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Whale Wars Podcast:

https://soundcloud.com/ashley-kao-165662278/whale-wars?si=13fe5885efb44a2cb7fe957907178f6e&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing

Whale Wars Podcast Transcript

[Whale sounds (Relax Night & Day - Beautiful Nature & Sounds, 2019, 00:00:00–0:00:45)]

Caitlyn: “Another day ended, and the light bounced off of the trembling surface: two whales bobbing under the starlight.

I like the night up here, she said. We can see the stars.

They are not our stars, her mother responded.

Both knew more than they let on to the other, and when the blue of the night finally ran out, they awoke to another boat passing overhead. She didn’t know why, but this time, instead of swimming deeper and hiding, she had a feeling penetrate and a voice that ebbed inside her like the tide, and so, in a flurry, she turned to her mother and only whispered, *Don’t worry*, as she swam upward to meet the dangling hand slowly slicing the water” (Lee, 2021, p. 187).

[Sound of whaling (ifaw, 2016, 00:00:14–00:00:16)]

Caitlyn: The excerpt I just read came from Janice Lee’s novel, *Imagine a Death*. In the chapter, “The Whales,” the narrating whale actually has a happier ending. Upon reaching the ocean surface, the whale meets a girl and two men, who record the whale’s music with machines, before the whale safely returns to her mother. However, this podcast is trying to convey that not all whales have the same ending. I’m Caitlyn Tran.

Zander: I’m Zander Vervaet.

Ashley: I’m Ashley Kao.

Josh: I’m Josh Mendoza.

Jose: I’m Jose Camarena.

Caitlyn: And we will be your hosts on Whale Wars.

Josh: Today, we will be investigating Japan's current whaling practices to ultimately answer the question of how modern whales should be treated.

[Ocean wave sounds]

Jose: Since the ninth century, whaling was a popular activity for countries like Norway, France, and Spain. Over time, the world progressively took part in the activity, with whaling starting in the present day U.S by 1712. It was not until the 1900s when whaling really took off due to the introduction of harpoons and commercial whaling ships (*Japanese Whaling Association*, n.d.). That was when the whale population truly began to dwindle.

Zander: Whales are hunted in a variety of ways depending on the type of whaling. Most commonly, exploding harpoon cannons mounted on the bows of ships are designed to burst upon penetrating whale flesh. However, whale death is not always instantaneous due to inconsistencies in where the harpoon makes impact. The general procedure for whales that survive the initial harpoon strike is to winch the whale close to the bow of the ship and use rifles to shoot it in the brain. This becomes tricky when whales are struck in the abdomen or rear, as the head remains underwater; this usually results in the whale dying by asphyxiation since the blowhole cannot reach the surface to breathe. This begs the question of the ethical standards and humane manner in which whales are hunted, and how they size up to animal killing practices for other species. (Gales and Papastavrou, 2008).

Caitlyn: I can see why ethical questions are starting to be raised by whaling activities. The way whales are killed sounds very violent. Can you elaborate on how whaling methods have been analyzed?

Zander: Sure! A video taken by Greenpeace of whaling by the Japanese whaling fleet in the Southern Ocean captured the killing of 16 individual Antarctic minke whales. Fewer than 1 in 5 whales were killed instantaneously and the average time of death for the remaining whales was around 10 minutes. Although international regulations demand that whales be killed in a humane manner, this time of death is far too long to be considered ethical. While Japan suggested the presence of the Greenpeace vessels impeded upon their usual hunting practices (i.e. ability of the gunner to obtain an accurate shot, ineffective secondary killing methods), this was debunked by comparison to previous studies. The location of 17 harpoon impacts were mapped based on photogrammetric analysis for the video, with the mean hitting closer to the cranial region. (Gales and Papastavrou, 2008).

Jose: In response to the mounting pressure to control whaling, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) was formed by the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling

(ICRW). The convention was signed on December 2, 1946 by fifteen nations: including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Panama, South Africa, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Japan joined in 1951. Throughout the existence of the Commission, there have been several attempts to limit commercial whaling. In 1986, the Commission initiated a whaling moratorium regulation to cease all commercial whaling (Humane Society International, 2022). Additionally, in 1994, the whole southern ocean was declared a sanctuary for whales in which commercial whaling was prohibited. However, Japan was able to bypass regulations protecting the Ross Sea Marine Protected Area (MPA) by declaring their hunting activities as scientific whaling (*Japan Killing Whales in Antarctic Protected Area*, n.d.). Japan went on to harpoon hundreds of whales each year in the interest of observing their migration patterns and obtaining information concerning whale numbers, health, and breeding patterns. As of late, there is one sole whaling company operating offshore called Kyodo Senpaku Co. They operate 4 ships, one of which is a whaling factory ship, and the other three being hunting vessels. Japan's research endeavors were carried out by the Institute of Cetacean Research, which contracted Kyodo Senpaku (Ryall, 2022).

