

**Ecological Identification:  
An Exploration into the Motivations of Ecological Behaviour**

by

**Kevin Stevenson**

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
The University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

**Master of Arts**

Department of Sociology  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

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## Abstract

This thesis begins by questioning the suitability of an attitudinal approach to the question of why people adopt ecological behaviours – behaviours that are intended by the actor to have positive benefit (directly or indirectly) or to reduce harm done to ecosystems. It then takes a lead from research done in the area of identity with regard to ecological actions and behaviour, and attempts to bring the research more fully into the realm of the self.

The thesis then develops a conceptual definition of *ecological identification* by drawing from the theories of Arne Naess, Ernest Becker and Martin Buber. Central to this definition is that ecological identification consists of a social relation that involves investment of the self in others. This occurs by distinguishing the other as subject and is part of the process that Buber describes as the “I-You” relation. It is argued that humans are capable of entering into relations such as these with non-humans.

Using semi-structured interviews, 15 subjects from southern Manitoba who are involved in ecologically oriented voluntary organizations are studied. The interview questions are designed to probe the self of the subjects, and to ascertain what relations they have with nature (in the abstract and in terms of natural beings), and whether these relations (manifested in ecological identifications) are motivation for the ecological behaviours that they report. The purpose of the investigation is to determine whether or not ecological identification should be the focus of further efforts to explain ecological behaviours, as opposed to traditional sociological concepts that focus on the interaction between human and human.

The study concludes that ecological identification seems to be a likely motivational factor in many of the behaviours listed by the subjects, but that many *life circumstances*, such as financial resources, geographical factors and personal relationships may prevent people from acting on their identifications. Further research into ecological identifications is recommended.

## Acknowledgements

This thesis represents a personal journey that has spanned a period of several years. There are many people who deserve my gratitude for their help along that journey.

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## I. Introduction

The purpose of this investigation is to explore *ecological identification* as a sociological and social psychological factor in motivating ecological (or "green") behaviour. The bulk of the literature to be found in academic journals on the subject of ecological behaviour tends to focus on gaps between ecological concern – most commonly operationalized through attitudinal surveys – and ecological behaviour. Ecological behaviour is defined as actions and lifestyle choices that are performed or made with the intent to reduce one's ecological impacts; to promote ecological education; to protect ecosystems; to restore ecosystems; or to otherwise do something that is promoting ecological health. Ecological behaviour can include ecological activism, but it does not specifically denote activism.

The main area of agreement found in this literature centres around the fact that while Americans and Canadians report very high rates of high levels of concern about: the health of the ecosphere; environmental dangers; and pollution, this perceived concern has not brought about significant changes in behaviour that come close to reflecting that level of concern.

The following thesis begins by challenging the usefulness of pursuing a seemingly endless regimen of attitudinal surveys along the lines described above. Seeking a more appropriate research alternative, this study attempts to make a deeper foray into more probable factors in explaining sustained ecological behaviour. Generally speaking, differences between attitude and behaviour are quite commonplace, and thus

investigating attitudes - especially through attitudinal surveys - is not likely to explain why people commit to green causes and lifestyles.

Some social researchers have tried to bridge the gap using various identity theories as explanatory causes, as opposed to attitudes and values. While this move towards the concept of identity has some merit in that this shift of focus brings the self and self-concept into the equation (at least theoretically), these approaches seem somewhat doomed to failure in that more often than not, through the operationalization of the identity concept, the research ends up becoming little more than an attitudinal survey. Those that do employ more in-depth, qualitative methods tend to restrict their focus to social relations between *humans and humans*, and *human and institutions*. Further, many of various theories of identity tend to focus on labels as the locus of identity, and ignore the process of identification as a *relation*.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, a somewhat more in-depth research method designed to probe into the self of the subject is employed in the present study with the hope of locating a more consistent explanation for ecological behaviour. This research is designed to focus on the relations between humans and nature in hopes of determining whether this may be a more appropriate focus for studies where there exists an interest in answering the question: "Why do some people partake in ecological behaviours and make sustained lifestyle changes that are ecologically friendly?"

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<sup>1</sup> Jenkins, while describing the nature of identity as fluid, is nonetheless conceiving of the identifying process as one of self-categorization, and not self-investment: "...identity can *only* be understood as process, as 'being' or 'becoming'. One's identity – one's identities, indeed, for who we are is always singular *and* plural – is never a final or settled matter." (Jenkins 2004:5) Jenkins defines identification as "the way in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities." (Jenkins 2004:5) Here social relations are mentioned but only as a context in which people express their identities to others. "Identification" for Jenkins is merely a process of differentiating people and groups – a process of labeling and categorization.

The central concept being explored in this endeavour is *ecological identification*, and it is a concept largely derived from the writings of ecological philosopher Arne Naess and anthropologist Ernest Becker, and supplemented by the writings of Martin Buber. In contrast to ecological attitudes and identities as they appear in the literature, ecological identification is *not* defined as a series of identity labels, beliefs, and values. As a type of identification, it is conceptualized as the process of investment of the self in others. More specifically, *ecological* identification is viewed as the investment of the self in certain non-human others that fall under the umbrella term of *nature*. These others include specific animals, plants, rocks, bodies of water etc. but also include more abstract conceptions of nature such as weather events, the land, the sea, the sky, the planet, the stars etc. Through a series of question areas designed to explore both the ecological behaviours of the subjects and their ecological identifications, this study employs semi-structured interviews with the intention of eliciting whether or not identification (as it is explored qualitatively) is a more appropriate focus for social scientists concerned with explaining sustained ecological behaviour than "environmental concern" and "environmental identity".

To this end, the subject population consisted entirely of people who were involved with organizations or projects that had a strong ecological element. Through a focus on people who are active in promoting ecological education, ecological protection and ecological restoration, the investigation looks to paint a detailed picture of the ecological identifications developed by people who *have* made and sustained lifestyle changes, and otherwise participated in ecological behaviours. While it is not intended to be an exhaustive study of people who are ecologically active, the intention is to explore

whether or not ecological identification should be further pursued in the social sciences as an explanatory factor in sustained ecological behaviour. In order to determine this it seems logical to investigate the possible ecological identifications of those who participate in these behaviours and see whether or not these identifications were a motivating factor.

This thesis occupies a territory that is shared with environmental sociology in that it allows for non-human factors in explaining social behaviour (although there are some conceptual concerns with environmental sociology that will be dealt with in chapter two.) Specifically, in this thesis I contend that humans beings are naturally capable of social interaction with non-human others, and that not only do we as humans learn to relate socially with others, we learn to *not* relate socially in certain ways with specific others, including non-human others. This *not* relating in certain ways to non-human others is described as the result of cultural learning that is at odds with a *natural* tendency to do the opposite.

When this natural tendency to identify involves non-human others that fall under the umbrella term of "nature", I call it *ecological* identification. The ecological identifications that are the focus of this study are conceived of as a natural part of self-development, or "self-realisation."<sup>2</sup>

What is meant by "social relation" in this thesis can best be imagined as a continuum of relating with completely utilitarian relations towards an other – "object" at one extreme, and the complete transformation of the "object" to "subject" at the opposite end. Whereas all relations between humans are generally taken by social scientists to be

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<sup>2</sup> The term "self-realisation" is used by Arne Naess in reference to the developmental process of life of any given being. This will be further discussed in chapter two.

social (no matter how precisely *anti-social* i.e., master and slave), this thesis sees the ability to relate socially (this will be defined as confronting a subject)<sup>3</sup> as a natural potential in the human that does not require a human other. "Social" is not dependent on the type of "other" involved (i.e. the other does not have to be a human person for the relation to be considered social.) The degree of reciprocation of social relation on the part of a non-human other is harder to grasp where spoken and written language are not reciprocal (i.e. person and tree), but social relation here generally tends nonetheless towards the expansive end of the continuum that sees the so-called "object" or "other" transformed into "subject." Here the thesis looks to the writings of Martin Buber and his distinction between "I-It" and "I-You."

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<sup>3</sup> The writings of Buber in *I and Thou* will be useful in this regard.

## II. Ecological Identification

The main concept being researched in the present study is *ecological identification*. A research definition of ecological identification will be reached by dealing first with the term *ecology*, and secondly with *identification*.

### a) Ecology, not Environment

Throughout this thesis the word *ecology* and its forms (e.g., ecological) will be used to indicate an association with nature and the natural world. Although the term of *environment* (and its forms) is more commonly used to describe the natural world, it is inappropriate in the sense that it frames the natural world as a background, or stage upon which the precisely *human* existence is played out. Ecology – a concept derived from biological science - represents "a system-based view of the world..." (Hardin and Baden 1977:114). What this means is that the components of the ecology are seen as interrelated parts, as opposed to the concept of "environment" which implies a foreground subject (human) and a background. This distinction is crucial because it allows for an acknowledgement of the intricate web of life-sustaining processes in which we are enmeshed. Conceptually, using the term ecology places humans within a system of life processes, and further it locates humans on equal footing with all other beings that are also part of that complex system, biologically speaking. Kovel further describes the differences between the two concepts:

The environment is by definition a set of things outside us, with no essential structure, while an ecology is a *whole defined by internal relations*. Environments can be listed

and numerically evaluated. Ecologies offer no such packaging and the boundaries between them are sites of active transformation, without a fixed line between inside and outside. (Kovel 2992:17)

The implication of Kovel's contrast is that while the existing concept of *environment* may be useful in that it is more easily measured and manipulated than *ecology*, the downside of the *environment* concept is that it is a superficial and inaccurate way to conceptualize what are in fact complex systems. So in choosing to use the concept of *ecology* we are opting for an acknowledgement of human existence as *embedded* in the life systems of the planet. When ecology is used to refer to myriad interrelations between forms of life, non-living material and energy, the result is that human beings are included in the picture as an active constituent of the whole. Instead of human as subject and environment as object, we have a system of interrelated parts. A human is a piece in the puzzle, but not the *centerpiece*. Using the term *ecology* as an alternative to *environment* is more than simply replacing one word with another - it is a change in concept. That concept is one that puts emphasis on the *relations* between the parts.

Ecophilosopher Arne Naess makes an argument for the use of the concept of ecology as follows:

The study of ecology indicates an approach, a methodology which can be suggested by the simple maxim 'all things hang together'. This has application to and overlaps with the problems in philosophy: the placement of humanity in nature, and the search for new kinds of explanation of this through the use of systems and relational perspectives. (Naess 1989:36)

It is this notion of "all things hang together" which helps to form the approach taken in this study.

In the Introduction it was suggested that this investigation lies in the territory of environmental sociology. It is more accurate to describe this shared territory as *ecological* sociology. Despite rather overreaching claims to the effect of paradigm shifts in sociology - claims that include sociology moving from a place of *complete* disregard for nature to one of firmly acknowledging that human societies are absolutely embedded within an ecological framework - Dunlap and Catton, the unofficial heralds of environmental sociology have brought some otherwise useful points to our attention. While their "New Ecological Paradigm"<sup>4</sup> in sociology seems somewhat grandiose in light of the fact that they premise it on a very weak foundation - namely that sociology has (up until *their* arrival) completely disregarded nature- the general point that nature has largely not played a *significant* role in the social sciences is valid. Nature is a factor that effects social behaviour in ways other than imposing obvious physical restraints and it can be a *participant* in social relations with humans. As well, the spirit of "a strong anthropocentric tradition"<sup>5</sup> has certainly been present in much of modern western thought. It is also easy to see that modern humans tend to see themselves as outside of natural systems, and in this sense the underlying spirit of their Human Exemptionalist Paradigm<sup>6</sup> also rings true. Kueneman offers an apt description of these general trends in modern western thinking:

We think about the world as ours to use as a resource pool.  
Our individual egocentrism is compounded by our  
homocentric view of what is important and permissible.  
The social sciences' preoccupation is with the effects of  
human behaviour on human beings. We press our claims to  
human rights on each other and scarcely consider that other

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<sup>4</sup> See Dunlap and Catton 1980:34 for the New Ecological Paradigm.

<sup>5</sup> Dunlap and Catton 1980:17-18.

<sup>6</sup> The spirit of the HEP which I acknowledge as valid is the general sense that modern Western civilizations generally categorize themselves outside of, above, or otherwise as separate from the rest of nature.

forms of life have as much right to a quality of life as we do. It is clear that we must reconceptualize our place in nature or these destructive patterns will persist until we make the world inhabitable, for you and the rest of the community of life. (Kueneman 2002:1<sup>7</sup>)

This study attempts to do two things that Kueneman mentions above: the first is to do sociological research into a social relation between humans and nature – *ecological identification*; the second is to approach the problem with a mind to locate in what ways people are placing themselves (or re-placing themselves *back*) into nature. This certainly must be along the lines of what the pioneers of "environmental sociology"<sup>8</sup> had in mind. It is ironic, however, that the champions of environmental sociology have continued to use the misnomer of "environmental" to label their work.<sup>9</sup> It seems inappropriate to lump ecological sociology (as it should be called) in with sociology that studies the effects of backgrounds and environments on social actors – which is the traditional purview of environmental sociology. As such, distinctions within environmental sociology are necessary to distinguish between sociology dealing with physical environments, and sociology dealing with "the environment."

To further confuse the situation, two NEP's were produced by Dunlap, Catton and others. Besides the "New Ecological Paradigm," there is the "New Environmental Paradigm"<sup>10</sup> which refers to a purported general shift towards an ecological worldview,

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<sup>7</sup> This is from "Re-Placing Human Beings in the Life Process of Nature."

<sup>8</sup> The word "environmental" here is pertaining specifically to nature.

<sup>9</sup> Over 20 years after the New Ecological Paradigm was announced, the books published by Dunlap, Catton and others still fall under the rubric of "environmental" sociology: *Environmental and Resource Sociology: Theoretical Issues and Opportunities for Synthesis*, Buttel 1996; *Sociological Theory and the Environment*. Dunlap et al. (eds.) 2002; *Handbook of Environmental Sociology*. Dunlap and Michelson (eds.) 2002; *Environmental Sociology: A Personal Perspective on its First Quarter Century*. Dunlap 2002; *Has Environmental Sociology Arrived?*, Buttel 2002 - to name a few publications that still refuse the term "ecological."

<sup>10</sup> See Dunlap and Van Liere 1978 and Dunlap et al. 1992 for the New Environmental Paradigm

where the "New Ecological Paradigm" was describing a supposed shift within sociology specifically (Olsen et al., 1992).

Without echoing the condemnation of sociology by Dunlap and Catton, nor making claims to the effect of paradigm shifts occurring within sociology and without<sup>11</sup>, this study is nonetheless formulated in partial congruence with the spirit of their work in the following assertions: a) that sociology has *generally speaking* not treated nature - in all its aspects - as having social relations with humans,<sup>12</sup> nor has it *generally speaking* taken pains to adequately acknowledge human existence as being reliant on a complex web of life-sustaining processes and systems<sup>13</sup>; and b) that in North America there is a *general conception* - certainly in mainstream media and exhibited in the continuing primacy of economic growth over ecological health - that humans are above and separate from the rest of nature.

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<sup>11</sup> Buttel (2002); Bowden (2004); and Kueneman (working paper) are some examples of others who have argued against any paradigm shift occurring in this regard.

<sup>12</sup> It is saddening to see how many religions, ideologies and philosophies (some newer, some very old) begin with a premise something along the lines of: *the human is special, the one and the prime, the only animal with soul, the only life to be valued just because of what it is*. A premise along these lines immediately lifts the human, conceptually speaking, from its place as a component in a life-sustaining system and prefaces a mandate for domination. This premise is being challenged in the present thesis.

<sup>13</sup> Many sociological theories acknowledge a reliance of humans on nature. The point being made here is that nature is not generally given *adequate* consideration. For example, Marx's theory of value is painstakingly precise in the ways that labour is stolen; transformed into surplus value; comprises the source of value in a capitalist system etc., and covers a span of three sizable volumes. While Nature is certainly a factor in the theory of Marx, it seems to be the second passage left somewhat unexplored in the labour-process of whom there are only two participants, the human and the Earth. (Marx 1967: 179) "All those things which labour merely separates from immediate connexion with their environment, are subjects of labour spontaneously provided by Nature." (Marx 1967: 174) To claim however, that sociology has completely disregarded nature, as Dunlap and Catton have, is a massive oversight. Going a bit further into Marx, we see that nature is dealt with in passages regarding the destructive tendencies of capitalism: "...all progress in capitalistic agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the labourer, but of robbing the soil; all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time, is a progress towards ruining the lasting sources of that fertility." (Marx 1967: 475) This is certainly a description of industrial agriculture as overshooting carrying capacities - and made in 1867! As well, Marx *does* include alienation of human from nature in his formulation. In fact he parallels it with the alienation that occurs within a human in the process of labour: "By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature." (Marx 1967: 173) The spirit of anthropocentrism is still present in his work however when he premises humans as above the rest of nature, as evidenced in the following excerpt: "We are not now dealing with those primitive instinctive forms of labour that remind us of the *mere* animal." (Marx 1967:173) emphasis added.

## b) Identification, not Identity

There is a lot of academic literature in the social sciences dealing with the attitudes and concerns of people with regards to ecological issues. Almost thirty years ago, Van Liere and Dunlap (1980) were searching for "The Social Bases of Environmental Concern." This study was designed to determine what traditional variables, if any, were related to the amount of concern that people report in attitudinal surveys. Their findings indicated that: "younger, well-educated, and politically liberal persons tend to be more concerned about environmental quality than their older, less educated, and politically conservative counterparts." (Van Liere and Dunlap 1980:192) It was twelve years later, when after Dunlap and Jones did a follow-up study to determine if the findings still held (they concluded that they did) that they made an admission:

In concluding that the social bases of environmental concern have remained very stable, we must acknowledge an important qualification-that we are speaking about attitudinal concern for environmental quality (and a particular type, support for spending on behalf of the environment, at that) and *not actual behaviour nor activism on behalf of environmental protection*. (Jones and Dunlap 1992:44) emphasis added.

It is extremely well-documented that Canadians and Americans consistently report high levels of concern regarding ecological issues<sup>14</sup>. It is also extremely well documented that this concern usually does not translate into ecologically friendly behaviour.<sup>15</sup> But what precisely is the use of these attitude surveys? That attitudes alone

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<sup>14</sup> Similarly, reports of high rates of "environmental values" and "environmental beliefs" are common as well (i.e. Olsen et al. 1992).

<sup>15</sup> Some examples are: Samdahl and Robertson 1989; Olson et al. 1992; Kempton et al. 1995; Clarke and Stewart 1997; Frizzell 1997; Guber 2003; Winter and Koger 2004.

are *not* a reliable predictor of behaviour seems a fairly basic fact of psychology, and surely does not need such a dearth of corroborative evidence. Other than market research for possible "greenwash"<sup>17</sup> campaigns, it seems that the usefulness of "environmental concern" surveys is rather limited, once again given that ecological behaviour is not determined by "environmental concern" as it has been operationalized in much of the literature.

The search for predictors and/or motivators of ecological behaviour has been more successful in uncovering *barriers* to ecological behaviour than in predicting it. A couple of obvious barriers preventing ecological behaviour are: a lack of understanding of ecological issues; and a lack of social visibility of existing ecological problems: the latter deals with ecological problems being hidden from view; whereas the former deals with an inability to *recognize* problems due to a lack of ecological knowledge.<sup>18</sup> These barriers have been explored in the literature regarding ecological action and behaviour.

While these barriers seem rather obvious, they are noteworthy in that they are in some ways socially determined. Schnaiberg and Gould have written extensively on the phenomenon that they label the "treadmill of production" (Schnaiberg 1980; Gould 1993; Schnaiberg and Gould 1994; Gould et al. 1996.) They describe a large-scale orientation of modern nations, institutions and multi-national corporations towards profit *to the exclusion of many social and ecological concerns* that has real, and sometimes disastrous

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<sup>17</sup> The term "greenwash" refers the strategy of marketing a product or promoting a policy by making it superficially appear ecologically friendly.

<sup>18</sup> An hypothetical example would be a large pipe continuously discharging relatively clean, warm water into a pond. A lack of visibility would be that nobody is aware that there is a pipe discharging warm water into a natural water system. A lack of awareness or understanding would be knowing that there is a pipe, but not realizing that thermal pollution can severely alter and damage a water ecosystem.

consequences all around the globe. Following are some descriptions of the concept of the "treadmill of production":

This label is not meant to refer to a single political-economic process. Rather, it refers to a type of political economy that comprises a set of practices, assumptions, and structures which are geared toward economic growth, technological innovation, and diffusion and, therefore, continued ecological destruction. (Gould et al. 1996:18)

...the central mechanism for determining the volume and type of production is the treadmill of production. In capitalist societies, the treadmill is structured by the nature of competition between capital owners and the profitability and predictability of high-energy and capital-intense mass production. It is buttressed by the commitment of both organized labour and the state to generate employment and income through rising national production. (Schnaiberg 1980:417)

Schnaiberg and Gould argue that: "the major institutions (of) modern society are 'addicted' to economic growth and treadmill expansion" (Schnaiberg and Gould 1994:92). Increases in production, consumption and market base are fundamental to the continuance of institutions and economies which run on this treadmill. They further argue that these "treadmill institutions" are aware that their mutual success relies on the accelerating of the treadmill. This in turn translates into further withdrawals from ecosystems in terms of fast and *financially* efficient: extraction of resources; production of commodities and services; marketing practices; and consumption practices, as opposed to *ecologically* efficient ones. Thus treadmill acceleration results in accelerated ecological damage.

Anything that reduces the rate of acceleration of the treadmill such as time spent in investigating possible ecological implications of new technologies, withdrawals, waste management practices etc., as well as limiting extraction of natural resources such as fish,

is generally seen as detrimental to these institutions<sup>19</sup>. In other words, protection and maintenance of the natural world becomes a *barrier* to economic growth and stability. Thus ecological costs are not normally reckoned in the accounting of the business of treadmill institutions (this is known as "externalizing costs") unless governments have specifically enacted legislation that puts some sort of price on ecological degradation. According to the "treadmill of production" theory, not only is ecological damage externalized where possible, it is sometimes obscured as well:

These negative externalities of production are kept separately from the profit-and-loss accounts of these firms, in large part because each organization has an economic interest in doing so...Moreover, singly and collectively, these firms attempt to sustain this nonrecording, because affirming their environmental impacts will lead to regulation that will generally reduce their profits; they do so using political, legal, and economic influences. (Schnaiberg and Gould 1994:47-8)

This type of focus which ignores ecological ramifications can be seen in the way that the Canadian prairies were settled and developed agriculturally. F.B. Stevenson writes:

...the prairie region of Canada must have presented a beautiful picture to the new settlers. Like most other virgin regions it had a type of flora that was distinctive to the area...Man in his need for livelihood or his search for wealth changed all that. Gradually at first as the sod was broken, the original environment changed. Sloughs were drained and evaporation increased over the cultivated soil. The air became drier, so that many of the moisture loving plants disappeared. As cultivation spread, areas where plants that would grow in the drier places became less and less. The last survivors were found only on roadsides or railroad right of ways...What a pity it was that some of those in authority years ago didn't have the foresight to have set aside a few sections here and there throughout the

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<sup>19</sup> Treadmill acceleration being considered good for treadmill institutions and treadmill deceleration being considered bad for treadmill institutions assumes a rather short term outlook.

prairies to perpetuate a heritage now almost gone forever.  
(Stevenson 1969: 5)

Once an ecological "impact" has been identified and asserted, the presence of scientific data to back up ecological impact claims is still by no means sufficient to ensure proper action is taken:

...the environmental policy-making process is much more political than it is scientific. Although the process may be perceived as a scientific effort to determine appropriate action, in actuality, science merely provides competing foundations for competing political arguments. Therefore, the time, money and energy expended by environmental organizations to produce compelling scientific evidence paradoxically demonstrates the power of the powerful economic actors in deflecting political conflict away from primary issues. (Schnaiberg and Gould 1994:35)

Schnaiberg notes that the intellectual struggle between various scientists to have their findings accepted and disseminated does not take place on a level playing field:

Few scientists have the resources to engage in a round of speeches to a variety of public and private sector decision-makers nor do they tend to be invited to many such meetings. Yet production scientists, particularly those with direct sponsorship of major high-technology corporations, are often heavily funded for just such speech making, to disseminate the production rather than the impact aspect of a given technology. (Schnaiberg 1980:287)

The advantages that production interests enjoy extend to the media as well. As Chomsky (1991) has thoroughly detailed, governments and business elite in western democracies have some power to control messages in the media. This includes the hindrance of messages that they judge to be incongruent with their needs. The implications of this type of control are serious concerning ecological behaviour in that both social visibility and understanding are at risk.

The notion that treadmill institutions can exercise control over what "knowledge" is available is somewhat daunting in light of Kitchell and colleagues findings regarding civic ecological action. In a study of people involved in civic action against industries<sup>20</sup> that are polluting local ecosystems, Kitchell et al. (2000) find that a common path to civic action emerges. They report that many people in their study who came to be involved in civic ecological action only took action to combat the ecological problems once they came to the realization that the government did *not* have the situation under control – an impression that they initially had:

...the following is a common reformulation on the way to becoming a local civic activist. Initially, one believes that government will take care of common problems, and one's civic responsibility is to report problems to the proper authorities. Then they take this action: They report an environmental atrocity to government, wait, and find that nothing is done...(Kitchell et al. 2000:10)

Cable and Benson make a similar point regarding local ecological activism: "As with community-based crime prevention groups such as Neighbourhood Watch, grass-roots environmental groups form when people come to believe that traditional social control mechanisms do not work." (Cable and Benson 1993:465)

The implication here is that people may not be partaking in ecological behaviours and actions because they have the false impression that government and industry have these problems in hand. A further implication is that this false impression is being fostered through the instrumental and structural workings of our businesses, governments and institutions.

Having established that lack of understanding and lack of social visibility are barriers to ecological behaviour that can be erected socially as discussed above, it needs

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<sup>20</sup> The subjects in the study include people taking action against a chip mill, and an asphalt plant.

be said that an absence of these barriers is by no means sufficient to produce ecological behaviours.<sup>21</sup> The search for something to help explain ecological behaviour has been taken in the direction of identity, and manifests in the various identity theories<sup>22</sup> that exist in the literature. Some of the studies along this vein take into account to some extent the possibility of relations between humans and nature: e.g., Carr 2002; Gooch 2002; Holmes 2003<sup>23</sup>, but many more focus specifically on "identities" as: socially applied labels e.g., Kitchell et al. 2000, Tindall 2002; self-applied labels e.g., Kempton and Holland 2003, Stets and Biga 2003; or a combination of both:

Environmental identities inevitably contain a social component because they depend on and ultimately contribute to social meaning. How we understand ourselves in nature is infused with shared, culturally influenced understandings of what nature is – what is to be revered, reviled or utilized. Social variables affect how much we are able and choose to focus on the natural environment and how we interpret what we see. (Clayton and Opatow 2003:10)

While the above excerpt does allow for interaction between the human and nature, the study itself is focused on identity as a labeling process – labels applied by and through others, and labels applied by the subject – and not on the *relations* between the person and nature. This is revealed in the following passage: "With an environmental identity that is minimally influenced by social factors, individuals or groups *view* themselves as

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<sup>21</sup> Gould (1993) gives an example of how neither social visibility, severity of local ecological impacts, identification of the sources of these impacts, nor even proximity to impacted areas had direct effects on local ecological mobilization in one town where the "cause" of the impacts was also the chief local employer. This example shows one of the ways in which people are connected to, and even trapped on, the treadmill of production.

<sup>22</sup> The more common Identity theories and types of identity used in investigating ecological behaviour are: Group identity e.g., Tindall 2002; Collective identity e.g., Stryker 2000; Social identity e.g., Klandermans and de Weerd 2000; Role identity e.g., Stryker and Serpe 1982; Person identity e.g., Stets and Biga 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Holmes allows for a connection between humans and natural surroundings, but he denies connections on a larger, more general scale i.e., a person having a connection to the *entire planet*. Holmes focuses exclusively on connections through proximity and visceral experience.

experiencing and understanding nature directly. Nature is seen as distinct and apart from social living, and social conflicts and group memberships are less prominent." (Clayton and Opatow 2003:10) emphasis added.

