was discussed as it applies to specific parts of nature and as it applies to much larger collectives, such as the landscape or ecosystem. The inability to see the forest for the trees seems to be an apt
analogy for this perspective as an ethic directed at incomplete collections may be easier to focus on, but less useful in engineering worthwhile change in the same way that animal rights/liberation too falls short as a comprehensive environmental ethic (Callicott, 1980). What is needed is clarification on how we can use the concept of natural beauty to guide us towards an environmental ethics.

5.1.6 Letting Beauty be the Guide

Noting that there exist some distinctions in the way that natural beauty is conceived of seems to offer little guidance to how humans should treat areas of natural beauty, in the normative sense. In other words, there is not a clear progression between natural beauty and environmental ethics. Further, it is not a foregone conclusion that because something is beautiful that it therefore deserves some degree of ethical treatment. O'Neil (2000) makes this point when he contends that things which “can be objects of aesthetic appreciation... cannot properly be foci of moral concern” (p. 183). Nassauer (1997) suggests that aesthetic appreciation by most people is divorced from moral requirements representing just ‘trivial decoration’ and ‘social conformity’. And Callicott (1987b) notes the tension between an obligatory type ethics and beauty, when he says,

An ethic is onerous, burdensome—according to Leopold’s own definition, ‘a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence.’ Beauty on the other hand, is attractive... Duty is demanding—often something to shirk; beauty is seductive—something to love and cherish (p. 158).

What is needed then is some idea or suggestion that both beauty and ethics can lean on. As it turns out, there may be such a keystone after all.
Over 150 years ago, the landscape artist, Thomas Cole (1836/1965) remarked that “there is in the human mind an almost inseparable connexion between the beautiful and the good, so that if we contemplate the one the other seems present” (p. 99). And nineteenth century French author, Stendhal, remarked that “Beauty is the promise of happiness.” So we are left with the possibility that beauty is generally accepted as a good thing and something to be valued, yet by themselves, there is little to anchor these suppositions to a moral commitment. In an attempt to respond to this disconnect, I’d suggest that there exist at least three different options to build a bridge between beauty and ethics. And while all are anthropocentric at their core, the potential for securing protection for areas of natural beauty seems quite strong. First, there are those responsibilities and obligations that we have to our fellow humans with regard to respecting their preferences for beauty, particularly if these preferences promote other ethical ideals such as self-reflection, serenity, cultivation of a generous spirit, and general eudaimonia. A second option hinges on wielding beauty as tool for evaluating health of ecosystems, landscapes, watersheds, etc. And thirdly, there is the suggestion that current generations have obligations to respect the wishes of past generations when those wishes are made explicit. In this last instance, where previous generations have made the commitment to protect natural beauty, so we inherit this commitment as well.

Our first option suggests that natural beauty may be a valuable reminder of, or even a guide to, human flourishing. However, before defending this suggestion, I’ll lay my foundation on beauty as a pervasive and ubiquitous quality in nature. One of Howard’s many thoughtful comments during the interviews supports this view.
“... when you’re with someone else and they say, ‘Isn’t that beautiful?’ No one ever disagrees with them. So that tells me that some things in nature are beautiful to everybody no matter where you go or who you are talking to.”

And these two comments from John and Nicole,

“T’s just nature you know. Nature is beautiful and so wherever you see nature you see something beautiful.” (John)

I don’t think you can have just one definition of beautiful. Nature is beautiful and nature looks really different in different places, like the jungle and the desert and Cumberland Falls all look different, but they’re all beautiful too.” (Nicole)

Yet beauty may not be simple window dressing, a passive and passing visual experience. I am not alone in suggesting that beauty, wherever it is found, carries with it a force that demands attention and commitment. And it should come as no surprise that natural beauty has been described as an agent for bringing out the best in humanity (Nash, 1982). John Muir (1901/1990) noted that the hunger for natural beauty “may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike” (p. 96). Inherent in these views is the sense that the beauty, resident in the natural world elevates us all. Further, considering natural beauty in these terms, shifts the focus of the argument away from some algorithm or formula where the output is some quantitative assessment of visual preference (Jubenville & Twight, 1993 p. 168).

Beauty must necessarily be a broad category because it spills into so many different aspects of life. Not only do we use the term beautiful to describe landscapes and other parts of nature, but we use the term beautiful to describe our spouses and our children as if beauty in these cases meant the appropriation of ‘love’ as a visual property. We use the term beautiful to describe art, music and drama in the sense that all of those endeavors
should strive towards some perfect end. ‘Beautiful’ takes on qualities of excellence when we describe efforts on the baseball diamond, basketball court, or soccer pitch.

In reference to nature, some use the term beauty to describe our admiration and appreciation “of the achievement of complex form that is entirely unplanned” (Hettinger & Throop, 1999 p. 14). And recall that Tuan (1974) suggested that “Beauty is felt as the sudden contact with an aspect of reality that one has not known before…” (p. 94). And for some, beauty in nature seems to speak to Augustine’s belief in Divine perfection with a curious Panglossian type optimism where “All events are interconnected in this best of all possible worlds…” (Voltaire, 1761/1962). Therefore, with beauty holding court over many different aspects of life, there is no sense in limiting its meaning with regard to the way we speak of the natural world. And it is through this open-endedness that natural beauty can become something approaching universal appeal. Following which, if beauty in nature is generally conceived of as a universal good, then surely it is not a leap to extend this acknowledgement to an ethical commitment to protect what many or most people believe to be beautiful. By this measure, we accept that many people believe in nature’s beauty and in some way benefit from it. Our hard or soft obligations to protect natural beauty then would follow from our entrenched obligations to promote the welfare and encourage the flourishing of others.

The second option for bridging beauty and ethics returns to a pragmatic approach which considers beauty as a proxy for a healthy nature. Marcia Muelder Eaton (1997) authored an essay that speaks to this type of bridge. In her essay, she begins with a simple description of the aesthetic—as “anything that draws attention to intrinsic properties of objects and events” (p. 88). Thus, beauty is intrinsically good. Similarly, health is also
intrinsically good, no one need offer a justification why health is good—it simply is. In describing picturesque landscapes, Nassauer (1997) notes that “the picturesque has been so successful in becoming popular culture that scenic landscapes are often assumed to be ecologically healthy” (p. 68). This statement is clearly a *non sequitur* in which beauty should not be an indicator of health in all cases. Callicott (1987b) illustrates this when he bemoans the pleasant appearance of invasive vegetation such as “the attractive purple flower of centaurea or the vivid orange of hawkweed” (pp. 162-163). Our Montana landscape suffers the scourge of purple knapweed. Conversely, blackened landscapes following a natural fire might be drastically unappealing to many people; however, there may be much health resident in this seemingly barren landscape.

Of course, the embedded tradition of Aldo Leopold’s (1949) Land Ethic has securely hitched notions of beauty to ecological concepts of stability and integrity. It matters little if someone is a student of Leopold’s Land Ethic or not; beauty has been and continues to be an indicator of ecological health. In the interviews, Stuart, the former forestry student and U.S. Forest Service employee cited Leopold’s Land Ethic almost verbatim. Mary, a high school graduate who has lived in rural southeastern Kentucky her whole life, similarly identifies an absence of natural beauty as an indication of some ecological problem. Yet, despite the uncertainty of using beauty as a proxy for health, we might ask the question, how did these two come to be paired in the first place?

I sense an evolutionary explanation to this pairing as humans have come to appreciate the bounty that beautiful landscapes provide. In some respects this reflects E. O. Wilson’s biophilia hypothesis, which posits a genetic predisposition to affiliate with life (Wilson, 1993). Although, biophilia is not perfectly coincident with an inherited tendency
to prefer natural beauty, there does exist a connection. This connection is noted by Michael Soule (1993), when he recalls the “ultimate object of love is the beautiful” and biophilia is the love of life. Allen Carlson (1981), too, offers what I believe is an unintended endorsement of the biophilia hypothesis when he writes,

> We do not aesthetically appreciate simply with our five senses, but rather with an important part of our whole emotional and psychological selves. Consequently, what and how we aesthetically appreciate cannot but play a role in the shaping of our emotional and psychological being. This in turn helps to determine what we think and do, and think is correct for ourselves and others to think and do. In short, our aesthetic appreciation is a significant factor in shaping and forming our ethical views (p. 24).

The potential of the biophilia hypothesis rests upon an inborn propensity to appreciate certain things in our ecological setting. Appreciating these things may likewise encourage an evolutionary advantage. Without delving too deeply into the biophilia hypothesis, I’ll simply suggest that it is within the bounds of reason to consider human conceptions of natural beauty as derivative of our evolutionary heritage. Several of the interviewees explicitly disavowed any subscription to evolutionary theory; however, their critiques interestingly offer some endorsement of an evolutionary explanation for the pairing of beauty with health. Debbie at one point mentioned that God doesn’t make ugly things, by extension, God made all of nature beautiful. Debbie later made this comment,

> “God made everything on earth and He wouldn’t want us to destroy his creation. I don’t believe in evolution or anything like that, but everybody knows that food webs are really complicated and if you break just a corner of it you can break the whole thing.”

In Debbie’s perspective, health and beauty are tied together, and despite her distinct separation of evolutionary theory from the natural world, she leaves the door open as to
why humans associate beauty and nature beyond an explanation involving the supernatural.

Of course, this biophilia hypothesis makes little distinction between some of the different kinds of beauty that I mentioned previously: sublime beauty, spectacular beauty, desolate beauty, etc. All of these types of beauty would be equally appealing so long as some degree of life was resident in the landscapes. Recall Kant’s distinction between the beautiful and the sublime, where the beautiful was almost tame and garden-like and the sublime was frightening and mysterious. Hargrove (1989) follows Kant’s conception of the sublime in an evolutionary view of beauty.

... a person who appreciated the sublime could not look at the world as a place created solely for human use or perhaps even for human purposes at all. In this sense the sublime signified the end of the age in which natural objects were evaluated exclusively in terms of human uses and needs (p. 87).

And later, in discussing how sublime beauty seemed to erase the need for a human evaluator from the equation,

While the earlier conception of time in terms of human history was picturesque, geologic time was sublime (p. 88).

The third possible avenue for bridging beauty and ethics rests upon the perspective that all generations have obligations to respect the wishes of past generations when these wishes are made explicit. In this sense, the responsibility to protect natural beauty stems from a type of public acknowledgement that such and such was valued by this generation in the past and therefore our generation has a duty to continue to honor that value. In tying each of the four themes of my research together, I will explore the notion of respecting the wishes of past generations in reference to the other three themes, A Discussion of The Responsibility to ‘The Other’ and A Discussion of Public Lands.
Before embarking on that discussion, let us consider what we can take away from this discussion on beauty. Further, how can we answer the question first proffered at the outset of this section devoted to beauty? We began this discussion with various interpretations of beauty in nature: anticipated/unexpected, fixed/fluid, discrete/continuous, etc. Clearly there is much variety in the general concept of beauty. And if the notion of natural beauty is, at best, open to interpretation, then what avenues are available to those who would hope to hitch an environmental ethics to conceptions of beauty? Stated another way, is beauty a necessary and sufficient condition for an environmental ethics designed to protect natural areas? Necessary—yes, sufficient—no. It seems that however we conceive of beauty in nature, it is supremely important to many people; yet beauty, by itself does not take us far enough. And there may exist the persistent caution that beauty, as a wholly human concept, imprisons us in an exclusively anthropocentric environmental ethics.

However, non-anthropocentrists may find comfort in beauty as well. Recall the shared visions held by Carlson, Eaton and Tilden. All three of them seem to allow beauty to be a guide, leading all of us towards a more heightened awareness which in turn encourages greater attention and devotion leading ultimately to a more complete ecological understanding and appreciation for the natural world. So beauty is a conveniently necessary condition upon which we find ourselves compelled to discover more of the wonder of nature. It is from discovering this wonder that non-anthropocentrists may find their promise. Because although beauty is in some respects necessary to achieve a better understanding of nature, it is not the sufficient condition upon which any rigorous environmental ethics can survive. Therefore some other
conditions are needed. I believe we may find another of these conditions in the following
discussion devoted to the second theme of the research: Responsibilities to ‘The Other.’

5.2 A Discussion of The Responsibility to ‘The Other’

The modern tradition of Cartesian dualism has been called into question a number
of times in the post-modern era. However, identifying the ‘us’ and the ‘them’ remains a
common method of description and categorization. A guiding question we might use for
this subsection may be expressed in two parts: A) “Do we have ethical responsibilities to
non-humans?” and B) “If ‘A,’ then, what form do these responsibilities take?” The
environmental ethical ‘Other’, existing as an object to which humans have direct
obligations, resists easy identification (Rolston III, 1999). It is this resistance that proved
most telling in the hesitance that most of those interviewed showed when asked to
consider some type of obligatory ethic directed towards nature. That is, the interviewees
had difficulty in identifying clear ethical prescriptions directed towards non-humans.

Despite this hesitancy, nearly all environmental ethicists contend that nature, in
general or in some specific form, should rightly be considered one of the others to whom
we owe ethical obligations. (The environmental pragmatists, as discussed in Chapter 2 are
the obvious exception to this approach.) However, should we attempt to follow some
non-anthropocentric ethics, where should this journey begin? Most typically non-
anthropocentric ethics begin with the presumption of intrinsic value in non-human things.
Once we acknowledge some sort of intrinsic value, the human responsibilities to others
expands to obligations beyond just those owed to other humans. And our obligations to non-humans become direct rather than just indirect.

5.2.1 Intrinsic and Instrument Value

As previously presented, it has been argued that this intrinsic value resides in the possession of interests (Singer, 1993), all life, the biocentric perspective (Taylor, 1998), and in collections and relationships of things, such as ecosystems, the ecocentric perspective (Rolston III, 1987, 1988). Barrett (1999) notes that,

Ecocentrists share biocentrists' belief in the intrinsic worth of non-human elements of the biosphere. By emphasizing interactions, however, ecocentrists also share anthropocentrists' instrumental valuation of the natural environment. Ecocentrism thus shares important common ground with both biocentrism and anthropocentrism, even if proponents of each sometimes clash (p. 33).

Reading ecocentrism this way seems to blur the line between an anthropocentric environmental ethics and a non-anthropocentric one. To reframe the nature of this blurring is the idea that instrumental value may not be entirely separate from or at odds with intrinsic value. Indeed, these two conceptions of value may travel in concert rather than each one on its own solitary trek. What is generally agreed upon is the notion that nature does have some value, so perhaps this is a worthy starting point. Stated another way, nature is not axiologically neutral (Ouderkirk, 1999).

Assuming nature has some value, what responsibilities flow from this? On this task, the options are less clear. In order to find these responsibilities it seems we must again try to determine if nature is properly an object worthy of direct moral consideration. As a moral realist, Rolston believes that there is no doubt to the assumption that values truly exist in the world beyond the human ability to evaluate. Yet, Kellert and Wilson
(1996), with their attention to biophilia tend towards a softer, or more human-centered moral realism. In their view value inherently exists, but not in the objects themselves, but within the essences of the evaluators. Their moral realism suggests that humans, through the process of evolution, have become genetically predisposed to appreciate nature.

