The Whale Community of Husavik
Examining Perceptions & Experiences
Surrounding Whale Ecotourism & Conservation

by

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April 2017

Masters project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Environmental Management degree at Duke University’s Nicholas School of the Environment
Researchers have found that the experience of whale watching holds value within the context of ecological education and can foster a sensitivity towards environmental issues. Meanwhile, other researchers are concerned that the industry will do more harm than good to vulnerable populations of whales. The industry has sparked a lot of debate, largely due to concerns that whale watching poses a threat to their conservation. Researchers have found that whales spend shorter times feeding in the presence of whale watching boats and can exhibit signs of distress during high intensity boat traffic. There are also increasing concerns that aggressive or careless viewing behavior will directly injure and even kill whales. This study explores these concerns in Husavik, a town in northern Iceland with a population of just over 2,500 people. In recent years, Husavik has been recognized as “Europe’s Best Whale Watching” spot. This industry has been largely successful here, bringing in around 100,000 visitors annually.

Whale watching in Iceland is in a unique position because the country has participated in whaling on an industrial scale since the early 1900’s. There was a 20 year ban in the 1980’s that, when lifted, was met with mixed feelings among locals. Native Icelanders weren't accustomed to eating whale meat following the ban and were also exposed to a larger global food market, decreasing the overall demand. Regardless, whale meat has been available on restaurant menus and in grocery stores, largely marketed as a novelty item to incoming tourists. IceWhale started a campaign to reduce the consumption of whale meat, while also setting up a code of conduct for responsible viewing behavior aimed at Iceland’s whale watching companies. Three of the four whale watching companies in Husavik have adopted this code of conduct. Their owners have longstanding ties with Skjalfandi Bay as well, as their families have been fishing here for generations. The bay serves as an important summer feeding ground for up to 11 whale species, 5 of which are critically endangered.

A narrative approach was used when designing this study, where relevant stakeholders were contacted using a nonrandom snowball surveying method. These individuals have had careers that depend on the whale watching business in Husavik and were invited to participate through a formal sit-down interview (three were done virtually by email correspondence). These interviews were “semi-structured”, and focused on the current perceptions of the industry and issues surrounding whale conservation. The driving research question is:

What perspectives can be provided by the whale watching “community” of Husavik that can better inform conservation priorities?

This vantage point is provided through:

• Life experiences that have shaped these careers
• Perspectives on the whale watching industry and the whales of Skjalfandi Bay
• Awareness of local perceptions
• Concerns about the future
Within these topics, barriers were explored which threaten the industry and the ecological health of the marine environment it relies on (as well as the over-arching narrative of those working within and in collaboration with the industry). For the narrative, “significant life experiences” of each participant during their childhood were explored, followed by markers of personal growth. Using phenomenology allowed for interpretation of these recollections within the final analysis, utilizing conscious decision-making as a guide for understanding and predicting behavior. Because the nature of the data was qualitative, NVivo was used to organize the transcribed interview materials in order to organize principle themes emerging from these participants. These themes explore general beliefs about these topics, as well as similarities that arise from their personal experiences.

The responses from these individuals show not only an innate sensitivity towards these issues, but also provide suggestions to reduce these impacts. Most of the individuals felt that there were tangible solutions to this problem— from firmer policies that limit boat traffic around individual whales, to simple behavioral changes. Examples included reducing boat speed to prevent collisions, and minimizing disturbance to daily feeding and socialization behaviors of the whales inhabiting the bay. It’s important to note that none of these individuals expressed concerns that the industry should be halted, while every individual felt that the industry played an important role in educating others about whales and providing an experience within a natural environment. These individuals all demonstrated compassion for the natural environment as well, and expressed hope that future generations could experience the world (and its whales) like they did.

For future studies, perceptions surrounding the Whale School should be investigated further (in particular, the perspectives of the children and their parents on the programs offered and their current attitudes surrounding whales residing in the bay). Using participatory planning, researchers could work directly with this community to gather feedback for developing future programming for the whale school, as well as uncover barriers that exist between the local community and the industry-driven portion of the whale watching town. Once these barriers are better understood and communicated, a strategy to connect the whale watching community with the needs and interests of the town can be developed. There are many interesting dynamics at play here, largely that these facilities provide an engaging medium for people of all ages to learn about whales (and even get actively involved if they choose to). I believe it would be in the whale watching industry’s interest to incorporate this kind of feedback within their overall efforts.

The general attitude Icelanders have towards whales should also be more closely examined. It is important to consider evolving perceptions in light of the growing whale watching industry. These individuals have the potential to shape conversations and local action around the conservation of whales, as issues like climate change and increased travel within the country are brought to the forefront. When making management decisions, the consequences and benefits of tourism-related activities on the natural environment need to be taken into account.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is dedicated to my fiancé, my parents and my wonderful advisor, Dr. Nicolette Cagle. Thank you for your words of encouragement, support and patience during the completion of this project. I would also like to extend a sincere thank you to the Husavik Academic Center for being so welcoming and for providing me with a place to work and conduct my interviews. I'm also very appreciative of those I interviewed for this study who took the time out of their schedules to talk with me. It was wonderful to hear your stories and listen to your perspectives on your community and its whales. I also want to thank the captains who invited me out on the water to see the whales of Skjálfandi Bay. These experiences have no comparison.
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INTRODUCTION

While reflecting on my experiences with nature throughout my lifetime, I always remember a specific event that occurred when I was 12. My parents had taken me on a whale watching tour in the Pacific Northwest, somewhere near the San Juan Islands. This experience was particularly powerful because the whales on the tour “interacted” with us. They seemed to show curiosity about our presence there and were also simply amazing to see in their natural environment. For that tour, we had a fairly knowledgeable guide with us on the boat and she connected the experience to the dynamics of the environment around us and the natural history of these whales. At this point in my life, I had only seen captive orcas at SeaWorld and wild dolphins from the shoreline. There was a life-changing moment during this first whale watching trip where pod of orcas approached our boat and swam around and underneath us. In this moment, I got a sense that their behavior was intentional and mindful. Afterwards, I started to consider whales within a multitude of contexts. My initial interest grew into a desire to learn about them. With more education, I became aware of human impacts on them, both in captive and wild settings. I also sought out a rehabilitation opportunity with stranded and injured whales for my first job experience following my Bachelor’s degree. These cumulative experiences led to the development of this project. Here, I wanted to explore the perceptions of those who shape this experience for others and find commonalities within their own personal narratives that lead to careers that largely depend on this industry.