Another problem with using identity theories to explain ecological behaviour is that they are sometimes operationalized in ways similar to attitudes. Stets and Biga (2003) make the claim that "environmental identities" are better indicators of ecological behaviour than attitudes, beliefs and norms on conceptual grounds:

We maintain that the inconsistent findings about the relationship between attitudes and behaviour in environmental sociology are partially due to the fact that attitude and the intentions they produce are not sufficient to understand people's behaviour. (Stets and Biga 2003:399-400)

After claiming that attitude cannot explain behaviour, they go on to describe the research method that they have employed to investigate "environmental identities." The instrument they have chosen is the AC scale, an instrument developed to measure...*attitudes*:

The AC scale (Stern, Dietz, and Kalof 1993; Stern and Dietz 1994) is an alternative measure of environmental *attitudes*. Like the NEP, the AC scale measures beliefs on the environment but people's responses on this scale *presumably* reflect an underlying value orientation that is threatened, and this threat then motivates individuals to act in an environmentally responsive manner. The nine-item scale is comprised of three components... (Stets and Biga 2003: 411, emphasis added)

Using the AC scale compromises the conceptual difference between attitude and identity through the operationalization of identity *as* attitude. Even if the AC scale was the best measure of attitudes ever created that still does not make attitudes – or identities operationalized as attitudes – a reliable predictor of behaviour. The best conclusion that

one can hope for in this scenario is the rather obvious one that people with high rates of environmental concern are somewhat more likely to participate in ecological behaviour than people who are not concerned – and that is the conclusion that they come to.<sup>24</sup>

The main contribution that identity theories make toward researching possible motivators of ecological behaviour is conceptual: the discussion has now moved into the realm of the self seeing as identity is commonly conceived of as being a constituent of the self-concept.<sup>25</sup> It should also be noted that, conceptually speaking, it *makes sense* that identities can affect whether one partakes in ecological behaviours or not: people *will* be more likely to participate in ecological behaviours if they believe it will make them look good to do so (social identity); people *will* be more likely to sustain ecological behaviours if they associate with others who are involved in those behaviours (group and collective identity); people *will* be more likely to take part in ecological behaviour if it is prescribed by norms (role identity); people *will* be more likely to participate in ecological behaviour if they believe that it reflects who they are (person identity). These are all *valid* claims that make perfect sense, and I do not argue against the logic of any of them. The point is that none of them seem to stand out as a prime motivator of ecological behavior and I think that it is time we looked elsewhere: towards the care the people develop towards nature. We need to consider the possibility that the main social relation at work here may not be occurring between one human and another at all, but perhaps between the human and nature.

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<sup>24</sup> "In general, our findings reveal that the relationship between pro-environmental attitudes and behaviour is, in part, spurious due to the influence of the environment identity. One's identity serves as an important motivator for behaviour, because people act in ways to verify their identity meanings." (Stets and Biga 2003: 418)

<sup>25</sup> Stryker, for example, takes a lead from Tajfel in describing social identity as fulfilling self-concept requirements. (Stryker 2000)

The social relation that the present paper is investigating is ecological identification. In contrast to attitudes and identities, identification is a process of self-investment in others, and thus deals with the self<sup>26</sup>. Ecological identification is self-investment in non-human others, specifically a self-investment in some aspect of nature. This concept is hinted at by Gooch (2002), who studied how an affinity with place motivated some local volunteers to become involved in ecological restoration of local water catchment areas in Australia. Using qualitative methods Gooch revealed that social and self-applied labels (identities) were not the only possible motivations:

Many referred to a sense of place, related to the development of localized social capital and social learning. Some respondents volunteered because they already had an affinity with a particular place, others developed attachments to places through their volunteering efforts. Identification with a particular place was closely related to the development of local knowledge or ecological literacy. Others also focused on developing a deeper ecological consciousness. Some volunteers took on a more general ecological identity, linked to common group values and to caring about the landscape. To some, this had an almost religious intensity." (Gooch 2002:4)

This example provides some evidence that a qualitative exploration into ecological identifications may prove fruitful in terms of understanding possible motivations behind ecological behaviour.

Another promising example is the work of Thomashow. In conceptualizing "ecological identity" he allows for experiences in nature as affecting identity, and he also allows for connections with nature:

Ecological identity refers to all the different ways people construe themselves in relationship to the earth as

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<sup>26</sup> We will continue with the investigation even though some have declared the self off-limits as a focus of research: "The concept of self provides the philosophical underpinning for social-psychological inquiries into the self-concept but is itself not accessible to empirical investigation." (Gecas 1982:3)

manifested in personality, values, actions and sense of self.  
Nature becomes an object of identification. (Thomashow  
1995:3)

Having spent most of his career "designing programs, courses, and curriculum to meet the needs of environmental professionals,"<sup>27</sup> Thomashow has had much time to ponder the similarities that exist among people who are engaged in ecological behaviours on a daily basis. Reviewing qualitative evidence from his student base, Thomashow finds: "several educational paths to ecological identity: childhood memories of place, perceptions of disturbed places, and the contemplation of wild places." (Thomashow 1995: 30) All three of these paths to "ecological identity" that Thomashow presents appear to involve place-based ecological identifications along the lines that I am defining:

The interpretation of life experience transcends social and cultural interactions. It also includes a person's connection to the earth, perception of the ecosystem, and direct experience of nature. (Thomashow 1995:3)

The findings of Thomashow are an important indicator of how humans can be greatly affected by natural places. Referring to his years of reading the autobiographical "environmental" journals of his students, he notes: "...what I have found is that for many environmentalists, the direct experience of wild places has a transformational quality." (Thomashow 1995:15) The transformation being referred to involves the "identity" of the person. He also points to an ecological worldview as being a factor in the formulation of personality, and partaking in ecological action.

Before offering up a definition of ecological identification, it will be useful to consider some cultural "worldviews" that are profoundly ecological in spirit. Keep in mind that we are interested in humans relating to non-humans socially. The purpose of

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<sup>27</sup> Thomashow 1995:xiv.

this brief excursion is to consider what a worldview might look like if it is based upon the social relations of human beings with all things.

Callicott has made some observations and interpretations of American Indian cultures generally, and Ojibwa culture specifically with regard to beliefs concerning humans and nature. He argues that the traditional Aboriginal beliefs locate human beings in a social relationship with all of nature:

The implicit overall metaphysic of American Indian cultures locates human beings in a large *social*, as well as physical, environment. People belong not only to a human community, but to a community of all nature as well. Existence in this larger society, just as existence in a family and tribal context, places people in an environment in which reciprocal responsibilities and mutual obligations are taken for granted and assumed without question or reflection...It is a world in which a person might feel at home, a relative to all that is, comfortable and secure, as one feels as a child in the midst of a large family. (Callicott 1989:189-90)

Here Callicott has described the traditional life of Aboriginal peoples of North America as regarding non-humans as social actors to be interacted and identified with. This appears to be a very pristine and advanced manifestation of the phenomenon of ecological identification, one where ecological identification has become central to culture and lifestyle. Speaking to Ojibwa culture specifically, Callicott and Nelson note: "The whole Ojibwa world, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest, is organized socially. Every being is a member of a family, clan, and tribe; and these families, clans, and tribes - human and other-than-human - are all socially integrated and interactive with one another." (Callicott and Nelson 2004:105) This conscious social orientation towards nature certainly stands out in stark contrast to the orientation that Kueneman (working

paper) identifies.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, there can be heard similar echoes from other cultures around the world that live closely with the land.

Yunupingu (1997) describes an Aborigine perspective on the relation between human and the land:

The land is something that is always yours; it doesn't matter what nature or politics do to change it. We believe the land is all life. So it comes to us that we are part of the land and the land is part of us. It cannot be one or the other. We cannot be separated by anything or anybody. (Yunupingu 1997:2-3)

Some have interpreted "Aboriginal cosmology" somewhat differently. Reser (1995) downplays the relations between humans and non-humans, and doesn't see non-humans as social actors:

Aboriginal cosmology is a pervasive anthropomorphizing of the natural world, and its dependence on human ritual and management for continuance and life itself. Finally, Aboriginal world views are inherently and ubiquitously social as well as human; while it is true that there is often an almost literal identification with place, for example, through conception linearity, this identification is perhaps more accurately understood as an ontological and kinship marker in a pervasively social landscape of meaning. (Reser 1995:245)

In using the word "anthropomorphizing" Reser betrays a reluctance to accept the Aboriginal wisdom that has placed non-humans on equal footing with humans, at least in terms of social actors.<sup>29</sup> Reser portrays nature as a backboard for inter-human relations by emphasizing its use as a way of categorizing people (i.e. "kinship marker") in stead of

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<sup>28</sup> See section II a) Ecology not Environment, above.

<sup>29</sup> "Anthropomorphism," and its equally annoying literary cousin "personification" are value-laden terms that often betray a pervasive anthropocentrism as well as human exemptionalism from the web of life. When we use these words, we are saying that animals, plants etc. do *not* have feelings, emotions, thoughts or relationships, and that these things are the exclusive domain of the human being. Further, we are then denying the possibility of human and non-human relations. As a result, what is really a proper way of relating socially with the world (identification) is made out to be a fantastic or neurotic exercise when it involves nature.

acknowledging the social relations between nature and humans that are evident in this cosmology.

The words of Reser above seem to reflect a modern cultural tendency to see only humans (and sometimes not *all* humans) and some animals (i.e. pets - the animals that we *name*)<sup>30</sup> as worthy of social interaction. Yet we can't help ourselves, *especially* when we are experiencing intense emotions. Who hasn't pleaded with golf balls, raged at automobiles, threatened stoplights, shook their fists at rain clouds, and so on? Of course this may be just venting emotion – or "projecting." But, when a child *naturally* talks to her toys, names them and makes personal requests on their behalf, is she projecting? Or, is she relating to them in a way that is natural to her: *socially*? Children certainly need to be taught various rules regarding social relations i.e., manners, customs, when to be quiet, what not to mention etc., but are they not also taught what "others" constitute potential partners in social relations? Consider the following brief excerpts with the "education" of children in mind:

The overall thrust of modern institutions is to create settings of action in terms of modernity's own dynamics and severed from 'external criteria' – factors external to the social systems of modernity. Although there are numerous exceptions and countertrends, day-to-day social life tends to become separated from 'original' nature and from a variety of experiences bearing on existential questions and dilemmas. (Giddens 1991:8);

If educators are to help heal the broken bond between the young and the natural world, they and the rest of us must confront the unintended educational consequences of an overly abstract science education: ecophobia and the death of natural history studies. Equally important, the wave of test-based education reform that became dominant in the

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<sup>30</sup> It is not by accident that farmers refrain from and discourage their children from naming livestock. Naming them – labeling them as a subject - which in turn opens up the possibility of identification, would only lead to heartache when Bessy inevitably graduates from "Bovine University."

late 1990s leaves little room for hands-on experience in nature. (Louv 2005:134)

...silencing is central to the workings of our culture. The staunch refusal to hear the voices of those we exploit is crucial to our domination of them. Religion, science, philosophy, politics, education, psychology, medicine, literature, linguistics, and art have all been pressed into service as tools to rationalize the silencing and degradation of women, children, other races, other cultures, the natural world and its members, our emotions, our consciences, our experiences, and our cultural and personal histories. (Jensen 2000: 2-3)

Only human beings have come to the point where they no longer know why they exist. They don't use their brains and they have forgotten the secret knowledge of their bodies, their sense and their dreams. They don't use the knowledge that the spirit has put into every one of them; they are not even aware of this, and so they stumble along blindly on the road to nowhere- a paved highway which they themselves bulldoze and make smooth so that they can get faster to the big, empty hole which they'll find at the end, waiting to swallow them up. It's a quick, comfortable superhighway, but I know where it leads to. I have seen it. I have been there in my vision and it makes me shudder to think about it. (Lame Deer: 157);

And finally, this excerpt from *Land of the Spotted Eagle*:

I have come to know that the white mind does not feel toward nature as does the Indian mind, and it is because, I believe, of the difference in childhood instruction. I have often noticed white boys gathered in a city by-street or alley jostling and pushing one another in a foolish manner. They spend much time in this aimless fashion, their natural faculties neither seeing, hearing, nor feeling the varied life that surrounds them. There is about them no awareness, no acuteness, and it is this dullness that gives ugly mannerisms full play; it takes from them natural poise and stimulation. In contrast, Indian boys, who are naturally reared, are alert to their surroundings; their senses are not narrowed to observing only one another, and they cannot spend hours seeing nothing, hearing nothing, and thinking nothing in particular. Observation was certain in its rewards; interest, wonder, admiration grew, and the fact was appreciated that

life was more than mere human manifestation; that it was expressed in a multitude of forms. (Standing Bear 1933:195)

What unites these excerpts is that taken together, they make the suggestion that perhaps we as modern western (or westernized) humans have learned to *not* relate socially with nature. It may in fact be *natural* for us to relate to nature socially,<sup>31</sup> and precisely *unnatural* to separate or alienate ourselves from nature. Perhaps we have been taught to "silence" the voices of nature. The above excerpts show how modern institutions, modern culture and modern urban landscapes may play a part in this silencing of nature.

Buber writes that human life begins with relation and association, and that one knows how to relate to a *subject* (or in Buber's terminology - to be confronted by a "You") before one learns to perceive an *object* (an "It".) In fact he argues that the human being naturally thirsts for social relation:

The prenatal life of the child is a pure natural association, a flowing toward each other, a bodily reciprocity; and the life horizon of the developing being appears uniquely inscribed, and yet also not inscribed, in that of the being that carries; for the womb in which it dwells is not solely that of the human mother...And as the secret image of a wish, this association remains to us. But this longing ought not to be taken for a craving to go back, as those suppose who consider the spirit, which they confound with their own intellect, a parasite of nature. For the spirit is nature's blossom albeit exposed to many diseases. What this longing aims for is the cosmic association of the being that has burst into spirit with its true You... The innateness of the longing for relation is apparent even in the earliest and dimmest stage. Before any particulars can be perceived, dull glances push into the unclear space toward the indefinite; and at times when there is obviously no desire

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<sup>31</sup> This is somewhat similar to the notion of "biophilia", which is described as "a genetic tendency to respond to the natural environment in certain ways, particularly with certain emotional responses." (Clayton 2003:48) This sort of pre-programmed response mechanism to natural surroundings certainly allows that we have a natural tendency to attach ourselves to certain natural places, but in stead of allowing for a social relationship it declares this attachment to be a survival instinct.

for nourishment, soft projections of the hands reach, aimlessly to all appearances, into the empty air toward the indefinite... It is not as if a child first saw an object and then entered into some relationship with that. Rather, the longing for relation is primary, the cupped hand into which the being that confronts us nestles; and the relation to that, which is a wordless anticipation of saying you, comes second... In the beginning is the relation-as the category of being, as readiness, as a form that reaches out to be filled, as a model of the soul; the *a priori* of relation; *the innate You*. Buber 1970: 76-78

With the words of Buber in mind we will continue with the construction of the concept ecological identification. We will return to Buber again as we explore the possibilities of non-humans as subjects.

Gecas provides a social psychological definition of "identification *with*" that has bearing on our concept:

Identification *with* refers to the emotional and psychological attachment that one has with some person or group. Identification with the socializer or the socializing group makes one more receptive to their influence and motivated to be socialized according to their standards. (Gecas 1981:166)

This definition of identification allows for attachment of the person in question to others, although it appears that those others are assumed to be human. What is important about this definition is that it clearly conceptualizes identification (*with*) as a process.

For the notion of identification as a process of self-investment we look to Ernest Becker's protean self: "The self is not physical, it is symbolic. It is "in" the body but it is rarely completely integrated with the body; like dominoes in a box, not like a tightly woven tapestry." (Becker 1971:31) He further explains:

The body is *one* of the things in which our true feelings are located, but it is not the only one, and it may not even be the principal one for believers in karma and reincarnation.

Least of all is the self limited to the body. A person literally projects or throws himself out of the body, and anywhere at all. (Becker 1971:32)

We need to pay attention to the idea of throwing the self out of the body, for here Becker is describing the process of identification:

You get a good feeling for what the self "looks like" in its extensions if you imagine the person to be a cylinder with a hollow inside, in which is lodged his self. Out of this cylinder the self overflows and extends into the surroundings, as a kind of huge amoeba, pushing its pseudopods to a wife, a car, a flag, a crushed flower in a secret book. The picture you get is of a huge invisible amoeba spread out over the landscape, with boundaries very far from its own center or home base. Tear and burn the flag, find and destroy the flower in the book, and the amoeba screams with soul-searing pain. (Becker 1971:33)

If we conceptualize identification as an investment of the self such as is described by Becker; a deeper and less limited - but still an - identification *with*, such as Gecas describes, we are then ready to look into the writings of Arne Naess.

Naess posits identifications as constituents of the self: "The self is as comprehensive as the totality of our identifications. Or, more succinctly: Our self is that with which we identify." (Naess 1988:261) His conception places the self on a continuum - on the one end is a small egoistic self with a few shallow identifications and a high degree of alienation from "others," and at the opposite end is a very massive self, rife with many deep identifications and minimal alienation from others (indeed, the ideal self is actually a Self – the pinnacle of identification with all things and best thought of as a Weberian ideal type.)

The self is engaged in the process of self-realization – the process of life. Wider, deeper and more numerous identifications are seen as progress in the process of self-

realization. But not only are these identifications - these precisely *social* attachments to others - extended to humans, they can in their eventuality extend to nature (in any and all of its aspects) as well: "Identification is not limited to beings which can reciprocate: Any animal, plant, mountain, ocean may induce such processes." (Naess 1989:262-3) The only amendment that needs to be made to this remark is that this present study accepts the possibility that non-humans may identify with others as well. Certainly anyone who has had a pet in their life is aware that animals do form social attachments with others: people, animals and things. The possibility of non-humans to reciprocate in a relation will be explored below when the writings of Buber are once again considered.

Naess links identifications to taking care: "The greater our comprehension of our togetherness with other beings, the greater the identification, and the greater the care we will take." (Naess 1989:175) This sentiment motivates the present intellectual excursion into ecological identification. Fox, who has written at length of the ecophilosophy of Naess<sup>32</sup> echoes this sentiment in a similar fashion:

Every living being is connected intimately, and from this intimacy follows the capacity of *identification* and its natural consequences, practice of non-violence... Now is the time *to share* with all life on our maltreated earth through the deepening identification with life forms and the greater units, the ecosystems, and Gaia, the fabulous, old planet of ours. (Fox 1990:230)

This process of identification that Fox discusses is one that is expressed in terms of a sense of commonality: "Identification should be taken to mean what we ordinarily understand by that term, that is, the experience not simply of a sense of *similarity* with an entity but a sense of *commonality*." (Fox 1990:231) Commonality in this sense may very

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<sup>32</sup> He also gives a detailed accounting of the contributions of two Naess-inspired writers: Bill Devall and George Sessions. These two writers are credited with bringing greater attention to the work of Naess.

well be a factor in ecological identification as this study is pursuing it, but the concept is not being hinged exclusively on "a sense of commonality."

Ecological identification is being pursued as a social relation. What the term "social" represents in this thesis is the approaching of an *other* as a *subject*, as opposed to an *object*. Application of the term "social" has been traditionally hinged upon the presence of human actors in the social sciences. The result of this is that "social" then describes *all* possibilities of interaction between people. The most unhealthy and abusive relationship that can be imagined is called social under this regime.

In the more everyday usage of the term "social" - as one might encounter outside the parameters of academic discourse - seems to denote a positive or friendly disposition towards - and/or intercourse with - an other. Unfriendly or disruptive relations are precisely "anti-social." The adoption of this lay definition of social is being undertaken in order to more fully illustrate the appropriateness of human and non-human relations in sociology.

Martin Buber sees language as the milieu from which the human being emerges, and through which his/her "I" can best be actualized. Thus the business of being and becoming are conceptualized linguistically<sup>33</sup>. Becoming is a concept similar to "self-realization" in Naess's formulation. This appears in his work "I and Thou."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> What this means is that Buber sees language as what separates the human being from all other living things. For him the basic human act is the speaking of basic words as described above. This metaphor is consistent throughout "I and Thou,"

<sup>34</sup> This was written originally in German as "Ich und Du." This has been most popularly translated as "I and *Thou*" to denote reverence in the latter term, but in Kaufmann's translation - which is being referred to in this thesis - "*Du*" appears as "*You*." Having come to trust Walter Kaufmann's translations after reading so much of "his" Nietzsche, I will use his rendering except when referring to the work as a whole which will remain "I and *Thou*." I do not speak or read German. For a detailed explanation of this change, see Kaufmann's "I and You: A Prologue" in Buber:1970.

Buber presents two basic words<sup>35</sup> that humans can speak, and these are associated with the two worlds that humans encounter – the "It-world" and the "You-world." These basic words are actually word pairs, and they are "I-It" and "I-Thou." I-It is what one says to an object, and I-You is what one says to a subject. Further, the "I" of the first pairing is different than the "I" in the second pairing. Buber categorizes these two "I's" as the "ego" (in I-It) and the "person" (in I-You.):

The I of the basic word I-You is different from that of the basic word I-It. The I of the basic word I-It appears as an ego and becomes conscious of itself as a subject (of experience and use). The I of the basic word I-You appears as a person and becomes conscious of itself as subjectivity (without any dependent genitive.) Egos appear by setting themselves apart from other egos. Persons appear by entering into relation to other persons. One is the spiritual form of natural differentiation, the other that of natural association. The purpose of setting oneself apart is to experience and use, and that is "living"-which means dying one human life long. The purpose of relation is the relation itself-touching the You. For as soon as we touch a You, we are touched by a breath of eternal life. (Buber 1970:111-13)

Buber conceptualizes the saying of I-You as the "actualization"<sup>36</sup> of being that occurs through relation to the other. This is juxtaposed with the "objectification" of the other that occurs in the saying of I-It. He illustrates the differences between the two in terms of the "worlds" that they occur in. "It-world coheres in space and time. The You-world does not cohere in either." (Buber 1970: 148) The following excerpts detail first: the experience of the I in the It-world; and second the being and becoming of the I in the You-world:

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<sup>35</sup> "The attitude of man is twofold in accordance with the two basic words he can speak." (Buber 1970: 53)

<sup>36</sup> This has also been translated as "realization," which makes the similarity of the concept to Naess' "self-realization" even more striking.

He perceives the being that surrounds him, plain things and beings as things; he perceives what happens around him, plain processes and actions as processes, things that consist of qualities and processes that consist of moments, things recorded in terms of spatial coordinates and processes recorded in terms of temporal coordinates, things and processes that are bounded by other things and processes and capable of being measured against and compared with those others-an ordered world, a detached world... There it stands-right next to your skin if you think of it that way, or nestled in your soul if you prefer that: it is your object and remains that, according to your pleasure-and remains primarily alien both outside and inside you. (Buber 1970: 82-83)

Or man encounters being and becoming as what confronts him-always only *one* being and every thing only as a being. What is there reveals itself to him in the occurrence, and what occurs there happens to him as being. Nothing else is present but this one, but this one cosmically. Measure and comparison have fled. It is up to you how much of the immeasurable becomes reality for you. The encounters do not order themselves to become a world, but each is for you a sign of the world order... It cannot be surveyed: if you try to make it surveyable, you lose it. It comes-comes to fetch you-and if it does not reach you or encounter you it vanishes, but it comes again, transformed... Between you and it there is a reciprocity of giving: you say You to it and give yourself to it; it says You to you and gives itself to you. (Buber 1970: 83-84)

Buber says that when we encounter a You - when our entire being says "You" - we are not only entering into a relation with an other, but we are also relating with the eternal You. The eternal You for Buber is God, although no word can encapsulate the eternal You, or any You for that matter. To do so is to make it an It. God can be widely interpreted in Buber because God (the eternal You) is precisely defined as indefinable. The best that God can be described can be glimpsed in the following excerpts:

For entering into the pure relationship does not involve ignoring everything but seeing everything in the You, not

renouncing the world but placing it upon its proper ground...in comprehending the You, giving the world its due and truth, to have nothing besides God but to grasp everything in him, that is the perfect relationship...Whoever goes forth to his You with his whole being and carries to it all the being of the world, finds him whom one cannot seek...when you dispute the life of things and of conditionality, you wind up before the nothing; when you consecrate life you encounter the living God. (Buber 1970: 127-28)

The eternal You is You by its very nature; only *our* nature forces us to draw it into the It-world and It-speech. (Buber 1970: 148)

Whoever knows the world as something to be utilized knows God the same way. His prayers are a way of unburdening himself-and fall into the ears of the void. He-and not the "atheist" who from the night and longing of his garret window addresses the nameless-is godless. (Buber 1970: 156)

What emerges from these words of Buber is that the social relation is in fact a spiritual thing that exists for a human when confronted by a subject to whom he/she says "I-You." While the It-world is important, and humans could not survive without living in it (finding food, shelter etc. for us requires objectification), it is the You-world that has the potential to make us human: "And in all the seriousness of truth, listen: without It a human being cannot live. But whoever lives only with that is not human." (Buber 1970: 85)

What I wish to draw upon from the writings of Buber is the potential for human beings to treat non-humans as subjects, to identify with them, and to enter into a social relation with them. Buber separates human association from the rest of nature, but he

does allow for relations between human and non-human. The following excerpts describe the I-You relation between a human and some aspects of nature:

Here the relation vibrates in the dark and remains below language. The creatures stir across from us, but they are unable to come to us, and the You we say to them sticks to the threshold of language.<sup>37</sup> (Buber 1970: 56-7)

One should try not to dilute the meaning of the relation: relation is reciprocity. Does the tree then have consciousness, similar to our own? I have no experience of that. But thinking that you have brought this off in your own case, must you again divide the indivisible? What I encounter is neither the soul of a tree nor a dryad, but the tree itself. (Buber 1970: 58-9)

The eyes of an animal have the capacity of a great language. Independent, without any need of the assistance of sounds and gestures, most eloquent when they rest entirely in their glance, they express the mystery in its natural captivity, that is, in the anxiety of becoming. This state of the mystery is known only to the animal, which alone can open it up to us-for this state can only be opened up and not revealed. The language in which this is accomplished is what it says: anxiety-the stirring of the creature between the realms of plantlike security and spiritual risk. This language is the stammering of nature under the initial grasp of spirit, before language yields to spirit's cosmic risk which we call man. But no speech will ever repeat what the stammerer is able to communicate. (Buber 1970: 144-45)

And referring to encounters with a house cat:

Just now the It-world had surrounded the animal and me, then the You-world radiated from the ground for the length of one glance, and now its light has died back into the It-world. It is for the sake of the language of this barely perceptible rising and setting of the spirit sun that I relate this minute occurrence that happened to me more than once. No other event has made me so deeply aware of the evanescent actuality in all relationships to other beings, the

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<sup>37</sup> Derrick Jensen (2002) writes very eloquently and provocatively about his own experiences in exploring "a language without words." He details both the great difficulties and the wonderful rewards of seeking communications with non-human others.

sublime melancholy of our lot, the fated lapse into It of every single You. (Buber 1970: 145-56)

It is precisely these types of relations – relations that are different from those that occur linguistically between human beings, but are rather solely based upon one's confrontation with a being (i.e. a tree) or sublinguistic communication (a glance,) and spontaneous confrontation of the animal You (i.e. a cat) – that inform the definition of identification being approached in the present paper as a social relation.

Buber writes about the It-world and its perils in ways that echo the words of other writers that were presented above when we addressed deficits in education and modern life in general, including aspects of the treadmill of production. His writings seem to encompass what has been emerging in this discussion so far:

But isn't the communal life of modern man bound to be submerged in the It-world? Consider the two chambers of this life, the economy and the state: are they even thinkable in their present dimensions and ramifications, except on the basis of a superior renunciation of all "immediacy"-and even an inexorably resolute repudiation of any "alien" authority that does not itself have its source in this area? And if the I that experiences and uses holds sway here-in the economy, the I that uses goods and services; in politics, the I that uses opinions and aspirations-is it not precisely to this absolute dominion that we owe the extensive and firm structure of the great "objective" fabrics in these two spheres? Doesn't the form-giving greatness of leading statesmen and businessmen depend on their way of seeing the human beings with whom they have to deal not as carriers of an inexperienceable You but rather as centers of services and aspirations that have to be calculated and employed according to their specific capacities? (Buber 1970: 96)

But in sick ages it happens that the It-world, no longer irrigated and fertilized by the living currents of the You-world, severed and stagnant, becomes a gigantic swamp phantom and overpowers man. As he accommodates himself to a world of objects that no longer achieve any

presence for him, he succumbs to it. Then common causality grows into an oppressive and crushing doom... When a culture is no longer centered in a living and continually renewed relational process, it freezes into the It-world which is broken only intermittently by the eruptive, glowing deeds of solitary spirits. From that point on, common causality, which hitherto was never able to disturb the spiritual conception of the cosmos, grows into an oppressive and crushing doom. (Buber 1970: 102-3)

The I-You relation that Buber describes may be present in the definition of identification that is being drawn from Naess and Becker. Naess gives an autobiographical account of a moment of epiphany regarding identification that occurred between himself and a dying flea:

I was looking through an old-fashioned microscope at the dramatic meeting of two drops of different chemicals. At that moment, a flea jumped from a lemming which was strolling along the table and landed in the middle of the acid chemicals. To save it was impossible. It took many minutes for the flea to die. Its movements were dreadfully expressive. Naturally, what I felt was a painful sense of compassion and empathy. But the empathy was *not* basic, rather it was a process of identification: that "I saw myself in the flea." If I had been *alienated* from the flea, not seeing intuitively anything even resembling myself, the death struggle would have left me feeling indifferent. So there must be identification in order for there to be compassion and, among humans, solidarity. (Naess 1995: 227)

In order to marry the two concepts (identification and the I-You relation) identification must be defined in regard to both the It-world and the You-world. Identification as it manifests in the You-world I will assume as the same as the I-You relation, merely spoken differently. Identification is the investment of self in a subject,

and I-You is the relation between I and You which by definition requires the I recognizing the subjectivity of the other.