Zander: There are three types of whaling that the IWC regulates: commercial, scientific research, and aboriginal subsistence whaling. Commercial whaling is the practice of hunting whales for the purpose of selling and trading their meat and other derived products. Scientific research whaling, such as Japan's lethal research in the North Pacific and Southern Oceans, is permitted by special permits from the IWC. Aboriginal whaling refers to whaling conducted by native/indigenous people to meet their cultural and subsistence needs.

Caitlyn: However, Australia challenged the Japanese Whale Research Program under Special Permit in the Antarctic Phase II (JARPA II), which justified Japan's killing of endangered whales in Antarctica, in the International Court of Justice by arguing that it did not qualify as scientific whaling (Scott, 2021). This is understandable since Australia champions a very strong anti-whaling stance, as seen from an investigation of Australia's non-print media released between the early 1900s and the early 2000s. After terminating whaling activities in 1979, Australia's anti-whaling attitude permeated their cultural materials (Kato, 2015). Global sentiment similarly transitioned to a more prominent anti-whaling stance, as seen from the examination of cultural materials released outside Australia. For instance, "Whale Poem" by Frederick Morgan outlines the transition from the commodification of whales and the portrayal of whales as dangerous beings in Rudyard Kipling's "How the Whale Got His Throat" and in the Bible to the humanization of whales and the portrayal of whaling as violent (Morgan, 2022).

The court unanimously agreed with Australia, so Japan complied by halting Southern Ocean whaling from 2014 to 2015 and announcing the termination of Antarctic whaling on December 26, 2018. However, Japan then withdrew from the IWC to pursue commercial whaling within their territorial waters and exclusive economic zone (Scott, 2021).

Jose: Despite efforts to curb whaling, 17,600 whales have been killed by Japan under the special permit. This surrounds the time period between 1986 and 2019. In recent years, approximately 333 minke whales in the Antarctic and between 90-135 sei whales in the North Pacific have been killed (Harbour, 2021). There are several reasons as to why Japan is the focus of the podcast. Japan was the only country whaling in the Antarctic which became the focus of governments like New Zealand and Australia. Additionally, Iceland and Norway, the two other significant contributors towards whaling, have legal and official objections to the IWC moratorium and legal rights have not been questioned. Japan, on the other hand, has withdrawn their objection under US pressure. The Japanese government continues to defend their practice of commercial whaling under the title of “scientific research.” In an interview recorded by AFP News Agency, a Japanese whaling negotiator stated the following:

[Japan’s whaling negotiator defends latest Antarctic whale hunt (AFT News, 2015, 00:00:00 - 00:00:47)]

Josh: This raises the question: Is whaling ethical and why still hunt whales?

[Ocean wave sounds]

Silence

[Realistic Earthquake Sound Effect [High Quality] (SoundEffectsFactory, 2014, 00:00:00 - 00:00:21)]

[Japan Earthquake Pictures, Video. Disaster in the Pacific 3/11/2011 (ABC News, 2011, 00:00:00 - 00:09:40)]

Ashley: On March 11, 2011, at around 2:46 PM, a 9.1 level earthquake hit the northeastern coast of Japan. This earthquake was the largest, most powerful earthquake recorded in Japan’s historical recordkeeping. From the earthquake arose a tsunami that rushed towards Japan with waves that reached 33 feet high and 6 miles inland. Not only was the coast of Japan affected, but so were many other Pacific coastal regions with 11-12 foot waves hitting the coasts of the Hawaiian islands and 9 foot waves hitting the coasts of California and Oregon. The death toll had reached greater than 10,000 Japanese citizens, with roughly 19,300 missing, and over 4,000 injured. This natural disaster also caused the destruction of roads, electricity, sewage systems, power stations and reactors, creating high risks for radiation, limited food and water resources, and causing over 300,000 Japanese residents to become displaced. Despite the rescue efforts by the Japanese Self-Defense Force along with relief from the United States, Australia, China,

India, New Zealand, and South Korea, there was still large amounts of damage beyond repair (Rafferty & Pletcher, 2023).