There is evidence that ecotourism can complement conservation efforts, promote education about the environment, and generate awareness that can ultimately shape future behavior, which is why it’s important understand the perspectives of those whose lives and passions make the industry possible. There is so much potential for experiences and environments like these to shape conversations about issues like wildlife conservation and sustainable business. It’s an interesting area to explore, especially since ecotourism (and whale watching especially) is on the rise throughout the world. The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as any “travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people”. If ecotourism establishments meet a set of criteria (such as good accessibility, quality of experience, and adequate resource access), ecotourism companies are more likely to succeed in raising awareness and promoting conservation actions (Garrod et al., 2003). In this study, experiences of those with careers driven by a successful whale watching “community” in Husavik, Iceland were examined to interpret narrative themes and shared perspectives on the industry and whale conservation.
BACKGROUND

Research Site

Husavik is a small coastal town located in Northern Iceland. It has a population of just over 2,500 people (pers. comm., 2016) and is surrounded by a surplus of ecological and geographical wonders. It also has a rich Nordic history and is believed to have been the site of one of the earliest settlements within the country. In recent years, Husavik's claim to fame has been a surge of interest in whale-related tourism and education initiatives. It has been recognized as “Europe's Best Whale Watching” location. This industry here has been largely successful, bringing in around 100,000 visitors to Husavik in a single year (pers. comm., 2016).

It's important to mention the ecology of the surrounding area, in particular the Skjalfandi Bay, to give some context for the project, and to explain why whale watching is such a success here. During the summer, the bay serves as an important feeding ground for up to 11 whale species. This feeding ground is also rich in marine and bird life. Of the 11 species of whale that frequent the bay, 5 of these are critically endangered, while many others lack sufficient population data. These whales are also threatened with impending issues such as the consequences of climate change, growing industries contributing to pollution of the water, disruption of normal behaviors and communication, as well as direct incidences of human conflict.

Iceland’s Whaling History

Whaling does not have a long history within Iceland, but due to advancements in technology, commercial whaling have been part of Icelandic history for the past one hundred years. Before commercial whale hunts began, traditional Icelandic whale hunters resorted to throwing spears adorned with special markings to bring down a whale. If the whale died during the hunt and washed up along the coastline, the markings found on the hunting spears would allow the whale hunter to make a claim to the whale carcass. Theses hunts were largely unsuccessful and historical records report that whale meat consumption within Iceland was mostly due to natural beaching events (Interview 05, 2016). Beached whales were considered important resources before large-scale trade broadened food availability within Iceland.

During the mid-1900s, Iceland started their own whaling industry to compete with other countries that were using Iceland’s ocean territories to hunt. Since the industry continues today, Iceland has been put in the spotlight globally due to ethical concerns over hunting whales and the implica-
tions hunting has on whale conservation given their declining populations across the world. Many countries have put a halt to their whaling industries because of these concerns. Whaling within Iceland has a complicated history. There was a temporary whaling ban that lasted 20 years (pers. comm., 2016).

Once the hunting ban was lifted, Iceland was left in a strange situation as most people weren’t used to having whale meat in their diet. However, the demand for whale meat resurfaced and the whale hunt started up again in the southern portion of the country. Whale meat is available on the menus of many of higher-end restaurants and it is common for tourists to try it during their time in Iceland, as it’s been advertised as a novelty item, fueling the demand for future hunts.

**Whale Watching in Husavik**

The town of Husavik, meanwhile, has been profiting through whale ecotourism and is considered Iceland’s best spot for whale watching. The town has curated a whale museum in conjunction with weekly educational seminars for locals and tourists to learn about whale biology, history and conservation concerns. Husavik’s livelihood is largely tied with Skjalfandi Bay, now known as the “best whale watching spot” in all of Europe. Husavik currently has four operational whale watching companies. The town’s whale museum covers a broad array of subjects on whales, including their anatomy and biology, Iceland’s whaling history, conservation concerns surrounding their populations (ranging from global to national issues), as well as several art exhibits featuring visiting artists and local student projects.

The town is also a hub for a non-profit called IceWhale, which seeks to unite the whale watching companies within the country under a single vision and ethical standard. This standard puts forth guidelines for whale watching companies to follow towards ethical viewing of whales in the wild. This non-profit has launched campaigns to end the consumption of whale meat within the country and to educate tourists on the impacts of eating whale meat while visiting Iceland. Of the four whale watching companies currently operating out of Husavik, three of these have agreed to uphold IceWhale’s ethical whale watching standard. These companies are North Sailing, Gentle Giants and Salka. The restaurants and grocery stores in the area have also agreed not to serve them (although they did in the past).
IceWhale’s Code of Conduct:

**Attitudes Towards Whale Watching**

The research by Stem *et al.* (2003) showed trends that those actively involved with tourism-centric benefits (employees and their families) were less likely to exhibit resource-intensive consumerism. This was also supported by the notion that large-scale ecotourism can reduce the need for destructive development within the community (such as deforestation). Stem was most intrigued about the indirect impacts of ecotourism, such as creating meaningful community infrastructure that can offer mutualistic benefits to both the community and the tourism businesses, while increasing the longevity and success of the enterprise within its community. Community-based involvement was key in these findings, as well as the importance of ecocentric values surrounding the environment in creating a longterm business.
While the definition of ecotourism can be loosely applied to wildlife tourism, establishments that do it well have been successful in setting conservation priorities for their local areas, providing resources for economic frameworks that allow for more sustainable development, and creating context for policies that can protect valued species (and subsequently protect larger environmental landscapes from destructive practices). It is important to consider that a large portion of whale watching companies don’t have existing or enforced regulations that mitigate the negative impacts of whale watching on the whales and their surrounding environment (Higham et al. 2009). There are also secondary concerns from the increased numbers of tourists who want to go whale watching. With more people traveling to enjoy these natural marine systems, these systems face increased pressures such as rises in pollution, resources depletion, and disruption of natural processes. These issues raise concerns on how sustainable whale watching is and many researchers (including Garrod et al., 2003) are cautionary about how fast this industry is growing around the world.

It’s important to highlight that sound ecotourism can serve as an important vehicle for learning about the natural environment for people of all ages, especially for those whose experiences of natural environments are limited around their local area. There are a vast array of drivers for successful ecotourism experiences. Ballantyne et al. (2011) in particular, reflected on the importance of powerful interpretive experiences in shaping one’s perceptions of the environment, and ultimately lead to conscious behavior.