Bissell (1999) summarizes the position of Kellert and Wilson in that, they believe “that environmental ethics based on either altruistic or anthropocentric considerations alone fails to account for all human values and fails to recognize all of the values represented in nature” (p. 215).

Of course, others, such as Norton (1996), Light and Katz (1996) are quite hesitant to recognize any obscure or not-readily-apparent intrinsic value in the natural object or the inborn capacity to sense value in humans. On one extreme, environmentalists such as Rolston would have us recognize intrinsic value in nature and honor direct duties to the natural world, either in whole or in part. On the other extreme, environmental pragmatists would have us continue to recognize human-centered values and perhaps expand our notion of these values such that we assume many more indirect duties to the natural world. In this respect, issues of environmental justice may cause us to care more for the environment such that the basic rights of humans are not compromised.

There were brief and fleeting hints of intrinsic value expressed by some of those interviewed. Beatrice made this comment,

“We’re supposed to have respect for all life.”

And, Sylvia expressed this sentiment about the wildlife that lives in and around Cumberland Falls,

“They’ve got just as much right to be there... maybe more, as we do.”
Yet, neither of these comments offers an unqualified endorsement of intrinsic value in nature. Much more common were comments that expressly identified that nature was here for humans to use however we see fit so long as our behaviors do not harm other people. And from that perspective it follows that the duties we have to nature are really only duties to other people with regards to how nature is seen or experienced by others.

O’Neill (2000) pointedly notes that “many environmentalists overlook an important distinction between intrinsic value and moral standing and attribute the latter to natural objects when only the former is warranted” (p. 185). If moral standing is not so perfectly paired with intrinsic value as O’Neill believes, then perhaps the energies directed at securing only direct duties to nature, may be overstated. Of course it has been suggested that this distinction between direct and indirect duties may itself be a non-issue in the end.

... this characterization of anthropocentric ethics requires an important qualification: certainly there is nothing in principle which prevents a human-centered ethic (an ethic which excludes nature from the domain of moral standing) from proposing human duties to the environment—and in this sense, nature would not be beyond the boundaries of ethical concern. Of course, these would not be direct duties to nature (we can only have direct duties to those with moral standing), but still we might well think that our direct duties to the human species demands indirect duties to the environment, since how we behave towards the environment obviously will affect the quality of life of our own species (Berthold-Bond, 2000 p. 8).

Within the scope of this research, anthropocentric environmental ethics seem less suspicious, or at least it exhibits greater, articulated clarity than any non-anthropocentric ethics. Where there seems to be such little support for direct duties to nature, I suggest that environmental ethics be viewed through two different lenses. These lenses describe two broad, sweeping categories whereby the fundamental bases of our ‘Responsibilities to ‘The Other’” can be examined in a different light. We might conceive of ethics as either
entirely culturally constructed or as predominantly evolutionarily-based. The implication for this distinction is that our responsibilities to nature may be dynamic and changing over time in the sense that they are culturally derived or they may be more static in the sense that they are evolutionarily-based. Recall that many people described ethics and/or morality as an interpretation or an outgrowth of their religious perspective. In order to accommodate this perspective, I’ll consider those people for whom ethics was coincident with religion to view ethics through a culturally-derived lens.

5.2.2 As a Purely Cultural Construct

Beginning with ethics as a cultural derivative, a host of social constructions come to the fold. Even focusing just on environmental ethics, rather than ethics in general, it seems the web of social constructions is too tangled to discern relationships and to which anchors people ultimately attach concepts. Peterson (1999) noted that “nature can be understood as socially constructed in two senses: in different culture’s interpretations of the nonhuman world and in the physical ways that humans have shaped even areas that they think of as ‘natural’” (p. 339). Social constructionism is not the focus of this dissertation, nor even this chapter, section or subsection. It is offered only as the briefest of illustrations on the difficulty in determining some foundation upon which an environmental ethics can rest. If, indeed, social construction challenges the true-ness of nature or the wild or wildlife, then how can we properly be directed to protect those things which may have no real meaning beyond what we somewhat arbitrarily assign? Social construction of anything, is ultimately an exercise in both epistemology and ontology. Epistemologically, Meno’s paradox questions how it is possible to seek
knowledge of something if one does not know precisely what one is looking for; and if one does recognize it, then one already knew it and did not need to seek knowledge of it in the first place. So searching for some truth or knowledge about nature simply begs the question, “But, what is ‘nature’ anyway?” This, of course, leads to an ontological account of nature whereby we ultimately question if ‘nature’ is something real in the world at all. A less troubling path might begin with the question whether we are each contemplating the same ‘nature’, as differences at this level might yield different commitments. Hargrove (1989) answers this latter question stating, “the ontological argument for the preservation of nature… is primarily aesthetic and ethical, not metaphysical. It is not intended to prove that nature exists, which is taken as a given, but to show that humans have a duty to act so as to ensure the continuation of nature in its appropriate, natural form” (p. 192). All of this suggests that in hoping to determine the responsibilities for some other we ultimately have to understand the nature of that other.

So, social constructionism is one puzzle that a culturally-derived environmental ethics must attempt to solve. Of course Hargrove (1989) sees no reason to quibble about social constructions of nature, his responsibilities to ‘the other’ are once again grounded in beauty. Simply stated, his take is that any ethical requirement or duty is designed to promote some good. And “the duty specifically to promote and preserve natural beauty arises out of the recognition that not only artistic beauty but also natural beauty constitutes an aesthetic good that makes up part of the general good that exists and ought to exist in the world” (p. 192).

Yet, Hargrove’s position is not entirely convincing as it is not prima facie apparent that natural beauty is everywhere or even universally agreed upon. So the social
constructionism hurdle remains; and this is no small challenge, given the host of meanings and values that seem to be firmly affixed to all parts of nature including the whole. Anna Peterson (1999) refers to a work by Adrienne Rich (1994) in which Rich describes the simple practice of referring to a specific bird by the name of Great Blue Heron. Peterson (1999) writes, “When humans put a name on something, they usually endow it with a host of other characteristics as well” (p. 339). And there is the belief that cultural expectations of the way that nature should appear has led to “a contrived and frequently misleading nature” (Nassauer, 1997 p. 68). Without a doubt, nature in whole or in part carries with it so many value-laden terms and ideas that we can scarcely hope to identify them all or even understand completely how they color our views.

Another challenge in the culturally-derived view of ethics concerns the ever-expanding knowledge that we have been steadily building about the natural world. One hundred years ago, we understood little of natural processes. Fifty years ago, most people had never heard of ecology. Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* ushered in the widespread use of the term environmentalist. And even fifteen years ago, our degree of understanding of processes at the molecular level, pales to what we now know. “Many of the details of the ways in which individual landscapes work are not only inconspicuous, they are invisible” (Eaton, 1997 p. 92). In turn, some of our environmental ethics seem to lose their vigor as we become more aware of the complexity and the important, but sometimes very distant relations between things. My example here rests upon the traditional notions of animal-rights and other individualistic environmental ethics. Singer’s utilitarianism and Tom Regan’s rights-based argument both offer fairly clear guidance about what is right and wrong. However, their focus on the individual allows real harm towards collectives. In
this way, Singer, Regan and other individually-based ethicists, seem content to isolate
good/bad and right/wrong only as it applies to individuals and avoid the complications that
accompany the perspective of seeing all individuals as members of a larger community. In
identifying appropriate responsibilities to non-human others we’ve drawn our line in the
sand, but we know come to find out that our line excludes more than it includes and for
shaky reasons. Rolston (1988), an admitted ethical holist, believes that ethical sins against
types are much more than just compounded sins against many, many tokens—or
individuals of that species. Yet Rolston too is not above criticism, his spooky Holism fails
to resonate with many because it is so hard to envision duties to something that resists
convenient identification.

Where does this leave us? First, the social construction of nature raises questions
about our ability to prescribe both direct and indirect duties to the natural world. Despite
efforts to dismiss social constructionism as a diversionary intellectual pursuit without
much applied merit, so long as disagreements persist in terms of what nature is, we will
find ourselves disagreeing on what nature should be. Secondly, our purely culturally
derived environmental ethics offers a flexibility to incorporate new information and keep
pace with scientific understandings of the natural world. Yet, this flexibility produces less
vigorous prescriptions as we never know what tomorrow will bring that might shed more
light our understandings of the environment on new or different duties to the natural
world.

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5.2.3 The Evolutionary Turn

Do our ethics transcend our human existence or are ethics simply a convenient tool? This question arose in a couple of contexts during the narratives when people would suggest that ethics are either immutable or that they are simply spatially and temporally negotiated rules of conduct. Definitively answering this question is well beyond the scope of this dissertation, but I will reaffirm that ethics from an evolutionary standpoint need not be counter to reproductive success and thus an evolutionary explanation is not without merit. Callicott (1989) believes that ethics “arise in association with the survival advantages of society or community” (p. 165). In this respect, ethics do not transcend humanity, but are, perhaps, coincident with it. Yet, as evolution simply means change, ethics may similarly change as necessitated by selection pressures. Kerr (2000) describes this idea further,

According to Darwin and other evolutionary thinkers, selection pressures can account only for some sympathetic feelings among humans with whom one lives in community, possibly only one’s own kin. How does Callicott justify the more extensive sympathy required by an ecocentric ethics? Because the sentiments are tendencies, Callicott explains, additional knowledge gained from ecology as to what constitutes true community will ‘reveal new relations among objects which, once revealed, stir our ancient centers of moral feeling (p. 90).

The evolutionary turn to ethics seems readily apparent in E.O. Wilson’s biophilia hypothesis. It is similarly apparent in Leopold’s A Sand County Almanac and in Callicott’s conception of environmental ethics which is heavily informed by Leopold and Darwin. Callicott (1987b) describes his ethics as blended with Leopold’s through the lens of evolutionary theory, “ecology, as Leopold pictures is, is the biological science which runs at right angles to evolution. Evolution lends to perception a certain depth, ‘that incredible sweep of millennia’ while ecology provides it breadth” (p. 162). Yet, while
ecology and evolutionary theory support one another, an ethic derived from one or both of these concepts runs headlong into one of the persistent concerns in environmental ethics. That values cannot derive from facts poses a tricky challenge for environmental philosophers. Environmental philosophers seem to search for an elusive but steady footing upon the shifting sands of scientific knowledge. The philosophical charge of naturalistic fallacy bemoans the rapid discoveries in ecology and evolution. Our facts and values, no longer so distinct, seem to advance together with each new discovery. Yet, this means the scientific canvassing of the natural world seems to leave few stable moral footholds. Despite this challenge, if ethics are evolutionarily-based, then we might presume them to be static, or at least more invariant than culturally-derived ethics.

5.2.4 Erasing Or Ignoring the Naturalistic Fallacy?

In her book, *Living in Integrity*, Laura Westra (1998) suggests that “nothing can be moral that is in conflict with the physical realities of our existence or cannot be seen to fit within the natural laws of our environment in order to support the primacy of integrity” (p. 24). The challenge of erasing the naturalistic fallacy is rooted in the separation of fact from value, of is from ought, and of description from prescription. Kerr (2000) is committed to erasing the naturalistic fallacy when he suggests that, “much nonanthropocentric theory has committed the naturalistic fallacy because it has deployed various forms of empirical naturalism, and that to meet this challenge nonanthropocentrism must employ a form of meta-physically based nonanthropocentrism” (p. 85). The modern project, which began so forcefully with Rene Descartes’ separation of mind and body, echoes today in the canyons of environmental philosophy, where the
way the world is, inevitably informs the way(s) we believe the world should be. I contend that the naturalistic fallacy is an outmoded byproduct of Cartesian dualism which countless post-modern critiques have so thoroughly addressed. Thus, perhaps the mental gymnastics required for erasing the fallacy have been, at best, misdirected effort. Rather, might the naturalistic fallacy be ignored from the perspective of environmental ethics where facts and values seem to reveal themselves simultaneously and where indirect duties following an anthropocentric ethic require no such fact/value distinctions? Or better, is it fair to suggest that the naturalistic fallacy may have merit in social ethics but not in environmental ethics? I offer this question based on the difference between the “is” in human behavior and the “is” in the natural world. The naturalistic fallacy may be a valid concern in social ethics where human behavior is the fact of the matter, it may not be a concern in environmental ethics where the “is” of nature rests beyond the realm of morality. In other words, humans can be separated from the natural world, but we cannot be separated from humanity.

Rolston (1975) notes that “what is ethically puzzling, and exciting, in the marriage and mutual transformation of ecological description and evaluation is that here an ‘ought’ is not so much derived from an ‘is’ as discovered simultaneously with it” (p. 78). This notion not only sheds new light on our responsibilities to other, but whether we are moral agents at all. This latter perspective will be discussed in the final section of this chapter; however, here I will say that moral agency seems less clear-cut when questions continue to arise in reference to when, if, and how values arise in the natural world. I will restrict my argument here to the suggestion that distinguishing facts from values with respect to the natural world may not be all that important after all.
Recall that few people interviewed for this study were able to articulate much in the way of direct duties to the natural world, either in whole or in part. However, many people were quick to identify and recognize the duties that we owe to our fellow humans—these being indirect duties to the natural world. It just so happens that how we treat the environment, quite often affects other people, sometimes in negative ways. From this perspective, it matters little which comes first in the natural world: facts or values. Thus it would follow whatever I determine as being an environmentally ethical good or right course of action, will ultimately be a byproduct of my behaviors directed towards other humans. Insofar as I act to protect and preserve nature in an effort to promote a quality of life among members of my own species, I am doing what I should be doing. Yet this still seems to violate the naturalistic fallacy. In responding to charges of committing the naturalistic fallacy, noted moral development theorist, Lawrence Kohlberg (1971a) offered this response,

The third form of the 'naturalistic fallacy which we are committing is that of asserting that any conception of what moral judgment ought to be must rest on an adequate conception of what it is. The fact that our conception of the moral 'works' empirically is important for its philosophic adequacy (p. 222).

Kohlberg's contention is that the fallacy will inevitably be violated at some stage, but his point is that we must begin our moral assumptions somewhere. Were Kohlberg an ecocentric, environmental ethicist, I believe he would suggest that no environmental ethic can begin without first understanding the nature of the environment in all its magnificent complexity. On the flip-side, if Kohlberg subscribed to a more anthropocentric, environmental ethics, he might likewise continue to dismiss this aspect of the naturalistic
fallacy by claiming that identifying those indirect duties to nature is fundamental if we are to promote courses of action that are ethically good for our fellow humans.

Of course, the concern raised by the legion of non-anthropocentric environmental ethicists remains. Anthropocentric ethical approaches offer little guidance in how to deal with environmental harms where there are no evident human interests. Additionally, these same ethical approaches fail to recognize the unfortunate byproduct of a purely utilitarian outlook. Traditional utilitarian ethics prescribe that actions should promote aggregate good or minimize aggregate bad across all members of the moral community. Yet, one’s good may conflict with another’s bad—this is especially true in instances of environmental conflict where ‘good’ and ‘bad’ inevitably expand their meanings beyond simple human evaluations. Similarly, Kant’s deontological ethics as expressed with his Categorical Imperative provides little guidance for resolving cases of conflicting duties. More, there is the question whether something as obtuse as “nature” can indeed claim rights at all (Perhac Jr., 1999).