The prolonged existence of this identification requires that there be some representation of the relation in the It-world (a world that cannot sustain a relation) that sustains the belief in the other as a subject between moments of I-You saying. This aspect of the relation may be bound up in worldviews, religious or spiritual beliefs, pragmatic and intellectual facts and beliefs, or other markers such as pieces of art that have the ability to confront a person as a You, and thus the eternal You.

Ecological identification for the purpose of this study is conceptualized as a process of investment of the self in non-human others – a social act that occurs specifically between humans and nature – be it between a person and a single animal, a person and a particular place, or a person and the planet Earth. This identification requires that the person involved discover the subjectivity of the other in question, and – according to Buber – may also involve the confrontation of the eternal You: that which is unnameable. Identification is also comprised of the thoughts, words, beliefs and other objects (or It's) that the person uses to maintain their belief in the subjectivity of the other – their faith in the You-ness they once and will again encounter. These things are the It-world tokens that remind one of the You-world relation.

This study looks at people who are already involved in numerous ecological activities to investigate whether or not ecological identifications have played a significant part in activating those behaviours – both in their beginnings and in their maintenance. As derived from the writings of Naess, the process of widening identifications and the growth of the self tend to reduce the alienation of the individual from the rest of the

world. Taking Naess' lead, it is reasonable to expect that stronger identifications may more readily exhibit qualities indicative of social relations. Most importantly, it is the purpose of this study to investigate whether or not the participants have experienced relations with non-human others, and whether or not these experiences of the You are motivating them to engage in ecological behaviour.

### III. Method of Research

#### a) The Participants

In order to investigate whether or not ecological identification may be a major factor in sustained ecological behaviour, the study was designed to probe the ecological identifications of people who are already involved in these behaviours. The strategy was fairly simple. Find people who are involved in ecological groups and try to discover whether or not they identify with nature. This research design is not targeted at proving that identification has caused these behaviours – this could not be done by sampling only those who are already involved in ecological efforts - but rather it endeavours to establish whether or not ecological identification is a *plausible* factor in the motivation of ecological behaviour. If the subjects appear to have invested themselves into nature and natural beings, this discovery would in turn imply the need the further research into ecological identification. The research employed semi-structured interviews.

To locate possible subjects an internet search was done to identify suitable ecological organizations and projects that exist in southern Manitoba - including the capital city of Winnipeg. The Manitoba Eco-Network website<sup>38</sup> was very helpful in this regard, and I found that it was the most comprehensive website for news and happenings in Manitoba on the ecological front. Through their network of linkages several possible groups were identified within southern Manitoba.

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<sup>38</sup> [www.mbeconetwork.org](http://www.mbeconetwork.org)

Besides the initial internet searches, a snowball sampling strategy was employed to further explore the dearth of ecological groups and projects going on in southern Manitoba. I got in contact with the Manitoba Eco-Network and they were able to provide a lot of information about many of the local projects and groups that were involved in ecological activities and contact information for some of these groups. Thanks to their help, I was able to establish contact with appropriate study organizations.

A second institution was also approached for this purpose. Through the help of the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER)<sup>39</sup> in Winnipeg, I was able to locate a First Nations ecological project that was suited to the research: Debwendon and the Brokenhead Wetlands.

Once a list of several possible groups was compiled, I sent introductory emails to these organizations. I identified myself as a M.A. student in sociology at UM, and stated that I was interested in including some of their members in my research into motivations for ecological behaviour. The recruitment period of the study was one of the more difficult parts of the entire thesis project. It was some time before I was able to set up communication with five suitable groups to the point where I could begin to recruit subjects. Many of the organizations on my original list did not return my emails or calls, so it was some time before I had contact with enough groups to go ahead with the recruitment.

The possible research subjects were generally forwarded my email address and asked to respond directly to me if they were interested in participating in the interviews. While a few willing people were not able to be interviewed due to schedule conflicts, I ended up with a total of 15 interviews from four different groups. In my research

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<sup>39</sup> [www.cier.ca](http://www.cier.ca)

proposal I had outlined five groups for study, but my recruitment emails sent to Save Our Seine (SOS) went unanswered and thus I was unable to recruit subjects.

The nature of each organization or project involved in this research is briefly detailed below.

Subjects' names have been changed to protect their confidentiality. They have been replaced with names that are familiar to me AND that begin with the same letter for each group. For example, subjects from group A: Bike to the Future, all have names beginning with the letter A. This strategy allows for the subjects to be easily identified with the group or project that they were recruited from while maintaining confidentiality. The gender of each subject has been preserved in the choice of each replacement name.

**Table 3.1**

**Interview Group A: Bike to the Future**

**Arthur:** a founding member of the organization who is very outspoken in his critical assessment of consumer or "soft" society. He spends an incredible amount of time in the outdoors through all the seasons of the year.

**Andrew:** another long-time member of the organization. His focus is on the safety issues that are so important to the establishment of cycling as a more viable commuter option in the city of Winnipeg.

**Anne:** a government employee who is passionate about ecological issues but ironically does not seek out or particularly enjoy natural places. She credits media messages received in her formative years as the impetus to her ecological career.

**Arlene:** a member of BTTF that admits she doesn't have a whole lot of involvement with the group. She articulates a profound sense of the urban situation as "nature" and describes in vivid detail encounters with natural beings and events.

**Aaron:** a long-time member of BTTF who describes a move from intellectual pursuit of ecological knowledge to personal, proximal experience. He finds deep spiritual significance in nature and values places that are untouched by humans.

**Alan:** not a member of BTTF, but he is on their email list so that he can keep abreast of their activities. A sustainable development manager for a large government branch, he seeks to find ways to allow employees to green their work activities.

After several "Critical Mass" rides – monthly rides which involved ever-increasing numbers of Winnipeg cyclists gathering and riding through downtown - there were incidents of violence perpetrated against cyclists by city police in May of 2006. The purpose of the rides was to bring public, media and government attention to the plight of cyclists in Winnipeg. The messages being sent by "Critical Mass" were: there is an increasing number of citizens who regard cycling as their primary form of urban transportation; there is next to no infrastructure in the city to accommodate these cyclists; and that often cyclists are not given proper space or consideration on the city's roadways. The rides were also intended to be a wake up call to the public as to the unsustainable reliance on fossil fuels for transportation in Winnipeg and the rest of the country, as well as to promote the idea that cycling is a viable, healthy and green commuter option.

During the May 2006 Critical Mass ride there were approximately five hundred participants - the largest number of cyclists to ever participate in any of the Critical Mass rides in Winnipeg. The resulting mass of cyclists making their way through downtown

had many motorists becoming angry with the temporary (but recurring) disruption of traffic. The city police intervened, and there were incidents of violence perpetrated against cyclists.

It was this event (or perhaps culmination of events) that caused several cyclists to get together and decide that something had to be done to bring about changes in the way that Winnipeg views cycling and cyclists. A meeting was held in August 2006 to set up a forum revolving around the issues that were of concern to "commuter cyclists" – people that use bicycles as their primary form of transportation in the city. In September of 2006 a forum was held at the University of Winnipeg. A few short months later the movement had thoroughly captured the attention of the press, and several documents on the subject of commuter cycling had been produced. Recommendations were presented to both the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba. These recommendations included requests for a relatively small portion of the infrastructure funds to be put towards creating safe bike paths and roadways, and calls for policy changes to be implemented that would make cycling easier and safer in Winnipeg.

Bike to the Future as a group was incorporated soon after, and they held their first AGM in April of 2007. By August 2008<sup>40</sup>, Bike to the Future boasted 595 members. The mission of Bike to the Future was described by one of the co-founders of the group (**Arthur**, as his name appears in the thesis) as follows: "Bike to the Future is working to make cycling in Winnipeg more convenient, safer and easier." The approach of Bike to the Future is described by the subjects as less confrontational in nature than the Critical Mass movement. **Aaron** points out that the original confrontation by Critical Mass was an important step in bringing attention to the aforementioned problems that the cyclists

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<sup>40</sup> It was at this time that I started interviewing Bike to the Future members for this thesis.

were concerned about. Having garnered that visibility, and having raised somewhat the awareness of the public as well as the local and provincial governments, it was important that Bike to the Future would manifest the concerns of cyclists in a more structured, less confrontational manner. In this way they hoped to build upon the visibility and awareness that resulted from the Critical Mass rides through a more cooperative approach.

In comparison to the other groups/projects that are represented in the sample, Bike to the Future is unique in that its mandate is not primarily ecological. Of the five members of Bike to the Future interviewed all agree that the work of the group stems from a concern for the health of the ecosphere, but that it is not the only concern. **Arthur**, a co-founder of Bike to the Future is clear on the fact that while many in the group are concerned about ecological issues, it is the promotion of cycling that is the unifying factor in Bike to the Future. He also notes that the many benefits of cycling including: personal health benefits, reduced fuel and automobile-related costs, and reduced ecologically harmful emissions, makes the message of the group stronger than if it was hinged on only one issue. This, he feels, gives the group a broader appeal. **Andrew** notes that the group is concerned about ecological health, although "it's not number one on everybody's list." **Anne** remarks that the primary mandate of the group is to make cycling easier and quicker for commuters, but that ecological health is a concern as well. **Arlene** feels that the group's work *does* stem from a concern for ecological health. She adds to this that the personal health benefits that cyclists may enjoy should be considered an ecological benefit as well because people are part of ecosystems. **Aaron** notes that one of the group's objectives is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. He

also stated that if the city would reorganize itself around cycling and walking instead of driving, it would be a more beautiful and enjoyable place to live, work and visit. This in turn would allow for more park-like settings which would be conducive to the flourishing of increased wildlife populations within the city.

Bike to the Future is engaged in continuing dialogues with the city of Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba regarding the need for a more cycle-friendly Winnipeg. They are also involved in such activities as promoting the Commuter Challenge, which encourages people to try walking, cycling, skating, paddling, busing or even carpooling to work as opposed to driving to and from work for a week each year. They also promote similar events such as Bike to Work Day and Car Free Day.

**Table 3.2**

**Interview Group B: Debwendon and the Brokenhead Wetlands**

**Ecological Reserve**

**Barry:** a member of Debwendon and an Ojibway medicine man in the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation. He has knowledge of local medicines and ecological functions of the land, and shares many creation stories during the interview.

**Benjamin:** a member of Debwendon and NOCI, he is an active member of the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation being involved in several projects at once. He believes that people inherently value the natural world, but that industry (partially through their influence on government) continue to endanger it.

**Barbara:** a member of Debwendon and NOCI, she lives in Winnipeg and is not part of the Brokenhead community. She has spent many years surveying and protecting areas that support rare native orchids and bringing people to special natural places to help them to learn about the importance of nature for themselves.

The NOCI is a non-profit group that formed in 1998 to locate and protect rare native plant species and the habitats in which they flourish. They conduct field trips to various Manitoba locations in the summer that members of the general public are invited to attend, as well as performing botanical surveys to locate rare plants in Manitoba. In the year 1998 members of the NOCI began conducting botanical surveys of the Brokenhead Wetland area, which is located approximately 45 km north of Winnipeg. These wetland areas are part of the traditional lands of the BON, and have been so for three hundred years<sup>41</sup>. Local members of the BON First Nation were instrumental in the locating and identification of various rare and medicinal plants in co-operation with the NOCI.

The wetland, the forest and the calcareous fen<sup>42</sup> which comprise the Brokenhead Wetland are very significant to the Brokenhead community. They are a source of special medicines; they nurture 28 of the 36 species of orchid native to Manitoba and 23 rare plant species<sup>43</sup> including 8 carnivorous plants; and they support a rare white cedar forest. Being traditional lands of the nearby Ojibway community, not only is the area one where the locals can go to relax and gather medicines, but it is a place where they can go to learn more about their culture and to connect with the land. Elders and medicine people can teach the other members of the community about the ways of their people and the

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<sup>41</sup> This information comes from a pamphlet on the Brokenhead Wetlands ecological reserve, see [www.debwendon.org](http://www.debwendon.org).

<sup>42</sup> "A fen is a type of peatland characterized by a high water table with slow internal drainage by seepage down very gradual slopes. The slow moving groundwater is enriched by upslope materials and thus fens are usually more mineral-rich and less acid (sic) than bogs. The pH in this fen is approximately 7.0 to 7.5. This kind of soil pH makes it easier for plants to take up nutrients and thus often becomes a home to rare plant species." This excerpt is taken from "Secrets of the Brokenhead Wetland" found at [www.nativeorchid.com/dorisMbGardener04summer.htm](http://www.nativeorchid.com/dorisMbGardener04summer.htm).

<sup>43</sup> Some of the rare plants found are: Ram's Head Lady's-Slipper, Dragon's Mouth Orchid, Grass Pink and Rose Pogonia. See [www.nativeorchid.com](http://www.nativeorchid.com).

ways of the land. The area has very significant cultural relevance to the local Ojibway community and is integral to their traditional healing practices.

Ecologically speaking, the wetland is of great importance as it performs the function of cleaning and recharging groundwater. It also cleans the air through carbon fixing and provides habitat for many forms of wildlife.

With all of these reasons in mind, the BON, NOCI and MMF undertook efforts (including the botanical survey) to have the area declared an "Ecological Reserve" by the government of Manitoba, and thus be protected from development. This goal was largely achieved in June 2005, when the Manitoba government granted the declaration to much of the area concerned.

Ecological Reserves are part of the province of Manitoba's Protected Areas Initiative (PAI), and are described by Conservation Manitoba as follows:

Ecological reserves are the most protected of the provincially designated sites within the network of protected areas in Manitoba. *The Ecological Reserves Act* specifies the purpose of ecological reserves and what activities are permitted in them. These sites are set aside for preservation, research, education and nature study. Under the act, approval is required to conduct any activity in an ecological reserve but most ecological reserves are open to the public for non-destructive, observational uses (e.g. walking, wildlife viewing).<sup>44</sup>

The concern for the area now is that it be accessible to both the locals and to ecotourists without compromising the health of the ecosystems. The habitat which supports orchids is one which is both complex and fragile. If too many people are walking through the area the earth will become compressed and the ecosystem damaged. In order to prevent damage to the habitat while still maintaining access to the area for local use

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<sup>44</sup> This appears in a pamphlet published by the Manitoba government entitled "Protecting Manitoba's Outstanding Landscapes: Manitoba's Protected Areas Initiative." 2008.

and public education, BON, NOCI and MMF decided to form Debwendon. Debwendon is a charitable organization with a board of directors is comprised of appointees from BON (4), appointees from NOCI (4), and a single appointee from MMF. According to the Debwendon website:

Debwendon Inc is a non-profit organization formed in 2007 to promote and preserve the Brokenhead Wetland Ecological Reserve, raise public awareness of the historic cultural connection between the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation and the Brokenhead Wetland, construct and maintain over the long term a boardwalk and interpretive trail adjacent to the Brokenhead Wetland Ecological Reserve, and raise funds toward those ends.<sup>45</sup>

Debwendon is an Ojibway word which means "trust." With the First Nations community of BON as the lead in the project, Debwendon seeks to raise approximately \$1 million to build between 1.5 and 2 km of non-intrusive trail along the Ecological Reserve which would include gravel paths, interpretive trails and boardwalks made from ecologically friendly materials.<sup>46</sup> This proposed series of boardwalks and walkways would be located along a parcel of land that lies directly to the east of the ecological reserve. This 12 hectare parcel was graciously relinquished by Riverside Gravel, a company that had Quarry Lease rights to the land.

It is the hope of Debwendon to allow public access to this spectacular area so that others may experience its special magnificence, as well as learn about water systems, ecosystems and rare plants. They also wish to preserve it so that the BON can continue to harvest from, use and enjoy these traditional lands. Preservation will also facilitate the enrichment, education and nurturance of BON community members. The wetland area is

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<sup>45</sup> [www.debwendon.org](http://www.debwendon.org)

<sup>46</sup> At the time of the interviews (September-October 2008) Debwendon had not attained status as a charitable organization, but has since received their charitable status.

also to be protected so that its important ecological functions will not be disrupted by development.

Debwendon has produced a promotional video of the project entitled "Eko"<sup>47</sup> which tours some of the area while explaining its significance. Debwendon is currently fundraising for this ambitious project, and can accept donations as a charity through their website: [www.debwendon.com](http://www.debwendon.com).

**Table 3.3**

**Interview Group C: Pembina Valley Provincial Park**

**Craig:** a long-time nature lover who views nature as God's creation and seeks to protect special natural areas from the encroachment of agricultural lands. He sees conservation as an act of Christian worship. It was largely through the work of Crystal and Craig that the Pembina Valley Provincial Park came into being.

**Crystal:** another lover of nature who sees the conservation of creation as an act of obedience to God. She feels that God has provided for us in nature an opportunity to connect with God and learn about His plan for humanity.

Interview subjects **Craig** and **Crystal** were instrumental in the creation of the Pembina Valley Provincial Park, which covers an area of about 440 acres in south western Manitoba. They recognized early on that the valley was a very special place and they sought to preserve it. Over a period of about 25 years they slowly accumulated parcels of land in the area. Eventually they had come to own a continuous piece of land that encompassed a valley thick with trees and breath-taking views. Over the years, through the hard work of themselves and their family, they developed a trail system.

<sup>47</sup> A short version of this video is available at [www.debwendon.com](http://www.debwendon.com). Full length videos (approximately 25 minutes) are available for sale at the same site.

They also did extensive landscaping. In 1999 they approached the government of Manitoba with the idea of creating a Provincial Park out of this land. Although the province was not initially interested, together with the Nature Conservancy they were able to bring the government on board.

In 2001 the Pembina Valley Provincial Park was established. The park itself is a beautiful valley that is home to many plant and animal species. Consisting primarily of a lush wooded valley surrounded by farmland, it is regarded as a special habitat in southern Manitoba. It is an important place for migrating raptors such as red-tailed hawks, swanson's hawks, and golden eagles as well as providing habitat for other birds such as warblers, vireos and chickadees and wildlife such as squirrels, red fox and deer.

Some of the floras that can be found in the protected area include cattails, asters, harebells, meadow blazing star, wild bergamot, wild sage, chokecherries, pincherries, saskatoons, wild raspberries and high bush-cranberry. Trees common to the area are willows, aspen and burr oak. According to Manitoba Conservation:

The creation of Pembina Valley Provincial Park in 2001 helped Manitoba expand its network of protected areas. Although relatively small in size, the park is still very important. It links the Pembina Valley Wildlife Management Area units and the Pembina Valley Camp. These three parcels of land combine to form one large habitat area for the wildlife and plants that live there. Because farmland and towns cover much of southern Manitoba, the value of these natural lands holds even greater significance.<sup>48</sup>

Thanks to the creation of the park and the link that it provides between other protected areas, there now exists approximately 2000 acres of continuous protected habitat.

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<sup>48</sup> [www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/parks/popular\\_parks/Pembina/info.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/parks/popular_parks/Pembina/info.html)

With the creation of the park Manitoba Conservation hoped to achieve the following goals:

Protect the representative features of the glacial spillway and river valley ecosystem, including deciduous and river habitats; provide nature-oriented recreational opportunities such as hiking and wildlife viewing in a largely undisturbed environment; and promote public appreciation and understanding of the park's natural features.<sup>49</sup>

**Craig** and **Crystal** have built their home overlooking the beautiful valley from the west. They have built this home to accommodate the frequent guests that they lodge in their promotion of the park. They have made it their life's goal to help people discover the wonder of this piece of creation, and to provide opportunities for people to educate themselves about nature.

In 2004 they became affiliated with international Christian conservation organization A Rocha, and currently they are moving forward with a plan to develop an A Rocha field study centre on 100 acres adjacent to the park. Once completed, the field study centre will include: a viewing platform, a main house, camp sites, an education centre, an interpretative centre, accommodation, an orchard, a pine grove, a native prairie, a living classroom, a special stone circle and many trails. Some of this work was complete at the time of the interviews.

**Craig** and **Crystal** describe themselves and other A Rocha members as "Christians in conservation." **Craig** is careful to point out that while they are Christian people, the business of A Rocha is in conservation:

Even though A Rocha is a faith-based organization, we identify ourselves as Christians in conservation. That's who we are. But what we *do* is basically conservation

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

work in partnership with hopefully the park around us and other conservation organizations in the community.

**Table 3.4**

**Interview Group D: Roseisle Creek Watershed Group**

**Douglas:** a member of the group for about ten years, he and his wife retired in the country instead of pursuing the "corporate dream" in Toronto. He really experiences a lot of self-discovery during the interview process.

**Duane:** a long-time member of the group who moved out to the St. Lupicin valley area after life-changing experiences overseas that led him to get "back to the land." He enjoys cross country skiing as well as grooming and maintaining trails.

**Donna:** a long-time member of the group, she found a re-connection with nature gave her the desire to get "back to the land." She finds the complete experience of gardening as very rewarding, and she finds it brings her a sense of renewal.

**Darryl:** a long-time member of the group, he sought out the country in order to get "back to the land." He has strong opinions about how the human being has lost its way and tries to separate its existence from the rest of nature. He is not optimistic about the future of humanity on Earth.

Now called the Roseisle Creek Watershed *Group* (RCWG)<sup>50</sup>, the Roseisle Creek Watershed Association came into being in 1994 as an arm of the Pumpkin Creek Fair (PCF). The PCF is a local cultural organization that was incorporated in 1979 as a charity. When people in the St. Lupicin valley area became concerned about local ecological issues, they decided to act through the already established PCF. Thus the RCWA (now RCWG) was established specifically to deal with local issues of an

<sup>50</sup> The name was changed from *Association* to *Group* to more accurately reflect the nature of the group as being part of the Pumpkin Creek Fair - and not an association in its own right - as well as to comply with local bylaws.

ecological nature. As the name suggests, they have dealt with water quality issues in the area, although they deal with other ecological issues as well. Their activities are largely concerned with the valley itself as opposed to the entire watershed. The Roseisle Creek watershed is located approximately 150 km south west of Winnipeg. According to the group:

It encompasses an area that begins at the headwaters of Roseisle Creek, west of the towns of Notre Dame and Cardinal and Lyle Creek and Roseisle Drain with headwaters south and to the north west respectively of the town of Altamont. As it flows north and east, the creek passes through a deep, narrow, steeply sloped valley which cuts through the face of the Lake Agassiz Escarpment and joins the Boyne River not far from Stephenfield Lake in Stephenfield provincial Park. This watershed is part of the Morris River Watershed which includes the Boyne River, Stephenfield Lake, the Norquay Channel, the Morris River which flows in the Red River Basin.<sup>51</sup>

This "steeply sloped valley which cuts through the face of the Lake Agassiz Escarpment"

is a special area described by the group as:

...an oasis of natural wildlife in a surrounding sea of farmland. Most of the Valley is heavily forested with Ash, Basswood, Birch, Cottonwood, Elm, Manitoba Maple, Oak and many other species including rare or endangered species including the endangered Hop-Hornbeam or Ironwood. This forest provides habitat for a large variety of woodland plants and animals too numerous to mention here, but including rare or endangered species such as the Pink Lady Slipper Orchid, Loggerhead Shrike and River Otter, and also seven species of fish.<sup>52</sup>

To date, the group has been involved in several activities. In 1982 they approached the local Rural Municipality (RM) with concerns regarding weed and bush control practices. At the time weeds along road allowances and hydro lines, as well as

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<sup>51</sup> Excerpt taken from a promotional piece entitled "Roseisle Creek Watershed Association."

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

encroaching bush, were being controlled through the heavy application of herbicide chemicals. After some negotiation with the RM, the group agreed to take responsibility for weed control and cutting which they have done ever since without the use of chemicals. Their work is approved by the local Weed Inspector, but they are not remunerated by the RM for the work.

In the past they took legal action against a concrete company that was engaged in gravel crushing operations close by to the creek which was causing industrial runoff to enter the water. The group did not win out legally against the company, but afterwards the company ceased their activities and gave up their mineral rights. **Duane** notes: "Legally and technically we lost, but in reality we won."

At one time the group co-operated with the Natural Resources Institute (NRI) and about half a dozen Master's students out of the University of Manitoba to produce studies of the area with geological, geographical and historical components. The results of these studies were several documents that have helped the group to substantiate their ecological claims in the area.

They have also had some problems in the past with water pollution as a result of hog farm practices before municipal and provincial regulations were in place. RCWG was instrumental in helping local livestock bylaws become enacted. With regard to how the group is viewed by others, **Darryl** notes with a smile: "We make a lot of friends downstream, but not so many upstream." At present the group continues to monitor threats to their local ecosystem.

## b) The Interviews

The interviews took place between August and October of 2008. They ranged in duration from 36 minutes to 4 hours and 10 minutes, with most of them falling in the 45 minute to 1 hour and a half range. Each subject was interviewed singly with the exception of the four subjects from the RCWG. The four of them were interviewed together, although they answered the personal questions (Questions 2, 3 and 4) in turn. This change in procedure was made to accommodate the distance that I had to drive to do the interviews and time constraints were also a factor for both the subjects and me. Since the group is made up of a small membership; it focuses solely on local ecosystems; and the subjects know each other well it was decided that a group interview<sup>53</sup> was best for all involved. In all the interviews that were scheduled for this thesis attempts were made to limit the amount of driving where possible, and this was one such case.

The interviews were designed to pursue knowledge in the following areas:

- 1) Historical information regarding the group or project in question;
- 2) The nature of ecological activities and behaviours of the subject inside and outside of the group;
- 3) Motivations for partaking in these ecological activities;
- 4) The nature and depth of possible ecological identifications of the subject;
- 5) Historical information with regard to the subject's ecological thinking and action and their relationship if any, with nature;

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<sup>53</sup> This group interview lasted for close to three hours.

- 6) Autobiographical accounts of any development or changes in the subject's ecological behaviours and identifications;
- 7) Factors other than ecological identification that may have been involved in the subject's adopting and/or sustaining of ecological behaviours;
- 8) The subject's assessment of ecological concern and behaviour on the local, provincial, national and global level.

Two slightly differing versions of the interviews were used. A second set of interview questions was developed for the subjects from Brokenhead Ojibway Nation (BON). The differences in questions consisted of minor changes in language in an attempt to render the questions more meaningful to the subjects. As it happens, I was not able to ask the questions of **Barry**, an Elder and medicine man from BON. That is not to say that the interview was unfruitful, for our conversation lasted over four hours! During the interview I did try to ask the questions, but I got the impression after a few attempts that he was not ready to answer. Out of respect I did not make any more attempts to ask, but let **Barry** direct the course of the conversation. It was a very interesting and memorable conversation, although **Barry's** voice did not register on my recording device, just like he told me it wouldn't. Nonetheless, I was able to get a glimpse of the most profound ecological identifications that I would come across over the course of the research. It was really a privilege to have an Ojibway elder share with me some of the wealth of his knowledge about the land that he retains. The interview with **Barry** is summarized in Table 4.1.

It is also worth noting that I began to substitute the word "creation" for "nature" in the interviews with **Craig** and **Crystal** when I realized that the term held more meaning for them. Their spiritual insights were profound and I felt privileged that they would share such personal knowledge as well. I made this substitution spontaneously with the intent of "speaking their language." Their definition of nature may differ from some of the other subjects in that **Craig** and **Crystal** see it as the work of God, and it also appears that they see God in nature.

Both complete interview schedules along with informed consent forms are found in the appendices. The interview question areas were as follows, with the BON interview questions appearing after each in the cases where they differ:

#### **Question Area 1: History of the Group or Project**

The purpose of this question was fairly straight forward. I wanted to know about the activities of the group or project in question in terms of ecological action, education, restoration of health, protection etc.