I shaped my research question with this in mind, and chose to conduct my research in Husavik, Iceland. This town has received global recognition for its whale watching experience. I use the term “experience” because the town offers whale watching tours to visitors, but also has a dedicated whale museum and research center. These centers all work in tandem with one another to shape the visitor experience and also provide current research and learning opportunities for all those involved. Iceland is also one of the few countries that still hunts whales. This dynamic is interesting to explore because whaling is still part of their economy and aspects of their culture. In the meantime, the country has also seen a surge in whale watching companies in the last ten years. While developing my project, I wondered how the presence of three largely successful whale watching companies within the same town, as well as the presence of a specialized whale museum and research center, has impacted the local perception of whales in Husavik. I also wondered how those involved with this community had established their careers here, and what their perceptions
surrounding the benefits and pitfalls of the whale watching industry were, as well as their perceptions of the whales themselves. To do this, I posed the following question.

What can the underlying experiences of those with careers within this community tell us about:

• How do these individuals reflect on (and utilize) these experiences in the context of their careers and developing attitudes?

• What are the present-day drivers for their careers within this community?

• What are their concerns and suggestions towards industry and whale conservation?

METHODS

Childhood experiences in the outdoors have been invariably tied to how adults perceive nature (Lohr and Pearson-Mims, 2005). Studies suggest that the awareness generated from these early childhood experiences can foster an “ecocentric” mindset (Ewert et al, 2005) and subsequently ecocentric behavior (Stern et al, 1993). Stern and his colleagues hypothesize that the motivation behind pro-environmental behavior depends on a combination of egoistic, social and ecocentric orientations. In other words, pro-environmental behavior has to benefit a person’s intrinsic needs (egoistic) and not conflict with the person’s social orientation. With these orientations aligned, barriers to ecocentric behavior can be circumvented. Tanner (1980), in particular, identified underlying motivations behind conservation work and the development of environmental sensitivity over time.

Tanner (1980) credited these commonalities as important factors in building motivation towards pro-environmental behavior: interactions with natural and rural areas, frequent experiences within these environments, positive memories with family, teachers and role models, hunting/fishing/gathering activities, as well as time spent alone in the environment. The importance of these exposures is supported further by new findings that also show that they correlate with pro-environmental behavior (Hinds and Sparks, 2008).
The progression of this process, especially following a “significant life experience”, is described by Rajecki (1982) as follows:

1. Direct vs. indirect experience (significant life experience vs. other outdoor experiences)
2. Normative influences
3. Temporal discrepancy
4. Attitude-behavior measurement

Chawla (1998) has also done extensive research on the impacts of “significant life experiences”. She explains that our emotional response can be heightened when we experience something like environmental degradation firsthand. Given these experiences and an accumulation of indirect ones, altruistic behavior can develop because of a growing sensitivity towards another being’s suffering and a personal resolve to lessen their pain (Schwartz, 1977). Chawla (1999) explains that altruistic behavior is based on emotional sensitivity towards an issue, versus a simple guilt response, which makes the behavior to resolve this issue more concrete and also last longer over the course of one’s life. Stevenson et al. (2014) found that significant life experiences centered around time in the outdoors, as well as time spent learning about the environment through different mediums, all produced specific behaviors and perspectives unique to those experiences. Early experiences in life are shown to be crucial to developing perceptions about the world. Oftentimes, those with well-preserved environments growing up have a great awareness on changes within the environments, which make them excellent environmental stewards and educators.

Lück (2003) also found that tourists favor educational experiences during their ecotour experiences and believes new knowledge can provide a foundation for an understanding of wildlife within the context of the environment and help generate a sensitivity to disturbances both directly and indirectly affecting wildlife. Following this experiences, the individuals surveyed were more likely to support regulations to conserve the environment. Individuals who have gone whale watching were also largely shown to support regulations protecting wildlife from potential impacts from ecotours, such as noise disturbance from louder and faster boats, as well as general sources of pollution (Curtin et al, 2009).
RESEARCH DESIGN

Importance of Interviews in a Qualitative Approach

The nature of this research requires first-hand accounts of those working within Husavik. These accounts are from researchers, tour guides, captains, resident artists and educators that have worked within the town of Husavik during the time these interviews were conducted (save for one who worked there the previous year). Analyzing this data as a narrative allowed for an exploration of how significant life experiences shape development, as well as perception of current issues. Researchers use the narrative approach to organize significant experiences into useful and insightful perspectives on a given topic (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Using semi-structured interviews, participants were asked to reflect on these life experiences and examine their perspectives on a wide array of topics surrounding the whale watching industry and their community. Using NVivo software, the data collected could be organized to uncover trends that could express and analyze these perspectives in a meaningful and quantitative way.

Selection of Study Site and Participants

Husavik is about an hour from Iceland’s second largest city, Akureyri. Within the same block of the whale watching launch sites in this small town, there is a specialized whale museum and research center dedicated to studying whales within Skjalfandi Bay and other locations around Iceland. This research center has paired with the town’s academic center (Husavik Academic Center or ‘HAC’). I made initial contacts with both the HAC and the research center ahead of my arrival and scheduled many of my interviews from this initial communication. To build a list of relevant contacts, a nonrandom snowball method was used. Many participants were also contacted directly once I was situated in the town.

At the time of my arrival, three of the four whale watching companies (North Sailing, Gentle Giants and Salka) had adopted IceWhale’s code of conduct. These companies have agreed to work with the responsible whale-watching parameters set by IceWhale and also have served as eco-tourism companies within the bay for longer than 3 years. I chose to interview a select number of guides and captains from each of these three companies. Other participants were selected based on the roles they played as whale educators and researchers within the town. In terms of my project, I defined whale educators as individuals who work largely to generate public interest on the subject of whales. Whale researchers were defined by those who are studying whales in some sort of academic capacity and are sharing their research within their community. Those selected for the interviews are more largely categorized as part of the “Whale Community” of Husavik, as
many individuals work within several areas (research, education and tourism) and there is open collaboration between the whale watching companies, the museum and the research center. These factions coordinate often to share information and experiences with each other, their community, and the visitors traveling to Husavik.