With the preceding discussion, the challenge of the naturalistic fallacy, I propose that the naturalistic fallacy be dismissed as foundationally unimportant. This is not to say that it does not hold sway over other ethical debates, but understanding the fundamental nature of things (in the most descriptive sense) is essential to mapping appropriate prescriptions. However, we are still left with how this applies to ‘The Other’ in the sense of those non-humans to whom we may owe direct duties.

‘The Other’ remains a confusing notion. The tension between individually-based ethics and holistic ethics (as described in Chapter 2) introduced this confusion. And as we are left with no firm answers on ‘The Other,’ we end up questioning what, if any,
responsibilities we might have with regards to this other. Ignoring the naturalistic fallacy goes some way towards clearing the waters, as we need not be unnecessarily constrained in our efforts to do the right thing by the suggestion that we've simply used ecology or evolutionary biology to tell us what that right thing is in the normative sense. A number of those interviewed did seem to ignore the naturalistic fallacy:

“That's just the way nature works—the web. We're supposed to make sure that we keep the web the way it should be.” (Ed)

“I would say that evolution kind of tells us what's good to do. I know that stuff is evolving all the time so we shouldn't mess that up.” (Don)

“I think you've got to know about science and biology... uh ecology, because then you'll know what's okay to do and what's not.” (Michael)

With these excerpts and others like them, it seems that many people subscribe to the idea that ‘The Other’ in some sense is non-human. In the instance of these three quotes, ‘The Other’ in fact seems to be a general composite of nature; yet it does not follow that this composite can be found on equal footing with other humans. From this follow two important points. First, that humans do indeed have some responsibilities to this non-human other; however, just what those responsibilities are remain unclear. And what is more unclear is if those duties are direct towards nature or only indirect as they are meant to protect other humans from harm. Secondly, these responsibilities are knowable; they are not left unrevealed, nor are they confounded amid other ethical prescriptions. Despite the uncertainty of ethical prescription and direct/indirect duties, there exist some obvious choices.

As mentioned previously, a number of people referenced some Divine plan as the authority which outlines our responsibilities to nature. However, this acquiescence to God
need not weaken an environmental ethic. It is the factual knowledge of ecology and evolution which ultimately gives strength to the 'shoulds' and 'oughts' of the people mentioned above, not the belief that some higher power created this planet and all life upon it. In this respect, those responsibilities we have to 'The Other' speak to the theist and atheist alike.

From the discussion related to this theme, it does appear we have responsibilities to non-human human nature; however, it is less clear if these responsibilities are in the form of direct duties to the natural world or if they're simply indirect as how we treat nature inevitably affects how we treat other humans and ourselves. Ignoring the naturalistic fallacy seems the most prudential path we might take towards resolving some of the philosophical challenges of identifying these responsibilities to nature. And this ignoring is not without foundation. Bernard Williams (1985) makes a circumspect case for ignoring the naturalistic fallacy in all ethics as a matter of linguistics. That is, Williams feels the naturalistic fallacy is more a challenge to defining what is good than anything else. And in this respect ignoring the naturalistic fallacy allows us to use beauty, as something good and worthy of protection, as a description that encourages a prescription—or in other words we've derived an 'ought' from an 'is.' Therefore, we can at once use the necessary condition of natural beauty as a reason for an environmental ethics and whether or not this reason violates the naturalistic fallacy is unimportant. But more valuable is the connection we now have to protecting ecological and evolutionary processes, because here too we need not worry about deriving an 'ought' from an 'is.'
5.3 A Discussion of Public Lands

It is difficult to offer an objective treatment of any topic, when the topic itself is so thoroughly wrapped in meanings, assumptions, and perhaps even its own ethical directives. Public lands, specifically park lands, seem to be rich with meanings, good and bad and right and wrong. I've no doubt that at least some of what I had originally hoped to study, was confounded by the nature of publicly-held lands. A great deal has been written about public lands and from many different angles. My discussion here will concern public lands as an ethical object—a perspective that appears to have been largely ignored, notwithstanding the obvious treatment of Garrett Hardin's *Tragedy of the Commons*. However, as will be shown, public lands represent a significant assumption of environmental ethics.

Within the notion of public lands lay a myriad of value-laden concepts: ownership, gift, commodity, utility, and image. Environmental ethics weave throughout these concepts and others that describe public lands. A guiding question for this section might be, “How do public lands inform our responsibilities to others?” In order to focus this discussion a bit more, I'll partition this section into various subsections that roughly parallel the subthemes recognized in the interviews.

5.3.1 Intent of Public Lands

Few people are privy to the legislative history responsible for the creation of various public lands. With the exception of small, municipally-owned resources, the original intent of the creation of public land may be entirely hidden. As a result, ethical prescriptions may be created *ex nihilo* without any reference to the wishes and desires of
the people involved in setting aside the land in public trust. Or these ethical prescriptions
may simply be presumed from the ‘signs’ and practices of managers who are themselves
products of that original legislative narrative. Heyd (2000) suggests that

“an ethic of protecting the sustained use of certain features of the natural
environment (commonly called ‘natural resources’) arises through social learning
triggered by some availability crisis; the ethic, though is maintained only as long as
communal control of the territory is a given” (p. 419).

This observation is worth further review. Heyd offers up a perspective on the origin and
continuance of an environmental ethic. Without delving into the arena of moral realism,
Heyd could probably make a decent case for ethics as a natural outcome of scarcity. In
this respect, environmental ethics arise when it becomes clear that the continued existence
of some object, or perhaps, collection of objects, is threatened. Heyd goes on to suggest
that this ethic is perpetuated so long as those who created the ethic continue to dictate
how the resources are used. This latter point has direct bearing on how public lands factor
into this equation.

By definition, public lands have a somewhat nebulous concept of control—as in
who controls this land? Stated another way it is not obvious where the decisions on how
to manage a specific area come from. The public? The resource managers? The
government agency that ‘owns’ the land such as the USFS or the NPS? At the federal
level, most Americans can identify that they, themselves, do ‘own’ or control the national
parks or forests in the sense that they are citizens of the country. Similarly state
ownership speaks to a smaller constituency yet the same fuzzy notions of ownership
remain at the state level as well. Cumberland Falls is a state park, controlled by the
Commonwealth of Kentucky. Yet Kentucky residents are not privileged above non-
residents. Nor are non-Americans discriminated against when visiting National Parks. All visitors, regardless of where their home currently is, are entitled to the same degree of hospitality and concern. So, if everyone, to some extent, controls the resources at Cumberland Falls and Yellowstone, then where does the ethic come from? Heyd (2000) draws this conclusion,

In conditions of open access to outsiders, the conservation ethic tends to fall apart, although it is restorable if community control over the territory is reestablished (p. 419).

So we seem to be left with an AWOL ethics, a normative commitment that is Absent Without Leave, and a scattered pattern of ownership/control. This ethic might be considered AWOL because it was presumably implied to some extent during the creation of some park, however, it has all but disappeared today. Clearly a rigorous environmental ethics need not depend on specified legislative intent, however, as discussed in the previous chapter, a number of those interviewed did suggest that knowing why and under what circumstances an area was set aside is important in determining some prescribed behavior(s). The question of ‘ownership’ is but a minor point in discussing the ethics of managing public land, but it bears on some other related questions. For instance, is public land a uniform thing, such that public land is public land is public land? Or do some types of public land demand different types of ethics? For instance, should the NPS follow a deontologically-based preservationist ethic while the USFS practices a consequentialist utilitarian ethics? Or, do ethics derived from a group claiming familiarity count more than ethics of everyone? This latter question, of course, recalls earlier discussions in Chapter 2 on the contrast between ethics of justice and care.
In describing the work of the pragmatist, John Dewey, Minteer makes this comment. "Dewey suggested that we need to construct the unique 'good' of each situation; a good that is to be 'discovered, projected, and attained on the basis of the exact defect and trouble to be rectified'" (Minteer, 2001 p. 68). The pragmatist project seems to get at the first of the two questions offered at the end of the preceding paragraph. Pragmatists would respond that public land is not public land is not public land, because public land may vary in important respects depending on the agency that oversees it (state vs. federal) and how it is classified (park vs. forest vs. wildlife preserve). In other words, defining a problem as that which is found on public land may be too imprecise; a problem must be defined at a more specific scale. And I'd hazard to say that they would not concur that a park is a park is a park. To wit, Yellowstone is not Central Park is not Cumberland Falls. Each of these parks contains a wealth of information and meaning that inevitably discerns it from all others. Moreover, each park is unique in some sense as to the people who live nearby and their ethics may vary greatly (Berthold-Bond, 2000).

Stated another way, there is reason to believe that meanings, values, and issues associated with any specific park are not shared by people who live near other parks. In the end, environmental ethics, as directed towards parkland, may resist any uniform, monistic treatment. From this it appears that the intent (original meaning) of any particular park is at least unique in the sense that the collection of circumstances that combined to bring a specific park into existence may be irreproducible. And if this is true, then it may be too ambitious to hope for any single unifying environmental ethical theory that can apply to each and every example of public land.
5.3.2 Purpose of Public Lands

The purpose of public lands is to be distinguished from the intent of public lands through the shifting of verb tenses. Where 'intent' recalls the objectives and motives of those instrumental people in the past, 'purpose' reflects the here and now. 'Intent' describes what was the case, 'purpose' describes what is the case. This distinction is necessary because more than one person interviewed suggested that intents and purposes may very well change over time. The ideas of land as property shifted from the time of John Locke to the ideas espoused by Thomas Jefferson (Browers, 1999). Restricting the focus of public land to just parks, simplifies this analysis, but only somewhat. Eloquently stated by noted landscape architect, Albert Rutledge, (1971), "parks are for people." Parks may well be for people, but just how we make use of them can change over time.

Eric Katz (2000) comments that "modernity can only appreciate the lion in two ways—through science or hunting. But we need something more—something mystical, ritualistic, or sacred" (p. 106). Can we interpret park land in the same way suggesting that we only appreciate it through science and recreation? I'd suggest that in many instances small scale park lands were intended to satisfy recreational desires; more recently though, small scale park lands have become valuable for scientific utility: havens for song birds, controls of water quality, plots for measuring the spread of exotic vegetation. If the current purposes are changing in this way, then might it be possible that future changes are on the horizon? Katz' encouragement towards a mystical and sacred relationship with the lion may be possible for park land as well. And while the sacredness of the lion echoes cultures long gone, the sacredness of small parks seems to echo the words of Thoreau and Emerson. Yet, not only will these public parks shrink the distance between culture and
nature, but they may also fulfill a purpose suggested by Hannah Arendt (1958) as a means to examine one’s place in a community. In this respect, an environmental ethic that grows from a public park no longer is AWOL, but it returns home again to encourage those living near the park to understand the park as a foundational member of a community—community, here, is expanded to the meaning described by Leopold.

5.3.3 Gift or Commodity

In a book-length treatment of gifts, Lewis Hyde (1983) discusses the differences in obligations between receiving a gift and purchasing a commodity. Jim Lichatowich (1999) brings this contrasting of gifts and commodities closer to my research when he discusses the public nature of wildlife, specifically salmon. Parks, as a form of public land, may be best considered as gifts. And just as we have responsibilities to those gifts we receive from friends, so we too must worry about the public lands we are gifted. A few people, in this study commented on how parks are a form of gift; recall Beatrice’s comment,

“I really like the idea that it’s a park now, because that means that we’ll have something to give to our children and they can give it to their children and on down the line. It’s just like a gift that we keep passing on to future generations.”

And Ed, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employee, suggested that giving land to the public was something to be grateful and thankful for.

Distinguishing between gifts and commodities is an illuminating way to consider the different obligations that people feel they owe to other people with regards to public land. Hyde (1983) notes that

Gifts are a class of property whose value lies only in their use and which literally cease to exist as gifts if they are not constantly consumed. When gifts are sold, they change their nature as much as water changes when it freezes, and no
rationalist telling of the constant elemental structure can replace the feeling that it is lost (p. 21).

This suggests that if the original transfer of land was meant as a gift, it can cease to be a gift at the point when those who accept the gift laude over its commodious value and worship its real estate more than enjoying the land through using it. Obviously the type and degree of use must in some sense be tempered with the goal of maintaining the land; however, use need not be considered coincident with traditional notions of consumption in the sense that using a bushel of corn naturally results in the steady depletion of the gift. Using park land can not only be sustainable, but may even result in a net increase of the gift if more land is added to the original stock through public pressure to increase park lands; or if more people make use of the land than originally intended, so the gift grows again. This reading of use or consumption is important, because as Hyde noted elsewhere that, “gifts are always used, consumed, or eaten... when the gift is used, it is not used up. Quite the opposite, in fact: the gift that is not used will be lost, while the one that is passed along remains abundant” (p. 21).

The practice of gift giving has a long tradition, far longer than the practice of commodity exchange in market economies. The death of a gift is when it becomes an object of property, with value artificially assigned through a constructed system of accounting. Jim Lichatowich (1999) believes that the true nature of gifts has been lost,

Nowadays we think of gift as a commodity: once it is given, the receiver takes possession of, and it becomes his or her property. But in ancient economies, a gift was not a possession; in fact, it couldn’t be owned. Rather, it had to be passed on. The very act of accepting a gift meant that the receiver also accepted an obligation to return it in kind to the giver (p. 34).
If Lichatowich is correct and we no longer appreciate gifts in the way that we should, what implications does this have on our obligations to keep and protect public lands? Indeed might this shift to parks as commodities be illustrated through the privatization of parks through concessionaires and user fees?

Public lands represent a type of gift that is in eternal exchange, so long as one new person can make use of the land, then the gift has been passed on again. Where the situation becomes cloudy is when we attempt to determine just who is doing the giving. And if we cannot determine precisely who is doing the giving, we fall victim to believing that public lands are really no one’s responsibility. The gift economies traditionally moved in a circle. Lewis Hyde maps an amazing circuit of Polynesian island kingdoms where gifts passed from one island nation to another taking as many as ten years to complete the circuit. In this conception of gift exchange, the giver of a gift necessarily must receive a gift in kind, if not immediately then within a year or so of the first gift. However, how does this idea translate to our notion of public lands as gifts among many people?

This issue of groups giving and receiving gifts does not appear to be that great a problem. Hyde (1983) notes that, “while gifts are marked by motion and momentum at the level of the individual, gift exchange at the level of the group offers equilibrium and coherence, a kind of anarchist stability” (pp. 74-75). Yet, it seems we are still left with two challenges: 1) identifying the giver; and 2) identifying the reciprocal transfer, as must occur with all gift exchanges. I’ll tackle this second challenge first.