I've learned a little bit about the group [insert group or project name] and its activities but I'd like to hear more about what you are doing, why you are doing it, and the history that stands behind your current activities. *Probes:* "How did the group start? Who started it? When did it start? Has it changed, and how? Has there been community support for or resistance against the group? Has there been government support or resistance?"

The BON version of this question is identical.

### **Question Area 2: Subject's Experience with Nature and Nature Themes**

The purpose of this question area is to explore how much time the subjects spend outside, and what kind of activities they enjoy in this regard. Explicitly the question is looking for what sorts of small scale identifications the person may have developed through "I-You" encounters with non-human others as well as what "It-world" identification markers (such as pieces of art and books) the subject might have and enjoy. It also looks for any possible I-You moments with nature in the abstract – the types of events that would centre large scale ecological identifications. Finally, the question asks the subject explicitly if any of the moments that they have described (if they indeed have described any) have motivated their ecological behaviours.

a) Do you spend a lot of time in the "outdoors", for example: cycling, skiing, hiking, canoeing, bird watching, swimming, gathering mushrooms or berries, looking at trees, observing wildlife and insects, hunting or fishing?; b) Do you have any special places, times of year, favourite species, favourite rocks etc.? c) Do you have books, videos, or pieces of art that have nature themes?; d) Have you experienced any special moments in nature? *Probe*: perhaps encounters with animals, plants, weather events?; e) Have these moments influenced you in terms of making or sustaining behavioural or lifestyle changes?

BON version: a) Do you spend a lot of time in outdoor activities, for example: biking, skiing; walking; canoeing; bird watching; swimming; gathering mushrooms, plants or berries; looking at trees; observing wildlife and insects; hunting, trapping or fishing?; b) Do you have any special places that you like to go to, or favourite times of year? Are there animals or plants that are special to you?; c) Do you have artwork or other possessions that carry a natural theme?; d) Have you experienced any special moments in nature? *Probe*: perhaps encounters with animals, plants, weather events?; e) How do these moments effect how you see nature?

### **Question Area 3: History of Ecological Thinking and Behaviours of the Subject**

This question area is focused on the personal story of how the subject has viewed ecological issues in their life, and how they feel they came to become involved in ecological behaviours. It also looks for any defining moments in the person's life with regards to ecological awareness and action – moments that may involve a powerful I-You encounter<sup>54</sup>.

a) When did you start to be concerned about ecological issues?; b) Can you tell me if your thinking about the ecosphere has changed over time?; c) At what point did you decide that something needed to be done?; *Probes*: Did you get involved immediately? Was there some specific event, meeting, experience etc. that moved you from thinking about ecological issues to getting involved in ecological action?; d) What sort of

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<sup>54</sup> Buber writes that the "You" confronts the "I."

ecological behaviours do you participate in, inside and outside of this particular group/activity?

BON version: a) Do you remember when you first became concerned about the health of the land?; b) Can you tell me if your thinking about the land has changed over time?; c) At what point did you decide that something needed to be done? *Probes:* Did you get involved immediately? Was there some specific event, meeting, experience etc. that moved you from thinking about these things to getting involved in action to protect the land?; d) What sort of things do you do (both as part of the Wetlands project and outside it) that you believe are beneficial to the health of the land?

#### **Question Area 4: Subject's Relationship with Nature, and Perception of Themselves vis-à-vis Nature**

This question seeks to determine whether or not the subject sees themselves as having a relationship with nature, and how they conceptualize that relationship. Their worldview in terms of natural systems and the place of humanity with respect to these systems is being probed as well. This question is designed to investigate the possible ecological identifications of the subjects on both the small and large scale level, whether or not they have been motivators for ecological behaviour.

a) Describe to me your relationship with nature and what nature means to you.; b) What does [insert place name of focus of activities – or in case of Bike to the Future, Winnipeg] mean to you?; c) Do you see yourself as part of a natural system? Do you feel

that natural beings are a part of you?; d) Does your relationship with nature motivate you to be involved in the activities we have discussed?

BON version: a) Could you tell me about your relationship with the land?; b) What do the Brokenhead Wetlands mean to you, and others in your community?; c) Do you see yourself as part of the land? Do you feel that natural beings are a part of you?; d) Does your relationship with the land motivate you to be a part of this project?

**Question Area 5: Ecological Orientation of the Group/Project and the Subject's Assessment of Ecological Concern and Behaviours of Others**

This final question was designed to confirm that the group or project that the subject participates in is actually focused on ecological issues. It also asks for the subjects assessment of the levels of ecological concern and behaviour on several levels, and probes their opinions (as people involved in ecological action) as to why some people get involved and some people don't. This question wasn't as useful as the others in the present study as it turns out, but the last part of it was designed to open up other possibilities as to what is motivating and/or preventing ecological action.

a) The work of your group stems from a concern for nature and for the health of the ecosphere, or at least a portion of it, is this correct?; b) Do you think that enough people on the local; c) provincial; d) national; e) global level are concerned about this as well?; f) Are people doing enough?; g) Are there any differences that you can see between people who take action to promote the health of ecosystems and those who don't

seem to care or don't act despite caring? *Probes:* Do members talk about this amongst themselves? Are there any explanations floating about in the group as to why people do or do not engage in these activities, and as to why people care or remain indifferent to the rest of nature? What is your assessment of these explanations?

BON version: a) The work of your group stems from a concern for nature and for the health of the land, is this correct?; b) Do you think that enough people in your community are concerned about the land; c) Do you think enough people in Manitoba are concerned for the land?; d) Do you think enough people in Canada are concerned for the land?; e) Do you think enough people around the world are concerned for the land?; f) Are people doing enough to care for the land?; g) Are there any differences that you can see between people who take action to protect the land and those who don't seem to care or don't act despite caring? *Probes:* Do members of your group or community talk about this among themselves? Are there any explanations floating about in the group or community as to why people do or do not act to protect the land, and as to why people care or remain indifferent to the rest of nature? What do you think of these explanations?

Informed consent consisted of four separate areas: a) consent to the use of a recording device; b) consent to the interview; c) consent to the possibility of my contacting them for a follow-up interview; and d) consent to portions of the thesis draft being provided for subject's perusal, and the opportunity for subjects to provide feedback on the thesis. All 15 participants consented to all 4 areas, although no follow-up interviews were done. The BON version of the interview had an additional cautionary

section detailing the possibility of culturally sensitive material being discussed during the interview. This section was read aloud to the subjects prior to the interview, advising them not to speak of anything that they felt was culturally sensitive. Further, they were encouraged to peruse the thesis draft portions that I would provide to ensure that no sensitive information has been accidentally included.

## IV. Findings of Research

The analysis first explores the various ecological behaviours that the subjects report. After establishing that the subjects do partake in a great many ecological behaviours, the analysis moves to examining the possible ecological identifications that emerged in the interviews. Once the possible ecological identifications are established; the motivations for the ecological behaviour of the subjects are explored; and finally the explanatory value of ecological identifications is assessed. Other factors that emerged in the testimony as possible motivation are discussed as well.

Quotes appear in the analysis with emphasis that was present in the dialogue. For the sake of fluidity, many repeated words, sighs (such as um, uh), as well as words such as "like" and "you know" have been removed unless it was felt that their removal would alter the meaning of the quote or the underlying context – such as uncertainty or a thoughtful pause. Any paraphrasing does not appear with quotation marks. Note that longer quotes that appear in single space without quotation marks are nonetheless direct quotes - with the possibility of editing along the lines just mentioned.

Due to the extremely high quality of the interview recordings,<sup>55</sup> the original emotion of the conversation was partially preserved in such a way that recreates the situation for the listener. I have found that listening to the recordings transports me back to the interviews with amazing clarity, and many details including appearance, posture and facial expression all come flooding back. This level of recall – enabled by the quality of the digital recordings – has allowed me to more deeply analyze the conversational context of the testimony, and thus gives me great opportunity for – and

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<sup>55</sup> The one exception is the interview with Barry.

confidence in – my interpretations. That being said, a single interview cannot come close to revealing the life of a subject, nor a perfectly accurate picture of any aspect of that life. Moreover, I am certainly not infallible in my ability to properly understanding what is being said to me, nor the contexts that underpin each subject's experiences. It is for this reason that I have asked the subjects to review my drafts so that they can provide feedback on my interpretations. Not all of the subjects responded to the draft, and so I cannot confirm that all subjects are in agreement with what I wrote. Those who voiced strong agreement with my interpretations were: **Barbara, Arlene** and **Anne**. **Anne** noted that my interpretations of her testimony were "eerily accurate." Arthur said that he felt I had captured the interview well, but asked me to delete one adjective that he felt was too strong for what he had been describing. This adjective appeared in a quote, and he feels that he was quite worked up at the time and spoke a bit strongly. **Andrew** made one small deletion and substitution, and brought a typo to my attention. He did not otherwise comment on the interpretations. After the reaction of some of the other subjects, I took this as a possible sign that I may have inferred too much in the way of identification with from **Andrew's** testimony so I scaled it back. **Douglas** told me via email that he was surprised at some of his quotes, but acknowledged that he later began to remember the self-discovery that he experienced during the interview. Due to this response, I have re-analyzed his testimony with greater caution, keeping in mind that some of the views he expressed were emerging in the situation, perhaps being verbalized for the first time. Nobody who responded voiced any disagreement with the interpretations but it should be kept in mind that not every subject responded.<sup>56</sup> In all cases I made the changes requested by the subjects who responded to me.

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<sup>56</sup> Seven of fifteen subjects responded to my email.

## a) Ecological Behaviours of Subjects

Before proceeding with the analysis of ecological identifications, it is important to confirm that the subjects are in fact people who participate in intentionally ecological behaviours that involve effort and/or change in lifestyle<sup>57</sup>. The behaviours detailed below are in addition to those specified as group/ project activities in part "a)" of chapter two, unless otherwise specified – the participation and efforts of almost all of the subjects that was associated with their respective groups already comprises significant ecological behaviour.

In light of the fact that each group/project that has been studied has its own unique focus, the analysis will initially proceed from group to group. Themes that transcend individual group dynamics will be discussed in the section on motivations.

When determining what constitutes an ecological behaviour, it must be kept in mind that the ultimate qualifier of "ecological" is the meaning that the subject applies to particular behaviours. It is not enough that a given reported behaviour has a "green" effect, the behaviour must be "green" in the subject's comprehension, and further must be undertaken (at least in part) because of that comprehension. That is to say that the subject must be partaking in the behaviour (at least to some extent) because they see it as ecologically friendly.

In all of the interviews I asked the subjects to report to me what their ecological behaviours were. In some cases the subjects admitted that certain of these behaviours

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<sup>57</sup> It is ecological behaviours that require effort or lifestyle change that have not been reflected in "environmental concern." For example, most places in Canada have recycling systems in place that ensure recycling requires minimal effort, and recycling has in fact become a normative behaviour. For example, in 2006 the lowest percentage of household recycling in any province of Canada was 88%. This was in Manitoba. (Babooram and Wang 2007)

were not undertaken for specifically ecological reasons. For example, more than one of the subjects reported that they were very careful to conserve energy and avoid being wasteful, and that this was something that they learned growing up. Thus the appearance of avoiding waste for some was not an ecological behaviour but a norm of practicality, although for others it was as is seen below.

Another theme that emerged was that defining an act or consumer product as ecologically friendly is a highly contentious process. All of the subjects from the RCWG mentioned that they were unsure of the status of the Compact Fluorescent Light bulb (CFL) as a green option. Reports of high mercury content in the bulbs, as well as their tendency to explode, run counter to popular messages that portray them as green, safe, energy-saving alternatives. Another example is that while **Anne** avoids glass containers, **Andrew's** household avoids plastic. Presumably each prefers the other. They both gave valid reasons for their choices: **Anne** avoids glass because we do not have a deposit program in Manitoba and she doesn't believe that it gets properly recycled, and **Andrew** believes that plastic containers cannot be truly recycled, only down-cycled. This serves to illustrate that ecological knowledge is contested ground within the ranks of the "ecologically friendly."

### **Bike to the Future**

**Arthur** has been involved in cycling advocacy since 1992. He has been using his bicycle as his main means of transportation since 1975. His household recycles and he composts his own material plus leaves and clippings from neighbours, and has done so

since 1988. They harvest much fruit from their trees, they grow some of their vegetables in a garden and they frequent farmer's markets and u-picks to ensure their food is produced locally whenever possible. Being an "extremely ideologically driven" person, **Arthur** talks of hauling his children several kilometers to skating lessons on a sled as opposed to driving a vehicle. Their family lives on vegetarian diets which require less land and energy to produce than those relying on industrial livestock farming. He has also been part of international ecological organizations such as "Friends of the Earth" and others. As a rule, his household tries to avoid consumption whenever possible<sup>58</sup> - something that he notes is not a matter of money, but one of principal. He states: "...as North Americans, we are consuming ourselves towards the apocalypse," and that his decision to avoid consumption is not based on his financial situation. He says he could buy "anything I wanted to," but does not because he sees consumerism as a major factor in the continuing destruction of the ecosphere, as well as perpetuating human oppression and thus seeks to limit his own consumption.

**Andrew** promotes cycling and sustainability within his own workplace. His household recycles, they wash laundry with cold water and dry about 50% of it by clothesline. They monitor energy use and general consumption, preferring to repair (the "fourth R"<sup>59</sup>) than to throw out and buy new. They are gardeners and composters, and have been for 25 years. They buy food from the farmer's market when they can, and even make the journey of several kilometers by bicycle with a trailer in tow to haul their vegetables. Like most Bike to the Future members, he makes cycling his number one means of transportation. Plastics are generally forbidden in their household. He brings

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<sup>58</sup> The shoes that he was wearing on the morning of our interview were 15 years old. He mentioned it was almost time for new shoes.

<sup>59</sup> Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and *Repair*.

recyclable materials from his workplace home to be picked up by the local recycling program.

**Anne** has been involved in the commuter challenge at the UM campus. She now is in charge of it at her place of work. She has a government career in the "environmental" field which she decided to pursue at a young age. She relies on mass transit and cycling for transportation. She packs her lunches in reusable containers, she is conscious to conserve water and she avoids pesticides and herbicides in her home and yard. She also avoids glass containers because of a lack of deposit system in Manitoba and limited recycling options. Her household composts, and they are planning a garden in the coming spring at their newly purchased home. They have upgraded to a high efficiency furnace and improved the insulation as well. She has also volunteered for the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) in the past.

**Arlene** does not drive. She rides her bike during the summer, spring and fall, and she walks in the wintertime. She is a vegetarian, and a "big gardener." She composts, recycles, tries not to use air conditioning; turns down the thermostat; and has done energy and insulation efficiency upgrades in her home. She uses ecologically friendly cleaning products and is conscious of energy use, and tries to conserve it. She has also taken part in organic garden co-operatives.

**Aaron** and his family have recently moved to a smaller house in the downtown area where they are close to the places they need to be. They have done a lot of energy efficiency upgrades in the home. They are involved in composting and they are in the process of putting in a garden. They are vegetarians and they rely on mass transit and bicycles for the vast majority of their transportation needs. They avoid flying whenever

possible and if they do use a car they make sure that they carpool. They try to limit their water use and they generally try to limit all forms of material consumption. They buy second hand items when they are available, as opposed to new items.

**Alan** walks to work. His household has a single vehicle appropriately sized for their family, and they have improved the energy efficiency of their home. They try to buy things that are recycled, and they try to frequent stores with an ecological focus such as MEC.<sup>60</sup> When they camp they are careful to leave the spot as they found it, and they are conscious to pass these practices on to their children. About 70% of the food that they buy is organic, including organic grain which they grind themselves. They do some gardening, and they pick apples from their neighbour's trees. They recycle and compost at home.

Of all of the subjects appearing under the Bike to the Future heading, **Alan** is the only one who is not actually a member. He is on their mailing list, and this is how he found out about the interview opportunity. He is the sustainable development coordinator for a large department of the federal government of Canada, and some of the green initiatives and changes that he has had a part in facilitating have had significant results. With 7000 or so employees to work with, his efforts in achieving material reductions and waste reductions have translated into very big numbers. **Alan** is quick to point out that he doesn't take the credit for all of these changes, but that the process has involved the efforts and ideas of many.

The Bike to the Future members that were interviewed all make efforts to avoid the use of motorized vehicles, and they all use alternate transportation (cycling, walking

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<sup>60</sup> Mountain Equipment Co-op is located in a building that is shared by several ecological organizations including the Manitoba Eco-Network. This building is collectively called the Eco Centre, and I was graciously allowed to use their boardroom for four interviews.

or mass transit) in commuting. During the interview process there was a palpable sense that they were all committed to reducing their consumption (some moderately so and some more rigorously so) as a general rule, and not just specifically targeting energy.

### **Debwendon**

I do not have a list of the ecological behaviours of **Barry** due to the fact that the interview questions were not directly asked. What is known is that **Barry** does eat foods that are harvested locally, and that as an Elder in the Brokenhead Ojibway community he is very prominent in the effort to educate others (both from his community and elsewhere) about the deep relationships between the people and the land, and the obligations that form a part of that relationship. His wisdom with regards to the functions of various aspects of the land is important to the continued understanding of his community members. He harvests medicines locally as well. Recycling options are not currently available in his community.

**Benjamin** harvests foods and medicine from local areas including: berries, teas and other plants; as well as some meat. He is careful to take only what is required for his household and was brought up to avoid "over-picking." The hunting that he does is usually just enough to last the year. He fishes occasionally, but more often buys fish from locals who fish commercially. He also is heavily involved with the local bison ranch, and that provides food for his household and community as well. He is involved in the promotion of ecological education both within his community and outside of it. He

has participated in several ecological organizations. Recycling programs are not currently available in his community.

**Barbara's** household recycles and they never use chemicals on their lawn. They make an effort to reuse things rather than buy new. They avoid consumption where they can as a general rule, but she notes that she was brought up to avoid wastefulness as a general rule. They drive a small car, and try not to fly too much. She mentions that most of the uses her car is put to have benefits for ecology (i.e. her botanical survey work with NOCI.) In the past she gardened extensively, but now they have a smaller garden that they can manage. They have composted for many years.

#### **Pembina Valley Provincial Park**

**Craig** and **Crystal** have always maintained a good-sized garden. They grow their own food as much as possible – they grow enough potatoes and carrots to last all winter, and usually their tomatoes and apples last until December. **Crystal** does a lot of canning and preserving. They compost and they recycle. They try to conserve energy as much as they can. **Crystal** tries to avoid excessive packaging when making purchases. They don't use chemicals in the garden as a general rule. They try to buy local meat and produce to supplement what they grow themselves. They try to conserve energy when possible, like washing dishes by hand when there is just the two of them. They use "green" cleaning products. If they have problems around their house, garden and orchard with deer or squirrels, they use non-violent means to resolve them (i.e. fences,

enclosures; and in the case of particularly miscreant squirrels, a car ride to somewhere else.)

### Roseisle Creek Watershed Group

**Douglas** is a board member of a local Conservation District, where he can make sure that water quality concerns are addressed. He has written articles for local newspapers on ecological topics. His household composts and recycles. They do all of their yard work organically. They avoid wastefulness, but this is admittedly a habit that **Douglas** maintains is not rooted in a specific ecological intention, but rather a lifestyle practice that predates his awakening to ecological issues. They changed all of their lightbulbs to CFL lightbulbs that reduce energy consumption although they are unsure of whether this is actually a green action seeing as there is growing concern regarding the mercury content of the bulbs.

**Donna** and **Duane** try to avoid buying things with excessive packaging. They try to be resourceful in their household, and to be mindful of consumption. **Donna** really enjoys gardening, and they do quite a bit of it. They try to eat organically as much as they can. They have used a composting toilet for the last twenty years that **Duane** built himself. The compost that it produces is spread on trees and non-food-producing plants in their yard. They burn a lot of waste in their woodstove. They try not to make any unnecessary trips with their fuel-efficient car. When they do make a trip to Winnipeg they have it well planned. They maintain a woodlot that acts as a carbon sink and is important for the health of the ecosphere.

**Darryl** tries to plan his trips to Winnipeg, and avoids making unnecessary ones. He tries to turn off the electricity when he's not using it. He tries to conserve energy somewhat in heating his home, which is a barn converted into a dwelling. The home was made to be energy-efficient with the help of **Duane**, who is an architect who specializes in designing homes that are more ecologically sound. He tries to reuse things as much as possible. He reclaims and sells reusable car parts for a living. **Darryl** notes that he does not rigorously try to reduce his energy consumption and similar behaviours given that he believes that it is already too late to bring things back into balance globally. He believes that humans have overshoot the carrying capacity of the planet and that we will not – taken as a whole - be willing to make the radical changes that could reverse the damage.

It is clear from the activities of the subjects of this investigation – performed both as part of ecological groups and personally - are involved in various ecological behaviours that require effort, and that many have adopted greener lifestyles practices despite the hardships that might be associated with them. Having established this, we will now look to the ecological identifications that emerged in the interviews.

Looking at the activities of the subjects above I am struck by the fact that while these people are partaking in a fair amount of ecological behaviours they are not what I would consider to be radicals – although **Arthur** probably comes closest of them all. By and large these are people at various stages of their lives trying to incorporate as much ecological behaviour into their lives as they can comfortably manage.

The study was undertaken within the area of southern Manitoba where there is not a lot of what I would consider "radical" ecological activity (i.e. chaining of people to trees, sabotaging of machinery etc.) It is quite likely that "radical" subjects might report

lifestyles of "radical simplicity" to use Merkel's (2003) term, where ecological footprints have been drastically reduced – there is an example of a household producing only one bag of garbage per year – and these may in turn have been associated with ecological identifications of even greater intensity, or perhaps more explicitly stated in some cases. What I may have missed out on as a researcher in terms of radical types of identification is made up for – I believe - in the greater accessibility and meaning of the testimony herein for a wider reading audience. I have found it personally inspiring to see what these subjects have done in their lives and through their ecological activities – and these types of activities and changes in lifestyle seem all the more realistic because these people don't seem all that different from me.

## **b) Ecological Identifications of Subjects**

The interview was designed to elicit the possible ecological identifications of the subjects along the following lines: a) through the investigation of experiences and the relations that the subject may have encountered in outdoor settings as well as the types of art and media the subject experiences in their home. These smaller scale identifications were the primary focus of Question 2 in the interview schedules; b) through inquiring into how the subject locates themselves (and the human being in general) in terms of the nature world. This also included investigating whether or not the subject feels they have a relationship with nature, and what that relationship consists of. The sort of identifications being sought here are of a more generalized type involving nature as an abstraction. These larger scale identifications were the focus of Question 4. These two

levels of identification that have been described are not mutually exclusive, nor are they rigidly defined. They should be thought of as identifications that apply to two general ordinances of nature. How these identifications manifest themselves in the subjects and their understandings is often unique, and the distinction being made at this juncture should generally be thought of in terms of the magnitude of nature that is the locus of the identification. The distinction should not be understood in terms of demarcating qualitative differences between identifications, nor in terms of quantitatively describing the *strength* of the identifications. The unique qualities of subject's identifications will be dealt with along lines supplementary to this distinction in the section on motivations. Commonalities that emerge within each level of identification, and differences between the two may lead to a more robust contrast.

### **Bike to the Future**

The interviews with members of the Bike to the Future organization uncovered several possible ecological identifications. **Arthur** talked about his connections to certain places, such as his back yard and the various parks that he frequents with his family. He describes a spiritual connection with these places that he attributes to the experiences that he has shared there with his family:

So do I have a spiritual um relationship with that? Yeah, I can think of myself sitting in the back yard and just looking at everything...and I go to a park and whatever, you know Spruce Woods and yeah I remember in 1985 we went there. The kids were 2 and just born and so on and so forth. So you know there's spirituality there.

The spiritual bond that he describes here emerged through his experiences in these places, and his relations with them. **Arthur** also describes a deep connection that he feels towards nature in general. This more abstract connection is largely articulated through intellectual knowledge of ecosystems and their functions, as well as the immersion of human beings within the web of life.

Throughout the interview with **Arthur**, large scale ecological identifications are manifested in the theme of "the outdoors." When he says "I live for the outdoors," he is being very truthful. For example, he works on his computer outside (even during mildly inclement weather), he takes naps outdoors (even in winter), and in fact the only reason that our interview was conducted indoors was that it happened to be raining the morning of our interview<sup>61</sup>. I asked him what he found so special about being outdoors, and his response was: "Just the natural environment. It's being in the natural environment...It's what life's all about." He describes his outdoor experiences biking and walking through the rain on the morning of our interview:

When you're indoors, it's climate controlled, when it's outdoors you take some responsibility for that. Today I wore my rain jacket right? And all the other things that come with it. There's challenges to that, there's *victories* in that. There's the feeling of you know, 'Okay, it's raining. I'd *prefer* it to be nice and sunny and you know, the wind at my back etc., but it *wasn't*.' So that's the card that was dealt today. So you just play the card, and I played the card perfectly today and had a great time in the rain.

This commitment to enjoy the pleasures *and* endure the hardships of the outdoors may stem from a relationship that **Arthur** has with nature: "Part of that is almost spirituality, of getting away from humans controlling the world, of being out in the natural

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<sup>61</sup> I had consented to meeting outside somewhere quiet although I was worried about the poor quality of recording that might be produced.

environment." While it does have a somewhat spiritual component, **Arthur's** more general identification with the outdoors stems from a pragmatic approach and an intellectual understanding as well:

The natural world is what life is all about. It is the underpinnings of life. We could not live without it. If we consume the resources too quickly, we clearly have no long-term sustainability. The fundamental existence of human beings is connected to the natural world.

**Arthur** notes that as a general rule he's not into watching television or buying art, but those few shows that he has watched and those few pieces that they do own are nature-themed.

This large-scale identification is similar to that which **Andrew** articulates:

I think that we all have an effect on the overall natural system. We're all part of it, and everything that we do effects it. I mean that's what I think a lot of people miss: is that everything we do has an effect.

**Andrew** sees the implications for the future of humanity as of primary concern, and this is an important part of his large scale identifications with nature:

I don't understand how anyone who has children can't care about what's happening right now and how we have an effect on, well, on nature, on the environment because we're leaving this. We're not going to be around to see the worst of it, but our children are going to be, and our children's children, and if you can't think about that, you can't think that far ahead, I think I feel sorry for you, I really do. I think that's just absolutely wrong if you can't see that far ahead; if you can't care that much.

Unlike **Arthur**, **Andrew** doesn't see himself as "at one" with nature or natural beings. It is questionable whether he has a significant large scale identification with nature. If he does it is purely along pragmatic and intellectual lines. He sees humans and nature through a lens of cause and effect:

I think we're all interconnected in some way...I wouldn't say that I have a true relationship with nature, but certainly it's important, and I think if we're talking about nature we're talking about animals and forests, and, and all those things tie back...

**Andrew** also describes some special encounters that he has had with wildlife, and here we glimpse some possible small scale identifications as well. He notes that coming across wildlife in natural surroundings can be a very powerful experience where you "automatically establish a special connection....There is certainly something special about those occasions." For **Andrew**, having knowledge about ecosystems and interconnectedness gives these moments a more powerful, lasting effect. He lists Blue Lake and the Canadian Shield as places that are special to him, and that his family likes to frequent. While **Andrew** does not express a deep relationship with nature, it seems likely that he has had experiences with wildlife that he feels are quite special. It would be a stretch however to conclude that he has been "confronted" by a "You" in the form of a deer, however. It simply cannot be concluded that he has strong ecological identifications that drive him to participate in ecological behaviours. His intellectual understanding of ecological issues seems to be a greater motivator.

The possibilities of ecological identifications that appear in the testimony of **Aaron** are quite numerous. Like most of the subjects interviewed, he enjoys spending time out of doors and his favourite time of year is the fall. He describes some powerful ecological identifications that seem to fall somewhere between small and large scale:

I've thought about if I have favourites and I don't really have any favourite species of <trails off> I seem to uh admire a great many species, you know, I'm fascinated by their adaptive, you know their adaptations to their environments and the things that they've done...Wolves are always magnificent to see if you've ever had the chance to

see one in the wild, which is rare but I have seen them a couple times and it's just amazing to see them in the wild, and other animals like that. But equally, I've been fascinated by spiders, you know: small, less noble, less impressive kind of creatures, but they all, they all have a certain interest and fascination for me.

There are also some pieces of art to be found in their home that depict wildlife such as killer whales and wolves. **Aaron** notes that while they have books on nature and ecology in their library, they don't take up the most space on the shelf.