**Approach**

I choose a narrative analysis approach while also borrowing from phenomenology. These are qualitative methods that allow researchers to analyze unstructured data sources like interviews to better understand the motivations and perceptions around a given topic (Creswell, 2003). I used semi-structured interviews to gain qualitative data that considers emotional responses and well as psychological motivators to portray the narratives of those working within Husavik and their range of perspectives on the questions explored within the interview. According to Brunner (1990), the narrative approach allows the researcher to uncover these motivations among the population studied, and is a fundamental tool in uncovering data that is often ignored through other methods that can used to understand conscious behavior development over a given time.

In my research, past experiences were examined that have shaped those who’ve built their careers within Husavik. Within the underlying narrative, “significant life experiences” of each participant during childhood were uncovered, as well as descriptions of personal growth and perspectives that have shaped these careers. For this, the phenomenological approach was used to explore conscious decision-making and reflections that followed these events. These direct experiences largely influence how concepts are shaped about our world and can coincide will pro-environmental decision-making, especially for environmental educators (Chawla, 1998). Although some of the participants aren’t specialized in education, all of these individuals have the potential to shape the conversation around issues surrounding the whales, as well as the pros and cons of the largely successful whale watching industry in Husavik. I considered the diversity of these perspectives important in providing a broader platform to talk about these issues. While these individuals all have diverse perspectives, it was extremely important to highlight what commonalities emerged from their responses; in particular the experiences they shared before establishing their careers in Husavik, as well as common attitudes that formed following these experiences.

I considered impactful early-life experiences as potential factors towards building careers within Husavik’s whale watching community. I also determined if there was a correlation between these
experiences and the development of sensitivity towards environmental issues surrounding whale tourism and conservation as a whole. The individual’s current state of curiosity towards whales was also addressed during the interviews. This was used to gauge continued interest stemming from their initial experiences. I also asked these individuals to reflect on the roles they play within the town and for its visitors and if any of these experiences were particularly memorable. From there, I wanted to assess the concerns towards the industry itself to see if they were sensitive to potential negative impacts of this industry, as well as the benefits of their line of work in educating others about whales.

**Interview Procedure**

I conducted my interviews using a semi-structured interview process, where key stakeholders were identified and contacted for a formal sit-down interview. The stakeholders were chosen using a nonrandom snowball surveying method to acquire stakeholders that would be appropriate for the study. This method was used to select participants with diverse perspectives within the group (these perspectives included those who were native to Iceland vs. those who were not, those who lived in Iceland year-round vs. those who’d stayed only seasonally). Once the participants were selected, the interview took approximately 30 to 45 minutes, depending on the responses provided and the time each individual had available. During these interviews, a set of predetermined questions was asked and the responses were recorded with an audio recorder. During each interview, follow-up questions were posed to explore some of interview topics more closely. For example, if something was unique to an individual’s experience, I would ask more about their perspective relating to that specific experience.

I ended up recruiting 12 participants (9 of these were in-person interviews conducted in Husavik). Three of my selected participants were out of town, so their interviews were conducted by email. For this interview method, the interview questions were provided by email with notes attached to questions where more descriptive answers were helpful for the study. These follow-up questions often had to be prompted during the in-person interviews and could reveal something unique about the participant’s experience.

The initial questions were set up to identify childhood experiences, first establishing what experiences the participants had in the outdoors growing up. From there, the topic steered to their first memorable experience with whales. This particular question could take on several meanings to the participants. For example, many participants talked about how they first learned about whales
(they mainly reported this was through books or through cinema), while others described going to see them in an aquarium setting. I would follow these responses with questions about their first experience seeing them in the wild and ask how these experiences compared to seeing whales in captivity (or in media). From there, the participants were asked to reflect on both of these interactions to create a narrative on their developing perceptions towards whales. I then explored how these individuals came to work in Husavik, what they found special about their whale watching community, and their concerns for the industry itself and its range of impacts on the economy, local attitudes, and the ecological health of the bay and its marine inhabitants. This included their concerns towards what they saw and experienced within their line of work, as well as the merits and intrinsic motivations that sustain their careers.

Analysis

Recorded interviews were transcribed manually. While transcribing the interviews, notes were taken on the emerging themes within data to help structure the responses into meaningful nodes. NVivo was used to organize the transcribed interview material. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software that allows unstructured data sources (like interviews) to be grouped into meaningful nodes, or categories that are used in a formal analysis. The transcripts were uploaded and specially managed to reveal common attributes within the data in this software program. In NVivo, frequently used words and phrases can also be identified through a command in the program, as well as associations between these words among the correspondents. Using these tools, common themes were developed from the conducted interviews. The major themes, or parent nodes, were then subdivided into more specific topics that could be quantitatively analyzed.

RESULTS

General Background on Participants

Out of the three participants from Iceland, two are natives to Husavik. The other is from Grimsey Island, located north of the town (see Fig. 1 for full breakdown of demographics). Eight of the 12 participants are whale watching guides or were in the past, and 6 of the participants stated that they have been involved in whale research in some capacity. Five of the participants are also involved in education and outreach within the town. Two of the interviewees are captains representing 2 of the three whale watching companies. A third company was contacted, but a captain couldn’t be reached for an interview. Each of the three companies is represented by at least one guide as well.
Outdoor Experiences in Early Childhood

Eight (67%) participants, when asked about their memorable childhood experiences in the outdoors, described experiences in nature within their local area (see Fig. 2). One (8%) participant only described experiences they’d had while traveling abroad (this individual had grown up in an urban setting). Three (25%) participants explored experiences they’d had both locally and from traveling that held particular significance to them. Eleven of the participants (92%) had meaningful interactions with nature locally.

Of these, 10 (83%) participants also interacted with bodies of water as part of their experience, 5 (42%) with freshwater, 5 (42%) with the ocean/sea, and 1 (8%) had both of these experiences (see Fig. 3). Half of these individuals described growing up in a fairly rural region as well.
In a 2014 study of school children in China, Zhang et al. (2014) found there was a significant increase in biophilic responses among students who had more contact with nature, as well as an increased interest in conserving wildlife. This study also considered the impacts of mass urbanization on the country, expressing the inherent value of nature and green spaces in a child’s development. They found that children raised in urban settings showed less willingness to conserve natural spaces and proposed this was from a lack of contact.

Six (50%) participants recalled wildlife viewing as part of their memorable childhood experiences in the outdoors (see Fig. 4). An equal number of participants also described the action of walking, hiking, or exploring their environment as something they particularly enjoyed. Overall, there were a broad range of activities described by the participants.