Caitlyn: I did hear about this earthquake when it happened. It sounds like a very devastating event, but I'm having trouble understanding how it connects to whaling. Could you clarify the connection for our audience?

Ashley: Yeah, so another devastating result of the 2011 tsunami was the destruction of small fishing towns, including Ayukawa, a small region with 1,400 residents and a long history of whaling. This was one of four Japanese communities who have continued the cultural practices of whaling, regularly consuming their meat despite the discontinued consumption in other Japanese regions. With the loss of this small town and its source of food and economic benefit, the whaling town's deep cultural reliance on whaling could have dissipated (Fackler, 2011). Despite the other places of need left as a result of the tsunami, the Japanese government prioritized the preservation and restoration of whaling communities like Ayukawa. Shortly after the natural disaster, Japan announced the following in their opening statement at the 63rd Annual International Whaling Commission conference:

Jose: "Out from the devastation, [Ayukawa] has expressed a strong desire and an unbending determination for restoration of the whaling community and, the Ayukawa whaling has even been seen as one of the symbols of the restoration from the great East Japan Earthquake. The small type of coastal whaling remains as a priority issue for Japan" (IWC, 2011).

Caitlyn: I see, so Japan's modern whaling activities might stem from a historical and cultural connection.

Josh: Right, and Japan continues to stand by that whaling is deeply rooted in their culture, despite only hunting for around 75 years, when most indigenous groups have been whaling for over 1000 years. Japan ultimately wants to be treated by the IWC similar to how they treat the indigenous groups who continue to whale. The main difference between Japan and the small communities in the North Atlantic and North Pacific is that Japan wants to continue to whale commercially while all of the other indigenous groups only whale for their survival and culture.

Caitlyn: It sounds like Japan is not the only one that still participates in whaling today, so can you give us more context about whaling conducted by the other communities you mentioned?

Josh: The indigenous communities of Alaska have a long history of hunting whales for subsistence and cultural purposes, and their hunting techniques and cultural values are closely intertwined. In Alaska, they use traditional techniques using hand-thrown harpoons and skin boats that have been passed down for generations. Whale hunts are a community-wide effort and

they only use their knowledge of the behavior of whales to find them. Whenever there is a successful whale hunt, every part of the animal is utilized for food, tools, and other purposes, and the hunting and processing of the whale is accompanied by ceremonies and rituals that reflect the cultural significance of the hunt. Often other meats cost as much as \$15 a pound. For Alaska's indigenous communities, it is more than a means of subsistence but is part of their cultural heritage and identity. They are able to maintain their traditional way of life and pass their knowledge and values on to future generations because they are able to hunt whales. Even knowing this they prioritize the importance of conservation and work closely with the International Whaling Commission. (“Alaska,” 2023)

Similarly to Alaskan tribes, the Makah Tribe, located on the western coast of Washington, USA. They have a unique relationship with whales, and historically hunted gray whales as a traditional practice. In 1926, they stopped hunting because of the decreased populations but in 1999 after a long legal battle the US granted them permission once again. Each hunt they engage in ceremonies and rituals to seek the blessing and protection of their ancestors and the spirits of the animals they hunt. However, the last time they went on a hunt was in 2007. In the past, they used canoes and hand-thrown harpoons, but more recently, they have transitioned to modern equipment such as high-powered rifles and motorized boats due to a lot of groups asking for more humane ways of hunting. They also use every part of the animal and work closely with scientific experts and regulatory agencies to monitor and manage the hunt and make sure it is sustainable and does not threaten the survival of the gray whale population. (“Makah Tribe,” 2023)

Ashley: That’s really interesting to hear. I heard that there are also indigenous practices of whaling that happen *outside* of the US. Are the indigenous practices within the US similar to practices outside of the US?