The strength of **Aaron's** large scale identifications become apparent to me when he describes "phenomenal, humbling events" that occur in unspoiled wilderness. One such event took place during a mountain climb:

It was just an amazing experience to stand on a mountain top and look around and see nothing but mountain tops, and no sign, no visible sign of humans and uh it can give you the sense or at least the sense of relief on my part that those kinds of places still exist that aren't touched, at least not visibly touched by humans. It's necessary, in my mind, to have that...and another time being in the lookout tower going north to Thompson: there is a lookout tower sort of along highway 6 where you stand there and see that it's nothing but trees right to the horizon and that's also a fascinating, reassuring event.

**Aaron** places the human being in a relationship with nature:

..All humans are, all *things* are part of systems. Nothing is in isolation. I empathize with, or I identify with the philosophies, Native philosophies where everything is connected and everything's alive. In Native culture, in Native religion you know, even inanimate objects are alive. Like, rocks are part of everything, there's spirit in everything...That everything is interconnected is, I think undeniable...I think there's a strong connection between everything on the planet. Beyond that the connection's weaker, but everything's connected, and everything certainly within this planet, I think we should realize, is connected together.

**Arlene** says something quite similar:

I don't feel that us as humans are at the top of the chain and everything else descends downward I think it's all an interconnected, woven circle...I have this body, but this isn't the same body that I had six months ago...cells have been shed and died and been recreated and changed. The oxygen I'm breathing maybe is the oxygen that a tree in my sister's back yard is breathing six months from now...So I think that we're all exchanging energy and exchanging elements and what I do affects them, and what they do affects me.

This ecological identification that **Arlene** seems to be describing is both spiritual and intellectual.

One of the most powerful themes that emerged from the interview with **Arlene** was that of urban nature. This theme crept up in the narratives of other Bike to the Future members as well (certainly **Arthur** – along the lines of being "outdoors" - and **Aaron**), but **Arlene** really brought across a deep understanding of being in nature *all the time*. This was reflected in how she describes her relationship with nature. She notes that, seeing as she bikes or walks every day, some days "nature is my friend, and some days not." What strongly emerges from the discussion about her relationship with nature is that it is very intimate and is present on a daily basis. Like **Arthur**, she is committed to being outside. What is quite interesting about her case is that she doesn't require trips to the wild to feel as though she is experiencing nature. She really has a sense of nature being all around, and that urban places are not devoid of – or separate from - nature. When I asked her if she spends time in the outdoors, she said:

I wouldn't say that I'm a hiker or a camper, I haven't done that in years quite honestly...Out and about in the city, yes but other than that I'm not out in the bush or anything like that...I always plan to, but it never seems to work out.

She exhibits what appear to be strong small scale identifications that have developed within the city of Winnipeg, and they are evident in her testimony:

I love the fall. That is absolutely my favourite time of year. Cool, crisp, no bugs, it's great weather and the city is really pretty at that time of year and in the neighbourhood that we live now, we have *two hawks* – I don't know what specific species they are – but when I see them around that makes me *really* happy...also when I'm walking or cycling and geese are migrating, that just, ahhh <satisfied sigh>, that's Canada to me, hearing the sound of Canada geese coming and going, I *love* that.

That's not to say that she hasn't had special moments away from the city. She brings up two examples that have special meaning to her. The first occurred while lying on a beach in Costa Rica one night when the power went out for sixty miles. She stared up in amazement at the stars for literally hours. The other experience involved having to take shelter in a tunnel of rock when a powerful storm swept in off the ocean. Both events had a profound effect upon her:

I would say that common to both of them was *awe* at nature. Particularly at, in the sense of the storm uh the power was incredible and I thought 'Oh, I'm just a little insignificant thing!'...In the first case, in Costa Rica the *stunning beauty* that I kind of feel like a lot of people are sleep walking through and we don't see enough of. It was just really taking in the moment and just thinking 'Wow! The world is a beautiful, beautiful place.'

After the conversation with **Arlene** I think it is quite fair to conclude that she has strongly identified with aspects of nature, and nature as a whole. Her story-telling was quite engaging and powerful, and as a listener I got a very palpable sense that these moments in nature that she described were definitely "I-You" moments.

**Anne** was probably the most unique among all the subjects because she seems to exhibit very little ecological identifications at all in response to the interview questions. She had a real sense of humour about the whole situation because it was obvious that she felt she was giving me answers I didn't really want to hear<sup>62</sup>. When I asked her to describe her outdoor activities she responded:

The funny way for me to say it is the outdoors don't agree with me...it's part laziness, honestly; it's part I grew up in the city. I don't go out and do nothing, I sit in front of my computer and look at things through the computer...I enjoy cycling for fun, but I don't typically cycle for fun. I cycle to and from work and then when I'm at home I stay at home. I don't go out...I'm very ingrained in my urban environment.

When I asked her if she had a favourite species of animal she said that she didn't have one, but admitted later it would be "a hamster or something."

She does have a favourite time of year, however:

I really like the fall, because the fall is, like, I went to university right after high school so fall represents for me kind of like a clean slate and even though I'm in the working world now it's kind of a clean slate for that, and uh I guess I like the way it looks outside when its fall and like the leaves, stuff like that.

She also describes a special moment that she experienced:

I remember the one moment, where um, when I was little I was convinced that silence didn't exist because no matter where I went in my house I always heard a really, really faint hum, and it wasn't until I was out at my aunt's cottage that I realized that there could be actual silence...I didn't understand that that was the electricity buzzing. So that was really neat because it was something I didn't really think I could experience.

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<sup>62</sup> It should be noted that my research had been described as "ecological" in nature.

While her motivations for ecological behaviour (as listed in the previous section) will be discussed in the next chapter, it is fair to observe at this point that she does not report any small scale ecological identifications or really visceral experiences in nature. Unlike Arlene, she seems to see her "urban environment" as something other than natural. She does exhibit some possible large scale ecological identifications – though they would have developed along intellectual and pragmatic lines of understanding:

My relationship with nature is that it's something that supports everything on the Earth, and that is part of why we need to work so hard to keep it as healthy as possible because if it's not healthy we're not gonna be healthy. We're not gonna live very long... It's like life support, it's kind of like the Gaia hypothesis but I don't, I don't really think of it so much in that uh intangible, like it's this life force thing. I think of it like science, like water cycle; air cycle – everything connected. You put it up in the air, it's gonna come back down and rain on us - that kind of thing.

These connections seem to go farther than science and pure pragmatism, however:

I took environmental economics as part of my degree, and part of that is learning that you have to do things sometimes like set a value to a piece of nature, like a tree so that you can learn to compensate it even though, inherently to me that feels extremely wrong. Like how can you say how much a tree is worth? It's a tree.

In response to my question regarding whether or not she feels natural beings are a part of her, she says:

Probably, like *spiritually* maybe and scientifically everybody is all one being but I, I don't walk around thinking like that typically, not even in the back of my head, that like I'm part of, me and that plant are like *homeboys*...

It appears from the above that she is admitting to a belief in oneness, although a belief that is buried rather deep. A possible explanation for this belief being buried so deeply emerges in the following account she gives of daily life in our consumer society:

I have to take myself, I have to not think about it as much in order to live how I wanna live, like if I want to keep doing things like eating food from the supermarket that was made in a factory by people who aren't making very much money and doing things like using water and eating stuff that wasn't grown here, things like that. Like *I have to take myself out of it* in order to do these regular people things that people do, but I know that it exists there and occasionally I do get the guilty pang about what I'm, what I should be doing. Whether I shouldn't be eating meat or whether I shouldn't be buying kiwis in the winter - that kind of thing. (emphasis added)

The "taking myself out of it" that **Anne** describes is certainly a powerful statement as she seems to be experiencing tension between the mainstream lifestyle that on some levels she desires, and at the same time pain and guilt on account of her identification with people and nature in general. **Anne's** case is a very interesting one, and it needs to be pointed out that she was very honest during the interview and that she didn't shy away from sharing her feelings and experiences. In the section on motivations it will be argued that her ecological behaviours are motivated from a unique combination of factors, at least in comparison with the rest of the subjects.

**Alan**, like many other subjects likes the fall season: "I'm a fall guy. I love the fall, I like the cooler temperatures, I like the crisp, I like the crispness in the air...Every season has its own beauty." He notes that there are special places that he likes to go, and that he has had special experiences in nature throughout his life:

Well yeah, there's a certain tranquility to, to sort of sitting on a bay and on a rocky shore somewhere in the Canadian Shield and have the loons floating around in front of you or

something, or a campfire. I've done that in numerous spots and occasions...In my youth I did a *lot* of canoeing: hundreds or thousands of kilometers of canoeing...I've had lots of those types of experiences.

His relationship with nature he describes in this way:

We count on nature to clean our air, to clean our waste like it's always done that, what we produce is gonna decompose and, and it's gonna be, nature will always be there and it's much bigger than us and we can try in our infinite wisdom to uh, set up our cultures and our society's to be *great* and to have big cities or to build bigger and better and faster and, but um, really it's um, the more we understand natural cycles and use it; become part of the natural cycles so that our waste becomes the input of the next phase then uh, the better off we're gonna be. So that's in a sense one of the philosophical ways that I sort of run my own work...That's sort of a philosophy that guides my thinking quite a bit.

There is a commonality that exists between the narratives of **Alan** and **Anne** that needs to be briefly mentioned here. They both are working in government occupations with a definite ecological focus, and they both describe a very particular type of change in their thinking about ecology. They both seem to say that they are more aware of the human (and economic) realities than before, and that they have come to see their earlier ecological thinking as somewhat naïve. **Alan** speaks to this in the following two excerpts:

I used to be a lot more um, idealistic...So now I'm much more in tune with, sort of the balance between you know the top down authorization and the bottom up innovation in where you find that right balance...The new effort is 'how do you connect those? How do you have both?'

Particularly as a teenager, you know the canoe trip things, summer camp things, um so that was more of a physical action, involved immersion...But then I followed that up through uh, through my you know education, through university and my degree in something related – like a geography degree perception and...I was really looking at

how people interact with nature 'cause it's always been the two, okay? I'm not an ecology...what do they say?: an environmental extremist. That doesn't fit the reality of the world or the big picture. So, you need enough, I sort of believe you need enough space so that you can have some deep ecologists out there doing their thing. Great, good for you, you have a role to play, but you also have to change. You have to enter the lion's den, you can't just fight the lion you've got to enter the lion's den and help him change.

For **Anne** there exists a similar change in how she perceives ecological issues.

She spoke at length about how she had to learn to face certain facts, and how her original ecological sentiments were incomplete. Her current ecological view is one that includes people. She thinks a lot of people are just worrying about their next meal, and not so much about the big ecological issues. She seems to be linking ecological behaviours with affluence, which for certain behaviours does have merit (i.e., hybrid cars, energy efficiency upgrades, buying organic food).

It appears, however that this change in thinking also has roots in her experiences in environmental science at the university level. The beginning of her change in thinking seems to have been an unpleasant experience for her, and is perhaps linked to her comments regarding taking herself "out of it" while shopping:

I'm a really good cynic, aren't I? That's starting out in environmental science and going 'I wanna be green! I wanna help!' and you know, going through and learning 'Hey, I have to work for the man! All of us are probably going to work for the man!'

From these examples it appears that **Anne** and **Alan** have moved away (to varying extents) from what could be described as ecological thinking with a somewhat anti-establishment flavour. **Anne** appears to still be negotiating her ecological views, or at least experiencing some tension between the two. The "anti-establishment" aspect of

her original ecological views may still be a lingering factor despite her occupation and her inclusion of humans into the ecological equation.

For **Alan**, it appears that he may face 'anti-establishment' attitudes based on who his employer is, as well as his occupation as a manager. I got the feeling during the interview that he may have had his 'greenness' challenged on the basis of this in the past. But, as his comments regarding entering "the lion's den" show, he has a clear idea of what he is doing and why. He sees himself as dealing with a human reality (partially an economic reality) that other "environmentalists" perhaps don't like to acknowledge. I also got the impression that he perceived his green behaviours and lifestyle as being pursued along moderate, and legitimate pathways. For example, when he was describing to me his ecological behaviours, and those of his family, he noted: "We try not to be fanatical about it or anything."

When I asked him if he thought enough people were involved in ecological actions, he responded that it's not about having enough people involved, but rather the right people. He indicates that the people who hold various positions of power – such as the energy industry executives, are the ones who most need to change. In response to my inquiry as to *why* he thinks some people get involved in ecological behaviours and some don't, he says:

There's gonna be action people and there's gonna be theoretical people. There's gonna be whiners, there's gonna be, you know there's different types of people so people will act in different ways. There are action people and there's non-action people...If you want things done you get action people. If you want things um, thought about you get an academic-thinking, you know perceptual person, or if you want things *talked about*, you get *that group*...

### Debwendon

The ecological identifications that may exist for **Barry** are rooted in a cultural history much different from the other subjects save **Benjamin**. Through the stories of creation that he shared with me I was able to see that he has spent much time thinking about the human's relationship to the land. This connection for Barry is thoroughly spiritual and bound up in Ojibway cultural teachings and way of life. It was abundantly clear that he relates socially with the land and that he sees members of his community as having social obligations towards the land. This was evident in the clan organization of the Ojibway and the duties and obligations that go along with it. These duties were organized around the maintenance of the community and some were very much ecological in nature (i.e., the fish clan being keepers of the water.) See Table 4.1 for a summary of the interview with **Barry**.

**Benjamin** talked about his connection to the fall time of year: "I like being in the bush in the fall. That's for harvesting, hunting and just enjoying the weather and scenery. So yeah, I spend time in the bush in the fall time." As far as favourite species go, he says: "Well, I like cedar, I like the, the teas, any kind of tea from any kind of plant's good. Trees are very important for oxygen...prairie's good too but trees have got more of a, more importance than most other things I think." As far as special places other than the Brokenhead Wetlands, he talks about the connection he feels to sacred sites within Manitoba that contains petroforms:<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> "Petroforms are defined as features formed by placement (not piling) of stones so as to create the outline of a figure." (Three Fires Society – Roseau River Chapter 1990: 1) As to the sites themselves: "The sites are traditional forms of sacred grounds. As such, the meanings attached to the petroforms are akin to the knowledge contained in Western libraries and museums where both secular and sacred cultural

It's a very special place, I always feel uh, feel relaxed. I don't know how to say it. I don't know if you say 'free' but you know it's a feeling there that makes me feel nice when we're there, comfortable you know. I just feel like I'm part of the landscape myself sometimes but it's uh, the sounds; some of the sites there; the petroforms; effigies everywhere. There's snakes, turtles around the area. Just to walk around there, it's something else, special so...it's a special place, that is.

There is no doubt that not only is it a strong identification with this place, and with the land in general that is so potent for **Benjamin**, it is also a connection to his past and cultural heritage. In terms of Buber's I-You relation, I believe that this may exist for **Benjamin** most strongly at the sacred sites that he described.

**Benjamin** echoes some of the things that **Barry** says about learning from the land:

Well yeah I guess you could say I have a relationship with nature, because nature has knowledge. If you follow nature, you watch the signs of nature, it gives you a pretty good read on what's gonna be happening for the next, you know, weather-wise...You can tell the leaves have uh, they're turned different when it rains, so you can see the underside more.

Also like **Barry**, **Benjamin** places the human being within a web of relationships with the rest of nature: "Traditionally speaking, I think nature, water, air, even the sun and moon and stars, they're all part of us...whatever affects one thing affects the rest."

The ecological identifications here reflect both spiritual connection and a personal

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information has been recorded for preservation and learning. The sites thus parallel the functions of both Western schools and Christian churches whereby this information is transmitted to future generations through teachers, elders and religious leaders. Therefore, the issues of their physical protection and accessibility are of paramount importance to some Native groups, indeed, some individuals insist, for their very survival as individuals and as Native people." (Three Fires Society – Roseau River Chapter 1990: iii)

knowledge of nature that has been transmitted through the cultural teachings of the Ojibway as well as modern intellectual channels.

**Barbara** lists orchids, mushrooms, birds and animals as things in nature that she really likes. She was born close to bogs and boreal forests and feels that because of that she feels particularly connected to these types of landscapes. She notes that she has been getting to know and enjoy tall grass prairie as well. As far as art and books, she says she has approximately 250 field guides, and her house is filled with nature-related material.

In terms of special moments in nature, she admits: "Actually, I have experienced quite a number of them." One experience she recalls took place when she was in an amphibious vehicle in the middle of a remote bog:

You would be there, sitting in this machine, in a floating bog, and all around you would be flowers and butterflies – and *strange* ones too – and nothing else. And you'd be sitting there, eating your lunch all alone in this thing. And you just had the feeling that you really belonged there. You really, you had a real profound experience of being part of nature. You could see how you as an animal were part of the whole system.

**Barbara** describes her relationship with nature as follows:

Well I guess nature means everything to me, I mean it's, it's a very clear memory and an intimate part of my past...As I'm getting older, instead of getting away from it I'm running more to it. I feel better when I'm outside, I feel more *energized*, I feel less achy and I feel that I belong there, so it's strange 'cause you would think that as you got less able to enjoy it and maybe it's a little harder to walk and these kind of things, you wouldn't like it, but no, *no* you *go back* to what you liked as a child only excepting now I see it with, in a much bigger picture of it and everything and I'm just anxious to keep my little granddaughter out in the bush with me and I really, really, love it more now than I ever did.

I asked **Barbara** if she saw herself as part of a natural system:

Yeah I do, I surely do and um, I think we always were but for some reason we kind of got removed from that, maybe really mostly over the last hundred or hundred and fifty years, that we sort of got removed from that and got to thinking that we weren't part of that system any more. We were outside the system, and that's where we sort of got into grief – acting outside the system.

I asked her if she felt natural beings were a part of her:

Yes I think we're all part of the same continuum of life really, right from the insect or the...right up to people or all through the plants and everything. I would definitely put the plants in, in the same position. We're all part of the same continuum, the same spark of life where uh, we're like a, a Glenn Gould composition: we're all variations on a theme, whether it's the very tiny or the very big.

**Barbara** was very clear about how much she enjoys being in nature, and what it means to her. I really sensed that she has had I-You encounters in the natural world. She puts a lot of time and effort into protecting lands and educating people about the important roles various ecosystems play in all our lives. I think she is an excellent example of a person who identifies with nature.

### Pembina Valley Provincial Park

For both **Crystal** and **Craig**, the human being has a special place in creation.

This is bound up in their identification with nature. **Craig** describes it as follows:

We are definitely part of the creation. Uh, I do feel that we have a unique spot in the creation because of the fact that we're human beings and, and we're different from other animals, but in a physical sense *we're not all that much different* because we breathe the same air, we have the same physical needs that all other animals have so in that sense we are part of, of that whole family of creatures in the physical sense. But I believe that man is unique in that

it has, it has that special, uh divinely given soul, which is different and as far as our physical bodies go, yeah we're part of this earth, but I believe there's much *more* for us as humans 'cause we also have an eternal soul which in many ways is far beyond my comprehension <laughs>.

**Crystal** describes a similar belief:

I think God has made it in such a way that we need to respect where we are and we need to be responsible for our decisions we make and for the life we live...I feel a human has God's spirit breathed into us, that we have uh, we have a soul that is accountable to God and whereas He has given us all the creation around us to, to take care of as worship for Him.

**Craig** notes that he spends as much time outdoors as he can. Often that outdoor activity involves working on developing the A Rocha Field Centre, as well as working around their yard and area. With regards to special places in the valley, he notes:

Well, there are a few spots in the valley which have special meaning to us...I guess my *first* special place when I went scouting around in the valley years ago looking for a spot to you know put down roots is that hill that now belongs to the Pembina Valley Camp, and at that point it was Crown land. And so, I sat down on that hill overlooking what is now the park, and that's probably where my commitment got started and uh, I said to myself that you know, this is the spot. Somebody has to make this open to the public.

What was it that **Craig** saw there when he sat contemplating the valley? What confronted him that day – confronted and perhaps urged him to bring others to the same place?

**Craig** also identifies somewhat with the local wildlife that frequent the Pembina Valley Provincial Park: "The Pembina Valley is sort of known for it's raptors, hawks and also the with-tailed deer. Those two would probably be my favourite."

One place in the valley that has special meaning to the both of them is what they call the stone circle. This circle is comprised of about sixty stones as big as their front end loader could lift, and it is used as a place for gathering, fellowship and worship. This is one of the many special areas that they like to frequent with friends and guests. There are numerous places along the sides of the valley that provide wondrous views of the valley, and these places are special to them as well.

**Crystal** really enjoys watching the birds in the area, her particular favourites being grosbeak, bunting, warblers and humming birds. She also talks about forging special connections with wildlife. She notes that they have watched several fawns grow to adulthood over the years, and that the deer often grew accustomed to them. She was really affected by how "cute" and "sweet" the animals are, and she has fond memories of fawns learning to walk – and in particular one set of triplets.

She also enjoys looking at the many flowers that grow in the area, and there is always something more to learn. She says: "I guess once you're aware of what's all out there you notice it you know, and the more you're meek, the more you learn <laughs>."

It really began to emerge early on in both interviews mentioned above that these subjects not only had I-You experiences with nature, but they also articulated how they find God present in the natural world. For them both, their relationship with God is one that can be renewed and grown through time spent in creation. That they see the eternal "You" in their many encounters with the non-human "You" is a compelling thought, and I believe that it was ever-present in each of **Craig** and **Crystal's** interviews.

## Roseisle Creek Watershed Group

Douglas spends a lot of time outdoors during summer, spring and fall. He notes: "I've always been that way, I'd rather spend my time outside than indoors: gardening, yard work, even visiting somebody I'd rather sit outside than sit in the house. It's pretty much been like that since I was a kid <laughs>." The following passage gives a glimpse into some of his small scale identifications:

Yeah, I have a favourite spot. It's a, there's a spring that goes through my place, and I'll go down there when I sorta, I don't *meditate* but I guess that's kinda doing that. I just need to get away and uh, it's something that's quiet...I can spend hours there, just by myself. As far as animals, I guess uh, I never thought of it before but I, I love chickadees. I guess it's because I admire them that they can survive at forty degrees (below) outside <laughs>. Yeah, brave little things.

He tells me that he experiences special moments in nature all the time – even moments that include communication between chickadees and himself. In the early part of winter he feeds the birds, and he has noticed that the chickadees will come and sit on the ledge of the window close to where he is working on the computer to "tell" him that the feeder is empty.

He places the human being in a close relationship with all other beings. When I asked him if he felt he was part of a natural system, he responded:

Uh, gee now we're getting' really *deep* here. <laughs> Uh, *yeah* in all honesty, yeah. I believe we're all, everything's connected from the rock to the human being or whatever it might be, higher than that. It's all linked together, one can't do without the other.

His answer to my question regarding whether or not he feels that natural beings are a part of him also hints at large scale ecological identification:

Part of me? Yep. Yes, most definitely. Uh, again I guess, hearing the others talk about their experiences with nature, I thought more of my experience here. But I've had uh, some experiences away from here where I've felt that *linkage*, okay for short periods or for longer periods.

**Duane** is very active in the outdoors. While he doesn't do a lot of mountain biking anymore due to ailments, he spends a lot of time cross country skiing, as well as teaching skiing as well as maintaining and grooming trails. Much of this activity takes place on land that **Donna** and **Duane** own. Both of them describe it as a place of special significance to them, and note that it has fabulous views of the valley. **Duane** explains: "We developed our own special system of trails up there. It's a woodlot, we get our firewood up there... We spend a lot of time up there... just *being* in the bush you know, has always been, for me an important thing."

As far as special moments in nature, **Duane** says that he has had so many that it is difficult to pin one down in particular. He describes one that came to mind:

I had one particular experience which is, we used to do a thing called moonlight skiing and we'd go out on the full moon, get a group together and this particular day it was like 35 below, and you know a few hardy souls showed up and uh, I ended up going out by myself at the end because we were expecting some other people so we were waiting around... And I went out after, when I was by myself in a full moon, 30 below and I had one of the most *incredible* skis of my whole life and it was uh, it was a very weird, weird day because usually when it's 30 below - I don't know you've skied when it's that cold but it's like skiing on sand paper, it's *so slow* - but there was something about this night, maybe with the humidity or something, something in the tracks that was very fast... the light of the full moon, it's 30 below and uh, it was a really powerful experience for me. I think I skied about 12 kilometres that night.

**Duane** describes a special feeling on that night that emerged from his visceral experience of nature. One can easily imagine **Duane** skiing effortlessly on this frigid night, losing all track of time and temperature. This "powerful experience" certainly seems along the lines of what an "I-You" encounter - an immediate relation that transcends time and space - might be described. He strongly feels a part of a natural system, and that "all beings are part of each other, sentient or not sentient including the rocks." His relationship with nature is: "that we're all totally interrelated. Everything is totally interrelated so there's no separation. Uh, most of us don't realize that..."

For **Donna**, the experience of gardening is very powerful for her, and through it she feels a connection to nature and to the processes of life:

...early spring and gardening is a , a very *strong*, significant time for me, 'cause you come out of a winter even though it's enjoyable, at the end of the winter you know you're restless and, and uh *tense* kind of thing, just from not having that, being outdoors enough. And I just love the sense of *renewal*. I like digging up the old soil and I like planting seeds and, and uh cleaning out and you know just coaxing things from seed to fruition in the fall. It's a process of three or four months that I find extremely rewarding and I enjoy putting it all to bed now, till the soil and put it to bed kind of thing. So it's very cyclical and kind of a lifestyle, sort of a life process thing. So gardening is a big deal.

One aspect of the gardening experience that has been a source of some problems involves an ongoing relationship<sup>64</sup> that they have with a beaver: "Every single morning the beaver starts a new dam by our garden, and we tear it down...Uh, you know we're interfering with the beaver and its natural way." Despite this ongoing issue, **Donna** says the somewhat antagonistic relationship is actually comical, and that they are happy that

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<sup>64</sup> Here I use the term "relationship" as **Donna** did when describing this story.

they can have a problem with a local animal without being immediately compelled to shoot it. In terms of "I-You" relations between **Donna** and the beaver – and **Duane** and the beaver - perhaps we can best judge whether or not that exists by approaching the problem from the opposite direction. If **Donna** for example, saw the beaver merely as an object, merely as an "It", she would then likely seek to have the menace destroyed and removed as quickly as possible as it is disrupting her ability to garden – which is a very important part of her life. It seems reasonable to conclude that she sees this beaver as more than an "It," and that somewhere along the line she has encountered the "You" of this creature – or encountered a "You" which leads her to treat this creature as a subject. Her identification with the animals (or perhaps with animals and nature) is perhaps leads her to avoid violence against it.

Another example of **Donna's** possible identification with nature is her awareness of weather, and how it forms an integral part of her relationship with nature. Once again a social relation seems implied:

I'm very, very, very *aware* of the weather. I'm aware of it because of gardening; I'm aware of it because of how it makes me feel so I think about it all the time and I know there's some people that don't have a clue about the weather but I'm quite aware the wind and the way the light is and so it's you know, like every day...That's the world - it speaks to me.

Other evidence of ecological identifications in the lives of **Donna** and **Duane** include **Donna's** passion for Japanese flower arrangement, and **Duane's** enjoyment of nature-oriented poetry and essays. For Buber, during the creation of art and the enjoyment of art one may encounter the eternal "You." The piece of art seeks out the artist or admirer, it speaks to them. It asks to be released from the medium, it asks to

enter into relation with the person. There is the possibility of I-You relation through art<sup>65</sup>. That being said, neither **Duane** nor **Donna** made specific reference to their enjoyment of these nature-themed arts in terms of confronting subjects. What is clearer is that art, at the very least, can function in their lives as an It-world component of ecological identification. These can be the markers that help to reinforce faith in periods when the relationship between the person and the "You" is in latency.<sup>66</sup>

**Darryl** loves being in the outdoors as well, and it seems the worse the weather, the more he enjoys it: "I like the storms, especially blizzards. I used to *walk* in blizzards. When I first moved out here I used to walk in blizzards to town...It's just so incredible, nature's power." As for small scale identifications, **Darryl** has a special relationship with the coyote that includes communication: "I like to hear them talking to each other. I've even called out to them on occasion, and they've responded...If you listen closely, their talking." Other animals that he identifies with to an extent are birds and deer.

There is a hill on his property that is special to him, and he finds himself going there to think, or when he is feeling down. He finds that laying there and looking up at

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<sup>65</sup> Buber speaks of the "I-You" relation in terms of both the creation and beholding of art: "This is the eternal origin of art that a human being confronts a form that wants to become a work through him...What is required is a deed that a man does with his whole being: if he commits it and speaks with his being the basic word to the form that appears, then the creative power is released and the work comes into being." (Buber 1970: 60 – for the former); and "The created work is a thing among things and can be experienced and described as an aggregate of qualities. But the receptive beholder may be bodily confronted now and again." (Buber 1970: 61 for the latter.)