Clayton et al. (2016) found that social context of experiences in nature were particularly important (and often overlooked) and found that integrative nature interactions were also important. These
experiences had a more profound cognitive impact because of the complexity of these interactions, which were referred to in Clayton’s study as building on the “dimensions of experience”. This study suggests that when an individual only has a few contextual frames to analyze their environment from, their association with the environment will also be limited. Clayton further suggested that interactions with the environment should take on many forms for the best overall learning experience.

The large number of responses related to local experiences in the outdoors is supportive of these findings in the context of these types of careers (see fig. 5). Seven of the 11 participants with local experiences also expressed strong emotions while later describing the experience of seeing whales within a natural setting. The other three participants expressed strong biophilic reactions, particularly when describing aspects of nature experienced during the tour. The natural surroundings of the mountains, as well as being physically out on the water seemed to bring them much joy. All but one individual recalled these memories in a social context as well, either describing specific memories they’d had with their parents, or describing a particular action using “we”.

Figure 5. Childhood Recollections on Experiences in the Outdoors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Childhood Recollections on Experiences in the Outdoors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We went camping since I was very little. There was an outdoor skating rink, there was lots of hiking. There were seven lakes around where I lived so I’d go to the lake all the time, fishing. We’d see lots of wildlife as well. (2016 Interview 03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I was growing up, my father was a sailor and the skipper, and he took me on with him when I was just 9 years old. By the time I turned 20, I had been out on the water every summer (more or less). (2016 Interview 09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We played outside and we went camping. There’s a small lake very close to the town and we’d go to catch tiny fish. Yeah, just walk around. There were horses around and you could walk up to them and feed them bread. (2016 Interview 08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I got to experience nature a lot growing up. I was living just outside a fjord, and one of the biggest forests in Denmark was nearby so I was doing a lot of outdoor things, yes definitely. A lot of wildlife in Denmark. It’s not like Norway, we don’t have wolves (well, wolves have just gotten introduced again). There’s foxes, rabbits, and deer and such. It was definitely an important part of my experience growing up. (2016 Interview 07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeah, I guess going into the forest and went on holiday with my parents a lot to Norway, Sweden, Denmark and parts of France and that had a lot of outdoor activities. Camping and swimming in lakes. (2016 Interview 05)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Childhood Recollections on Experiences in the Outdoors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I grew up in the countryside close to the forest and spent a lot of time outdoors. Already as a child my parents took me on walking and skiing tours and we spent our holidays either in the mountains or near the sea. (2016 Interview 10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My home was by a lake and I was in the local scouts and for that we did a lot of outdoor activity, always by the sea. (2016 Interview 01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes we lived in the countryside, sometimes in cities. My memories of living in the country are always better than the city ones. Cycling in fields, investigating animal traces, examining rock pools and exploring woods, all this was filled with magic to me. (2016 Interview 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, bird watching, walking trips to other countries, lots of time at the seaside. (2016 Interview 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve been outside a lot. We were by a forest and huge fields and we’d go out a lot in nature. The whole area is made up of small villages only and it takes a while to get to a city and so there was a lot of farming. From the forest, we got a lot of deer passing and foxes and birds. We used to have small rabbits too. (2016 Interview 04)</td>
</tr>
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<td>When I was a child, we had a place where we’d go often on holidays (sometimes weekends) and it was just the countryside. So yeah, I spent a lot of time outside. This house was about an hour from Paris and we’d go whenever it was possible. I think it was really great that my parents wanted us to have that and yeah, I spent a lot of time outside hanging out with cows, sheep, horses. (2016 Interview 02)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I got to experience the outdoors a lot growing up. I started working at sea when I was seven during the summer. It was just something I had to do. In winter of 1965 through 1970, everybody had to work – it wasn’t a question. There was lots of stuff to do around Iceland that we would do for fun when I was young. (2016 Interview 06)</td>
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**First Experiences with Whales**

Further studies on interactions with animals in the wild showed that children are affected by these experiences, especially in the context of a direct interaction. For example, Ballouard et al. (2012) found that students showed increased interest in protecting snakes after studying them in a field setting. These students had the opportunity to handle snakes as well as observe how scientific data was collected on them and where they were found within their natural environment. Following this field trip, students tended to rate conservation priorities for these animals as equivalent (or higher in some cases) to more “charismatic” megafauna. Three (25%) of the participants expressed that they first got excited about whales through movies like Flipper and Free Willy.

One reflected on how watching Free Willy sparked their interest, but also concerned them:

“My father showed me Free Willy. Of course, when you are a small child you think its cool, but at
the same time I disliked it because I knew it was somehow wrong. That's when I started to read about how they got the whale Keiko to find out more. I was really upset to learn about the whole story behind it. After that, I was getting more interested in whales generally and I'd read about it. I remember some years later that I kept saying I wanted to see wild whales.” (2016 Interview 04)

For this particular individual, their initial curiosity about whales lead to them apply to a contest to go on a whale watching trip. They didn’t win the contest, but their growing interest in whales later brought them to Iceland to see them for the first time in the wild. This experience was later described as “breathtaking” and eventually lead to their first career on a whale watching tour, as well as their pursuit of higher education specializing in whale biology. They are now heavily involved with research on the whales that reside around Iceland. Their recent research examines the efficacy of conservation measures geared towards protecting whales from noise pollution.

When the participants described their first experience seeing whales in the wild, many of them could picture vivid imagery associated with these memories. It was common for them to smile while describing these first encounters. In the transcript below, a participant details a family outing that left an impression on them.

“The first time I actually saw a whale, I was eleven and that was also on holiday with my parents in Norway. That was so incredible and made me decide to go and study biology.”

This individual’s experience also lead them to make a conscious decision to study whales in the wild. When asked about this first experience in more detail, they shared:

“We went out with a whale watching company to see sperm whales. It was really funny because I still remember it very well, even though I was quite small. We were waiting at the pier for the captain to arrive (he was running a little late). He came running with a bag of carrots so my dad was joking that it was for attracting the whales. So every time I go whale watching now, my dad asks me if I’ve brought my carrots. I was sailing there on quite a small boat and they were having a microphone in the water to record the clicks so they knew there were whales in the area. When they finally came up, it was breathtaking.” (2016 Interview 05)
Another remarks about the imagery and sounds of their first whale watching trip.