Josh: These indigenous practices in America are practically identical in Greenland, Bequia, and Russia, as it has been a way of life for centuries. Today, whaling in Greenland is still carried out by Inuit hunters as a subsistence activity, with the meat and blubber from harvested whales providing a valuable source of food and income for local communities. The Greenlandic government also regulates the hunt using quotas, and only allows Inuit hunters to participate. Greenland has said that it is a sustainable and necessary activity that is vital to the cultural and economic well-being of the region. In Bequia, a small island in the Caribbean, inlanders hunt humpback, sperm, and pilot whales as a means of subsistence and culture using traditional wooden boats and hand-thrown harpoons to hunt. They even jump in the shark infested water to manually sew the mouth of the whale so it does not sink to the bottom, which is incredibly dangerous. Regardless, Bequia whalers participate in scientific research and programs to make sure that they are not threatening the survival of whale populations in the region. Russia also has decided to abide by the IWC ban on whaling and participate in scientific research with small

quotas and made sure that their indigenous groups such as the Chukotka tribe were able to continue to hunt using traditional methods and continue their cultural practices from over 4000 years ago. (“St Vincent and the Grenadines,” 2023; Government of Greenland, 2018; Zharikov, 2019)

Ashley: Wow I didn't even realize that there were places in the Caribbean that hunted whales. I thought it was mostly in the North Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. I have seen a lot of videos and photos from the Faroe Islands and I know they use older techniques but there's so much controversy.

Josh: Often in the United States we consistently see controversy and protests from animal rights groups about whale hunting around the world. Most recently, the Faroe Islands have taken center stage for banning whaling because of the traditional methods indigenous groups continue to use. The Faroe Islands, a cluster of small islands in the North Atlantic, have hunted whales for over a thousand years. The traditional method of hunting whales is community-based whaling known as the grindadráp. The grindadráp starts when a boat sees a pod of whales close to shore. The captains then signal to the villagers that the grindadráp has begun. They then drive the pod of pilot whales into shallow bays with small boats and kill them with hand-held tools such as knives and lances. The community works together to encircle the whales and drive them towards the shore, where they are beached and restrained. The whales are then killed using a "spinal lance" - a long, pointed tool that is used to sever the spinal cord and ensure a quick and humane death. The Faroese whalers continue to develop their techniques to ensure the hunt is as humane as possible while keeping their unique traditional values. When the whales are harvested, the meat and blubber is split among all of the local community. Although they have been criticized worldwide by activist groups, the Faroese people state that the grindadráp is vital to cultural heritage and traditions. They continue to ensure the safety and sustainability of the hunt, and work closely with IWC. (Lögmansskrivstovan, 2017)

Zander: Moving back towards larger commercial powers, Norwegians have hunted whales in their own waters for a long period of time, dating back to the 9th century. They paved the way for the industry's dramatic expansion through their innovative whaling techniques and technologies, such as the exploding harpoon cannon and processing ships. Modern minke whaling in Norway is conducted by fisherman, even outside of whaling season due to minimal surveillance and lowered regulations and requirements. As an influential force in the whaling industry, the Norwegian government has gone to great lengths to justify the commercial practice, including: subsidization to develop new markets, declaring whale meat to be healthy and act as an alternative in burgers and sushi, school lunches, and even feed the homeless. Retired head chef Bjørn Martin Eklo gave out over 60 tons of whale meat free of charge, prioritizing nursing homes, humanitarian organizations, and the needy as early recipients. However, should we

consider these efforts to be acts of philanthropy, or merely expediency? (*Whaling in Norway*, 2023).

Jose: Offloading all this whale meat onto those in need definitely has its pros and cons. With such a surplus of whale meat, what is keeping the market afloat within Norway?

Zander: Whale meat has seen a growth in demand in the past several years, primarily due to an increasing interest in local cuisine and consumers developing an aversion to industrially produced meat like beef and pork. Tourists are the main target for whale products, with whale meat being made widely available at dockside fish markets, restaurants, and on board cruise ships, marketed as a “traditional” and “local” specialty. By purchasing whale products, tourists help to perpetuate the whaling industry, which many deem to be one that should have died long ago. Much of this waters down to education, where outreach campaigns targeted towards tourists have proved effective in reducing demand for whale meat (*Whaling in Norway*, 2023).

Ashley: If Norway and indigenous groups are also involved in whaling, then why is there so much criticism against Japan?

Caitlyn: Well, some countries like Norway whale commercially, but they never joined the IWC or they left the IWC before whaling. Japan, on the other hand, took advantage of a loophole within IWC regulations by justifying their killing of endangered whales through science, which did not sit well with other countries in the IWC like Australia. This led to the court case between Japan and Australia mentioned earlier, which ended in Japan’s eventual withdrawal from the IWC. Also, Japan originally targeted whales in Antarctica, which brought up some questions about sovereignty over that region (Scott, 2021).