<sup>66</sup> Buber describes the I-You relation as comprised of periods of "actuality" and "latency." He writes: "This, however, is the sublime melancholy of our lot that every You must become an It in our world. However exclusively present it may have been in the direct relationship-as soon as the relationship has run its course or is permeated by *means*, the You becomes an object among objects, possibly the noblest one and yet one of them, assigned its measure and boundary. The actualization of the work involves a loss of actuality. Genuine contemplation never lasts long; the natural being that only now revealed itself to me in the mystery of reciprocity has again become describable, analyzable, classifiable-the point at which manifold systems of laws intersect...Every You in the world is doomed by its nature to become a thing or at least to enter into thinghood again and again." (Buber 1970: 68-9)

the sky, in summer or winter always gives him a special feeling. **Darryl** describes his feelings towards nature in terms of a sense of wonder:

Nature is such a beautiful thing, that's what we all are. We seem to be at odds with it unfortunately, instead of paying more attention to it, and letting it guide us. ..I'm in wonder, I'm in wonder. Like sometimes I just stop you know, whether it's lookin' up at the sky, at the clouds or the stars or whatever, you know maybe a particular smell of poplars in bloom...in the spring time especially. Yeah, there's all the birds, the *sounds* of nature, the wind, the rustle of the leaves.

For **Darryl**, water has a particular significance:

I'm drawn to water, I'm drawn to water. When I was a kid I used to go to the river - I lived near the Red River in Winnipeg - uh I used to go down and play by the riverbanks all the time and...we used to ride on our bikes over there - again hanging around the river a lot of the time.

The testimony of **Darryl** certainly points to identification with nature in several of its manifestations: water, his special place on the hill, coyotes and the weather. These are the "You's" that he encounters.

### c) Ecological Identifications and Ecological Behaviour

Possible small scale identifications with the potential to motivate ecological behaviour that appear in the subjects' testimony seem to have their origins in visceral experiences with nature and natural beings. This level of ecological identification might be seen in the example of **Douglas** and his relationship with the chickadees that he feeds, and **Crystal's** fondness for the fawns that have grown up near her home. It is also evident in the special places that subjects describe like **Darryl's** hilltop that he visits

when he has something on his mind, or the many lookout points in the Pembina Valley Provincial Park that both **Craig** and **Crystal** enjoy.

Visceral experiences have also led to large scale identifications as well, with the experiences of **Aaron** in untouched wilderness being an example, and **Barbara's** relation with a wild bog that led her to see herself as a part of nature providing a couple of the more poignant examples. Besides visceral experiences, the subjects' testimony indicates that some have learned to relate socially to nature from others. In the interview it was found that this learning was sometimes manifested through family traditions; neighbourhood communities; and in the cases of **Barry** and **Benjamin**, traditional Ojibway teachings. This sort of learning is associated with the development of both small and large scale identifications.

Some of the subjects learned from their parents (**Benjamin, Barbara, Duane**); some from their local community (**Arlene**), and some from spiritual leaders (**Barry, Benjamin**). Many subjects made the point that experiences in nature often need to be coupled with teachings in order to bring people to understand and care for nature. **Benjamin** spoke about the importance of not only being on the land, but having somebody to teach you how to pay attention to - and learn from - the land. He believes that people need to open their eyes and ears to the land, and that this requires teaching.

The large scale knowledge of nature of the subjects tends to be bound up in two general ways of understanding: one being what may be best described as a spiritual<sup>67</sup> (or perhaps intuitive) understanding of the human in nature; and the other through a pragmatic or intellectual understanding of the human as part of ecosystems and the

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<sup>67</sup> The word "spiritual" includes but is not restricted to religious beliefs. It also refers to deep connections that may not be readily apparent to the senses.

dangers that face ecosystems and the ecosphere. Both types of understanding as found in this study generally emerge through a process of the subject locating themselves and humanity within nature. For spiritual understanding, this occurred more through visceral experiences in nature and pragmatic understanding came about more through cultural and intellectual means.

In all cases both general types of understanding encountered carry with them - to varying degrees - an element of *care* for nature. It is this *care* for nature that may be indicative of an ecological identification being transformed into social act – an act that varies from person to person in terms of their understandings of nature, and their personal *location* of the human in nature - but a social act nonetheless. It also varies in *strength* from subject to subject. Along the lines of Naess' formulation of identifications and the self, the strength of this caring would generally be indicative of a "wideness" of the self. Further, the "wider" the self, the more the relations between the person and nature would appear to be explicitly and obviously *social*.

The locating of the human in nature by the subjects followed two general philosophies: the human as on an equal footing with the rest of nature; and the human as somehow privileged above nature – although all subjects maintained that human existence was reliant on natural systems and interconnections. Although those subjects with understandings dominated by a spiritual/intuitive largely tended to view humans as on an equal footing with the rest of nature, and conversely those that relied more heavily on intellectual and pragmatic understandings seemed to privilege the human somewhat, there were exceptions.

Most of the subjects (**Arthur, Arlene, Aaron, Barry, Benjamin, Barbara, Douglas, Duane, Donna, and Darryl**) articulated very clearly in different ways that they do not privilege the human being above the rest of nature – at least in a philosophical or cosmological sense. The understandings that emerged from the testimony of these subjects all had strong elements of spirituality or intuitive, personal knowledge although intellectual and pragmatic understandings were still present, especially in the cases of **Arthur and Aaron**.<sup>68</sup>

**Alan** and **Andrew** did not articulate the view that humans were on a completely equal footing with nature but identification with nature was nonetheless present and was possibly a relevant factor in their ecological behaviour. Their understandings leaned towards the intellectual/pragmatic side. Once again, their understandings (more so **Alan's**) did show some sign of spiritual/intuitive components as well. **Anne's** understanding of the human in nature was thoroughly pragmatic, and appears to have developed after she began to commit to ecological behaviours. Her testimony showed an emphasis on human realities and a general philosophical placement of the human as at least somewhat higher than the rest of nature. **Craig** and **Crystal** articulate spiritual views that recognize a privileged human as well although **Craig** points out that "in a physical sense *we're not all that much different.*"

It bears repeating that the types of understanding that have emerged from the narratives – spiritual/intuitive and intellectual/pragmatic - are not mutually exclusive nor are they rigidly defined. In many cases a subject's ecological identifications combine elements of more than one way of knowing. For example, **Barry** seems to have come to

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<sup>68</sup> It should be remembered that **Aaron's** ecological identifications were originally developed through an intellectual understanding. At the time of the interview, however, he expressed a very deep spiritual understanding of nature and the human being.

hold large scale ecological identifications through experience in the bush, through reading and research, and through the tutelage of a medicine woman (this last being a combination of intellectual understanding, spiritual understanding and visceral experience that is transmitted through traditional teachings). Further, there has been demonstrated a wide variation within these types of understanding. **Barry's** knowledge of nature has been transmitted through different cultural means than **Arlene's**. While **Barry's** learned ecological behaviour stems largely from traditional Ojibway culture, **Arlene's** cultural teachings consisted largely of a neighbourhood community culture that exists in the Wolseley area of Winnipeg, where she learned to participate in certain ecological behaviours that were "normal" to that particular community.

While some subjects understand "the outdoors" to indicate time spent in the *wild* outdoors (or at least parks), others like **Aaron** and especially **Arthur** really had a sense that one is always in nature when one is outdoors, even in an urban setting. Perhaps the most poignant example is the case of **Arlene**. Through her testimony we encounter a deep understanding that she is in nature *all the time*. Thus, she is able to experience the meaningful interactions with nature that she describes in an urban setting. This is despite the fact that urban settings and modern western culture tend to promote insulation from nature. Throughout her interview there was a very palpable sense that she was enjoying nature on a daily basis (although some days more than others depending on the weather!)

### Ecological Identifications Motivating Ecological Behaviour

Evidence of ecological identification is less clear cut where the subjects were articulating a primarily intellectual or pragmatic understanding of ecological issues without reporting enduring special moments, visceral encounters or spiritual connections with nature. For subject's like **Anne** and **Andrew**, it is hard to conclude that ecological identification is what motivates them to take part in the ecological behaviours that are part of their lifestyles. The interviews provide a dearth of evidence to this end. With **Alan** it is unclear as well whether the connection that he felt to nature as a young person is still an enduring relationship for him today. This is not to say that he isn't committed to his ecological behaviours and the many green changes that he works so hard to bring about through his occupation, but merely that his case doesn't offer much in the way of clear cut evidence of ecological identification as a major motivating factor.

For **Alan**, a pragmatic understanding of ecological connections – which in turn was prefaced by past experiences in natural surroundings – was a factor in motivating his ecological behaviour. It must be kept in mind however that it is his job to pursue sustainability. For example, when I asked him if the work that he does in his occupation stems from a concern for nature he responded:

Yes and no. It's my job...I didn't end up in this job because I have a degree in natural resources and that. I ended up in this job because I was a manager at the time who dealt with corporate support issues...But I *still* have this job because I am passionate about it, and now it has gone from being 10% of my responsibilities to about 80 to 90% of my time and energy.

It is certainly the case that the nature of his occupation has had an effect on his ecological behaviours, but he indicates that he has continued in the job due to being "passionate about it."

### **Special Moments in Nature**

Most of the subjects interviewed indicated that special moments experienced in nature motivated them to partake in and/or sustain ecological behaviours. **Arthur** speaks about the influence that special moments in nature have had on his lifestyle:

Yeah, there's definitely a connection there. There has to be...clearly, a lot of my viewpoints in terms of...the willingness to keep large portions of the Earth - or at least my immediate surroundings here: my city; my province; my country - as natural as possible or as close to the way they've always been, certainly that desire and working towards those policies, and lobbying for those policies and personal *action* that's day to day in the things that I do, and whatever, consciously do to not spoil that type of <trails off>, that's clearly related to the love of being there and valuing them for both for what I know they do for the long term sustainability of the earth, but indeed for the short term enjoyment of myself.

**Andrew** found that special moments in nature had an effect on him, but he notes that special moments on their own are not enough to motivate somebody to adopt a green lifestyle:

I think that they probably actually have an effect on just about anybody um, but whether or not they connect that to the environment and sustainability, I'm not sure that everybody does. It certainly does for me you know, when you see wildlife you don't wanna see that disappear, you know, and we know that some of that is happening.

Special moments in nature are definitely a motivator for **Arlene**:

When I have these moments when you're out there connecting with nature...I feel even more strongly about *protecting* it - absolutely. I'm sure that if I went from an air conditioned car to an air conditioned office to an air conditioned house and lived entirely within an artificial environment I wouldn't feel *nearly* as strong about it. I think you have to get out there and connect with it to even understand what you're trying to do.

For **Aaron** special moments were not an original motivator for ecological behaviour, but they have motivated him to sustain those behaviour changes. Originally, his relationship for nature and motivation for ecological behaviour came from an intellectual understanding of ecological issues:

I think those events weren't the motivating factor so much as they were, they supported more of what was almost an intellectual decision to value natural systems before experiencing them. So, and then having experienced them it was, it perpetuated and supported that initial intellectual decision, from my point of view.

Forming ecological identifications through intellectual means seems quite natural for **Aaron**, who describes himself as a "bookworm." In his case it may be that through words he was confronted by the "You" of nature - perhaps the eternal "You."

**Alan** admits that special moments in nature may have motivated him to adopt a green lifestyle:

Yes, I think I would think so, 'cause I have good strong memories of growing up and doing activities and going as I said on canoe trips or being out there in the wilderness and I love to be able to say 'that area is a protected area,' or 'here is a program, a government program that is encouraging that type of activities or protecting those areas. I'm a strong believer in habitat protection...I believe that fundamentally if you don't have the habitat, you don't have genetics diversity, you don't have species diversity, you don't have the environmental systems around so the key is protect the habitat as much as you – the right spaces - as much as you can.

**Benjamin** says that special moments in nature have affected his views and his behaviour toward nature, especially moments spent at traditional sacred sites. This connection with nature and cultural heritage motivates him to protect natural areas. He frames his respect for nature in terms of natural history:

Yeah, I respect nature quite a bit because if you look at the evolution of mankind we're the last ones here. The plants, the water, the animals were all here before us. So, I feel that we're uh, blessed and very fortunate to have what we have, but to uh...to uh contaminate is something that is industrial, that the industrial age did to us and today you know it's hard to maintain or try 'n bring back some of that because industry's gonna keep going, *progress* is gonna keep going. So to preserve certain parts of it is I guess the goal of most cultures...

Special moments in nature are a motivator for **Barbara** as well. When I asked her if the special moments that she described influenced her ecological behaviour, she said: "Oh yes, I think so and it really has reinforced the idea that we have to do something for the next generation and especially when you're getting' older and you're a grandparent already." **Barbara** is a great believer in the transformational quality of wilderness experience.

**Craig** says that special moments in nature do affect him. For him, a lot of these special moments occur in his beloved Pembina valley:

I notice when you come to the valley, and you drive into it, you're entering a different world altogether. You're kind of leaving the rat race of everyday life behind you and you're dropping over the edge and you're going into the valley and you're in a totally different environment and it affects you socially and spiritually...

**Crystal** said that special moments in nature "absolutely" motivated her to take on ecological behaviours. For her and **Craig**, these moments are bound up spiritually in

their Christian faith. What emerged from the interviews is that they both felt that God was leading them to do the work that they do. **Crystal** describes it thus in the context of their move out of town to live along the valley:

I feel God gave me that vision, or a very distinct um moment where he said you know 'You're other work is finished out there and this is a new life for you and have faith, there's lots to do,' and you know that He had a place for me to serve Him here, and it was that way. I have not been lonesome one moment I don't think <laughs> and it's been just a very wonderful experience...

**Douglas** found that his experiences in nature as a child would have a profound effect on him later in life. He tells a very powerful story:

I was a *corporate* guy and uh got programmed I guess I always call it, to have a corporate-type mentality. And then coming out here to live, it was such a huge change for me. I wasn't the boss any more and <laughs> it's not all this, kind of, activity around me. I'm with nature *again*, I guess as it was when I was a youngster... I retired early because I was kind of burnt out, I was never home and was always traveling and I couldn't deal with it any more. So I came out here and found out that you know, it was always kind of the 'I could've stayed and been a corporate guy and got all kinds of money.' I was offered a job in Toronto, a *big* job with all kinds of dollars to go with it. I turned it down and came out *here* instead. And there has been, I guess during my retirement there was times I would look back and say 'Gee, you know, I could've moved to Toronto and I could've lived in a two million dollar house' or whatever <laughs> but then I found that it was a thought-through decision. It was a good decision for me because it put me back where I really wanted to be, and I think that's like it was when I was a youngster.

Speaking specifically about the places that were important to him in the past, he notes that watching a special place deteriorate is a powerful motivating factor as well:

Over the years, I've seen it deteriorate. Personally, the yard stick I use is the creek, because I know [wife's name]'s parents used to drink that water and we'd go to Stephenfield

and the lake it was crystal clear. Now with spring runoff, it smells like a sewer and I don't even want my grandchildren wading in that water it's that bad.

To see a place that he has known and loved be damaged was painful for **Douglas**, and this speaks of the investment of his self in this place.

Watching a special place deteriorate was also a motivating factor for **Barbara**, who was shocked to see how much of the natural landscape had been altered where she was born:

I guess I started to be concerned when I was in my thirties - after I'd sort of um, married and had my family and had some time to look around a little more and sort of look at the bigger picture. And then I could see that the things I remembered from a child where I was born - I still have the place where I was born - how things were even changing there. And then I thought 'Oh my, if they're changing here and it's pretty remote, they're probably changing everywhere.' So I started to do a little more, become more politically active and uh more vocal about it.

For **Duane**, childhood experiences in nature had a major influence on his ecological behaviours later in life:

Like **Douglas**, I had a lot of exposure to being close to nature as a child. I grew up spending big parts of my summers at my uncle's farm uh, and my father's an avid outdoorsman, hunting and fishing - so I spent many, many days either on lakes in northern Saskatchewan fishing or in the fall and early winter hunting and just being outdoors...I just *gravitate* to it so, just so *naturally*.

These experiences were a factor in making a decision to change the direction of his life:

It's a little bit like **Douglas'** story only I made that decision a lot earlier...I could have been, I could be working in the city as an architect and making you know, three times the salary...A big part of it was to be close to nature, because I felt that's where you could truly break through that alienation that exists in urban centres. It's just *set up* for cutting you off from everything and the rest of the world so

coming out here was part of the sixties' 'back to the land' thing I guess.

**Aaron** is another subject who made a career change, moving from industry to promotion of ecological awareness. He notes that an "ever-increasing concern" drove him to make the career change, and he feels lucky to have found a job that allows him to work promoting ecological awareness.

**Donna** notes that she felt very close to nature as a child as well, and she played outside all the time. She then tells of how her years in university immersed her in an urban world that was such a stark contrast to earlier times. One day she took a drive back out into the country and found that she was really happy there:

At that point I realized that something was missing in my life and it was that connection with nature, 'cause the university years was, all we did was study and party so you know <laughs> it didn't have much to do with the natural world whatsoever <laughs>...Once I started to find out I was really enjoying it I started to pursue this - this is where I wanna be again and was fortunate enough to find this place...Now I just hope that there's a senior's home in the bush!

**Darryl** says that special moments in nature have definitely influenced him to partake in ecological behaviours in terms of the work of RCWG. There is also a different kind of moment that he recalls from his past that he thinks may have had a particular influence on him – one where he may have glimpsed a "You" a little too late:

I think it might have been when I was a kid of about ten or eleven and I shot a bird with a bee-bee rifle from my bedroom window...I went outside and I was looking at my bird and then this bigger kid came up to me and said, 'Did you do that?' <laughs> and I did, had done it eh, and I just didn't say anything but I was scared and I realized I'd done something really wrong. I shouldn't have killed this bird.

**Craig** described a similar situation in his youth. He told a story that reaches back to when he was a fourteen year-old farm boy. He and others were hoeing sugar beets in a field when somebody spotted a creature running across the field. They chased it down, not knowing what it was while somebody went to get the neighbour, and his rifle. The neighbour came out and shot the animal, which turned out to be a grey squirrel. It was the first one **Craig** had ever seen:

Now, the fact that here we saw a new creature we had never seen, and our first impulse was it has to be shot - that kind of attitude makes me sad...But since then I've come to realize that that attitude still prevails and what I hope to do is try to change that attitude.

**Craig** also tells about the only time he ever shot a rabbit. He had his brother's rifle and only a few bullets, and when he ran out of ammunition the rabbit was wounded but not dead. He had to clobber the animal to death with the butt end of the rifle – an action which broke the stock. After that he said there was no more hunting for him: "I'd rather go for a walk."

This story is similar in some ways to that of Arne Naess when he wrote about the dying flea. For Naess the experience brought about an epiphany about the human self, and the identification that takes place between a human and an other. For **Craig** it appears that the rabbit was first an "It" – an "It" that he decided to shoot. But after exhausting his store of bullets the rabbit was still not dead – obviously he was not standing very close to the creature. Why not? Certainly a point blank shot would easily terminate the creature's life. Perhaps he was afraid of what would confront him. He felt he had no choice but to finish the animal off by physically clubbing it which he described as a very painful and uncomfortable experience. Somewhere in the process, this dying

animal seems to have confronted him as a "You." One can imagine the fearful glance – full of anxiety – that for a moment transcended the "It-world." Not only would **Craig** have been confronted with this "You", but also with the "I" (his personhood) that goes with it. After the encounter, he never hunted again. It seems a powerful example of the self-transforming capacity of a human and non-human relation. As for the rifle-stock breaking (the rifle belonging to his brother), it seems that **Craig** may have interpreted this as a sign that what he had done was wrong – as if he was confronted by God in that moment, the eternal You. Of course he may have emphasized the breaking of his brother's rifle to better express what an awful experience it was, but the possibility of it confronting him as a message from God is a reasonable possibility.

### **Relationships with Nature**

Many of the subjects indicated that they had a relationship with nature, and that this relationship motivated them to partake in ecological behaviours. The relationships that were reported were unique to the subjects, and the strictly social aspects of these are often hard to pin down and seem to vary in strength.

**Arthur** has a daily relationship with nature, which is most apparent in his commitment to being outside – in nature – as much as possible. He articulates an intellectual understanding of nature that exhibits elements of spiritual connection. He says that this relationship is definitely a major part of why he pursues such a green lifestyle. In order to understand this relationship that **Arthur** has with nature it is important to explore one theme that was ever-present whenever we discussed this

relationship. This theme was that of a comfort-driven, consumer lifestyle that **Arthur** has made the conscious choice to resist. He sees consumerism as a major part of this popular way of life:

So many people don't understand the implications of building and buying things, that building and buying and growth – our whole growth paradigm in our society. You talk to even the media, you talk to them and they say that 'Oh, the growth in our last quarter in Canada was only .1% or it was -.1% and, like we're in deep trouble here because we're now in a depression/recession type of thing.' So, it's 'consume, consume.' You cannot have infinite growth on a finite planet, and the planet is finite in terms of the number of people it will support, and we're way above that and the shit is gonna hit the fan big time...

**Arthur** believes that a relationship with nature and an understanding of natural systems are what enable people to make the tough day-to-day decisions to avoid consumptive behaviour, and to pursue ecological behaviours. The view that living a greener lifestyle is in some ways a rejection of modern values of comfort, consumption and status is shared by other subjects as well and was a dominant theme throughout the interviews, although it was manifested in different ways particular to the subjects. For **Arthur**, this theme was particularly powerful. Throughout the entire interview (which lasted one hour and 26 minutes) he was either standing before me or pacing back and forth with great energy and speaking with great enthusiasm. His words came tumbling out one after the other, each heavy with equal parts conviction and emotion. It was very evident to me that the topic of ecological behaviours in the context of what he views modern society to be is one that permeates his self.

**Aaron** talks about the insular nature of modern urban culture. Similar to the narratives of other subjects, he talks about climate control and the indoor environment as

being the pinnacles of urban culture. When I asked him why some people don't adopt ecological behaviours, he responded: "...they're just so married to their lifestyle that they don't want to make a change." Having lived his entire life in urban situations, he has seen first hand how people can insulate themselves from nature. He says that in a city a person can feel that the human being is all powerful, but in a forest or on a mountain top one can come to the realization of just how small one is. To feel small in this way one is at least confronted by a being or beings that is/are larger.

**Aaron's** relationship with nature was begun along intellectual lines. He notes that getting his first degree in zoology opened his eyes to a lot of the realities of ecological disasters. For him, it was coming to the realization of his ecological connections through scientific and ecological literature that was the impetus to ecological behaviours.

Eventually he felt a desire to seek out natural places, and those experiences he had in wild nature reinforced and strengthened his resolve to maintain ecological behaviours. He describes his relationship with nature as spiritual, but not in a religious or dogmatic sense. He says that he really sympathizes with Native religion. He explains that what he means by saying that: "...in Native culture, in Native religion even inanimate objects are alive. Rocks are part of everything, there's spirit in everything..." This certainly appears to indicate that he sees non-humans as subjects with "spirit."

**Alan** was somewhat reluctant to talk about having a "relationship" with nature. He seemed to shy away from portraying himself as having spiritual connections with nature, and didn't seem to care for the flavour of some of the questions (i.e. do you feel that natural beings are a part of you?). Nonetheless, he admits that his early experiences in natural surroundings and his intellectual understanding of the processes of natural

systems and our reliance on them have had a motivational effect on his ecological behaviours. The language that he used during the interview was often managerial and economic in flavour, no doubt due to his experience as a manager trying to facilitate green changes in his workplace. I would say that he may have some sense of a relationship with nature, but that it is not coupled with a counter-cultural orientation as we see in the testimony of **Arthur** and the members of RCWG, for example. **Alan** is very aware of economic realities that some of the other subjects may not focus on and he also seems to see himself as working "within the system" as opposed to against it.

It seems quite likely that the ecological behaviours of both **Barry** and **Benjamin** are motivated by their relationships with nature. In the stories that **Barry** told, the importance of the land to people and the obligations that people have towards the land was a prominent theme (see Table 4.1). **Benjamin** notes that current trends in government and industry, and the prevalence of green-washing make it very important that places like the Brokenhead Wetlands be protected:

Everybody's on the green plan and everybody's trying to be green, and if you get on board and you show that you're doing something for the green, it looks good at a company level but then on the ground does it really affect anything?...There's a hundred percent of a company and maybe three or four percent is in the green...If industry controls government, which it looks like now it does, it's gonna be a fight for any kind of uh development or protecting anything in nature.

**Benjamin** perceives that natural areas are in danger of over-development. He says that his relationship with nature, and his connection to the Brokenhead Wetlands motivates him to be part of protective efforts both past and present. He says his relationship with nature motivates him to be involved with Debwendon, and that it "makes you want to

think about I guess 20 years from now if things don't change, these little patches of preserved stuff will be very important to us." Both **Benjamin** and **Barry** have spiritual connections to nature, although **Benjamin's** connection is not as culturally traditional as **Barry's** – a point that he made himself.<sup>69</sup> When they both describe non-human beings as humans – like rocks, the sun, moon and stars – I get the feeling that through their encounters with these things they are at times entering into I-You relations. In the Debwendon film "Eko" an Ojibway medicine man says: "The animal is the same as person. They're human like us."<sup>70</sup>

When asked if her relationship with nature motivated her to be involved in ecological behaviour, **Barbara** said:

Well for sure. If I didn't feel that way I don't think that I would continue to push myself as hard as I do – certainly at this age. I mean I'd go out and take a few pictures of flowers 'cause I like taking pictures but not to really go out and do survey, you know survey where it's tough walking, summer and winter sort of thing.

A theme that emerged in **Barbara's** testimony (and **Andrew's**) was one of responsibility to the future generations, and she feels that this is something that people begin to consider as they get older. It was clear from the interview that **Barbara** spends a lot of time in wild nature, and that she thoroughly enjoys herself there. She is extremely knowledgeable about plant life and several types of ecosystems, and she has developed her own gentle methods of passing on her knowledge to others, especially

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<sup>69</sup> When I went to BON to interview Barry and Benjamin, Benjamin told me that he wasn't so much into the "spiritual side of it", but that Barry would show me that side. After the interview with Benjamin, I understand his use of the word "spiritual" to mean religious teachings, some of which Barry shared with me.

<sup>70</sup> This reminds me of something that somebody at CIER (Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources) said to me: "People don't understand that when First Nations people say that they are a part of the land, they mean it *literally*." (paraphrased)

those that may not be initially receptive to her message. The following passage shows some of her views of on behavioural change:

I think that everyone I talk to, even the most dyed-in-the-wool oil company executive is very concerned about their own quality of life, especially concerned about their children, their grandchildren, just as concerned as I am. But, in order to make the kind of changes that, to start making changes...It would mean a whole really big change, they'd have to assess 'Do we really need to be finding more natural gas, maybe we should take our money and put it into renewable energy sources. It would represent a *huge* change...It's too hard for them, so then they just try to *ignore* it...you know just put a wall around that. Yeah, block it out 'I won't look past that.' They don't necessarily thank you for puncturing through that, you know what I mean?

She talked about the method of teaching that she uses that has been most successful for her in regard to people resistant to change:

...you don't confront them directly, you just kind of take them around with you so they begin to see for themselves...You know, when I taken 'em out for a walk they see it for themselves you see, it's hard for them because they can see it for themselves and gradually they come to the realization. I find it works better on most people than if you – well there's a place for that but – it works better especially on older people if you don't directly challenge.

**Barbara** prefers to let nature confront the person.

Both **Barry** and **Barbara** have adopted a teaching role that involves passing on their wisdom to future generations.

**Craig** feels that his relationship with "creation" does indeed motivate him to pursue the ecological behaviours that he does. He says:

Well yes, um we – like all creatures – depend on the physical environment for our life, for sustained life, and so especially since we're the only creatures that have the

capacity to reason and in many ways determine the destiny of the planet with what we do, I think we have a *real* responsibility to, to uh *protect* the environment not only for *our* future generations but for all creatures.

**Crystal** feels "absolutely" that her relationship with "creation" motivates her ecological behaviours. She feels strongly that nature can provide a sense of wholeness that God intends for all people to have because: "it brings them to the realization of God – that He created a sense of uh, a sense of *wholeness* that He would like us to have. Absolutely we've worked to see the beauty of God's work."