“I saw whales for the first time in the Mediterranean, close to Genova. I was 7 years old. I still remember the sounds of them breathing and the sun shining on their backs, it was so beautiful!” (2016 Interview 12)

Commonalities that arose from these responses were descriptions of physical characteristics of the environment and the social context of these experiences (individuals often discussed who they were with at the time or described the experience using “we” rather than “I”). The visual descriptions were more detailed, and most often people recalled the physical sounds of the whales, while three individuals actually remembered specific smells. These experiences usually related to the mechanisms behind a whale’s breathing (the sighting of the spout, the sound of the exhale, and the smell of their breath).

The vivid nature of these descriptions underlines the significance of these experiences for these individuals. They were often recalled with emotion or were reflective in nature. Oftentimes, the individual would relate back to their previous experiences with whales, expressing changes of heart in regards to these experiences, as well as noting how the two experiences compared, with a majority of the individuals preferring the wild experience.

However, one individual described an indirect experience with a whale that was particularly powerful. They recounted the following:

“I remember the first time I knew anything about a whale, and that was because there was a blue whale that was apparently somewhere around Denmark. I might have just maybe been like ten years old, so that’s like forty years ago. They put it on a truck, this big whale, and then they were driving through Denmark with it and it was put on display and you could pay to get in to see it. Of course, there weren’t many whales in Denmark and definitely not in the fjords where I grew up. They just didn’t come into the fjords – between Denmark and Norway, it’s very narrow.”

It is interesting to note that this individual, after starting their career in Husavik, helped coordinate the display of several fully preserved whale skeletons as part of a large exhibit within Husavik’s Whale Museum.
**Why pursue a career in Husavik?**

For some of these individuals, coming to Husavik itself was somewhat serendipitous. Of the 9 participants that were from other countries, 6 participants ended up working in Husavik by chance or circumstance. However, these same individuals reflected that they made a conscious decision to stay because of their ability to find work and research opportunities in Husavik. The reasons included: resources needed to develop their careers were “easy and accessible”, their jobs were enjoyable, and they wanted to increase their community involvement. One was intrigued by the “enterprise of human-animal and human nature connections” and was eager to learn more about what sparked these connections, while another participant commented that Husavik provided a great environment to connect with those from other countries.

Eight of the 12 participants (67%) reported loving whales since childhood, while these same participants concluded that this love for whales ultimately lead to their pursuit of a career in Husavik. The experience of being out on the whale watching boats seemed to open up opportunities for those who weren't native to Iceland when they first came here for work. This was a common theme among respondents who worked as tour guides. Five of the participants also reflected on how beautiful the natural environment was. In particular, one of the captains reflected that their childhood memories of Husavik's natural surroundings inspired their career and the development of their whale watching company. They initially brought visitors out to enjoy the bay and the experience of being out on the water. They grew to appreciate Husavik as an adult, having left the area for several years to pursue academic studies.

The other participant that was native to Husavik responded similarly, saying that their childhood was not particularly striking to them at the time, but after being away for many years, they had a newfound appreciation for the area's natural environment and their childhood here. This same
individual is now working to connect locals to their natural environment and provides educational programs for the local school children to learn about the whales that reside in the bay. During the interview, they reflected back to their childhood in Husavik, revealing there weren’t many opportunities to see whales at that time, and speculated that this was perhaps a barrier for people in town — they’d never had the chance to see them, therefore they never really thought of them.

Perspectives on Whale Watching Vs. Captive Viewing

Over half of the participants initially experienced whales in captive settings (i.e., seeing trained whales in movies or in aquatic park settings). I asked if they’d grown to feel a distinction between seeing whales in the wild through whale watching tours vs. seeing whales in a captive setting. One remarked on how seeing whales within the context of their habitat made it easier for people to consider the larger ecosystem.

“I think it’s really important. When people see [whales] in their natural environment, people really understand and start to appreciate them. You know, we talk about the food chain on the boat and people really start to think about what’s going on in the ocean. Sometimes you don’t when you don’t see it in the natural way. It’s really hard to hear about it until you actually see it.” (2016 Interview 04)

Lück (2003) reinforced the importance of interpretive experiences within the whale watching setting to the overall experience. They found that the environment on a tour boat can create cognitive dissonance that enables people to develop informed questions and determine how they can improve on the issues raised in the context of viewing whales in the wild.

Another participant explained that the experience through a whale watching tour can generate sensitivity towards human influence on a wide range of factors that can impact whales because they have the opportunity of seeing these issues firsthand, within the context of the environment. As a tour guide, they found this teaching medium particularly eye-opening to those participating in the tour.

“Whale Watching has a great potential to fascinate people and sensitize them for the whales’ vulnerability towards human impact. Also it increases the willingness to participate in conservation measures and oppose whaling activities.” (2016 Interview 05)
Another reinforced this idea by saying:

“You need to see what it is that you want to protect and then have that connection. I think it’s really important.” (Interview 2016 01)

It was generally concluded that whale watching helped provide context to issues surrounding the wellbeing of the whales seen on the tours, and that the presence of a specialized museum and research center were particularly helpful in shaping and deepening this experience. One individual said that the tour made a tourist upset because they had consumed whale meat during their trip and was more concerned about the impacts of whaling on the whales residing around Iceland after seeing them physically in the wild. Many other visitors wanted to continue their involvement, asking if they could share their pictures with the research center for their ongoing identification study of the whales of Skjalfandi Bay. Following the tours, many guests would also ask for recommendations on where they could learn more and tour guides would direct them to the research center and the museum from there.

One participant was thoughtful in their response about the experiences visitors sought while going out on the whale watching boats, and considered the underlying dynamics of these interactions, considering the impacts of whale watching from the whale’s perspective as well.

“I think it’s really interesting that 100,000 people come to sail out just to look at the whales and come back and they get absolutely nothing out of it except the experience of looking at them. I haven’t gotten to any conclusions. But I think that whale watching is definitely a lot better than Seaworld. In some way, the whales could be enjoying whale watching too. At least, that’s what some of the people say. If they’re intelligent, sentient beings, then why shouldn’t they find it interesting?” (2016 Interview 06)

Local Perception towards the Whales and the Whale Watching Industry

Eight of the respondents (67%) noted a divide between the “whale watching community” and the rest of the town. The Whale School has been trying to bridge this gap to generate interest among the residents of Husavik, while teaching the local children about the whales that call their bay home. Many participants, when asked if whales were important to the town, discussed the economical and infrastructural impact the whales have, rather than emotional or intrinsic impacts.
One participant explained:

“I don't think that the people in Husavik realize how important the whales are to their community. I think that's the main thing about it, because the whales are very important. You can see that we get maybe 100,000 people every year coming to Husavik to go whale watching (and there are about 2,000 people living here). I don't know what more percentage of people that is. This is a huge financial input into this little community.” (2016 Interview)

The whales provide large sources of revenue for the town, in fees paid by the whale watching companies and through the profits gained from all the businesses throughout town due to the influx of people visiting Husavik during peak whale watching seasons. Another participant remarked that there are many career opportunities because of the multiple resources the town offers in terms of research and business expansion.