Josh: Also, it is almost impossible to consider Japan as an indigenous group that should be able to whale. Japan has been whaling for around 75 years almost entirely commercially as a source of cheap meat after World War II, while indigenous people around the world have been hunting for thousands of years. In fact none of these indigenous groups whale commercially, yet Japan does. **Why does Japan still whale?** Economically, Japanese whaling is a failing business, and is subsidized about \$10 million USD annually by the Japanese government. Between 1987 and 2012, they have spent over \$378.7 million USD on whaling, and continue to operate at incredible losses. Also, the Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR) sets prices too high relative to the demand for whale meat and causes thousands of pounds of meat being practically given away. In 2011, the cost of each whaling season exceeded income by \$10 to \$20 million USD, which would have bankrupted the ICR, so the government gave money from the 2011 earthquake fund. Former IWC deputy commissioner Masayuki Komatsu admitted that using such "money for scientific whaling is quite irrelevant to the reconstruction of the disaster area." In addition, Kyodo Senpaku, the company responsible for the hunts, was given permission to apply for a \$25 million

USD loan to refit the Nisshin Maru and enable it to continue operations for a further 10 years. To facilitate the repayment of that loan, the Japanese government would pay 50- 90% of the company's operating deficit for the next three years using taxpayer dollars" (Ramage, 2013; "Whaling in Japan," 2022).

[Ocean wave sounds]

Caitlyn: Even if whaling has potential benefits, all of the mentioned benefits have been for humans. Why don't we consider the impacts of whaling on other living organisms? The first creatures that come to mind would be the whales. There has been some research into whether whales grieve for dead or dying whales. Although further research still needs to be done, some studies have shown that whales exhibit similar responses to grieving social animals (Bearzi et al., 2017). Some critics may argue that the grief whales experience may be mitigated since the targeted whales are mysticetes, which tend to be solitary (Mann, 2017). However, multiple studies have found that anthropogenic activities in general, such as climate change, ship strikes, underwater noise, marine litter, chemical pollution, entanglement in fishing gear, and tourism, can still impact individual whales (Risch et al., 2019). The impact is obvious when the activities result in stranded or dead whales, but our activities also increase levels of cortisol, corticosterone, and fecal glucocorticoid metabolite (fGC) concentrations in whales, which all indicate increased levels of stress (Lemos et al., 2022; Lowe et al., 2021). Increased stress levels can in turn alter whale behaviors and eventually lead to a continued depletion of energy until the whale dies in the open ocean, where humans cannot observe the effects of their activities (Parsons, 2017).

Ashley: Right, and the effects of whaling don't just stop at whales. Because of the large percentage of biomass that whales contribute to the ecosystem, the practice of whaling also affects many other species, including human beings. We had the opportunity to interview Alex, a member and student of Ocean Resources for Conservation and Advocacy here at UCLA who shared the importance of whales to other species and the overall oceanic ecosystem. When asked about the the role of whales, Alex said the following:

Alex: So, Baleen whales are arguably one of the most important animals for the ocean ecosystem as a whole because they sort of do two things that have major effects on not just the ocean but also every animal on earth. The first thing is that they eat such a high volume of zooplankton, which are microscopic animals which feed on phytoplankton, photosynthesizing plants, that they have a significant effect on the amount of oxygen on earth. This is to the point where people estimate that if baleen whales were to go extinct, we might see a 30% drop in atmospheric oxygen, which is absolutely insane amount considering there are not that many whales on earth.

Ashley: So as Alex mentioned, whales have a large impact on the atmospheric oxygen levels, thus affecting all aerobic species on earth. Thus, if we were to consider where our earth would stand without whales, the atmospheric ozone layer would decrease. However, looking more closely to whaling impacts on the oceanic environment in particular, Alex said this:

Alex: Whales are actually really crucial in terms of holding entire ecosystems together not just because they are top predators in some instances but also because whale poop as well as whale carcasses go down to feed animals in lower levels of the ocean. This holds deep sea ecosystems together where a whale carcass may be the only thing as food there for literal years.

Ashley: This concept of whale carcasses providing ecosystems and other forms of nutrition for other species is known as whale fall. Once the carcasses fall to the ground, three kinds of oceanic species are provided with food in locations where food is generally limited: the sea floor. When the whale carcass first falls to the ground, the mobile-scavenger stage begins in which sharks and fish consume the soft tissue of the whale. Shortly after, the enrichment-opportunist stage begins where the fauna begin to develop in the bones and sediments. Lastly, the skeleton of the whale is decomposed during the sulphophilic stage, where sulfides are released and utilized by chemoautotrophic bacteria (Roman et al., 2014). Thus, we can conclude that whales are heavy contributors even after their death.