**Crystal** and **Craig** both have a relationship with nature is very spiritual – being very deeply integrated with their Christian faith. While this faith is certainly a motivator for their behaviours, their cases exhibit the motivational power of ecological identification as well. Both **Crystal** and **Craig** were brought up in a rural evangelical Mennonite tradition<sup>71</sup> – one that teaches strong Christian faith and a robust work ethic. **Craig** notes "we both attended Sunday school, and later Bible school. Both of us took part in 4H and learned the work ethic at an early age."

One thing that was not a part of their upbringing was valuing - and connecting to – wild nature. **Crystal** remembers that one thing that first interested her about **Craig** was that he could see value in a marsh – something that her father thought was a waste of land: "For him it had to be four sides square and black." This view of the land is bound up in a nonetheless rich agricultural tradition that highly values the virtues of hard work, honesty and respect. It doesn't seem to value wild nature, however.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Craig notes that Crystal's upbringing was "perhaps a little more evangelical than mine."

<sup>72</sup> This observation is a personal one of my own derived from living most of my life in a rural town, and counting many farmers among my friends and family.

**Craig** also came from a cultural perspective that didn't value wild things, at least not on the farm. His story about the day he and a gang of kids saw a squirrel for the first time – and that their first reaction was that it needed to be shot – is I think a fair example of farm culture vis-à-vis wild nature in southern Manitoba. That's not to say that farm families are unable to connect with nature – in fact I would say that they do. Black earth, open sky, seeding and harvesting – these things can be spiritual experiences I do not doubt. What I am pointing to here is that there seem to exist ways of relating to nature on a farm – generally speaking, of course - that are passed from generation to generation. In other words, a particular way of relating to nature is being transmitted culturally. Part of this way of relating labels many species of wildlife, birds, plants and insects as enemies. No doubt this is bound up in the economic reliance of farming families on the land for their living. Taking a look at the livestock industry, it becomes apparent that it involves something else: a cultural prohibition on identifying with the animals<sup>73</sup>; and a strong tradition of treating animals as commodities. In terms of the particular economic and social history of industrial farming in North America, I believe these tendencies were an unfortunate, but inevitable cultural outcome. It is not the purpose of this thesis to investigate rural farm culture, but this brief excursion leads us to conclude that neither **Craig** nor **Crystal** learned to value and connect to nature from their farm upbringing.

As for their Christian faith, it is abundantly clear that the ecological identifications of **Craig** and **Crystal** have shaped that faith, and brought them to believe differently than most in their community. Coming from an evangelical Mennonite

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<sup>73</sup> Derrick Jensen writes extensively and provocatively about the process of silencing the voices of nature (among others) in *A Language Older Than Words*. (Jensen 2000)

background in southern Manitoba,<sup>74</sup> something has caused them to view, value and relate with nature along different lines! While a spiritual connection with creation is a very good fit with Christian beliefs as **Craig** and **Crystal** are both excellent examples of, it is nonetheless a relatively uncommon thing to encounter in southern Manitoba – especially among those of evangelical backgrounds. The upbringing of a rural evangelical Mennonite does not typically promote those kinds of values. In fact, the evangelical movement *in general* tends to move in the opposite direction.

For example, "Focus on the Family" chairman and *extremely* popular evangelist James Dobson and other "conservative leaders" sent a letter two years ago to the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) board to have an evangelical minister ousted for trying to encourage his followers to take climate change seriously:

The leaders registered their concern that Cizik and others threaten their unity of the evangelical movement by promoting the scientifically unsubstantiated message of climate change and shifting the emphasis away from "the great moral issues of our time" – abortion, same-sex marriage, and sexual purity. The letter continues: "If [Cizik] cannot be trusted to articulate the views of American evangelicals on environmental issues, then we respectfully suggest that he be encouraged to resign his position with the NAE." (Green 2007: 49-50)<sup>75</sup>

Coming from a rural background that tends to see animals and land as commodities, and a religious background that tends to distrust ecological threats, I think it is reasonable to conclude that **Craig** and **Crystal's** ecological behaviours are the result of ecological identifications that have manifested in personal Christian faith. **Craig** says:

For me personally, I prefer to use the word *creation* and uh, it just reflects my faith base and so I believe that as a

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<sup>74</sup> Southern Manitoba has a very strong evangelical Mennonite presence.

<sup>75</sup> This excerpt was taken from a popular evangelical magazine called *Today's Christian*. The article, by Jocelyn C. Green, is entitled "Going Green." (*Today's Christian*, May/June 2007: 47-52)

Christian person all of creation, all of nature is to be respected and cared for. And it's not, perhaps not so much that whatever I *do* is actually going to *save* the planet, that's not my *goal*. I consider respecting and caring for creation as part of my normal life and to me it is an act of obedience 'cause I think that's what, what I should be doing. But also, I consider it an act of worship and it's just my normal role to do and I feel it should be so for everybody, really.

Buber writes:

Creation – happens to us, burns into us, changes us, we tremble and swoon, we submit. Creation – we participate in it, we encounter the creator, offer ourselves to him, helpers and companions. Buber 1970: 130

When they first engaged in efforts to preserve and protect a part of the Pembina Valley, they found that most people in their community and church did not understand what they were doing, nor why they were doing it. **Crystal** notes that in church she could tell that there was a general feeling that what they were doing was "crazy." She says: "They wondered 'what are you doing out there, anyway?'" As time has passed, she finds that "environmental" things are not so unusual any more, and that "it's not so bad now." Both **Craig** and **Crystal** were happy to find other like-minded Christians in the international A Rocha organization.

**Douglas** says that his relationship with nature "most definitely" motivates him to be involved in ecological behaviours, a relationship that he had forgotten for a while:

I guess I didn't quite realize what was, what was going on in the world generally. I was too busy with my office work and not really a part of it. And well living in the city too, you don't get that attachment to nature. And then coming out here and like I say...my wife and I, our kind of yard stick has been the quality of water in the creek. Just to see how badly it had deteriorated. You know we came out here as teenagers, so...

**Darryl** confirms that his relationship with nature is a big motivator for ecological behaviours in his life. In describing how he came to develop a relationship with nature he touched upon something that resonated strongly with the rest of the group. He noted that his experiences overseas with other people in other lands changed the way that he looked at his own life: "I think it happened, I became much more aware of it – again in the psychedelic sixties...traveling in Asia and seeing how people live in rural situations and use what's in their environment." He notes that after some very moving experiences in the mountains of Nepal he became seriously ill. After spending time in hospitals overseas, he was sent to a hospital in Canada. During his time in hospital here, he really began to take stock of his life, as well as the lifestyles that he saw around him. He said to himself: "You know, it's just not right. It's all screwed up...This is the root of the problem, this lifestyle we live in modern western society. It's *anti-nature* you know, and I ended up seeking a rural place and within two years I found *this* valley through friends."

**Darryl** also tells of the culture shock upon returning from a trip to India:

You need that contrast sometimes...It's so stark <claps hands together sharply>, you fly in a matter of hours from that to this. That's what got me when I came back from India, and traveling in the east eh. I come here and, aw man it's just like 'Whoa, it's like this thing is *on fire* here. You know back there it's, people are busy and doing things but it's not the same you know, it's just not the same.

**Duane** has no doubts that his relationship with nature motivates him to partake in ecological behaviours. In addition to this, the choice to move out into the country and get "back to nature" was partially what he and **Donna** call a "political statement." This political statement was along the lines of what **Arthur** talks about in terms of a society that seeks comfort through consumption, and certainly along the lines of what **Darryl**

experienced as well. **Duane** says that he came to a realization that there was something fundamentally wrong with the way many people live in North America. Moving into the country was an attempt to reclaim a more natural way of living. He says that his experiences traveling overseas had a profound effect on how he viewed the way of life back home. He describes time spent in Morocco:

You know, living out of a backpack and traveling, really thinking I'm living on *nothing* and then I started living in this village with these people and to them I'm like the wealthiest person in the world. I've got *on my person*, in my backpack, I've got more wealth than they could ever imagine...It really had an influence on how I wanted to live when I got back to North America.

**Donna** notes: "that affected me too, traveling to those kinds of environments."

She says that decisions about how she would live her life were affected by experiencing other cultures and different lands. Both **Donna** and **Duane** felt that the cultures that they were encountering in less developed areas of the world seemed far more in tune with nature than the culture they experienced back home. **Donna** says that her relationship with nature "obviously" motivates her to be involved in ecological behaviours as well. **Douglas** also made it clear that experiences in Korea helped show him how wasteful we are, generally speaking, in Canada and the United States.

It is apparent from the interviews that while ecological identifications are not the sole motivator of ecological behaviour, they likely have been a significant motivator in the lives of most of the people interviewed. Whether it is through the visceral experience of connecting with a certain place, or feeling at one with all of the natural world; whether it is through an intellectual, cultural or spiritual understanding; or whether it is through a combination of these types of knowing, human beings can and do identify with nature in

its many aspects – and through many understandings. Furthermore, these relationships can motivate people to ecological behaviours.

The one subject who did seem the least motivated by ecological identification is **Anne**, and her case will now be further analyzed. A few things stand out in **Anne's** testimony. The first is that she has had very little exposure at all to wilderness, or what are commonly thought of as natural landscapes. When I first asked her about her time spent outdoors and she said "the outdoors don't agree with me," she also said something else: "I'm pretty far removed from that, I'm pretty much ingrained in my urban environment." She describes Winnipeg as "*so, so* home." As far as ecological identifications go, she does have some large scale identifications, and these are based on an intellectual understanding of humans being reliant on the rest of the natural world. When I asked her if her relationship with nature motivated her to participate in ecological behaviours, she said: "Probably not. It's the knowledge of the connections, it's not going out and seeing endangered species firsthand and think 'oh my God I've gotta protect those little guys' and that kind of thing." Here she seems to be saying that she has not experienced visceral connections to nature, but that "the knowledge of the connections" is a motivator. Further, she is indicating that she doesn't see the pragmatic concerns that she has regarding the health of the ecosphere as constituting a relationship with nature.

There seems to be another motivating factor in her testimony, and I can only describe it as somewhere between a normative function and a moral imperative. She notes that she became concerned about ecological issues in high school. When she was in Brownies, she recalls an activity that taught them to conserve water. In high school she became "obsessed" with recycling and noted in her journal that in terms of a career

she would "like to do something green." The theme that kept cropping up during this particular discussion was the fact that she did things based on whether or not she believed them to be right. At this time in her life, she came to see ecological behaviour as right.

She describes it thus:

It just always kind of seemed like the right thing to do, like I guess I was always really influenced when I was younger by like the anti-drug ads and things like that, like 'don't take drugs, *that's wrong*.' So to me, working on preserving the environment that, that just seems inherently like *the right thing to do*, any way you can.

From this testimony I conclude that **Anne's** primary motivation was to *do the right thing*, and that the large scale ecological identifications that she would develop along intellectual lines - and those possibly spiritual identifications that float beneath the surface of her consciousness<sup>76</sup> - were quite possibly less significant.

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<sup>76</sup> Here I point again to her confusion regarding the application of monetary value to trees, as well as her testimony regarding taking herself "out of it" to be able to participate in our consumer society.

Table 4.1

### The Interview with Barry

It was on a sunny August morning that my thesis advisor Dr. Rod Kueneman and I made the drive up to the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation. First on the agenda was a tour of the wetlands with future interview subject **Benjamin**. We met at the gas station and followed him up the highway a short ways before pulling off onto the shoulder. A small trail led into the woods. It was here that I offered him tobacco.

Before we had even entered the woods **Benjamin** had already pointed out a large rock that had been shifted since his last visit – by a black bear looking for tasty bugs.

Inside the forest we encountered a cool quiet atmosphere, and both **Benjamin** and Rod started pointing out plants of interest. The experience was quite enjoyable, but I couldn't quite contain my excitement about the interviews themselves. I was to be interviewing both **Barry** and **Benjamin** this day!

Once far inside the forest **Benjamin** adopted a semi-formal conversational stance and asked me what I wanted to know. From previous contact with **Benjamin** I knew that he was extremely busy, and he had been gracious to take time to show around Rod and I. Nonetheless I asked if he would be willing to sit down with me somewhere indoors where I could set up my recorder, produce questions and documents etc. He complied.

My first interview would be with **Barry** at the entrance to the Ojibway Village, across the road from the Bison ranch that I would later work at for a morning's duration. I was to interview **Benjamin** afterwards.

**Barry** drove up to the building and greeted me with a wide smile and friendly style. After about fifteen minutes of conversation outside, we got settled inside for an interview.

About the only thing I feel that I really got right from here on in was to offer him tobacco which he accepted. In a low and quiet voice, **Barry** immediately began to tell me about his people. He noted that it was customary to pray before such a meeting as this, and he shared with me several stories about the creation of the world, the origin of the sun, moon, stars, and the animals and spirits that were involved. Of these numerous stories I can scarce remember enough details to reproduce on paper, but what stands out the most to me was the image of the turtle. He said repeatedly that the land that we stand on is turtle island, and that its centre is sacred.

After several rich and fascinating stories of this type, he began to speak of other things. He told me of himself, his life and of the many projects that he has been involved in and the places and people he has seen and known. At this point in the interview (let's say about an hour in) I was

struck by two unanticipated truths. The first was that **Barry** was not only extremely knowledgeable about his culture and people (this wasn't a surprise) but he had a thorough and wide ranging knowledge of many cultures, politics, government agencies and policies, as well as world history. When I first learned (to my great delight) that I would be able to interview an Elder, I expected a man steeped in the cultural traditions of his people. I didn't expect a man who knew more about other cultures, politics, government agencies and policies and world history than I did. The second uncomfortable truth that settled upon me was that I was wholly unprepared for this interview. For example when **Barry** talked about his involvement in discussions regarding treaties 1 through 11, I *didn't* know that his community fell under treaty 1. What this meant to me was not so much that I was unprepared academically – although the example shows that I was – rather it meant that I hadn't really given consideration to the fact that I would be entering into another nation, and indeed another world. Here I was with digital recorder, interview schedule and informed consent forms in hand seeking answers to questions I had devised (in collaboration with my advisor and committee) fully expecting to receive profound and suitable answers for my thesis research. In the hustle and rush to make this interview a reality, I had seemingly overlooked the fact that I would encounter a people.

It took some time before I really accepted the fact that I would not be asking my questions this day. I will say that I entered into the interview with the intention of showing respect as is the due of an Elder, and I believe I did. This included leaving the conversation topic to his discretion. At about two and a half hours into the interview he agreed to the use of the digital recorder for the remainder, although he warned me that it wouldn't pick up his voice.

I must also make clear that **Barry** showed great courtesy and respect to me, and he thanked me more than once for meeting with him and listening to him. At the end of the interview (which lasted over four hours) he said that we should meet again and draft a medicine wheel where we would write everything down according to the way of his people. It was agreed that I would send him a letter through **Benjamin** that would inform him of my intentions and the questions that I was seeking answers to. I sent the letter but in the end we were not able to meet again. What I had anticipated to be the keystone of this work was not to be. That being said, I have compiled to the best ability of my memory (and my hearing regarding the recorder) what I can from the initial interview.

The challenge is to put into words what I believe was being communicated to me during my time with the Elder. The process of trying to reconstruct and translate the encounter that occurred between **Barry** and I has brought me to a realization of my entire thesis process in general. What this has been for me has been a journey in self-discovery. Put another way, I have been seeking to learn *for* myself. In submitting

drafts to my committee I have become aware that what I know, and what I have experienced may not appear on the pages to readers. Although the social sciences revere the symbol and venerate the word, I have to lay partial blame on the inadequacy of verbal-linguistic communication. The rest of the blame I shall shoulder myself, for as I said above, the point of this long journey has been for *my* learning. I see now that the product, the written requirement, the sacrifice as proof of faith has ever been to me a burden and an "It"

Here follows a summary of those things of which I feel certain enough to include from the encounter between **Barry** and myself:

Upon the beginning of our conversation **Barry** explained to me how these things (interviews; conversations with Elders?) should be done. A prayer should be said. A medicine wheel should be drafted with the topics of conversation laid out for all to see, and the results of the discussions also written out so that all members can see and agree. This certainly differs from the extraction of targeted knowledge that I came digging for.

I would say the first 30 to 45 minutes of the conversation was comprised of his telling to me the creation stories of his people that had been passed on to him. It was never the intent of this thesis to put into words such cultural information – as was clearly stated in the informed consent forms and personally articulated by me to **Barry**– and thus I don't feel so bad for not being able to remember the details. He did choose to share these things with me, however.

As mentioned earlier, the image that persists in my mind is that of the turtle island. The lesson that I feel I have learned from these stories is that **Barry** communicates and reciprocates socially with much more than human beings, and it definitely appears that this has been transmitted on the cultural level and actualized through his personal relations with nature and the land.

At no time was this more apparent to me than when he described the harvesting of medicines. "You don't just go and pick it," he said. "First you make an offering. To the Creator. You have to offer the tobacco before you pick the medicine if you want to be healed." When I consider these words in the light of Martin Buber's "I-You" relation, I feel as though I have glimpsed a cultural norm that emphasizes the "I-You" relation. One is seeking healing through medicine, but one is also beseeching the Creator for healing. One makes an offering. This is an overtly social act of reciprocity between human and nature – between human and the Creator. I feel this is a very clear example of the "eternal You" in a relation between human and nature.

I am told that Elders have a certain way of telling stories. I am told that they will relate stories in such a way as to bring the listener to find their own meaning in them. Here are some quotes that I can confirm that emerge from the early part of our discussion that followed the period of creation-oriented tales. My interpretation of these follows. Keep in mind

that these quotes all appeared in the anecdotes that **Barry** shared with me about his life and his many experiences.

He first spoke of healing, and that healing required understanding of the medicine wheel. He spoke of the importance of learning these. He said to me more than once that in learning one must know the laws. "Just like at university, you have to know the laws." Here, I have the distinct impression that he was drawing a parallel between learning about healing and the type of learning that I represented to him at the time. He told me about his experiences on school boards, and what was required of him in terms of learning the laws. "That's the game you have to play as a school trustee. There's a system." He told me about his experiences in owning his own business and his endeavours in the field of construction. "You have to have that plan, when you work in construction. You have to be prepared." He goes on to say "You have to plan: costs, materials, how long, man-hours. Construction has to have a plan."

It is my interpretation that **Barry** was teaching me about life as he sees it, as his culture sees it. Right from when I first met **Barry**, I felt confronted by another world. A *nation*. I believe that **Barry** felt confronted by a nation in me as well, and that he was sharing his wisdom with me in the context of the world that I represented to him. It seems clear to me now that he was saying 'Just like in university, just like in construction, just like on committees, there is a way of doing things and an accounting involved in the process of life and the relationship with the land that is central to it. I also believe he was saying that there is a process and a way of doing things in an encounter such as I had requested and he had obliged to – a way of doing things that I was ignorant of.

## V. Conclusion

This study concludes with the assertion that ecological identification was quite likely a very significant factor in motivating many subjects to partake in ecological behaviours.

A common theme among many of the subjects' testimony is that connections to nature began to occur through childhood experiences. This was especially true for **Arthur, Alan, Barry, Benjamin, Barbara, Craig, Crystal, Douglas, Duane, Donna, Darryl** and to a lesser extent **Andrew**. During these formative years, the subjects were able to learn about nature and, I believe to begin to develop relationships with nature. Having invested themselves in nature, many of these subjects found they had the motivation to adopt ecological behaviours, and in some cases to make somewhat radical lifestyle changes. In most cases, those who had meaningful visceral experiences in nature developed spiritual and/or intuitive understandings of their relationship with nature. For some like **Darryl**, this understanding developed early, and for others such as **Douglas**, it developed later in life when he "came back" to nature. This finding is consistent with Thomashow's work exploring "ecological identity" and "sense of place" through group discussions with "environmentalists."<sup>77</sup>

Some of the subjects noted that their experiences in nature were made more meaningful by the presence of teachers. Knowledge of the connections between humans and the rest of nature were seen by some to be very important in making these

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<sup>77</sup> Thomashow found that three common themes in the discussions in his class involving "environmentalists" were "childhood memories of place, perceptions of disturbed places, and the contemplation of wild places." (Thomashow 1995:30)

experiences in nature meaningful in such a way as to foster the development of ecological identifications.

Some subjects (all whom had lived in urban environments for most of or all of their lives) developed ecological knowledge primarily through an intellectual or pragmatic understanding. Through intellectual means these subjects were *still* able to connect to nature in some sense, and this path to ecological identification should not be underestimated. In the case of **Aaron**, this inspired him to seek out wild places and develop visceral connections as well. If one looks at this from the lens of a rural/urban dichotomy, it appears in this research that urban dwellers may tend approach nature through intellectual understandings, and that rural dwellers may tend to do so through visceral experience in nature. This has been argued elsewhere as well,<sup>78</sup> but we should keep in mind that this does not represent a deterministic relationship but rather a general social trend.

The theme of urban culture of insulation from nature that emerged in the interviews as well as a general lack of proximity to wild nature both seem plausible explanatory factors<sup>79</sup>.

**Anne** demonstrated a motivation for ecological behaviour based on a strictly *moral* basis. Her uptake of moral messages in the media seems to have been her primary motivation to pursue ecological behaviours, and an "environmental" career. While this does indicate is that such a strategy to make people "green" can have *some* success, I think the overall indication of the study points to direct, visceral experience in nature

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<sup>78</sup> This is suggested in Popenoe and Michelson 2002.

<sup>79</sup> Urban populations generally rate higher in "environmental" attitudes than rural in the United States (Van Liere and Dunlap 1980, Jones et al. 1999)

coupled with some form of comprehensive learning about nature and ecology as a *much* more effective strategy.

Some subjects came to develop intellectual or spiritual understandings through visceral experience, and for some, their understandings of humans in nature preceded their visceral experiences. It is also apparent that in the case of many of the urban subjects from *Bike to the Future*, their intellectual (and sometimes spiritual) understandings brought a realization of the fact that they *are* in nature, even in urban settings. Undoubtedly, the presence of both general types of understanding in the lives of human beings would have profound effects on the way people conceive of themselves vis-à-vis nature, and on how they live those lives.

In terms of the social relation between human and non-human - the "I-You" relation – the subjects that demonstrated this to a significant degree and articulated something quite similar were **Arlene, Aaron, Barry, Benjamin, Barbara, Craig, Crystal, Donna, Duane** and **Darryl**. I also strongly suspect that **Arthur** has had these types of experiences – I am quite convinced that he sees many non-human beings as subjects, and I think **Douglas** has too. In the case of **Douglas** however, I am somewhat reluctant to place him among the others just because he himself said during the interview that he hadn't necessarily thought along "deep" lines some of the questions seemed to be taking. While his answers were genuine and enthusiastic, I think that the fact that these answers were very fresh for him – which could cause him to overestimate their significance – and the fact that he was being interviewed alongside three other subjects

who were unabashedly spiritual in their responses – may have pushed his answers towards ecological identification more so than may actually be the case.<sup>80</sup>

Many of the subjects articulated similar critical views towards what has been called "modern western culture" or "consumer culture" repeatedly in this study. These criticisms tend to be located around two general themes: comfort and status through consumption; and insulation from nature. These criticisms did not seem to be determined by whether the subjects' understanding of the human in nature was primarily intellectual/pragmatic or spiritual/intuitive. It was obvious in the interviews that the subjects felt that their ecological behaviours, and especially their group activities represented actions that differed from general normative behaviours. **Anne's** testimony concerning the process of life in a consumer society, and the sort of psychological work necessary to cope with the social history of most of the products and services that are consumed in that society seems to point in a direction similar to one Jensen (2002) takes us, when she says:

I have to take myself, I have to not think about it as much in order to live how I wanna live, like if I want to keep doing things like eating food from the supermarket that was made in a factory by people who aren't making very much money and doing things like using water and eating stuff that wasn't grown here, things like that. Like *I have to take myself out of it* in order to do these regular people things that people do, but I know that it exists there and occasionally I do get the guilty pang about what I'm, what I should be doing. Whether I shouldn't be eating meat or whether I shouldn't be buying kiwis in the winter - that kind of thing. (emphasis added)

This really seems to be along the lines of what Jensen writes:

In order for us to maintain our way of living, we must, in a broad sense, tell lies to each other, and especially to

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<sup>80</sup> This is only a precautionary note for the reader. I myself remain convinced of his identifications.

ourselves. It is not necessary that the lies be particularly believable. The lies act as barriers to truth. These barriers to truth are necessary because without them many deplorable acts would become impossible. Truth must at all costs be avoided. When we do allow self-evident truths to percolate past our defenses and into our consciousness, they are treated like so many hand grenades rolling across the dance floor of an impossibly macabre party. We try to stay out of harm's way, afraid they will go off, shatter our delusions, and leave us exposed to what we have done to the world and to ourselves, exposed as the hollow people we have become. And so we avoid these truths, these self-evident truths, and continue the dance of world destruction.

What **Anne** described above is not expressed in terms of "telling lies" to herself, but rather in terms of taking her self "out of it" in order to continue to live in society. While this research concludes that her main motivation for maintaining ecological behaviours has basis in a broad moral imperative, it is certainly the case that she suffers pain due to her identification with others – both human and non-human as evidenced by the above excerpt.

It could easily be argued that all of the subjects are partaking in and maintaining ecological behaviours and lifestyles on a *moral* basis. Certainly they all believe that what they are trying to achieve is *right*. What sets **Anne** apart from the rest is that she appears to have come to believe that ecological behaviours are right completely through means other than ecological identification. She was clear in her testimony that the *message* of ecological behaviour as "the right thing to do, inherently," a message she recalls as being transmitted largely through government-run commercials and institutions was her main motivator. The ecological identifications that she exhibits in her narrative likely emerged after her commitment to ecological behaviour on strictly moral grounds, although the

dissonance that she experienced between her self and behaviour was similar to experiences had by other subjects.

During the interviews other evidence cropped up that seems to indicate that some of the subjects had invested themselves in nature. One major theme that I noticed over and over again was the sense of guilt or shame that many subjects communicated to me regarding the ecological behaviours that they are *not* involved with. **Barbara** told me that she really feels bad that she does so much driving, and that she has to tell herself it's okay because she uses her car mostly to do botanical surveys and things that are promoting ecological health. All of the four subjects from RCWG lamented the fact that they were so reliant on their vehicles living out in the country. For example, **Donna** says she feels "irresponsible" for even owning a car and that: "If I lived in the city, I'd have a bicycle, and rent a car or something that...I definitely try to *not* waste trips." The topic was somewhat sensitive for **Darryl** as well. Please note that in the following quote **Darryl** was not actually addressing anybody in the room when he says "you," but rather was speaking as though he was defending himself to a fictional "urban environmentalist," or so I have interpreted it:

I live in a rural area and I like to have that little four wheel drive truck for whatever, because you don't know what its like. You're in the city, you have the bus to go on, you can call a cab, you could *walk* to work if you had to, whereas *here*, you know people when they want to go shopping, you know want to get some groceries, they, they're gonna travel for, the closest grocery store from my home is about fifteen minutes, okay, or twelve minutes. Maybe it's twelve.

This type of emotional response was not uncommon at all during the interviews. In fact, when it came to the question about ecological behaviours many of the subjects were compelled to confess their ecological "crimes." What this seems to indicate is the

involvement of the self in their ecological behaviour decision making. While it is certainly conceivable that a subject might feel guilty about certain non-ecological behaviours solely because of the interview situation, this does not account for the confessional mood that would periodically emerge during this part of the interview.

The heartfelt confessions of **Donna**, **Darryl**, **Anne** and to a lesser extent **Barbara** and **Crystal** seem indicative of what may best be described as dissonance between the self (and its constituent identifications) and the behaviour. **Crystal** confessed that she "only recently" had switched to "environmentally friendly" cleaners because she had come to "trust" her usual brands.

Getting back to the issue of the RCWG and their guilt regarding their vehicles, another barrier to ecological behaviour seems to have emerged. During the analysis process it became apparent from the interviews that geographic and proximity factors play a major role in determining what ecological behaviours are feasible for people. Many of the urban subjects reported walking or biking to work all year long and many didn't drive vehicles at all. These are important and significant lifestyle commitments that are ecologically beneficial, but they require a geographical proximity and accessibility as well as the time necessary to travel at a slower pace. Those subjects who live in the St. Lupicin valley cannot survive without vehicles. There is no mass transit and the terrain can be treacherous during inclement weather. There are steep grades on some of the roads, and when there is a lot of snow and/or ice a person is wise to have a four wheel drive truck.