Gifts should never be given in order that someone becomes indebted to another—this is not the nature of a gift. However, each gift demands a return gift in kind. So if one group of people, decides to give their children and other future generations the gift of
public land, how are they to be repaid? Hyde comments on the reciprocal gifts given to
scientists and scholars who have given to some community their intellectual gifts through
publishing in appropriate journals. These scientists and scholars receive no financial
remuneration, yet they do receive recognition and status. This recognition and status is
believed to be sufficiently reciprocal to maintain the persistent flow of the gift exchange.
We might use this same concept in identifying the reciprocal transfer of public land from
one generation to the next. We have recognized the ‘gifts’ of John Muir by naming some
public lands after him: John Muir Woods. We are grateful to President Teddy Roosevelt,
and have so named public lands for him. We also continue to pay respect to these and
other public-land gift givers by recognizing their achievements through our continued
study of their efforts. These examples are easy to find, as the original gift givers are easily
distinguished. But how do we recognize and give status to all the intervening generations
who keep the public land in trust? How will we be recognized by our children and
grandchildren for keeping public lands available for them? It is easy to remark on the
efforts behind the original transfer, but of what value is our passive stewardship?

My answers to these questions and the first challenge listed above (identifying the
giver), require another turn. I don’t see any way that we can recognize the transfer of
public lands from a previous generation to our own in the sense that reciprocal giving is a
hard practice to fulfill. A remedy may be found in Hyde’s work again where he notes that
the ties of gift exchange gain strength and power when they are expanded beyond a two
person/group equation.

Reciprocal giving is a form of gift exchange, but it is the simplest. The gift moves
in a circle, and two people do not make much of a circle. Two points establish a
line, but a circle lies in a plane and needs at least three points... When a gift moves
in a circle its motion is beyond the control of the personal ego, and so each bearer
must be a part of the group and each donation is an act of social faith (Hyde, 1983
p. 16).

In this way, our generation need not search for ways to honor and recognize the
generation immediately preceding us. The public lands they entrusted to us were given as
an act of social faith that we gladly accepted without any need to reciprocate in kind. Our
gift will be, and must be, the steadfast care of the public land in such a way that it can
continue to be used and enjoyed by future generations.

There is great promise in public lands from the perspective of honoring obligations
to past, present and future generations and how each of these generations in essence owns
the lands. In discussing the way that public lands are indeed owned, Nassauer (1997)
comments thusly as follows,

People take care of what they own. Land ownership can mean holding title to
land. It can also have a broader meaning that extends to the land over which we
feel a sense of ownership: our street, our neighborhood, our park, our school, our
town (p. 69).

This broader type of ownership is qualitatively different than the ownership one assumes
through a market purchase. This type of ownership embraces generations, rather than
partitioning people into owners and non-owners. Nassauer goes on to suggest that
publicly-owned land advances an ethical permanence that is difficult to apply towards
more fragmented areas of privately-held land. Public land, parks in particular, resist
changes (though they are not entirely immune) to how they are perceived; parks have a
longevity and this longevity may reflect real economic values. John Crompton’s (2001)
study of property values near park land attests to this, but his is a controversial path to
follow for it again leads us towards viewing parks as commodities.
The dark side of the gift is when someone presumes ownership as in a birthright. It's been noted that some people "assume the parks to be their rightful inheritance" (Nassauer, 1997 p. 69). In this view, the park is less a gift than a commodity of financial value. When the gift of a park is coupled with property values and inheritance vocabulary, the park drifts from whatever noble intentions gave birth to it. But the tendency to see parks as market goods is not the only trapping. Even when we view parks as true gifts passed on from previous generations, we are not similarly deeded a clarity of options for appropriate treatment or expectations for the park. Witness the effect of the current exploration of user fees for various public lands. At the crux of considering public lands as gifts is the idea that with gift ownership comes responsibility and once responsibility is assumed then it becomes a bit clearer that public land is indeed a feature of some natural areas that informs environmental ethics.

5.3.4 Responsibilities of Public Ownership

Similar to the discussion of Beauty in Nature, this discussion of Public Lands also raises fundamental questions about our Responsibilities to 'The Other'. Since, it is not always clear what responsibilities we have with regards to our parks, we find ourselves in this dialogue—trying to discover and determine an environmental ethic. In fact, this is the ambiguity of much environmental ethics in a nutshell. Is it indeed my responsibility to pick up other people's trash? Do I have any direct obligations to the birds and the trees that live in this park? How much is too much when I devote my time to taking care of a public resource, and why do I seem to be the only one who cares? These questions and
others came out in some of the narratives. Consider the words of Julie, Sylvia, and Thomas.

“I don’t think it’s my job to pick up after other people... that’s what the park rangers are for.” (Julie)

“I might do some of those things [helping to clean up the park], but I wouldn’t do them all the time, because it’s just... there’s just more important things to do.” (Sylvia)

“For me, [taking care of park land] is really not a priority, you know. I like going to parks and everything, but I’ve got bigger things on my plate than if some little forest burns up or gets cut down. My ethics don’t really include anything with the environment...” (Thomas)

Responsibilities of public ownership are ill-defined. Given the uncertain definition of what public ownership means, it is not surprising that the responsibilities we have to these gifts of public land are similarly unclear. It is neither intuitive, nor culturally prescribed what each of us should be doing with regards to keeping our public lands in fine shape. More, it may not always be apparent why we should keep the lands in fine shape to begin with. Aside from pleasing environments in which to recreate and the treacherous fiscal justifications of property values, some people have argued that public lands help to fulfill our own social identity (Arendt, 1958; Nassauer, 1997). Combining these reasons and doubtless others, the ultimate hope of parks as objects of moral concern will be a return to the feeling that parks were a great gift, one that was unexpected and perhaps, even undeserved. Long-time National Park Service park ranger, Tom Milligan, stated, “Parks are going to have to become a privilege, not something you just take for granted” (Wren, 1972 p. 161). If nothing else, a privilege is characteristic of a true gift.
This discussion on the intent and purpose of public lands sheds new light on another view of public land as a thing which truly can be given and received in the same way that more tangible gifts can. Yet as Sharon noted in her interview, accepting a gift demands responsibility and she felt that few people recognized that. However, it is not clear that public lands should be considered gifts in the sense of being a privilege as much as public lands should be an a priori birthright. Gift or commodity, privilege or birthright, our obligations towards any object may well vary. Both gifts and commodities can be said to be valuable, yet when value is assigned to commodities it tends to evoke a methodological, cost-benefit approach to determining good and bad actions. Ultimately this path leads to some formulation of utilitarian calculus, invoking compensatory rules for decision making in much the same way that one would compare different makes/models of cars when considering a consumer purchase. However, a different sort of value emerges when public lands are considered as gifts. The values we assign to gifts seem to surround a greater moral commitment. It is more grievous to ill-use a gift than a commodity because commodities, by their nature are open to renewal, repurchase, and reacquisition. Gifts, on the other hand, while they may be used (but not necessarily used up), assume values beyond traditional market factors. Gifts might be said to embody protected values. These protected values are those values which resist trade-offs (as would be allowed in compensatory rules for decision-making) and are often valued above and beyond any market-based determinations (Baron & Spranca, 1997). Thus, the protected values which we assign to gifts encourage a greater degree of moral commitment on our part. The challenge, then, is to promote a view of public land rightly as a gift rather than a birthright or some assumed feature of living in a democracy.
In responding to the guiding question of this section (How do public lands inform our responsibilities to others?), we can answer this in two ways. First, public lands inform our obligations to past, present, and future generations to the extent that public lands embody values and goods that seem to transcend across time. The values identified in the 1872 legislation responsible for the creation of Yellowstone National Park continue to resonate with us today. Here we can see how beauty in nature might help us. Beauty does not appear to be some fickle judgment that we freely change and redefine. Hargrove's (1989) perspective of natural beauty as that which approaches universal appeal seems more likely. As a result, we honor our obligations to past, present and future generations by setting aside areas in the public domain that many, if not most, people would agree are beautiful.

The second response to our guiding question might take us back to an earlier question. How does this aspect of public land factor into the necessary and sufficient conditions needed to frame an environmental ethics? Public land, I submit, is another necessary but not sufficient condition. Although the 'ownership' of the resource is a considerable force in how we evaluate vast stretches of wildlands, it should not rightly be the ultimate variable determining how we construct an environmental ethics. Setting up different ethics depending on different types of ownership may give the appearance of degrading the value of an environmental ethic in the first place. Because in this conception, any environmental ethic would simply follow from, rather than precede, the transient landowners' wishes. However, I think this misrepresents the issue. An environmental ethics is not simply doing what the landowner wants, rather landowners contribute to the overall production of an ethics. It is possible to have an environmental
ethics spanning NPS lands and USFS lands despite their differing views on resource management. Similarly, it is possible to have an environmental ethics governing private land too. Of course the force of private property rights is itself considerable. Yet, I believe that the hope in developing an environmental ethics across all types of land ownership rests in promoting moral agency in people who may have never considered themselves morally responsible with regards to the environment.

5.4 A Discussion On Becoming a Moral Agent

Identifying the boundaries of the moral proved to be one of the most difficult aspects of my data analysis and it continues to be a troubling topic in the literature and my own thinking. Therefore I will find myself concluding that much more work needs to be done in the field of environmental ethics with regards to moral agency. This section will illustrate this through a discussion of the various criteria required for moral agency and morality.

Firstly, it is unclear what constitutes the moral in environmental ethics contexts. Put simply, how do we know if some environmental issue is indeed a moral issue? In a discussion of ethics in general, Tom Beauchamp (1991) discusses four features or “marks of the moral.” They are:

1. A judgment, principle, or ideal is moral only if a person (or alternatively a society) accepts it as a supremely authoritative or overriding guide to action.
2. Moral statements are distinguished from others by their prescriptive form; that is, they are action-guiding imperatives that do not describe states of affairs.
3. Moral statements are statements that should apply in a similar way to all people situated in relatively similar circumstance; that is, moral statements must be universalizable.
4. It is necessary for a moral action-guide to have some direct reference to human flourishing, to consider the welfare of others, or at least to be concerned with harm and benefit to other persons. Of course Beauchamp’s description of ethics fails to include many of the instances of environmental ethics in reference to two of his points. Point number one refers to ethics as that which is supremely authoritative or overriding. Williams (1985) employed similar language. And it has been noted that “everyone who uses the word ‘moral’ in a way that expects others to listen and to take notice ought to be able to agree that what is being talked about is something of social importance, potentially interesting to large numbers of people over long periods of time” (Burtness, 1999 p. 22). However, many instances of environmental ethics proposed in this study failed to achieve this level of reverence or ‘supremely authoritative’ guidance. Secondly, Beauchamp’s point number four considers the moral community as consisting of only humans. Thus, non-human harms or benefits are only considered if there is a coincident human harm or benefit. Of course Peter Singer’s (1993) general moral principle is that of “equal consideration of interests” whereby the welfare of all those with interests (coincident with sentience) must be considered.

Despite all the work being done in environmental ethics today and all that has been done over the past three decades, the ‘ethical’ realm remains ill-defined. Perhaps, the problem rests in an observation made between the urban and the wild, “We live in one world (the built) and we worship the other” (King, 2000 p. 115). In King’s view, the perception held by many of us that we live beyond nature sets up the environment as this ‘other-worldly’ thing. However, we do live in social situations and therefore we are able to easily discuss (if not always agree) on our social obligations. Yet, the perceived
distance between humans and the environment perhaps makes it more difficult to consider any direct relationship that would demand moral agency. As a result of this difficulty, it is no wonder there is disagreement on whether or not some actions are moral.

That much disagreement exists on when some behaviors are moral seems to reflect the subjectivity of our own individual ethical boundaries, particularly when we are challenged to welcome non-humans into the moral community. In a recent article in *Environmental Ethics*, one writer commented that “Western civilization has given me the luxury of being an environmentalist. I am insulated against nature and this insulation gives me the luxury of no longer needing to see nature as a threat” (Schmidtz, 2000). Hargrove (2000) drew a similar conclusion when he noted that those with generally high standards of living continue to be the ones who are more likely to express concern for the environment. Yet, there is not universal agreement on the necessary and sufficient conditions required when caring for the environment. Similarly, there remains an elusiveness in defining those things that make up the category of environmental ethics. So, we are still left with a large question mark in our search for something that can be discretely defined as environmental ethics. The larger question, of what makes someone a moral agent requires an answer before we can consider if someone should or should not be an ethical agent with regards to the environment. To this end, I’ll begin with a discussion of what defines a moral situation.

In Chapter 2 I offered some defining features of morality. Further, distinctions were drawn between ethics, convention, and etiquette. These simple descriptions were sufficient at that point. However, with the discovery of the fourth theme, On Becoming a Moral Agent, a fuller treatment of the general topic of morality is needed. Clearly the
narratives raised issues of identifying, defining, and distinguishing ethical aspects of environmental issues. In an effort to document some additional features that contribute to environmental ethics, I will offer a more thorough treatment of ethics in general. In his book, simply titled *Ethics*, William Frankena (1973) sketches a conception of various normative judgments where some are moral and some are non-moral. Figure 4 illustrates his conception.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 4: Schematic of the moral and the non-moral normative judgments (Adapted from Frankena 1973)**

In Frankena's view, there are boundaries which separate the moral realm from the non-moral realm. Within each of these realms we are called upon to make different types of judgments; these may be judgments of obligation or judgments of value. And within each of these types of judgments are examples of the particular and the general. I'll offer a few examples to illustrate how some of these things are distinguished. Frankena suggests that the statement, "We ought to keep our agreements" is an example of a general judgment of obligation in the moral realm. The statement, "That is a nice shirt" is an example of a particular judgment of value in the non-moral realm. The statement,
“Sheila is a caring person” is an example of a particular judgment of value in the moral realm. And, the statement, “John should read the latest Harry Potter book” is an example of a particular judgment of obligation in the non-moral realm.

Frankena makes it clear that “morality must be distinguished from prudence” (p. 7). In this conception, prudence may be an important consideration in non-moral judgments, but it should not enter into those judgments deemed moral. The assumption behind this perspective is that “there are moral issues and non-moral issues, and that moral issues ought to be thought about and handled in a different way from non-moral issues.” And further, that if something is a moral issue, “it has to do with what is right and what is wrong, and this determination overrides all other considerations” (Burtness, 1999 p. 31). This is not to suggest that the realm of the non-moral is represented by judgments lacking importance; it simply means that “building a case for a moral judgment involves a quite different set of presuppositions and procedures from those employed when making a case for a non-moral judgment” (Burtness, 1999 p. 31).

Approaching ethics in this way where the moral is distinctly separate from the non-moral and obligations and values are equally distinct allows for a convenient partitioning of various statements that people might make. However, real life rarely provides such discrete categories and this is especially true in the case of ethics. Burtness (1999) offers a nice critique of Frankena’s organizational representation of morality. Burtness notes that, “in the real world, what Frankena calls non-moral obligations and values invade what he calls moral obligations and values” (p. 33). Thus, Frankena’s non-moral categorizations may find themselves creeping inexorably towards the moral. The further the ‘clear’
distinction between the moral and the non-moral is examined, the more problematic it becomes.