But the role of whales in the environment doesn't even stop there. Whales provide nutrients to other species in other ways, both through their movement and through their feces. Looking at their movement, whales tend to dive to different depths of the ocean, passing through different oceanic layers. In doing so, they are transporting nutrients and compounds to layers that would otherwise have little to no access to said factors. This both gives access to necessary compounds, while removing other harmful ones. One example of this is the sperm whales' transportation of iron into the photic zone from the deeper parts of the ocean, allowing more autotrophic species at the bottom of the ocean to thrive without the limiting factors of iron (Roman et al., 2014). The fecal matter of whales also provides a movement of nutrients, but through a filtration system. With the ingestion of large amounts of krill as a source of food, whales will retain the carbon, but release the trace metals which act as nutrients back into their surroundings (Bowie et al., 2015).

Zander: Furthermore, whale meat is considered a benefit of whaling, but it is not guaranteed to be safe for consumption. Because most waters where whales inhabit are polluted, poisons are known to concentrate in their tissues. Persistent organic pollutants have been detected and analyzed in various baleen whale tissues (like the blubber, muscles, and liver). Persistent organic pollutants are resistant to the biodegradation process causing them to biomagnify within ecosystems, transferring from one trophic level to the next through ingestion. Exposure to these pollutants can lead to the following prolonged, chronic effects: endocrine disruption, cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes, birth defects, and dysfunctional immune and

reproductive systems. When you consider how unregulated the Japanese market is, and its competitors, there is no guarantee for quality control, especially when you consider stockpiles of toxic whale meat as a byproduct of their scientific research. Persistent organic pollutants are only just the beginning, with a host of other contaminants being common within marine environments (like PCB's, PFC's, DDT, and mercury levels that exceed the threshold of safe human consumption). Therefore, regardless of the quantity, the consumption of whale meat can expose humans to dangerous contaminants that harbor a life-long impact on one's quality of life. This begs the question of whether the Norwegian government has the authority to declare whale meat as safe for consumption (as we discussed previously). Who should be responsible for making this distinction? (Coulter, 2022)

Josh: The impact on humans sounds frightening, and the question of responsibility is an incredibly difficult question to answer. Is this problem limited to Norway, or can whale meat be found in other countries for consumption?

Zander: This problem is definitely not limited to Norway, as it is also quite present in Japan. In an attempt to source where whale meat has originated from, population-level molecular markers have been used to identify the origins of North Pacific minke whale products within Japanese retail markets, which contributes to reducing illegal whale hunting and trading of whale products. Approximately 43% of market products from North Pacific minke whales do not originate from the reported scientific hunt in pelagic waters, but instead from the unregulated exploitation of a protected population in the Sea of Japan. The Japanese government has been conducting molecular genetic analyses of whale products within Japanese retail markets since 1995, while also developing a system to detect illegal trafficking based on the registration of DNA profiles (from by-catches, strandings, and stockpiles as well). Hopefully this will curb illegal activities in the market and ensure greater safety for whale product consumers (Baker et al., 2000).

Jose: Those are very interesting advancements, and I hope they help to alleviate unregulated hunts. How do citizens of commercial whaling countries respond to the practice amidst vast disapproval?

Zander: As mentioned previously with anti-whaling sentiments in Australian cultural materials, Norwegians also share similar sentiments. In a set of street interviews conducted by World Animal Protection USA, Norwegian citizens expressed their distaste for their country's continued efforts in commercial whaling. They acknowledged the toll commercial whaling takes on Norway's reputation due to its immense global opposition. All stated that whaling should have been banned long ago, and that what remains should be done in the most humane manner possible (which is not the reality). Many also claimed to have never tried whale meat despite growing up in Norway, while expressing no interest in doing so. These narratives contradict the

idealized perspective taken by the Norwegian government, who continually breaks down bureaucratic barriers and regulations to promote the unsustainable hunt of minke whales (World Animal Protection USA, 2011).