Others seemed frustrated, saying that while the whales are important economically, the locals aren't emotionally invested, or just don't express much interest in them.

“Most people just live their lives out there – they don't think about the whales, they don't think about the tourists that much.” (2016 Interview 07)

“For them, I think whales are just one big thing in the sea and it doesn't have the same cultural image that we have in the western world.” (2016 Interview 12)

Three participants expressed puzzlement over the lack of local involvement.

“I think it's really funny if you talk to the locals to ask if they've been whale watching, it's surprising how many people say they've never been.” (2016 Interview 06)

“I wonder how many from Husavik have actually gone on the boats. Many of them own the boats in the harbor and can just go if they'd like to, so I think for the people not involved in the whale watching, it's just as before, they're just there.” (2016 Interview 05)

“It was interesting for me to find out most people from Husavik never went out whale watching or to the Whale Museum. From my conversations with people, I understood that seeing whales as 'beautiful', 'impressive' or 'awe inspiring' were novel concepts to them.” (2016 Interview 11)
Four (33%) of the participants mentioned that whales were considered a nuisance among the general population, especially within fishing towns (which Husavik largely was and still is). When asked why this was, two individuals explained that the general reasoning among locals was that whales would eat all the fish, which has played into the continuation of the whaling industry to decrease the number of whales (and ultimately the competition for resources). The Whale School has been trying to bridge this gap to generate interest among the residents of Husavik, while teaching the local children about the whales that call their bay home. Many brought up how this divide was bridged through educational programming through the Whale School, which is based out of the town's whale museum.

One individual expressed:

“For the rest of the people in town, they don’t have nearly any involvement. Huld, the way she’s been trying to educate people is through the Whale School and the kids. And informing their parents in this way and reaching others as well.” (2016 Interview 01)

I asked the participants to reflect on their hopes for future generations in regards to how they grew up thinking about whales. Ten of the participants cited that they wanted future generations of children to “love” and “respect” whales, as well as appreciate their roles within the ecosystem. 8 of the participants wanted children grow up with awareness or live consciously in regards to their impact on the environment, while four of these participants also mentioned the importance of understanding the interconnectedness of nature. Many others reflected on how they have hopes that children just have the chance to see whales in the wild and reflected on the importance of experiencing them this way, as opposed to zoological settings. All of these individuals had opportunities to see whales in the wild when they were young, which is important considering the realization that this type of experience may not be so tangible for future generations.

Main Concerns of the Participants

Eleven (92%) of the participants were concerned about the exponential growth of the whale watching companies. In particular, they expressed concern about the number of boats out on the water and the dramatic changes occurring within the harbor. Five (42%) suggested that some captains have more aggressive viewing techniques, which they felt was detrimental to the whales and the
overall viewing experience. Five (42%) participants also were concerned that higher boat speeds and noise could disrupt the behavior of the whales (in particular, disruptions to their feeding frequency and ability to communicate). Two (17%) mentioned that whales could get injured from the faster boats as well through the increased chance of boat collisions.

Eight (67%) of these participants proposed solutions to these issues, such as policies protecting whales from increased traffic, as well as speed limitations and making the captains responsible for monitoring whale's behavior as a way to avoid disturbing their feeding and communication. Many also suggested turning the boats off completely to reduce noise pollution, as well as eliminating the faster RIB boats (3). For ecotour consumers, there is a general understanding and support for regulations that protect wildlife from potential impacts from ecotours (Curtin et al, 2009). These suggestions would likely not impact the overall success of the industry in the eyes of a consumer and perhaps strengthen the demand for more environmentally-conscious initiatives driven by these whale watching companies.

Six (50%) of the participants were also worried about the recent construction of a silica plant on the outskirts of town. With the construction of the plant rises concerns about shipping traffic, pollution from the plant, and noise pollution from ships using the shipping lane. There was also concern that more traffic through the opening of the bay with increase the number of collisions the boats have with whales. One participant pointed out that whales have been caught in fishing lines within the bay. This individual was involved in research within the town on this issue, as well as generating estimates on how many whales were impacted by certain fishing practices. Four participants also cited climate change as a growing concern (33%), noting physical and biological dynamics that were changing within the bay. One individual suggested that the increase in humpback whale sightings could be indicative of this, as they could be moving further north where summer feeding grounds are more productive. This same individual also ruminated that this could be due to growing population numbers.

Overall, participants were worried about impacts on the whale species that live within the bay, whether they would stay in the area, as well as concerns that fewer whales in the bay will put more stress on the whales that remain there (larger densities of boats around a single whale). This also raised concerns that if this happens, the industry will be at risk as well.
DISCUSSION

There have been similar studies conducted in Iceland on the perspectives surrounding the whale-watching industry. These perspectives are largely from tourists who actively participate in whale watching tours and from the whale-watching captains/company owners who provide these experiences. While these perspectives are important in shaping our understanding of the dynamics at play within this industry and its impacts within the context of a tour, it’s also important to consider the perspectives from a broader array of people who make these experiences possible (and also particularly memorable). Husavik is in a unique position compared to much of Iceland (and even to other whale watching hubs around the world). Here, there are opportunities to pursue collaborative research with the touring companies, as well as educational facilities to develop curriculum and specialized programing directed both to tourists and locals that bring this experience full circle.

The town hosts a widely interdependent community of individuals whose experiences have led them to this one place to work and they all play a role within the community and for those who choose to visit Husavik for their whale watching tours. These individuals have the ability to engage others on the whale-watching vessels, educate them within the context of a natural environment (as opposed to simulated environment within an aquatic park), and further this engagement following the tours. At the research center, people are welcome to ask more in-depth questions and participate in the ongoing ID study, and within the whale museum, specially curated content is readily available for those that want to expand their knowledge further.