Frankena is an advocate of deontological ethics, or ethics of duty. He draws sharp boundaries around the moral and the non-moral. Burtness is a follower of teleological ethics, or goal-driven ethics, specifically utilitarianism. Burtness’ utilitarianism recognizes the infused nature of ethics into many different aspects of life. To recall one of Frankena’s non-moral statements, “That is a nice shirt,” Burtness might argue that this simple statement may have many moral dimensions to it. Was the shirt produced in a sweatshop using child labor? Does purchasing this shirt enjoin one to an elite club? Are there hurtful or offensive words printed on the shirt? Where Frankena would view ethics as conveniently partitioned off from many aspects of everyday life, Burtness would view ethics as weaving throughout and coming into contact with just about every aspect of our lives. What bearing this has on this research returns again to the distinction between justice and care and obligatory and supererogatory.

Ethics of justice are essentially a deontological ethics of duty, while ethics of care are teleological ethics where some consequence is of concern. But recall from Chapter 2 that care ethics and justice ethics are both obligatory. Obligatory ethics represent the moral minimum—generally, those ‘Do Nots’ that each and every one of us must follow: Do not steal, do not harm the innocent, etc. Supererogatory ethics are those ethics we perform above and beyond the minimum. Generally worded in the positive, we should be charitable, we should be courageous, etc. In making his case for morality, Frankena aligns himself with moral minimums. The approach favored by Burtness is more of a blending of obligatory and supererogatory, and the term he employs is “degrees of moral density.”
For Burtiness, the “degrees of moral density” allows people to differentiate between those things of great moral import and those things of little moral import, yet all things carry with them some moral dimension.

While I find promise in Burtiness’ idea, I’m left with the feeling that little moral import might just as well mean ‘no moral import’ in many cases. This is particularly true in the sense of some responses in this study, such as when John suggested that rudeness is outside the ethical realm,

“It doesn’t take a lot to do the right thing, you know you usually know what you’re supposed to do most of the time. Sometimes when I see someone litter, I get upset and think that that person is just rude, but I wouldn’t call that person unethical.” (John)

In reference to the littering example John was responding to, Burtiness would suggest that this is a moral issue and perhaps one with something more than the minimum degrees of moral density. However, in practice, John does not seem to feel littering meets the standard of morality that Burtiness might use.

Other people expressed similar reservations in identifying a scenario as moral.

“Is this environmental ethics? I thought that was just like no hunting and fishing. I don’t think making parks or keeping parks clean is the same as environmental ethics unless some animals might get killed.” (Laurie)

Laurie’s comment illustrates that in her mind environmental ethics was a very specific set of things tied just to hunting and fishing. Therefore, issues of environmental concern not tied to hunting and fishing seem to be outside the realm of environmental ethics. So we are left with the question, how are we to describe these ‘not quite moral’ situations? As I stated earlier, I see some promise in Burtiness’ concept of degrees of moral density. However, I tend to believe that, in practice at least, situations involving minimal degrees
of moral density are essentially non-moral for many people. What is needed is a type of threshold above which only those instances of morality will pass. Rather than a threshold, I’ll suggest the notion of a moral filter which allows the moral situations through, but the non-moral remain on the outside.

5.4.1 The Moral Filter

Earlier, when discussing the difference between the moral and the non-moral, I offered a contrast between Frankena’s deontological ethics and Burtness’ teleological ethics. And while Burtness’ view of ‘degrees of moral density’ seems more reasonable, I suspect that those instances with minimum degrees of moral density can be considered, in effect, non-moral in the sense that many people simply fail to recognize or identify with the tenuous moral connections in the first place. However, simply recognizing that ethics effuse throughout everyday life does little to explain why so many people in this study had difficulty expressing ethical views or directives in different situations. On the one hand I might suggest that my own conceptions of environmental ethics were not categorically environmental ethics to several of the people interviewed as witnessed by the quotes in section 4.4.4 This Is Not a Question of Morals. On the other hand, perhaps environmental ethics language is vague and poorly understood in general. In this sense, the cues towards various ethical perspectives or orientations may not transpose themselves into environmental discourse where the object of moral concern is non-human. To illustrate this, talking about care with respect to a family member or a close friend is essentially effortless, familiar, and full of meaning. However, these same expressions seem to ring hollow for most people when they are applied to nature or some specific place, not
necessarily because they don’t have value, but because they are rarely discussed in such
terms. In other words, it is a qualitatively different phenomenon to discuss care for fellow
humans as it is to discuss care for collective non-humans such as parks or forests or
ecosystems. King (1991) suggests as much in his challenge to care ethicists to transpose
human-human care language into the nature-human discourse.

Yet the suggestion that human-human ethical approaches are wholly inadequate to
address nature-human relations goes too far. While difficulties may exist in how we
traditionally apply human-human ethics to the non-human, we may simply need to
reconceive of ways in which our nature-based language reflects ethical obligations.
Although it was difficult to identify unequivocally ethics of justice and care and direct
obligatory ethics and nature-directed supererogatory ethics, it is not necessarily the case
that people do not possess these ethics. At this point, I am simply willing to accept the
possibility that Kohlbergian and Gilligan-like approaches to interpreting ethical responses
may be insufficient to apply towards environmental ethics situations. And to quote Native
American author, N. Scott Momaday,

It seems to me that in a sense we are all made of words; that our most essential
being consists in language. It is the element in which we think and dream and act,
in which we live our daily lives. There is no way in which we can exist apart from
the morality of a verbal dimension (1983 p. 44).

Following Momaday’s observation, the language needed for environmental ethics is ‘out
there’ somewhere, it just remains to be identified, understood and commonly used.
Likewise, we might turn to the words of Nineteenth century English poet Emily Dickinson
(1961) as encouragement in allowing continuing discourse to bring about a real
environmental ethics.
A word is dead
When it is said,
Some say.
I say it just
Begins to live
That day.

There is not a widely understood language of environmental ethics. Words and phrases that environmental philosophers entice us to embrace, such as animal rights, caring about nature and, direct obligations to the non-human world, have yet to resonate with the masses. Yet, "words can take on new meanings and open up whole new lines of thoughts once they are spoken and set free in the public domain" (Bronson, 2001 p. 36)

"If environmental ethics is to become effective, it must center on the ideas that actually determine how people choose to live" (Gare, 1998 p. 20). This statement seems to strike at the heart of the problems I encountered in trying to force a discussion of environmental ethics where one may not have been appropriate. The welfare of ‘nature’ was not linguistically or cognitively accessible to most of the people interviewed. It was not something that they had thought about in great detail, nor was it something that they had experience in articulating. Finally, it was not considered something of great and lasting importance like any ethical determination should be. In this respect, I contend that there exists a moral filter with regards to environmental ethics. This filter is such that it only allows through those instances or cases where there are issues of unquestioned moral import. And for the most part, many things that philosophers, academicians and researchers would consider to be environmental ethics fail to pass through the filter of
many people who do not confront themselves with issues of environmental concern on a regular basis. This disconnect seems to leave us floating free, without a tether to anchor the environmental ethics of the ivory tower to those outside the tower. Clearly this is unsatisfying, for it seems that the ability to recognize issues of unquestioned moral import reside in but a handful of people—Philosopher Kings, if you will. I’ll suggest though that our hope for a widespread environmental ethics is not so distant a goal after all. Yet, to reach this goal all of us must become more informed about ecology, ethics in general, and our role as citizens in a community.

5.4.2 Adjusting the Filter

The moral filter for most people seems to be calibrated to issues of catastrophic importance or to issues of ultimately great human concern. The challenge then might be to recalibrate the moral filter such that more environmental issues are perceived as situations worthy of purposeful ethical reflection. King (2000) suggests that “an environmentally responsible culture should be one in which citizens take responsibility for the domesticated environments in which they live, as well as for their effects on wild nature” (p. 115). An answer to this calibration is to return to the legacy of David Hume and other ethicists who valued sentiment and feeling.

In describing a Humean approach ethics, Welchman (1999) notes that “internalists, such as David Hume, have held that theoretical justifications will not motivate an agent to act independent of interests, wants, or needs internal to the agents character whose satisfaction depends upon realizing the objectives of a given theory” (p. 412). Too often environmental ethics are presented, at best, as outside the moral realm and, at worst, as
contrary to other ethical considerations. Adjusting the moral filter will necessarily result in
more things competing for one’s cognitive energies. Further, the more ethical
prescriptions and proscriptions we must follow, the greater the challenge will be to our
personal autonomy. However, these additional, new, environmental ethics need not be
overwhelming nor obscenely burdensome.

One key to successfully adjusting the moral filter might be to show how sentiments
towards other people and sentiments towards nature or aspects of nature can be piggy­
backed upon one another. Thus, sentiment toward some other is the shared objective. In
this way, we would hope to encourage others to identify themselves as members of a
community. This membership acknowledges relationship in the sense of that which is
paramount to ethics of care. Just as care ethics have offered promise in social ethics,
likewise care ethics may garner support for environmental ethics where talk of rights and
justice seems to miss the mark.

The second key is to work towards identifying a sufficient range of options for
people to choose from when considering environmental ethics dilemmas. This range of
options is one critical aspect of preserving autonomy (Raz, 1986). Differences in how
language is used to express these different sentiments may still remain, but the root
concern is that minimum level of sentiment that results in its passage through the filter.

Welchman (1999) is concerned that simple sentiment is an insufficient foundation
upon which to build an environmental ethics. She notes that “one cannot similarly hope to
discover human dispositions that can be expected absolutely and universally to motivate
humans to act to preserve nature” (p. 412). Yet, her declaration seems overstated. If
ethics are one of many social institutions that “are necessary for the survival and
flourishing of human life and for the preservation of global ecosystems that sustain that life” (Burtness, 1999 p. 18), then there is no reason why naturally occurring dispositions towards nature might not arise. The challenge seems to be in finding those all important connections that all people can identify with and develop feelings towards. It has been suggested by many that modern life has simply obscured these natural connections and the din of culture has simply drowned out nature’s harmony (Abram, 1996; King, 2000). Don Ihde (1983) notes as much when he wrote, “nature is at best a background, often spectacular but not itself a force to be reckoned with” (p. 22). So our challenge is to bring nature to the foreground.

One approach to finding these connections was discussed by noted environmental philosophers, Jim Cheney and Anthony Weston. Cheney and Weston (1999) suggest that there has been confusion concerning what comes first: knowledge of ‘the other’ or an ethical approach to ‘the other.’ Cheney and Weston believe that we should first recognize an ethical relationship to other things before we attempt to understand them (in some scientific sense). This perspective is contra Rolston (1997), who suggests that, “We cannot correctly value what we do not to some degree correctly know” (p. 40). Cheney’s and Weston’s suggestion has two widespread applications. First, by approaching ‘the other’ ethically before approaching them some other way, we allow ourselves to embrace the natural sentiment that we may have lost sight of through our modern empirical lens.

Yet, perhaps, it is more than just appreciating an object of aesthetic sensibility. Some have argued that valuing nature at the outset, sets the stage for the identification of the environment as part of our system of basic human rights (Collins-Chobanian, 2000), where a healthy environment is a prerequisite for all other human rights. In this way, valuing
nature whether instrumentally or intrinsically demands some moral commitment. As a result the moral filter is less restrictive in what it lets pass through.

So in helping to define and establish moral agency we are left with two tasks. The first task is to adjust the moral filter. Too often people feel that various environmental issues lack a moral component. Promoting a fuller and more comprehensive understanding of ecology and evolution is one step towards identifying the moral component in environmental issues. Because, if the scope and complexity of ecology and evolution are acknowledged then a stronger case can be made for protecting the environment. And as was discussed with regards to the theme Beauty in Nature, ecology and evolution are fundamental components of our aesthetic appreciation. The second task involves determining what language is appropriate for an environmental ethics. If the language documented as belonging to justice and care in social ethics is insufficient, then what language can be used? It does not appear that discussing environmental issues in those terms associated with our social ethics does much to advance an environmental ethics. If this is true, then any attempt at establishing moral agency must figuratively and literally speak to the ways people feel comfortable expressing their commitments to the natural world.

5.5 Mapping the Themes onto Environmental Ethics

Back in Chapter 2, the Literature Review, an overview of traditional environmental ethics positions was offered. Among those traditional positions were things such as animal rights, holistic environmental ethics, deep ecology, and environmental pragmatism. The review in this chapter was presented in order that the data derived from the interviews
might be contextualized. The original intent of the research was to explore specific aspects of some of the standard views of environmental ethics. For instance, one goal was to determine the extent that principles of justice and principles of care emerged with regards to more and lesser known natural areas. Viewed this way, it is not clear how the four primary themes contribute to the knowledge we currently have about standard environmental ethics positions. The purpose of this section is to map out those relationships between the four themes and the standard environmental ethics positions.

From the previous treatment given to standard environmental ethics, it appears that three different variables compete with each other and within themselves in varying degrees. One variable that describes environmental ethics is the tension between a fully anthropocentric ethic and some non-anthropocentric ethic. This tension unfolds in the standard positions with environmental pragmatism embracing anthropocentrism as the only approach that is understandable to humans, for the non-anthropocentrists, the Deep Ecologists appear to be the self-appointed guardians against our perfect hubris. A second variable concerns the focus on individual life versus a focus on groups, systems, or collections. Peter Singer’s utilitarian brand of animal liberation urges us to consider the good and bad as it affects each and every individual. Rolston’s systemic value, Callicott’s Darwinian-based ethics, or Leopold’ Land Ethic, all of these purposefully shift our focus from individuals to collections. Finally, there exists a tension between the obligatory and the supererogatory. Tom Regan’s case for animal rights represents an example of an obligatory form of environmental ethics. Not quite as codified as the obligatory ethics, there exists glimmers of supererogatory environmental ethics too. For instance, Louke

These three tensions seem to run at right angles to each other such that a three-dimensional grid appears.

![Diagram showing three main tensions in environmental ethics: Individuals versus Collections, Anthropocentric versus Nonanthropocentric, Obligatory versus Supererogatory.]

Figure 5: Three main tensions in environmental ethics.

These three tensions compete within themselves and with one another in how different people conceive of environmental ethics. Over twenty years ago one noted environmental philosopher commented that, "environmental ethics has no precisely fixed conventional definition in glossaries of philosophical terminology" (Callicott, 1980 p. 311). Unfortunately, we seem still to be mired in a confusing morass of terms, foci, and competing obligations. However, this lack of precision does not preclude any analysis of various environmental ethics perspectives. To begin with, let's see how the theme 'Beauty in Nature' can be mapped onto this three-dimensional grid.
5.5.1 Mapping ‘Beauty in Nature’

Recall that the primary emphasis with this theme was that natural beauty was supremely important to some people. There was some disagreement on whether beauty was an intrinsic natural property or if it is merely a subjective evaluation. Yet, either as an intrinsic property or as a subjective evaluation, beauty in nature remained an important focal point of one’s environmental ethics. However, despite the high level of importance attached to beauty, the commitments expressed by different people varied. Recall these two contrasting perspectives.