Furthermore, the transfer of whaling technology from Norway to Japan, through affiliated equipment and manpower (like the grenade harpoon and processing ships), fostered growing concern from Norwegians as Japan emerged as a dominant power in the modern whaling industry. However, this concern was unevenly distributed, with the Norwegian legation in Tokyo expressing that “Norwegian whaling was in danger of being outmaneuvered by Japan back in 1937 following the sale of the Norwegian factory ship *The Antarctic*. There was concern not only that Japan did not intend to respect international regulations (as well as the ones imposed by Norway), but also that Norway continued to supply accessible trained gunners for Japan. No legal sanctions proved available to hinder exports of whaling gear, and no drastic steps were taken to prevent Norwegian gunners from seeking employment on board Japanese whaling vessels. These gunners did not find that they were assisting a potential rival, adopting a measure of condescension and disbelief that the Japanese could ever acquire their prestige level of shooting. These disparaging attitudes enabled the subdued response by the Norwegian public, being complicit in the dangerous manner in which the Japanese whaled (Mageli, 2006).

[Ocean wave sounds]

Zander: Our investigation waters down to one main question: what is Japan’s motive to continue whaling, despite the clear economic deficits it creates? One theory we created to explain Japan’s motive for their continued investment in the whaling industry is the potential for a market monopoly. Upon their resumption of commercial whaling in 2019, Japan ceased the import of Icelandic meat. With the loss of such a critical consumer, Iceland announced that it would cease whaling functions by 2024 since the practice was no longer profitable (low demand). Thus, the only remaining contenders left would be Norway (the old power) and Japan (the newer, emerging power). Due to the significantly larger Norwegian anti-whaling population, as illustrated by the street interviews we discussed previously, I believe that Norway will follow in the footsteps of Iceland eventually. Kyodo Senpaku Kaisha’s recent announcement of the construction of a new mothership exhibits Japan’s intent to instill a prominent whaling culture for future generations to come, hoping to resume commercial operations in the Southern Ocean. While it may not be profitable now, Japan’s investments will most definitely become profitable in the future as the sole producer of commercial whale products.

[Ocean wave sounds]

Ashley: Now that we have dissected the problem at hand, we must look at what needs to change in order to preserve the baleen whale population while also refraining from infringement of other

nations' sovereignty. While whaling seems to be an incredibly political or environmental issue requiring a certain level of knowledge of an expert, the non-expert general public have developed polarized understandings in different countries. Many individuals within the United States have been found to be strongly opposed to whaling while the majority of the Japanese population are in favor of the continued practice of whaling. In fact, when we asked non-expert students of the UCLA population on their opinions of Japanese whaling we heard the following,

Maddie: I'd say that media and everything that I've seen is always "whales are good." Nothing really with "whales are bad," and then whaling is the bad part.

Sophia: Oh, I hate whaling. I think it's detrimental to the ocean ecosystem in addition to being inhumane hunting for no reason.

Megan: I think whaling is really bad not only for the environment and ecosystem that the whales come from but also for human health due to the mercury content in whales.

Ashley: Contrarily, when Youtube creator Asian Boss interviewed Japanese citizens about their stance on whaling, many stated that they had consumed whale meat before at pubs, schools, or fancy restaurants. One person shared that they were taught that this practice began when food and other forms of livestock were scarce.

[What do Japanese Think of Eating Whales | Asian Boss (Asian Boss, 2016, 00:02:47 - 00:03:01)]

Ashley: In this clip, the interviewee states that every part of the whale is used and nothing goes to waste. While only certain parts of the whale are consumed, every other part, except for the bones, are used as oil to create light and energy. Additionally, when the individuals were asked about whether they knew about the ongoing international tension over whaling practices, many stated that they were unaware of the political controversy.

Ashley: But why is this? Well, a study performed in 2022 analyzed what the general public is highly exposed to: the media. They initiated a comparative analysis of the popular local news sources within the two respective countries, finding that the Japanese population utilizes national news outlets as their main source of political and environmental information while the United States heavily relies on televised and online news sources. These sources were then organized into different arguments made by the whaling media: animal welfare, cultural significance, economic benefit, dietary choices, research, and more. Out of the 78% American media sources, 68% were heavily anti-whaling biased, 22% were relatively neutral, and 10% had positive perspectives of whaling. Contrarily, Japanese media sources consisted of 87% of pro-whaling biases, While the American media consisted of focus on research, illegal practices, cultural

heritage, and dietary choices, Japanese sources focused on Cultural heritage, discrimination and pressure on Japan, research, and dietary choices (Xu et al. 2022). This study shows that media could be a solution for changing perspectives on whaling.

While the probability of completely ceasing all practices of whaling is out of reach, we can find ways to reduce the harm on the environment and change perspectives of whaling practices through advocacy and media.