The experience that the whale watching community offers is fairly unique in that it provides a deeper connection to several subjects/areas of interest surrounding whales — their ecological role and evolutionary history, aspects of their physiology, past and present human conflicts, as well as threats they face due to climate change. Within Husavik, this research can be important in highlighting how a fairly diverse community of people can share a single outlook on issues surrounding the industry, as well as the ways that whale-watching (in particular) can engage others in “caring” about whales. It is important to reiterate that the majority of individuals within this study (from captains, to tour guides, to whale researchers) felt a growing concern towards the rapid development of the industry. This reflects larger concerns that researchers have surrounding the impacts of whale watching on whales.
The responses from these individuals show a sensitivity towards these issues and motivation to reduce these impacts. Most of these individuals felt that there were tangible solutions to this problem – from firmer policies that limit tour traffic around individual whales, to simple behavioral changes (ex: slower boat speeds to prevent collisions and reducing disturbances to daily feeding and socialization behaviors of the whales inhabiting the bay). It’s important to note that none of these individuals expressed concerns that the industry should be halted, while every single individual felt that the industry played some important role in educating others about whales and providing an experience within a natural environment. These individuals all shared a love for the natural environment as well and expressed hope that future generations could experience the world (and its whales) like they did.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

For future studies, it would be beneficial to explore perceptions surrounding the Whale School – in particular, the perspectives of the children and their parents on the program and current attitudes surrounding whales within this whale-watching community. Using participatory planning, researchers would be able to work directly with this community to get feedback that could be used to develop future programing for the whale school, as well as uncover barriers that exist between the local community and the industry-driven portion of the whale watching town. Once these barriers are better understood and communicated, a strategy to connect the whale watching community with the needs and interests of the town could be developed.

There are many interesting dynamics at play here, largely that these facilities provide an engaging medium for people to learn about whales (and even get actively involved). I believe it would be in the industry’s interest to incorporate this kind of feedback within their overall mission. Utilizing participatory planning within this type of study would benefit the community as a whole because their input could be directly incorporated into educational programing and field opportunities for those who want to engage further. Also, once a larger community of people are involved with the whale watching and educational facilities, the town will have a stronger chance of being successful in the long-run.

It would also be important to gather more research on the general attitude Icelanders have towards whales, and the impact of these attitudes on actual policy-making within the country. It is impor-
tant to consider these perceptions in light of the growing industry because these individuals have the potential to shape conversations around the conservation of whales in the area – as issues like climate change and increased travel within the country are brought to the forefront (in particular, the consequences of tourism-related activities on the natural environment). It would also be interesting to explore the attitudes of the Iceland natives towards the economic benefits of the whale-watching industry. Also, uncovering these attitudes within a country that still has an active whaling industry could also further inform researchers about the ongoing demand for the products that this industry yields, as well as any ethical concerns or politics that surround whaling within Iceland. These attitudes have been explored before, but it is important to have a growing understanding of how these attitudes are evolving alongside the surge of whale-watching companies within the country.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX
Interview Guide

1. Where did you grow up?

2. Did you get to experience the outdoors a lot? What were a few of the things you would do?

3. What were your earliest thoughts on whales?

4. Do you remember your first experience with one?
   a. (If answer is “yes”) Can you describe this experience?

5. Based on your knowledge, could you tell me a little about Iceland’s history surrounding whales and whaling?

6. What have you experienced in your time here and do you think perceptions have changed?

7. If you grew up outside Iceland, can you briefly describe your country’s history surrounding whaling as well as their perceptions towards whales?

8. What prompted your involvement with whale tourism/education/research/activism?

9. Why did you decide to pursue this career here in Husavik?

10. For the community as a whole, how important are whales to the people of Husavik? Can you be more detailed with your answer?

11. How important are whales to you as an individual?

12. What are your experiences with conservation issues surrounding the whales of Skjálfandi Bay?

13. Are you still learning about whales?
   a. (If answer is “yes”) Could you provide some examples?

14. Are there downsides to whale watching (to the community & the surrounding environment)?
   a. If so, have you experienced any of these firsthand?

15. How important is seeing whales in the wild in generating positive change towards their conservation?

16. How does this compare to seeing them in captivity?

17. Is there something that sets Husavik apart from other parts of Iceland (even other parts of the world) in terms of its whale watching and educational opportunities?
18. Is there anything special about the ecology (or nature) of Skjálfandi Bay?

19. What are your experiences in educating locals and visitors about the local whales? For this question, could you provide an example or two?

20. Are you familiar with the Whale School?
   a. (If answer is “yes”) Could you describe the role it plays for the local children?

21. How would you like future generations to perceive whales?

22. For fun, I’m curious about what you like most about whales.

23. Would you like further information as I finish up my project?
   a. (If answer is “yes”) How would you like to be informed?

24. Do you have any closing thoughts?
Informed Consent Form

The impact of whale watching on the local perception of whales in Husavik

Researcher: Erika Reiter  Contact information: ekr9@duke.edu

Purpose of this research: This study is intended to gather responses from locals and researchers living and working within Husavik on the changing perspectives towards whales due to an ever-growing whale watching industry and local educational and conservation initiatives. Interview responses will provide vital perspectives on how these industries ultimately impact people’s perceptions of whales.

Procedures: The interview will begin with a set of predetermined questions, and then I will follow up with further questions based on the responses you have provided. An audio recording of our interview will be used to transcribe your responses to use as data for my research. The interview itself should last between 30 to 45 minutes, depending on your available time for the interview and the length of your responses. These findings will be presented as collective part of my Masters Project at Duke University this December.

Risks and benefits: This study should pose no foreseeable risks to you. If you feel uncomfortable disclosing your thoughts on certain questions, you will not be pressed to respond. Furthermore, you are free to end the interview at any time and choose to have your responses omitted from the data. The responses provided will otherwise be included in the analysis and potentially shared through other educational mediums (i.e. a radio story or short news article). I will report my findings to Duke University this December and the resulting paper will be published on their website. Your role is crucially important given that you live and work within a small town that has been recognized internationally for its whale watching. Your interview responses give a better understanding of how being part of the Husavik community has impacted your life and your perspectives on whales.

Confidentially: Your role in this study will remain confidential. All participants will be referenced using coded names when quoted within the research and all identifying information will be kept private.

Contact me: If you would like to have a copy of the research findings, or if have any further questions about the study, please use the contact information I’ve provided here. You can ask questions about your rights as a research subject by contacting Duke University’s Office of Research Support at 919-684-3030 or ORS-Info@duke.edu.

Please sign below if you have read and agree to participate in this interview.

___________________________________________    ____________
Participant’s signature     Date