“... we should always try to protect things that are beautiful.” (Michael)

and

“The only reason to preserve areas is because that’s what the majority of people want.” (Stuart)

So Michael suggests a strong imperative to protect natural beauty. However, Stuart favors a democratic approach wherein the vox populi decides when and where to afford protection for natural areas.

The question then is how can we map this information onto an understanding of traditional notions of environmental ethics? Most would agree that beauty is a uniquely human category. Regardless of the contention of some to describe beauty in nature as an intrinsic natural property, in the end it takes a human to construct the boundary conditions of natural beauty and from there determine which things may gain membership. Therefore we can locate ‘Beauty in Nature’ as something that falls much closer to the anthropocentric end of the continuum than the non-anthropocentric end. This takes care of the Y axis, but what about the other two dimensions?
In theory beauty in nature can be atomized down from landscapes to individuals, and even to portions of individuals ("a fierce green fire" in a wolf's eyes). Yet, in this study the theme of 'Beauty in Nature' fell most on a landscape, a mountain, a river, or a gorge. In other words, this theme applied primarily to collections rather than to individuals. Despite the singularity of a landscape, a mountain, a river, and a gorge, these things are indeed more collections than individuals because their identity is built upon the inclusion of many features. A mountain may be described as beautiful, but it is so because of many other features on and around it: the conifers that acquiesce at the timberline, the hardwoods that girdle the lower elevations and wash new colors over the hillside as the seasons change, and the late season snow that persists on the summit even into summer. Each of these things and others combine to solicit from us an evaluation of "Beautiful!" From here, it seems that beauty, at least as expressed by those in this study, tends more towards collections than individuals.

Lastly we need to map 'Beauty in Nature' onto the dimension of obligatory and supererogatory. This dimension is not as clear as the other two with regards to the words of the respondents. Aside from hard obligation expressed by Michael and the more utilitarian-based duties expressed by Stuart, there are not many obvious prescriptions. In this sense, I don't feel there is any direct evidence of obligatory or supererogatory ethics as they apply to duties to protect natural beauty. However, the next theme, 'Responsibilities to 'The Other' provides some insight into the level and specificity of commitment offered by some of the respondents.
5.5.2 Mapping ‘Responsibilities to the Other’

Few of the respondents expressed a non-anthropocentric obligation towards nature. Indeed most of the responsibilities expressed were specifically directed towards others who may want to visit the park in question. In this respect, the responsibilities to ‘the other’ are nearly always anthropocentric responsibilities. There was a willingness to consider obligations to groups of people and not only to individuals. Consider again the words of those who believe in some type of bequest value and thus an obligation to future generations.

“I’d like to think that other people would like to go to Cumberland Falls someday and if we don’t take care of places like this, then they won’t be able to.” (Beatrice)

“... if people don’t start taking better care of things, then it may not be around here forever and then those people in the future won’t be able to see what we had.” (Tom)

“Yeah, I think that would make me sad if I knew that we ruined something for other people down the road. Cause they’ve got as much right to come here as we do.” (Carol)

However, I’d hasten to add that where some considered responsibilities to future generations as a group obligation, the way that others worded this obligation suggests a responsibility to a collection of individuals such as expressed by all the people cited in section 4.2.2.2: Other Community Members.

In attempting to determine if our responsibilities are moral minimums or less, binding, but more noble pursuits, the data seems to suggest that many of the responsibilities are supererogatory. As disappointing as this may be, this by itself does not preclude environmental ethics from being considered in the larger context of morality.

Further, as will be discussed in my final discussion on the moral filter in the last chapter,
this supererogatory ethical focus may be a valuable starting point in our efforts to adjust the filter.

So responsibilities to 'the other' in this research tends to cluster at the anthropocentric end of the Y-axis and at the supererogatory end of the X-axis. There were examples of both responsibilities to individuals and groups and thus across the continuum of the Z-axis.

5.5.3 Mapping ‘Public Lands’

Public land can be either a strong commitment to anthropocentric value or a strong commitment to non-anthropocentric values. An anthropocentric commitment would concern protecting those values that public land primarily provides for other humans: aesthetics, clean air and water, higher property values, and of course outdoor recreation. Non-anthropocentric values protected by public land are reflected through legislative directives in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). NEPA demands consideration of biodiversity and ecosystem management. The ESA, as its name implies, elevates the existence value of species to a level never before recognized by government legislation. The people interviewed for this study tended to conceive of public lands almost exclusively as that which is good for human use, recreational or otherwise. In other words, commitments to protect public lands are followed because they are good for humanity.

Charles Taylor (1991) suggested that the rise of individualism is one of the great worries of our time. He does not dispute the value of individualism, but rather he sees it as having contributed to the demise of community and a sense of belonging to something
greater. With regards to public land, I offered a critical view of them in section 4.2.2.2: Ownership. One would hope that public lands encourage a return to community and invigorate a sense of belonging. To some extent this did seem to emerge in some of the narratives. Trent, after all, recognized that he would be more aggressive in defending those lands he is more connected to. However, for the most part, many of those interviewed offered what I would consider a lukewarm endorsement for anything other than the individual benefits that accrue through public land.

In mapping the obligatory versus supererogatory nature of commitments to protect public land, it seems that the narratives provided little definitive answers to this. To conceptualize how this might be considered, I'll offer these two examples. One who contends that protecting the existence of public land, whether for anthropocentric or non-anthropocentric reasons, is a requirement of living in a democracy would hold an obligatory orientation. However, if one sees public lands as a luxury or gift, then he/she would subscribe to more of a supererogatory orientation. I'd suggest that the data from the interviews tends towards a more supererogatory orientation with regards to our commitments to protect public land, but the evidence to support this view is not terribly strong.

5.5.4 Mapping ‘On Becoming a Moral Agent’

This theme is the most challenging one to map because, to some extent it begs its own set of questions from which the three dimensional grid was derived. As a result, there is an element of circularity when attempting to map ‘On Becoming a Moral Agent.’
That said, there does appear to be enough consistency in the narratives that some mapping can be done.

As mentioned previously there was a pervasive thread of anthropocentrism throughout the interviews. From this perspective, it would appear that anthropocentrism is a requirement for ethics, even environmental ethics. Thus, based on the narratives, one does not become a moral agent until it can be established that actions directed towards the environment will in some way affect the welfare or violate the rights of other humans. This is perhaps the most troubling finding of this research as most of the respondents seemed to reject any subscription to moral agency based on non-human interests. A couple notable exceptions were given by Beatrice and Sylvia.

"We’re supposed to have respect for all life and you can’t do that if you just go out and trash everything.... Maybe what I’m saying is that we have a responsibility to make sure that some areas are protected.” (Beatrice)

“We... everyone should all try harder to protect forest and rivers and stuff. It’s not just here for us either, it’s good to take care of these things for the animals that live there too. They’ve got just as much right to be there... maybe more, as we do.” (Sylvia)

Note also the tone in these two quotes that suggests the responsibility to non-human nature is more obligatory rather than supererogatory. At least to Beatrice and Sylvia, they seem willing to accept obligatory responsibilities to non-humans. Although it is also worth noting that they were offering fairly general prescriptions to follow: “have respect” and “take care of these things.” It is not clear what specific actions would be required (if any specific actions) in order to follow these prescriptions. So for Beatrice and Sylvia, becoming a moral agent occurs with any influence we might have on nature, regardless if there exists a corresponding effect on humans.
Throughout the narratives there was some evidence to support the suggestion that some obligations are owed to non-human collections such as to nature in the abstract or to the environment in general or to ecosystems. However, once again it was not clear just how committed people were to these positions and whether or not they truly supported an obligation to a collection rather than many obligations to many different individuals who all happen to be grouped together as in the case of feeling an obligation to a species, such as was suggested by Laurie.

So, in mapping On Becoming a Moral Agent, it seems for most of those interviewed in this study, anthropocentric concern, harm/benefit to individuals, and the desire to go above and beyond the call of duty combine to determine when one becomes a moral agent. This is in contrast to much of the current arguments broadly defined as environmental ethics (see section 2.3 for a review of these current arguments). Most of those in this study would stand in contrast to all of the animal rights positions although they would both agree on a focus on individual welfare. The people in this study would differ from the animal rights/liberation position because few subscribed to these responsibilities as moral minimums and few people approached any of the environmental dilemmas with anything other than an anthropocentric perspective. It seems that most of the people would similarly disagree with the holist ethical community (e.g., Rolston, Callicott, Goodpaster, and Leopold) based on uncertain commitments to collections rather than individuals and once again a hesitancy to embrace a non-anthropocentric, obligatory ethics. Little evidence emerged through the narratives to indicate a direct rejection of or a clear allegiance to either Deep Ecology or Ecofeminism. However, in considering where
On Becoming a Moral Agent is mapped it seems very unlikely that either of these views would be embraced by those interviewed.

5.6: Summary Thoughts on Discussing the Four Themes

The four primary themes of Beauty in Nature, Responsibilities to ‘The Other,’ Public Lands, and On Becoming a Moral Agent go some way towards documenting the nature of environmental ethics as it is discussed by some people. These themes illustrate both the emergent quality of narrative-based inquiry and the elusive notion of environmental ethics, particularly as these results relate to the several standard views of environmental ethics (as discussed in Chapter 2).

Despite attempts to corral the discussion of environmental ethics in terms of various social ethics studies (Kohlberg, Kahn, Swearingin, and Gilligan) new and unanticipated avenues revealed themselves. Returning to the literature, it can be seen that the words of the different people interviewed share context with one another and to a limited extent with the thoughts of others who have committed their ideas to writing. The literature review in this chapter was intended to illustrate the compatibility of the emergent themes with assorted pieces of environmental ethics writing.

The concluding sections on ‘Mapping’ the various themes across the three dimensions was intended to return the discussion of the themes to the general field of environmental ethics and illustrate how each theme differs from the other across one or more of the dimensions. The dimensions of anthropocentric/non-anthropocentric, individual/collection, and obligatory/supererogatory are tensions that exist across all
environmental ethics and it is therefore valid to use this grid to compare one theme to another and the themes to the standard views in the field.
Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

I begin this final chapter with a consoling piece of advice I received when wrapping up my Master’s thesis: “If you haven’t discovered more questions than those you have answered, then you haven’t done your research right.” Indeed this was the case. Many of these new questions followed clearly and directly from the data collection and data analysis processes. Other questions arose in response to reading any number of pieces related to environmental ethics. And still other questions emerged from a wider range of influences such as all that has gone into preparing this document as a doctoral student in forestry and outdoor recreation.

In this chapter, first I will discuss the myriad of conclusions which arose from all of these processes. Many of these conclusions are minor compared to a few big ones, but they are each important in that they have all furthered my understanding of outdoor recreation, environmental ethics, qualitative research, and the people of this region among other things. The first section of this chapter documents the value and validity of the four themes. The second section is the promised return to various misconceptions of environmental ethics. Thirdly, I offer a final recommendation for an environmental ethics that incorporates a number of the major points discussed in the previous two chapters: the moral filter, beauty as a guide, and responsibilities of gift ownership. Additionally, I offer my own prescription for an environmental ethics which is based on both the data from this research and my own beliefs and feelings which arose from my review of the literature. The fourth section of this chapter concerns the limitations of my research. And I conclude this chapter and the document with recommendations for future research.
6.1 Relationships Among the Themes

As previously stated, each of the four themes is robust at its core, yet when considered collectively the relationships between the four themes go further in explaining the nature of environmental ethics discourse. Consider again that the general statement of this research was to engage people in discussions about environmental ethics. And indeed this was achieved. Yet, let us now consider how it was that those interviewed did, in fact, discuss environmental ethics.

Naturally the words used in each narrative provided the framework for understanding the concept of environmental ethics. And in following the work of phenomenological philosopher Edmund Husserl, we all rely on words as expressions of things and meanings. Those words that are most accessible to us are those with which we express our meanings. As a result, the words used by those in this study should be thought of as the means by which the interviewees spoke of and about environmental ethics. Further, the themes themselves represent a coherent discourse on how environmental ethics is expressed; and in particular, the themes indicate and illuminate those aspects of environmental ethics which are most accessible to those interviewed.

The term metaphysics is used to describe the study of reality at an even more general level than physicists do. Following this progression, I use the term meta-theme to describe a class of themes which reflect a higher-order understanding of the general field of environmental ethics.

The themes that emerged through this research came in two flavors: themes of environmental ethics and themes about environmental ethics. Beauty in Nature and Public
Lands are the two themes of environmental ethics. In this respect, these themes illuminate some previously darkened corners of the environmental ethics field. Previous conceptions of environmental ethics have considered assorted necessary and sufficient conditions for membership in the moral community. Previous conceptions have focused on various principles and prescriptions borrowed from established traditions in Western moral philosophy. Recall the influences of Kant, Mill, Hume, and even Heidegger in some of the common iterations of contemporary environmental ethics. However, within the boundaries of environmental ethics some corners remain unexplored. It is within these unexplored corners that the themes of Beauty in Nature and Public Lands can be found.

Where the themes Beauty in Nature and Public Lands illuminated darkened corners within the traditional views of environmental ethics, the two meta-themes challenged the existing boundaries of the field. In this regard, they expose ontological questions about environmental ethics. Responsibilities to ‘The Other’ and On Becoming a Moral Agent are not themes of environmental ethics, but rather themes about environmental ethics. This shift in a simple preposition moves the focus of the themes from the inside to the outside of the environmental ethics box. Examining environmental ethics through the subthemes associated with Responsibilities to ‘The Other’ and On Becoming a Moral Agent yields a more fundamental understanding of the entire ethics project. To the extent that Responsibility to ‘The Other’ and On Becoming a Moral Agent represent challenges to the boundaries of environmental ethics, these meta-themes offer perhaps the most valuable insight into this field. And more, the two meta-themes serve to recast empirical approaches to the field of environmental ethics through a more careful consideration of underlying assumptions.
To clarify, themes of environmental ethics exist within the coexisting traditions that collectively define the field. In contrast, themes about environmental ethics raise questions about the boundaries of those coexisting traditions in such a way that the modern project of environmental ethics must be reconsidered in light of suspect boundaries.

### 6.2 Misconceptions of Environmental Ethics

My original intention during each interview was to avoid using the term environmental ethics if at all possible. However, several interviewees asked pointed questions of me that resulted in this term coming out. For example, Nathan wanted to know if I was an “environmental wacko like those PETA people.” Howard responded to one of my questions asking if it was an environmental ethics question. And Sylvia, who admitted to reading some philosophy said that this interview sounded like environmental ethics stuff. In subsequent exchanges with these three and other people, it became apparent that ‘environmental ethics’ was often a loaded term and meant very specific, and often different things, to different people.