Another consideration is the work and financial situation of the subject. **Aaron** noted that he felt extremely lucky to have gotten full-time employment that consists of

promoting ecological education. He is very aware that jobs such as this are quite rare. The financial situation of **Arthur** allows him to work a 60% work week. **Alan's** financial situation allows him to buy 70% organic food across the board, and to shop at the ecologically (and socially<sup>81</sup>) responsible Mountain Equipment Co-op. When **Douglas** spoke of the personal decision that he made to retire in the country instead of pursue a very high paying job in Toronto, his current financial situation obviously allowed him to make that decision. For **Duane**, working out of his country home for a third of the money that he would make in the city is presumably still bringing him a good living as an architect<sup>82</sup>. Many of these types of ecological behaviours or lifestyle decisions require a certain level of financial resources in order to achieve, and thus a lack of financial independence should definitely be considered a barrier to ecological behaviour. It was **Anne** who was most aware of this when she said: "Some people are worried about their next meal and not environmental problems."

If we look again at the self-work that **Anne** seemed to be doing in terms of managing consumer guilt, we can see that the globalized economic structure of the food industry is at odds with the self of this subject. Perhaps consistent access to reasonably priced, local, organic foods would allow her to keep her self *in it* when she shops for groceries.

Yet another factor that may prevent the adoption of ecological behaviours are the relationships and family situation of the subjects. When **Douglas** decided to move out to the country and retire instead of pursuing the big money in Toronto it must have helped that his wife had connections to the valley they were moving to, and that she supported

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<sup>81</sup> Just in case you forgot ecological is social...

<sup>82</sup> I don't point this out to make light of his decision – I think that it is very admirable choice indeed. I merely wish to point out that he has the financial freedom to make such a decision.

that decision. **Arthur** noted that his wife is actually "pretty conservative" and that they have had to compromise in both of their life styles. He admits that he has had to reign himself in somewhat in order to accommodate her, and that she has had to adjust to his more radical approach as well. Further, he talked about the necessity of driving a car when you have young children. He stressed that trying to adopt ecological behaviours that require significant deviations from "normal" lifestyles can be extremely difficult with the time constraints, responsibilities and concerns that come with family life. These difficulties even include social difficulties, like the negative attention he got for hauling his kids several kilometers to their skating lessons on a sled in stead of driving. He admitted that people telling you that you are a bad parent is not that easy a thing to take – and this extended to their decision to be vegetarian as well (although he admits vegetarianism doesn't seem as radical as it used to be.) He noted that: "being vegetarian in the 80's means you don't get invited to dinner."

For **Aaron** to downsize the house and move closer to work in Winnipeg certainly would have required the agreement of his family. He also talked about the difficulties of balancing ecological behaviour and lifestyle decisions with the responsibilities of raising children, and notes that financial and time constraints are big factors in all decisions.

Taking the geographical/proximal, financial, work, family and relationship factors into consideration, it appears that one's *life circumstances* have an effect on whether one is able to act according to their inclinations. What this means in terms of ecological identifications is that the subjects in many cases may be partaking in ecological behaviours due to ecological identifications, but that there are many factors that can prevent one from acting according to the dictates of the self. In cases where subjects

described moments where they were not behaving in ecologically friendly ways it appears that the "self dissonance" was causing discomfort. In **Anne's** case, she described it as forcing her to take her "self out of it."

This thesis began with the contention that attitudes, as they are generally operationalized in attitudinal surveys, are unable to explain ecological behaviour. I set out to delve more deeply into the self in order to find a more robust motivating factor. Was I able to do so?

It became fairly clear to me during the research process that while my semi-structured interviews were certainly more in depth than attitudinal surveys, the interviews still only occupy a relatively brief moment when you take into account the purpose is to try to take stock of a person. How much deeper did my method actually go?

It must be made clear that no human being can be known in such short a time – at least not known for the purpose of explaining that person. I feel comfortable saying that I was able to delve somewhat into the self of the subjects – but the process wasn't *that* in depth. Follow up interviews with refocused question areas would likely have been useful in more thoroughly addressing the directive of this thesis.

The point of this study was not to prove that people can identify with nature. I think that is self-evident. The real goal of this investigation was to try to discover something about identification itself – and the journey towards this goal began by constructing a definition of identification and testing it.

Do "environmentalists" *like* nature? This would be a rather silly question to ask I think. It may appear in some ways that, despite the conceptualizing efforts of the

researcher this is really all that has been answered. After all, there can be no empirically verifiable conclusions made here, can there? This comes with the territory of the self.

When I first read the declaration that the self "is itself not accessible to empirical investigation"<sup>83</sup> I thought bravely otherwise. Nearing the end of this project, faced with the daunting task of constructing an analysis I found that the self is indeed an enormously elusive target. It has been Martin Buber that has resurrected my faith in this project.

Gecas is right, the self is not accessible to empirical investigation. Only objects can be measured and categorized. The self – the person that manifests as a "You" to the "I" that speaks "I-You," – is unknowable. But it is unknowable only in a world of "It." The self may be invisible as it were, but it is invisible like the wind. An incredible force and presence that can be seen in its effect on others, like the stirring of leaves.

Moments of ecological confession; taking "my self out of it"; shooting an "It" and watching a "You" die; making an offering to the Creator before harvesting medicine - these are the rustlings in the winds of self that I hear in the testimony. These sounds cannot be heard in an attitude survey.

The main recommendation that stems from this research is that as a society we need to "re-place"<sup>85</sup> ourselves in nature. We have a natural inclination to relate socially with the world, and not just with certain human beings. Certain aspects of modern western culture (such as consumerism) have taught us to refrain from relating socially to much of the world:

But in sick ages it happens that the It-world, no longer irrigated and fertilized by the living currents of the You-world, severed and stagnant, becomes a gigantic swamp

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<sup>83</sup> Gecas 1982:3 in "The Self-Concept."

<sup>85</sup> To use Kueneman's term.

phantom and overpowers man. As he accommodates himself to a world of objects that no longer achieve any presence for him, he succumbs to it. Then common causality grows into an oppressive and crushing doom. (Buber 1970: 102-3)

Both physically and conceptually a fundamental change needs to take place, and it can only take place through learning. As Louv (2005) and Jensen (2002) note, the education that our children receive at the hands of the state or private institutions is lacking in contact with nature and an ecological, system-based presentation of the human as embedded in nature. If we are indeed serious about initiating green behavioural change on a scale that can possibly improve our chances of lessening the ecological devastation that is *already coming*, we need to restructure what and how our children learn. Ecology needs to be taught in Early, Middle and Senior Years – and not just in universities. It also needs to be coupled with real, visceral experiences in nature where children can see, hear, touch, smell and taste the astounding realities of the natural world. Countless surveys have shown that "environmental concern" (at least in the amount that is required to mark an 'x' on a sheet) is not bringing about this change. Parents should also be strongly urged to get their kids outside and to teach them about their role in the web of life, even if it means having to learn it themselves first! Activities, organized or not, that get kids interacting with nature should be promoted and encouraged. If *society* is to really be "green," changes made have to be deep and enduring, and they have to occur on a very large scale. As long as we ignore "consumer culture" as *the* major cause of ecological degradation, we will not make the substantial changes necessary to decelerate the damage being done to the point where the healing powers of the ecosphere can catch up. At this precipitous point in history, that can only occur if the entire world is

populated by a new (or perhaps old) kind of human being. This type of human being is one that has learned (or re-learned) to invest themselves in nature. Ultimately, what is needed is the reintroduction of the human child to the *rest of the family* – the extended family.

Besides changes in education, we need to enable our citizens to act on their ecological impulses by providing easy, safe, ecologically friendly transportation. Massive changes in city infrastructure are sorely needed. It became quite clear in the analysis that people who do feel moved to adopt ecological behaviours are sometimes prevented from doing so. Some of these are social barriers that can be removed. City organization needs to put people before automobiles, and put the necessities of life within easy reach. How many more people would be abandoning their cars for the bicycle if it was safe and convenient to do so?

People need to have green spaces in close proximity to their homes that they may enjoy. There need to be real, viable green options confronting people on a daily basis, and they have to be affordable. As a people, Manitobans have to build a society that *allows* people to be green. Local economies providing locally produced foods and goods would help to reduce the need for wasteful transportation and storage. And hey, if people do learn to invest themselves in nature, they learn to see the "You," they just might be happier. Everybody that I talked to in the research was wary of consumption – *and* I might add they seemed pretty darn happy. A more moderate wariness saw it as in some ways irresponsible (like **Alan**) while others took a much stronger stance (like **Arthur**.) Maybe Buber has it right – that the "It" rules only when the "You" goes unnoticed.

## Further Research

Further research into ecological behaviour and ecological identification could certainly be fruitful. The "I-You" relation between human and non-human promises all sorts of fascinating opportunities for research. Locating subjects who report such relations could no doubt make for a very rewarding investigation.

It might also be fruitful to pursue a comparative study where subjects involved in ecological behaviours and "control" subjects are interviewed. Both subject groups could be engaged with regard to possible ecological identifications in order to substantiate whether ecological identifications are in fact a motivating factor for ecological behaviours. These studies could further monitor the several possible barriers to ecological behaviour that both informed this study and that emerged from it.

The exploratory goal of this investigation was to determine whether or not ecological identification would be a worthy topic for further study. From the evidence gathered in the 15 interviews undertaken during the research I think it can be stated that ecological identification is definitely a factor – a long overlooked factor in sociology - that should be considered in any inquiry into the motivations of ecological behaviour.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Schedule

#### Introduction and Thank-You

"Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this research project. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated. Please be aware that you are not obligated to answer any questions that I ask, and that the interview may be stopped at any time at your request. If at any time during the interview you would like to ask a question please feel free to do so.

"My name is Kevin Stevenson, and I am a Master's student at the University of Manitoba in the field of sociology. The information that I hope to gather today will form part of my Master's thesis, and I am grateful that you are willing to take part in its completion."

#### Presentation, Discussion and Signing of Informed Consent Form

"Before we begin, I will present you with this form of consent. Please read it very carefully, and if you have any questions or concerns feel free to ask me. There are four separate areas requiring consent. You are not obligated to sign any or all of these areas."

#### **Interview Questions:**

1) **I've learned a little bit about the group [insert group or project name] and its activities but I'd like to hear more about what you are doing, why you are doing it and the history that stands behind your current activities? Probes: How did the group start? Who started it? When did it start? Has it changed, and how? Has there been community support or resistance? Has there been government support or resistance?**

2) **a) Do you spend a lot of time in the "outdoors", for example: cycling, skiing, hiking, canoeing, bird watching, swimming, gathering mushrooms or berries, looking at trees, observing wildlife and insects, hunting or fishing?; b) Do you have any special places, times of year, favourite species, favourite rocks etc.?; c) Do you have books, videos, or pieces of art that have nature themes?; d) Have you experienced any special moments in nature? Probes: perhaps encounters with animals, plants, weather events?; e) Have these moments influenced you in terms of making or sustaining behavioural or lifestyle changes?**

3) **a) When did you start to be concerned about ecological issues?; b) Can you tell me if your thinking about the ecosphere has changed over time?; c) At what point did you decide that something needed to be done? Did you get involved immediately? Was there some specific event, meeting, experience etc. that moved you from thinking about ecological issues to getting involved in ecological action?;**

**d) What sort of ecological behaviours do you participate in, inside and outside of this particular group/activity?**

**4) a) Describe to me your relationship with nature and what nature means to you; b) What does [insert place name of focus of activities – or in case of Bike to the Future, Winnipeg] mean to you?; c) Do you see yourself as part of a natural system? Do you feel that natural beings are a part of you?; d) Does your relationship with nature motivate you to be involved in the activities we have discussed?**

**5) a) The work of your group stems from a concern for nature and for the health of the ecosphere, or at least a portion of it, is this correct?; b) Do you think that enough people on the local; c) provincial; d) national; e) global level are concerned about this as well? f) Are people doing enough?; g) Are there any differences that you can see between people who take action to promote the health of ecosystems and those who don't seem to care or don't act despite caring? *Probes: Do members talk about this among themselves? Are there any "explanations" floating about in the group as to why people do or do not engage in these activities, and as to why people care or remain indifferent to the rest of nature? What is your assessment of these explanations?***

Thank-you and Commitment to Report Findings Prior to Defense

"That concludes the interview for today. Once again, I'd like to thank you for participating in this research. Your testimony is very important to this study, and I appreciate that you have taken the time to share your knowledge and experiences with me. If you have any concerns or questions about the interview or the research project, please feel free to ask now, or to contact me later. My phone number and email address are on your copy of the consent form. If you have consented to a follow-up interview I will contact you to schedule the interview only if I feel a follow-up interview is required. At this time, if you do not wish to proceed with a follow-up interview, you are in no way obligated to do so, even if you have consented to do so today. The follow-up interview would probably take place between September and November of 2008, depending on how long the initial data analysis takes.

If you have consented to review portions of the thesis that pertain to your testimony and the activities of your organization or community, I will contact you after I have completed a written draft of my thesis. I expect this to occur in November or December of 2008. If you have agreed to review portions of the thesis you may still decline when I contact you. If you are willing to provide feedback to me via mail, email or telephone, I would greatly appreciate it as it would provide an opportunity for me to see whether I have understood the testimony of the participants. You are in no way obligated to do so, however.

"Thank you again for your time."

## Interview Schedule (BON)

### Introduction and Thank-You

"Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this research project. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated. Please be aware that you are not obligated to answer any questions that I ask, and that the interview may be stopped at any time at your request. If at any time during the interview you would like to ask a question please feel free to do so.

"My name is Kevin Stevenson, and I am a Master's student at the University of Manitoba in the field of sociology. The information that I hope to gather today will form part of my Master's thesis, and I am grateful that you are willing to take part in its completion."

### Presentation, Discussion and Signing of Informed Consent Form

"Before we begin, I will present you with this form of consent. Please read it very carefully, and if you have any questions or concerns feel free to ask me. There are four separate areas requiring consent. You are not obligated to sign any or all of these areas."

"During the interview process, knowledge or information of a sensitive nature may arise in the discussion. As the researcher, I am not seeking knowledge about the names and types of medicinal plants, or sacred areas or practices. In the past these types of knowledge have been exploited or interfered with and it is important that you understand you should not speak of anything that you feel would be inappropriate. The purpose of this interview is to give me an understanding of how you, the participant see the world around you, and what sort of relationships you have with natural environments. I am not, however, asking you to speak of specific places or things that may have cultural significance to you and that you feel should remain unspoken. If at any time you feel that you have spoken of something that you should not have, please let me know so that I can omit the information from my thesis. Also, please remember that you may request the audio recorder to be switched off at any time if you do consent to its use during the interview."

## **BON Interview Questions**

**1) I've learned a little bit about the group [insert group or project name] and it's activities but I'd like to hear more about what you are doing, why you are doing it and the history that stands behind your current activities? Probes: How did the group start? Who started it? When did it start? Has it changed, and how? Has there been community support for or resistance against the group? Has there been government support or resistance?**

**2) Do you spend a lot of time in outdoor activities, for example: biking; skiing; walking; canoeing; bird watching; swimming; gathering mushrooms, plants or berries; looking at trees; observing wildlife and insects; hunting, trapping or fishing?; b) Do you have any special places that you like to go to, or favourite times**

of year? Are there any animals or plants that are special to you?; c) Do have artwork or other possessions that carry a natural theme?; d) Have you experienced any special moments in nature? *Probes:* perhaps encounters with animals, plants, weather events?; e) How do these moments effect how you see nature?

3) a) Do you remember when you first became concerned about the health of the land?; b) Can you tell me if your thinking about the land has changed over time?; c) At what point did you decide that something needed to be done? *Probes:* Did you get involved immediately? Was there some specific event, meeting, experience etc. that moved you from thinking about these things to getting involved in action to protect natural systems?; d) What sort of things do you do (both as part of the Wetlands project and outside it) that you believe are beneficial to the health of the land?

4) a) Could you tell me about your relationship with the land?; b) What do the Brokenhead Wetlands mean to you, and others in your community?; c) Do you see yourself as part of the land? Do you feel that natural beings are a part of you?; d) Does your relationship with the land motivate you to be a part of this project?

5) a) The work of your group stems from a concern for nature and for the health of the land, is this correct?; b) Do you think that enough people in your community are concerned about the land; c) Do you think enough people in Manitoba are concerned for the land? d) Do you think enough people in Canada are concerned for the land? e) Do you think enough people around the world are concerned for the land? f) Are people doing enough to care for the land?; g) Are there any differences that you can see between people who take action to protect the land and those who don't seem to care or don't act despite caring? *Probes:* Do members of your group or community talk about this among themselves? Are there any "explanations" floating about in the group or community as to why people do or do not act to protect the land, and as to why people care or remain indifferent to the rest of nature? What do you think of these explanations?

"That concludes the interview for today. Once again, I'd like to thank you for participating in this research. Your testimony is very important to this study, and I appreciate that you have taken the time to share your knowledge and experiences with me. If you have any concerns or questions about the interview or the research project, please feel free to ask now, or to contact me later. My phone number and email address are on your copy of the consent form. If you have consented to a follow-up interview I will contact you to schedule the interview only if I feel a follow-up interview is required. At this time, if you do not wish to proceed with a follow-up interview, you are in no way obligated to do so, even if you have consented to do so today. The follow-up interview would probably take place between September and November of 2008, depending on how long the initial data analysis takes.

If you have consented to review portions of the thesis that pertain to your testimony and the activities of your organization or community, I will contact you after I have completed a written draft of my thesis. I expect this to occur in November or December of 2008. If you have agreed to review portions of the thesis you may still

decline when I contact you. If you are willing to provide feedback to me via mail, email or telephone, I would greatly appreciate it as it would provide an opportunity for me to see whether I have understood the testimony of the participants. You are in no way obligated to do so, however.

"Thank you again for your time."

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent Form

**Research Project:** Ecological Identification – Exploring the Gap Between Ecological Attitudes and Behaviour

**Researcher:** Kevin Stevenson M.A. Candidate University of Manitoba

**Supervisor:** Rod Kueneman Ph.D. University of Manitoba

**This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.**

**Research Purpose:** The purpose of this research project is to investigate possible links between people's attachment to nature (this can occur in many ways) and the things that people do to protect and restore natural systems or promote education concerning environmental issues. By interviewing people who are in some way involved with environmental projects or groups, the study hopes to look at what motivates people to take part in these activities and behaviours. Specifically, the study wishes to investigate to what extent that people who actively participate in environmental groups do so because they feel that they are a part of natural systems on some level.

The interview is comprised of five main question areas. These questions deal with the following subject areas: a) The history of your community/organization and its activities that can be described as environmental; b) The types of outdoor activities that you partake in, and the relationships that you may have with nature and/or natural environments; c) Your thoughts about nature and environmental issues; d) How you see yourself with respect to the rest of nature; e) Your views on the state of the relationship between humans and nature in general. You have the right to refrain from answering any or all questions. This research is being done to complete a Master's Thesis in sociology.

**Interview Participation:** You (the participant) are being asked to participate in one interview with the researcher today, with the possibility of one follow-up interview that would likely take place between September and November of 2008. In the case of a follow-up interview, you will be contacted by the researcher in advance to arrange the meeting. You may certainly decline a follow-up interview. The interviews can last anywhere from one to three hours. The interviews consist of five multi-part questions which are intended to act as the basis for conversation between you and the researcher.

You will also have the opportunity to read portions of the research results that pertain to your testimony, and to provide feedback on them if you wish. Four separate areas of consent appear on this form. This first deals with the use of a recording device; the second deals with the possibility of the researcher contacting you to give you an

opportunity to review the portions of the thesis once the data has been analyzed, as well as to give you an opportunity to respond to what the researcher has written; the third represents your consent to participate in the initial interview today; and the fourth represents your consent to participate in a possible follow-up interview. If you consent to receiving portions of the results of the study for review, you will have the opportunity to give feedback to the researcher. This is entirely up to you, and you are not obligated to give feedback if you consent to reviewing the results. You will also be asked for your mailing or email address if you consent to reviewing portions of the thesis so that the researcher may contact you. If you consent to the initial interview today, you are not obligated to consent to a follow-up interview nor are you obligated to consent to reviewing the results and providing feedback.

**Recording Device:** The interviews will be recorded by a hand-held audio recording device so that the interviews may be transcribed. The recording device will only be used with your permission, and you may request that it be turned off at any point during the interview. Only the researcher will have access to the recordings of this device. Your signature here indicates that you consent to the use of this recording device during the interview.

---

Participant's Signature

---

Date

**Confidentiality:** All information collected will be kept by the researcher, and your name will not be included in the resulting thesis. The names of the groups who participate will be used as part of the thesis. Your name shall remain known only to the researcher. The researcher will code the tapes and transcripts of all interviews by numbering them so that only he will be able to discern your identity. This will be done by using a key which links your number code to you. This key will be kept in a safe place in the researcher's home. The tapes and transcripts will be labeled according to the group or community you were associated with at the time of the interview. There exists a risk of loss of confidentiality in that your testimony will be labeled in the thesis according to the group or activity you participate in. You should be aware that your testimony will be linked to your specific group/organization in the thesis.

All data including tapes, transcripts and notes made during the research process will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home. Nobody other than the researcher will have access to the data. Upon successful completion of the research project and the Master's Thesis that the data is being collected for, the transcripts, notes and tapes will be destroyed by fire. This will happen no later than February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

The data collected in this interview will be used in a Master's Thesis, and will be published and placed on the shelves of the Elizabeth Dafoe Library at the University of Manitoba. Copies will be provided to the Department of Sociology and the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Manitoba. The Researcher will retain a copy of the thesis as well. Furthermore, there is a possibility that the data will be used in publications in scholarly journals, presentations, articles, or books that the researcher may produce in the future.

**Feedback:** A copy of portions of the thesis draft that pertain to each group will be made available to you via mail or email by the researcher with the hope that you can review it, and make any comments or suggestions as to how their testimony was represented. As well, the conclusions reached in the thesis will be available for comment. The researcher can send to you portions of the thesis that pertain to your testimony prior to it being published, if you wish. This will allow you an opportunity to give feedback to the researcher regarding your interview responses. If you would like the researcher to provide portions of the thesis for you to review and provide feedback (at your option), please sign here and provide either a mailing address or email address so that the researcher may contact you. Please be aware that you are not obligated to consent to reviewing portions of the thesis nor to provide feedback if you consent to the initial and/or follow-up interview(s). Also, you are not obligated to provide feedback if you do receive portions of the study results for review.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address

Your signature on this form (below) indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation:

**Researcher: Kevin Stevenson    Phone: 204-746-6399**  
**Email: schpleegon@yahoo.com**

**Supervisor: Rod Kueneman    Phone: 204-474-6501**  
**Email: rod\_kueneman@umanitoba.ca**

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact either of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122 or email Margaret\_Bowman@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Please sign below if you consent to the initial interview today.

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Participant's Signature

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Date

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Researcher's Signature

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Date

There is a possibility that the researcher would like to do a follow-up interview with you based on initial analysis of the data. If you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview, please sign below. Please be aware that you are not obligated to participate in a follow-up interview even if you have consented to the initial interview today. If you consent to a follow-up interview, the researcher will contact you to schedule the interview some time this year. The follow-up interview will proceed in a manner similar to the initial interview, and should not take more than an hour. If you consent to do the follow-up interview, you still have the right to decline the interview later.

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Participant's Signature

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Date

## **Informed Consent Form (BON)**

**Research Project:** Ecological Identification – Exploring the Gap Between Ecological Attitudes and Behaviour

**Researcher:** Kevin Stevenson M.A. Candidate University of Manitoba

**Supervisor:** Rod Kueneman Ph.D. University of Manitoba

**This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.**

**Research Purpose:** The purpose of this research project is to investigate possible links between people's attachment to nature (this can occur in many ways) and the things that people do to protect and restore natural systems or promote education concerning environmental issues. By interviewing people who are in some way involved with environmental projects or groups, the study hopes to look at what motivates people to take part in these activities and behaviours. Specifically, the study wishes to investigate to what extent that people who actively participate in environmental groups do so because they feel that they are a part of natural systems on some level.

The interview is comprised of five main question areas. These questions deal with the following subject areas: a) The history of your community/organization and its activities that can be described as environmental; b) The types of outdoor activities that you partake in, and the relationships that you may have with nature and/or natural environments; c) Your thoughts about nature and environmental issues; d) How you see yourself with respect to the rest of nature; e) Your views on the state of the relationship between humans and nature in general. You have the right to refrain from answering any or all questions. This research is being done to complete a Master's Thesis in sociology.

**Interview Participation:** You (the participant) are being asked to participate in one interview with the researcher today, with the possibility of one follow-up interview that would likely take place between September and November 2008. In the case of a follow-up interview, you will be contacted by the researcher in advance to arrange the meeting. You may certainly decline a follow-up interview. The interviews can last anywhere from one to three hours. The interviews consist of five multi-part questions which are intended to act as the basis for conversation between you and the researcher.

You will also have the opportunity to read portions of the research results that pertain to your testimony, and to provide feedback on them if you wish. Four separate areas of consent appear on this form. This first deals with the use of a recording device; the second deals with the possibility of the researcher contacting you to give you an opportunity to review the portions of the thesis once the data has been analyzed, as well as to give you an opportunity to respond to what the researcher has written; the third represents your consent to participate in the initial interview today; and the fourth

represents your consent to participate in a possible follow-up interview. If you consent to receiving portions of the results of the study for review, you will have the opportunity to give feedback to the researcher. This is entirely up to you, and you are not obligated to give feedback if you consent to reviewing the results. You will also be asked for your mailing or email address if you consent to reviewing portions of the thesis so that the researcher may contact you. If you consent to the initial interview today, you are not obligated to consent to a follow-up interview nor are you obligated to consent to reviewing the results and providing feedback.

**Recording Device:** The interviews will be recorded by a hand-held audio recording device so that the interviews may be transcribed. The recording device will only be used with your permission, and you may request that it be turned off at any point during the interview. Only the researcher will have access to the recordings of this device. Your signature here indicates that you consent to the use of this recording device during the interview.

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Participant's Signature

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Date

**Sensitive Information:** Due to the nature of the questions being asked, there is the possibility that cultural information regarding sacred places and medicinal plants may arise in the discussion. Information regarding specific plants, practices and places that have cultural significance of a sensitive nature will not be included in the thesis, and the interview subject should take care to avoid speaking of anything that they do not wish to be published. If the subject finds that they have given information that is sensitive and they prefer not to have included in the thesis, they should feel free to inform the researcher of this and it will not be included in the thesis. There will be an opportunity for each participant group to review portions of the thesis draft that pertain to that group to ensure that no sensitive information has been included.

**Confidentiality:** All information collected will be kept by the researcher, and your name will not be included in the resulting thesis. The names of the groups who participate will be used as part of the thesis. Your name shall remain known only to the researcher. The researcher will code the tapes and transcripts of all interviews by numbering them so that only he will be able to discern your identity. This will be done by using a key which links your number code to you. This key will be kept in a safe place in the researcher's home. The tapes and transcripts will be labeled according to which group you were associated with at the time of the interview. There exists a risk of loss of confidentiality in that your testimony will be labeled in the thesis according to the group or activity you participate in. You should be aware that your testimony will be linked to your specific group/organization in the thesis.

All data including tapes, transcripts and notes made during the research process will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home. Nobody other than the

researcher will have access to the data. Upon successful completion of the research project and the Master's Thesis that the data is being collected for, the transcripts, notes and tapes will be destroyed by fire. This will happen no later than February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

The data collected in this interview will be used in a Master's Thesis, and will be published and placed on the shelves of the Elizabeth Dafoe Library at the University of Manitoba. Copies will be provided to the Department of Sociology and the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Manitoba. The Researcher will retain a copy of the thesis as well. Furthermore, there is a possibility that the data will be used in publications in scholarly journals, presentations, articles, or books that the researcher may produce in the future.

**Feedback:** A copy of portions of the thesis draft that pertain to each group will be made available to you via mail or email by the researcher with the hope that the you can review it, and make any comments or suggestions as to how their testimony was represented. As well, the conclusions reached in the thesis will be available for comment. The researcher will send to you portions of the thesis that pertain to your testimony prior to it being published, if you wish. This will allow you an opportunity to give feedback to the researcher regarding your interview responses. If you would like the researcher to provide portions of the thesis for you to review and provide feedback (at your option), please sign here and provide either a mailing address or email address so that the researcher may contact you. Please be aware that you are not obligated to consent to reviewing portions of the thesis nor to provide feedback if you consent to the initial and/or follow-up interview(s). Also, you are not obligated to provide feedback if you do receive portions of the study results for review.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address

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**Researcher: Kevin Stevenson**

**Supervisor: Rod Kueneman**

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Participant's Signature

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Date

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Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date