As stated previously, environmental ethics resists any convenient categorization. Environmental ethics may or may not involve any of the following: recycling, eating vegan, protesting nuclear power, donating money or time to the World Wildlife Fund. Of course environmental ethics may involve none of those things as well. There is a poor correlation between assorted specific, pro-environmental behaviors and an overall evaluation of environmentalism (Tracy and Oskamp 1984; Mainieri, Barnett et al. 1997).
My concern with the varied and sometimes misguided conceptions of environmental ethics is that it may have prevented some things from being discussed. Where some people thought that they knew what environmental ethics was, it typically was restricted to a narrow and specific environmental issue. Thus, although my research can be viewed broadly as a foray into environmental ethics, those with whom I spoke often seemed to partition off their own definitions of environmental ethics; and these definitions were frequently limited in scope. This seems to suggest the burgeoning aspect of environmental ethics in public consciousness as the term lacks precision, yet it evokes specific and sometimes contrasting views. For instance, where one may describe environmental ethics as not littering another may say that not littering isn’t environmental ethics at all but “no hunting and fishing” is. If our ethics, in general, are judged to be those things that are of supreme importance, then environmental ethics have clearly not reached this level. If environmental ethics are meant to convey a set of prescriptions for right and wrong behaviors, then this set is incomplete because it lacks consensus.

6.3 The Moral Filter Redux and My Environmental Ethics

If my supposition is true—that there exists a moral filter of sorts through which the moral is separated from the non-moral—then where does this separation occur? With respect to the questions asked in this study, it seemed that many people failed to see any direct connection to environmental ethics. Those who did appear to sense some degree of moral value saw it only with regards to fellow humans. Thus, nature or the environment or the park were not owed any direct duties, but rather indirect insofar as the duties might aid fellow humans.
That this ambiguity exists is telling about the clarity of ethical options and the convictions that people may hold. Stated another way, if there is confusion about the nature or the scope of environmental ethics, then it should not be surprising that there are few obvious prescriptions and proscriptions.

In the one instance where I specifically pushed one of the interviewees for his reasons why we should support some environmental ethics, his responses seemed to spiral into themselves such that any justification could be found within a previously answered question. More, there seemed to be an element of circular reasoning in some other answers. This too is a problem with the moral filter because what may not be moral on first blush is forced into the moral realm through repeated questions. In an effort to answer specific 'why' questions, the interviewee may resort to some ethical principle that he or she does not truly hold in an attempt to stop the line of questioning.

Ultimately the significance of the moral filter rests in recognizing the threshold beyond which the unequivocally moral are separated from the clearly non-moral. Yet as mentioned previously, this filter is in need of adjustment from the perspective of environmental ethics. If the results of this study are an indication of a broader segment of society, then it would appear that few issues of environmental import make the moral cut and pass through the filter. In other words, there appears to be a relatively small number of environmental ethics cases.

My suggested solution for this rests upon that which has guided my professional training: outdoor recreation. In recalibrating the moral filter, I offered the two-part recommendation of encouraging greater sentiment towards the non-human world and developing a more dignified understanding of natural processes—specifically the science
of ecology. Outdoor recreation is quite possibly the most convenient means through which we encounter the natural world and this encountering can't help but build knowledge and wisdom and this may well lead to a refocusing of our sentiments.

As I see it, there are four factors that combine to contribute to the sensitivity of the moral filter. If the overall goal is recalibrating the moral filter, then each of these four factors must be adjusted in some way. Not coincidentally these four factors relate directly to the four themes derived from the narratives. Also, perhaps not coincidentally, each of the four moral filter factors can be accessed and influenced by outdoor recreation—that vehicle which may encourage a more facile adoption of a wide-spread and rigorous environmental ethics. Table 6 illustrates the relationship between the themes and the moral filter factors and the different influences of outdoor recreation on each of the factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Corresponding Moral Filter Factor</th>
<th>Factor as It Relates to Outdoor Recreation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beauty in Nature</td>
<td>Beauty can inform knowledge.</td>
<td>Much outdoor recreation is motivated by a desire to see and/or experience natural beauty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities to ‘The Other’</td>
<td>Responsibilities go beyond a non-interference libertarian position.</td>
<td>Participating in outdoor recreation demands respect for others who share the resource and the resource itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Lands</td>
<td>Public lands are gifts to cherish.</td>
<td>Public Lands are the most common place for people to encounter nature and come to understand its beauty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Becoming a Moral Agent</td>
<td>Ethics surrounds us in everyday life.</td>
<td>Through participating in recreational pursuits on public land we must acknowledge our ownership in these lands and our responsibilities as citizens.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Illustration of the moral filter factors as features of the four themes and the corresponding influence of outdoor recreation.
The theme Beauty in Nature generates a factor in the moral filter through emphasizing that beauty is a diverse concept that is intimately tied to knowledge of ecology and evolution. Thus, the factor must be adjusted in such a way that greater aesthetic appreciation is garnered through a greater understanding of ecology and evolution. Since much outdoor recreation is motivated in some sense by a desire to experience natural beauty, the challenge is in encouraging people to come to a more enlightened understanding of those natural forces which combined to produce such a magnificent object of aesthetic appreciation.

We have to know that responsibilities to protect nature are unavoidably coupled with more widely accepted responsibilities to our responsibilities towards protecting the welfare of our fellow humans. Yet, our responsibilities to others must go beyond the minimal proscriptions of the libertarians. Any environmental ethics cannot long withstand challenges if the sole measure of good/bad or right/wrong is calculated in terms of human welfare. At some point, the leap must be made to embrace a new set of obligations, one with, perhaps, only tangential ties to human interests. Outdoor recreation participation can encourage a greater level of appreciation for the resource, although it may be viewed instrumentally at first. Continued participation can lead to greater degrees of respect and care for specific natural areas as shown by some sense of place studies (Schroeder, 1996).

The factor related to public land demands a refined view of public land as gift that carries with it its own set of responsibilities. Each and every generation would be required to accept the gift and hold it in trust for future generations. Public lands are one of the most common places to encounter natural beauty and through this encounter we can
renew our commitment to the ideals that gave birth to public land in the first place. The fact that our nation's public lands play such a large role in opportunities to pursue outdoor recreation focuses our attention from outdoor recreation in general to that gift of the citizenry—outdoor recreation on public land.

Finally, and perhaps the greatest challenge in adjusting the moral filter rests with adjusting that factor of moral agency. How do we convince people that they are indeed moral agents with responsibilities and commitments? First, we might choose to emphasize the ubiquitous nature of environmental ethics in all its forms: hard and soft anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism. Despite the absence of clearly expressed environmental ethics, I noted previously that I am not convinced that these ethics are entirely missing from the interviewees' moral frameworks. On the contrary, I remain optimistic that many of the people have some sort of environmental ethic, teasing it out in a discourse is the difficulty. Efforts to increase participation in outdoor recreation pursuits will only result in people reconsidering their commitments to those natural areas they use for pleasure and to the other people who make use of them as well.

6.4 Methodological Limitations of the Research

Always a difficult pill to swallow is acknowledging the shortcomings and limitations of any research effort. This section here is designed to be a critical treatment of the methods and approach to this study. There were, perhaps, three general problems with this study. First, the type of information captured was fundamentally different from that originally conceived. Second, the sample did not represent the passionate, place-attached people who might have been able to express ethical sentiment to the familiar
nature at Cumberland Falls. That is, none of those interviewed expressed a passionate commitment to Cumberland Falls as a place that was supremely important to them. And lastly, the nature of the objects (i.e., Cumberland Falls, Yellowstone, the environment, etc.) used in various questions may well have been problematic. These three failures do not stand alone as the second and third may combine in part to explain the first.

In reference to the first problem—failing to capture the type of information I had originally hoped for—I only consider this a soft failure in the sense that my original suspicions remain untested. However, I am generally quite pleased with the many unexpected and interesting things that did emerge from these interviews. The four themes opened, what I believe, are new and quite possibly rich avenues in term of theoretical and empirical inquiry. In this regard, it would be better to conceive of this problem as a net benefit because it not only identified new avenues, but it also went some way towards marking the boundaries of environmental ethics discourse.

I equated local residence and in some cases park attendance as appropriate proxies for familiarity. I suspect that familiarity needs to be more sufficiently defined and most certainly needs to be operationalized more than I attempted. One way this might be done is to explore the nature of familiarity more fully with respect to park visitation. Traditional notions of familiarity with places have tended to focus on the perceptual and cognitive aspects of knowing one’s own neighborhood or place of residence (Kaplan, 1978; Stea, 1978). Without a doubt, some of the work in these areas can be mined in advancing the understanding of park familiarity and further, what this might mean towards a situated environmental ethic. Of those people I interviewed, a good number of them had lived within an hour’s drive of Cumberland Falls for many, many years (if not their whole
lives). However, this temporal measure of experience with place did not give any indication that those living here the longest would express greater degrees of attachment to the area. In fact, Judy, a relatively recent transplant to southeastern Kentucky offered what was one of the few comments about one's attachment to Cumberland Falls.

“I'm glad you're asking me about coming here, because this is one of my favorite spots in this part of the country.”

Certainly, this is not a ringing endorsement of a deep attachment to Cumberland Falls, but it is odd that none of the long-time residents of this area expressed anything approaching even a fondness for the area. My suspicions for this are just that, suspicions; I have no empirical data to validate this claim. The questions asked in this study shied away from focusing on place attachment or sense of place. Although, incorporating those aspects may have benefited the study. In contrast to the open-ended questions asked by Schroeder (1996), my questions were less about "what this place means to you" as they were about "what do you like about this place." When Schroeder asked people in his sample to describe what places in Michigan's Black River meant to them, he prompted them to explore their own thoughts, feelings, memories and associations. My approach was to ask people about what they liked about Cumberland Falls and/or Yellowstone in an effort to gauge value which might lead to an understanding of ethical obligation. In retrospect, grounding the place-specific questions in meaning (a la Schroeder) rather than preference, might have resulted in a sturdier anchor for the subsequently asked questions on ethics. Additionally, these meaning-based questions would likely be a good source for judging familiarity. So, as a result of my choice of place-centered questions, those who had spent many years in the vicinity of Cumberland Falls may not have had an opportunity
to explore their own feelings, thoughts, and memories in such a way that an environmental ethic would naturally flow from. From this perspective, then, this is a sampling problem as much as it is a problem in question focus, because the independent and screening variable of familiarity was gauged in another way.

In an attempt to rectify this sampling problem, I might suggest that a more purposive sampling be followed. Attendance at the park was clearly no measure of familiarity, evidenced by the large numbers of non-locals who were visiting Cumberland Falls midway through the sampling period. In an effort to find people more familiar with Cumberland Falls, I went to another state park, but one that is entirely day-use and there several locals were interviewed. In the end, though, it mattered not if one had lived in the area a long time, nor if one expressed familiarity with Cumberland Falls. I suspect the best approach would have been to begin with a few interviews with park employees and follow a snowball sampling scheme whereby I would ask each person I interviewed if they could direct me to someone they thought would help to contribute to the study. In this way, focus could be given towards those people who were identified as holding some degree of attachment to the park.

It would appear that familiarity might be confounded with utility. I am familiar with Cumberland Falls because it is useful to me—I can go there pretty much whenever I want. Yellowstone on the other hand is less familiar because it is less useful—I have never been and may never go there. This confounding poses problems for establishing an environmental ethic in which natural objects are not viewed as tools purely for human use. Because familiarity seems to be so closely associated with utility, it may not be an easy task to consider familiarity outside the context of that which is and has been used by
humans. If this is true, then care must be taken when exploring an environmental ethic to
discern if this ethic is rooted in utility or some other thing.

The third problem with this research may have been in the objects of concern
themselves. My concern is that asking people about ethical obligations to Cumberland
Falls or to Yellowstone or to nature in general yields more uncertainty than the questions
were intended to clear up. In asking people to talk about ethics of justice or care to either
Cumberland Falls, Yellowstone or nature thrusts the respondent into an abstract world
where the subject and object do not belong in the same sentence together. For instance, it
may be easy for many people to talk about duties and responsibilities with respect to
fellow humans, either individually or as a group. However, it becomes less clear in
discussing duties and responsibilities with respect to collectives of non-human things—
Cumberland Falls, Yellowstone, and nature are all examples of collectives. This level of
abstractness is especially troubling when attempting to entice an ethic of care, which
demands particulars and specifics. This too, I think, reflects a failure of the traditional
language associated with ethics of care and justice being uniformly applied to issues of
environmental concern. In other words, the ethics language documented by Kohlberg and
Gilligan may not overlay well in situations where the object of an ethic is not rightly
human; we may simply not be ready for this yet. Notwithstanding Christopher Stone’s
suggestion about appropriating legal standing for trees (Stone, 1974/1998), it seems clear
that notions of rights, justice, real care, empathy and the right and the good have a long
way to go in the world of environmental ethics, at least in terms of the language we are
accustomed to using for such notions. I'll return to this idea in the next section.
Rick O’Neil (2000) suggests that “trees, rivers, and mountains are not sentient beings with desires and feelings and therefore while they can be objects of aesthetic appreciation, they cannot properly be foci of moral concern” (p. 183). Perhaps William Cronon (1996) gets to the heart of the matter when he describes the labeling problem with the word nature, noting that it “is always singular, suggesting that its referent is a unified holistic entity, whereas the things it describes are in fact plural, diverse, and perhaps not so holistic as they seem” (p. 477). Michael (2001) made a similar observation in stating, 

[N]ature is too bulky and diffuse; it is not the sort of thing on which one’s actions can have an effect. Rather, one can have an effect on individual animals or plants, or on species or ecosystems, or perhaps other sorts of natural things, but not on nature in the abstract... Because individual living things can be the subjects of causal relations, there is no conceptual difficulty in talk of interfering with them. However, matters are not so clear when the subject is a species or ecosystem or ‘object’ such as Niagara Falls. These things must be real individuals and not just fortuitous collections, and they must be stable enough so that we can talk about them undergoing changes (Michael, 2001 pp. 138-139).

So asking people if they support protection of this park or that forest or just nature, creates an ocean of possible responses each aiming to narrow the field a little more: “Protect the park so I can’t use it?" “Protect the forest like it is now?" “What part of nature are you talking about?"

6.5 Recommendations for Future Research

My first recommendation for any future research is to determine further the scope and understanding of this curious term—environmental ethics. I’ve noted that there was not only much disagreement about what environmental ethics was, but also much confusion surrounding the term. I think that this large degree of disagreement and uncertainty is at the root of what is wrong with so many other studies that purport to
study environmental ethics. Note, that I am not suggesting that indeed there exists a real and true thing called ‘environmental ethics,’ I am simply proposing that what many people on the research and/or theoretical end of things consider to be environmental ethics, may be very different from what lay people (for lack of a better term) consider to be environmental ethics. And from this, I contend that studies such as those which offer conclusions on various people’s environmental ethics (Borden & Schettino, 1979; Dunlap & van Liere, 1978; Manning & Valliere, 1996; Minteer & Manning, 1999; Schindler, 1999; Seguin, Pelletier, & Hunsley, 1998; Swearingen, 1989) ethics are premature at best.

I am not convinced that traditional expressions of environmental ethics, such as those found in environmental philosophy anthologies, are widely held or even adequately expressed by those who have been interviewed in the few qualitative approaches to environmental ethics research. For example, Kahn (1998) gives the following example of a biocentric perspective for protecting wild animals.

“It is important to have some [wild animals] in order to continue to have [them] always.”

Or consider this quote provided by Kahn as an example of an ecocentrically-based environmental ethics.

“[It’s not all right to cut the trees] because it destroys all the ecosystem that is interconnected. For instance, the animals that live around those trees, if they are cut down, they disappear and affect the whole ecosystem.”

With both of these quotes provided by Kahn, the respondents seem to gently endorse the non-anthropocentric perspective that Kahn says they do. However, upon re-reading these quotes again (following my own data analysis), I’m left with the feeling that the quotes stop short of that noble ethic. Earlier in this document, I cautioned against
pushing the interviewees too much and to some extent forcing them to search for more and more secure foundations upon which they can build an ethics. Forcing the discussion this way inevitably leads to an ultimately abstracted, general theory; yet this theory may not reflect the true feelings of those interviewed. This pushing represents one extreme; on the other extreme is the danger of allowing a single statement to stand on its own without question or further support. I believe my interview guide did provide clear opportunities to express various iterations of non-anthropocentric ethics, however these were not forthcoming. Kahn’s work did not allow for this variety of non-anthropocentric expression, but he claims to have found it. My conclusion is that Kahn was too quick to draw the conclusion based on, what I believe to be, weak evidence.

To clarify my recommendation above, substantial unpacking of the term environmental ethics is needed. As there is far from widespread agreement on what ethics is, much more work needs to be done to determine what environmental ethics is. I noted earlier that asking people about their obligations and/or responsibilities to the environment and nature likely casts too broad a net. Nature and the environment are concepts too large and diffuse for many people to apply their ethics towards. At the other extreme, in studies where very specific questions were asked about recycling, support for the ESA, buying ‘green’ products, etc., the narrowness of this approach seems to miss the mark of environmental ethics as well. Yet, it is not obvious that an empirical approach to studying environmental ethics must necessarily lie somewhere between the overly broad “nature” and the too specific examples listed above.

The suggestion to unpack and more precisely define the term environmental ethics follows from the limitations of the data for this report which I identified in the previous
section. Similarly, I’m suspect of the conclusions of Kahn (1999) and Swearingen (1989) who seemed to come closest to measuring environmental ethics. Briefly, the shortcomings of each of the studies conducted by these researchers are their wholesale subscriptions to environmental ethics as coincident with only an obligatory, justice-based perspective. At this point, I’m prepared to go further and question whether they, in fact, studied environmental ethics at all. My own failure and the failure of the other researchers is less a methodological issue as it is a conceptual one. Looking back on my own research now and considering all that I’ve read by others who purported to study environmental ethics, I’m left with the feeling that we all, to some extent, put the cart before the horse. As much effort as I put into trying to conceptually partition environmental ethics, in the end, my parameters were not the necessary and sufficient conditions needed to accurately and specifically describe such a concept. That is, how I conceived of environmental ethics was not necessarily consistent with how many of the interviewees conceived of environmental ethics, and this difference in interpretation was discovered somewhat late in the game. I suspect that other researchers met with this same barrier as well. In the end, each of us plowed ahead in search of something to measure and understand which exists in such an ill-defined form that studying it inevitably yields questionable conclusions. I’m reminded of the folk story where three blind men are each describing specific parts of an elephant somewhat accurately, yet they are all missing the mark on putting the parts together as a conceptual whole.

All that said, I am convinced that this research did document environmental ethics at least in part. Recalling some of the conditions of ethics in general; I believe that some people felt very strongly about certain aspects of nature or the environment. Howard’s
cogent comments on natural beauty showed me that, to him, beauty in nature was of supreme importance. Others echoed this sentiment with somewhat less articulated language. In those instances where people did show glimpses of environmental ethics, I think their words may have failed them where their feelings and passions did not. This, then leads to my second recommendation for further study.

I have a strong suspicion that the language required for discussing environmental ethics may not be coincident with language needed to study social ethics. My research approach throughout this study was to rely on the work of Kohlberg (1971b) to identify justice-based language, Gilligan (1982) to identify care-based language, and Kahn (1999) to discern obligatory from supererogatory ethics. However, Kahn’s work was simply a close adaptation of Kohlberg’s work and thus the concerns I now have with using Kohlberg to study environmental ethics percolate up to Kahn’s work as well. In short, my recommendation is to determine the appropriateness of general ethics research in studying environmental ethics.

Kohlberg and Gilligan both developed their theories on moral development based on a number of interviews and qualitative analyses of the narratives. I am not contesting their findings here. What I am suggesting is that it may be inappropriate to assume that the justice-based language described extensively by Kohlberg and others (Colby et al., 1987), and the care-based language described by Gilligan be uniformly applied to environmental ethics research. In short, the language described by Kohlberg and Gilligan were well-suited to framing their respective social ethics, but this language may fall quite short with regards to identifying an environmental ethic. Stated another way, it is not a priori evident when and if nature in whole or in part has rights that justice-language can be
directed towards. By the same token, the multiple interpretations of the term care do not obviously apply to a care-based environmental ethic. It is a large leap to presume that the language we use to describe our social obligations and commitments can be smoothly laid over our environmental obligations and commitments as well.

Note that my concern with the use of traditional justice-based and care-based language is not equivalent to a denial of the existence of these types of environmental ethics. I stated earlier that while I did not find unequivocal evidence for any environmental ethics as I had laid them out, I am not ready to concede that all of these ethics are absent in the hearts and minds of the people I interviewed. I am simply suggesting that a thorough empirical study is warranted to determine if traditional language used to describe social ethics is perfectly appropriate to describe environmental ethics. My suspicion is that the social ethics language may miss the mark, if for the only reason that many people are not equipped to speak of rights and duties to obtuse collections of things nor to speak of nature as another being with whom we have a real, reciprocal relationship. Therefore, new conceptions of language to describe environmental ethics are needed. In an effort to understand the relationship between social ethics’ language and environmental ethics’ language, a study might begin by questioning people on their more well-worn social ethics and, noting the language used, then ask them if the same thing could be said for, say, a single grizzly bear, all spotted owls, an ecosystem, and/or a National Park. If the language cannot be transferred over, which is my suspicion, then the challenge is to document the language which is used in these non-human contexts.
A final recommendation for future research is to follow up on some of the specific information gained from my own research. My original goals of this study remain unmet, as such I would be remiss to ignore this obvious line of inquiry. However, some of my recommendations listed above in terms of defining environmental ethics and determining the appropriate use of ethics language may inhibit any speedy conclusion to that research. My final recommendation follows from the serendipitous discovery of two themes pregnant with much more meaning and value that I was able to extract from them. I suspect that there remain vast riches to be mined in at least two of the themes that emerged from my study: ethics related to natural beauty and ethics related to public land.

As previously noted, the theme of Beauty in Nature emerged somewhat early on in my research, yet my attention to the value of this theme remained within the confines and boundaries of my original study. I think much more could be learned about the intersection of environmental ethics and natural beauty without the limitations of familiarity and justice/care and obligatory or supererogatory ethics. Or more specifically, constructing an ethical framework based on language which may not even be appropriate (i.e., justice/care) girdles the scope that this study might embrace. I’d recommend that someone begin from the generic assumption that beauty is somehow tied to morality. From a philosophical perspective both ethics and aesthetics share a normative component (Herman, 1999), thus, the link between beauty and morality is already there. Proceeding from this starting point, one might determine the extent of moral obligation to beautiful areas, the degree of sanction or reprobation following a transgression against beauty, and host of other things.
I suspect that interviewing people about environmental ethics with regards to various examples of public lands confounded some of what might have been found otherwise. In the context that public lands, specifically park lands are bundled together with a number of tightly wound values, it is hard to determine if people are expressing an environmental ethic or if they are expressing a public land ethic. Clearly these two things are not the same. In the United States, public land has a long and august tradition. Many people would express the continuance of public lands as an American birthright. With this level of sentiment attached to public lands, I'd suggest that there may be a sub-category to environmental ethics that only apply to public lands, at least, perhaps, in this country. Vast expanses of land are nearly always held in public trust in the United States. However, there are large tracts of private land here and elsewhere that might not be subject to the same ethical evaluation. Now, much environmental philosophy would attempt to circumnavigate this distinction by framing the discussion in terms of nature, or the environment, or the wilderness. However, this glossing over of the “ownership” of the land ignores the assumptions and values that many people have towards public and private land and these values may be very deeply held. My suggestion would be for a research program to be conducted which explores in-depth the fundamental assumptions and values in American public land today. And it is from these assumptions and values that we may shed more light on our individual and collective environmental ethics.

I sense that the adolescent nature of environmental ethics contributed to both the empirical limitations and the thematic successes of this research. In hindsight, I am content in the uncertainty of the questions left unanswered and intrigued by the previously hidden paths that now stand ready to accept other travelers in the form of environmental
ethics researchers. This work, hopefully, has highlighted those paths that most fruitfully advanced the recognition and articulation of held narratives of environmental ethics. In particular, the discovery of the four themes should provide additional insight and understanding into the field of environmental ethics.
Literature Cited


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APPENDIX A

List of Interview Sites and People Interviewed at Each

Interview Site # 1: Cumberland Falls State Resort Park, Whitley County, Kentucky
- Michael
- Stuart
- Thomas and Chris
- Tom and Carol
- Jon and Amy
- Steve
- Howard
- Judy
- Mary and Nathan
- Ed
- John and Julie
- Debbie

Interview Site # 2: Dr. Thomas Walker State Historic Park, Knox County, Kentucky
- Sylvia
- Mike S.
- Deborah
- Laurie
- Mike W.
- Don
- Tammy and Nicole

Interview Site # 3: Union College, Knox County, Kentucky
- Sharon
- Trent
- Beatrice
APPENDIX B

Biographical Sketches of Interviewees

1. Michael: Construction contractor. Originally from northern Kentucky, near Cincinnati. Has lived in Colorado, Montana and Alaska. Moved to southeastern Kentucky about a year prior to the interview. He had visited this area several times over the course of several years prior to moving here. Age guess is 37-38—mentioned graduating high school in 1980. Single. Was visiting Cumberland Falls with a female companion, who was not interviewed for the study.

2. Thomas and Chris: Thomas is the husband, Chris is the wife. Married just four years they have two kids from his previous marriage. They live in Ohio near Cincinnati, but visit all the Kentucky State Parks very often. Both are practicing Roman Catholics. Thomas is an attorney and Chris stays at home with the children. They are both involved in various, non-specified social causes.

3. Stuart: Visiting Cumberland Falls with his parents. Former employee of the U.S. Forest Service and a private forestry company in Idaho. Now he works for the State of Kentucky Division of Forestry in Lexington. Articulated a utilitarian conservation approach to public land management and didn't see the need for more preservation efforts. Age: 34.

4. Deborah: Artist and musician by trade. She's lived in the southeastern Kentucky area for 11 years at the time of the interview. Visits Cumberland Falls only a couple times a year and usually when family and friends are visiting from out of town.

5. Trent: Newlywed. Has lived in the area for about 20 years after moving here when he was just 11. He couldn't say how many times he had visited Cumberland Falls except to say that it must be “more than 20.”

6. Sharon: Works as a secretary and has lived in this area all her life. She said that she has been to Cumberland Falls “more times than I could count.”

7. Howard: At the time of the interview, Howard was 43 years old and was completely blind. He had been completely blind for the past seven years. He lost his sight slowly over about 10 years. He could still recollect with much detail what various aspects of nature looked like.

8. Judy: A long-time resident of Oregon, she only recently (five years ago) moved to southeastern Kentucky. She has been to Cumberland Falls probably 10 times but lives just about five minutes away. She enjoys living so close to the park.
9. Mary and Nathan: Married couple who were visiting the park for their anniversary. Mary works as a custodian and Nathan is on disability. They both grew up in this area and attend the Living Waters Pentecostal Church. They have two teenage children.

10. Ed: Works for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in Frankfort, Kentucky. He didn’t specify his job, but he did seem to know some about different public land agencies. He is single and was visiting the park alone. He comes to this park and others in the Kentucky Park System fairly often—“most every weekend during the summer.”

11. John and Julie: Older married couple, both retired. They have lived in this area most of their married life and just recently moved away. They had come back to visit friends and see the park again. They brought their children here many times when the kids were growing up.

12. Debbie: Married to Hank who didn’t want to be interviewed and was not present during the interview with Debbie. Southern Baptist who does not believe in evolution. Age is estimated to be early 40’s based on the comment that she moved here after high school and that was 25 years ago.

13. Steve: Just finished basic training in the Army and was back home visiting before going on his deployment. Grew up in Corbin which is about 15 miles from Cumberland Falls. Age is estimated to be 19. I suspect he joined the Army shortly after high school.

14. Mike S. Engaged but was interviewed alone. Roman Catholic who once considered being a priest. Said that he’s been all over this area and always takes people to see Cumberland Falls.

15. Tom and Carol: Married couple who were passing through on their way to Florida. They live in St. Louis and drive down to Florida for a yearly vacation every summer. They stop at Cumberland Falls every year and thought that this must be their 11th or 12 yearly stop here.

16. Jon and Amy: Unspecified Christian denomination who have been married for almost 8 years. They were visiting Cumberland Falls to see if it would be a good place for a Church Retreat. Both had lived in southeastern Kentucky their whole lives, but Jon had only been to Cumberland Falls 3-4 times previously and Amy had never been.

17. Mike W.: College student attending Asbury College, a small, private Christian Liberal Arts College “in the Wesleyan-Arminian and Holiness traditions.” (Quote taken from Asbury’s website). Lives locally but hasn’t been to Cumberland Falls very much, thought that he had been there maybe 6 or 7 times altogether. Age is estimated to be 20 or 21.
18. Don: Described himself as a soft atheist interested in the geology of the whole Appalachian area. He enjoys caving and rock climbing. He had been to Cumberland Falls a lot during the 80's and early 90's, but he hasn’t gone much in the last few years.

19. Tammy and Nicole: Both college students at University of Kentucky in Lexington. Tammy used to live locally, but her family moved to Lexington last year. Nicole still lives in the area. They have both been to Cumberland Falls several times.

20. Sylvia: Mother of two, who was with her high school aged daughter (not interviewed). Says she has studied some philosophy. She says she gets to go to Cumberland Falls about twice a year.

21. Laurie: Divorced mother of two who lives nearby and likes visiting Cumberland Falls before it gets too hot. She thinks it’s one of the nicest places around and a good place to bring her kids when the weather is nice.

22. Beatrice: Says she wasn’t brought up religious, but now practices Buddhism and that is the basis for her ethics. Knows Cumberland Falls fairly well from visiting it maybe once or twice a year over the past 10-15 years.
APPENDIX C

General approximation of my introduction to all potential interviewees

Hello, my name is Jim Harding and I am a faculty member at Union College in Barbourville. I’m doing a study on how people think about different parks and natural areas. One of these areas I’m interested in is Cumberland Falls. Do you come here often? (Alternatively—Do you know that area well?)

(Assuming an affirmative response, I continued.)

Would you be interested in telling me a little bit about your thoughts and experiences in Cumberland Falls and other places?