Zander: This will be a major task though. There is a large divide between Japan and Australia over the valuation of whale conservation, even among anti-whaling populations in these countries. This poses the difficulty of achieving international consensus about whale conservation, especially since it is unclear if the market provides incentives to do so. There is a small, gradually increasing number of Japanese people that are willing to invest as much as their Australian counterparts to terminate commercial whaling. Despite the popularization of whale watching, viewing these species did not increase the valuation in terms of willingness to pay (WTP). However, inviting more individuals to be involved in NGOs that support biodiversity conservation may increase motivation to protect whale species and encourage financial support efforts. Fostering a community of people with environmentally friendly attitudes and more knowledge about whales, regardless of one's country, will yield a larger population valuing additional protections for whales. (Wakamatsu et al., 2018)

Jose: We must also be careful with the way anti-whaling regulations are implemented, as seen with the activities of the Sea Shepherd, also known as the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. They have been directly involved in anti-whaling efforts for the better part of 20 years now. They have been frustrated by the lack of repercussions in Japanese whaling. They received worldwide attention for their hit series *Whale Wars* on the channel Animal Planet. Some of their techniques in putting themselves between the Japanese whalers and the whales noted from an article by Joseph Roeschke have been “ramming the ships, firing smoke canisters onto decks, using nylon rope to disable propellers, and nailing shut drains that spill whale blood into the ocean” (Roeschke, 2009). The Sea Shepherds have felt empowered to and have insisted upon the international law under the United Nations World Charter for Nature (Sea Shepherd Conservation Society). Eco-terrorism claims laid against the group have been considered valid under the definitions laid by several groups including the FBI. For example, James F. Jarboe, Domestic Terrorism Section Chief of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division defines eco-terrorism as “the use or threatened use of violence of a criminal nature against innocent victims or property by an environmentally oriented, sub-national group for environmental-political reasons, or aimed at an audience beyond the target, often of a symbolic nature” (Eco-Terrorism and Lawlessness on the National Forests). It is thus clear that Japan's accusations of eco-terrorism have truth as the aforementioned group has repeatedly used violence in the form of damaging property in order to persuade the whalers and people of Japan to stop whaling. Even the ideals of the founder of the

group, Paul Watson, have drawn widespread condemnation. According to Watson in an interview with the Telegraph, “if you’re not willing to risk your life to save a whale, you don’t belong on this ship and you won’t get past our vetting process” (Paul Watson: Sea Shepherd Eco-Warrior Fighting to Stop Whaling and Seal Hunts, 2009). While the goals of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society are noble, their practices remain highly questionable and in recent years, many of their members have distanced themselves from Watson and have pursued more peaceful measures similar to Greenpeace. Their methods have only served to add fuel to the fire. Their life-threatening actions only add to the frustration and determination of Japanese whalers and the government to continue whaling. While they have received leeway thus far, this factor may change if human lives are sacrificed.

Ashley: Gotcha... Well, there definitely has to be a better solution for whaling. Are there any ways for whaling to continue without as much environmental harm?

Josh: I think whaling boils down to sustainable hunting. For millions of years humans have hunted for survival and even animal domestication and ranching is in some ways hunting for human survival. I think that people should have the opportunity to whale, however only in sustainable ways. Millions of people hunt deer, yet their populations are not endangered. The main reason for this is all of the regulations such as only being able to hunt males of a certain age, which allows populations to stay healthy. According to Japan’s reporting, 122 out of the 181 female minke whales killed in Antarctica during the 2017/18 season were found to be pregnant, which is not sustainable at all. Even some of the less populated species like big horned sheep, only a few people once a year can hunt them and that quota varies on a year to year basis. If there was a way to establish these regulations and keep whaling private for individuals and more importantly for indigenous groups then there should not be any issue with whaling. However, that would require Japan to cut or stop commercial whaling. Regardless, Japan’s move to stop commercial whaling in the Antarctic allows that region to once again be a true whale sanctuary. Ultimately as Japan starts whaling in their own waters, there is not much IWC can do besides work with Japan to set quotas that are sustainable and responsible, especially since it is in the Japanese best interest if they plan to whale for many more years. (“*Whaling in Japan,*” 2022)

Caitlyn: Based on everything we’ve discussed so far, the reason why Japan continues whaling and how whaling can be managed in the future sounds extremely complex. It sounds like there are historical, cultural, and economic motives behind Japan’s continued whaling. However, from the ethical, biological, and environmental perspectives, whaling has major negative impacts on several wildlife species in addition to whales, which could cascade and eventually impact humans in terms of the food they consume. Since the situation is so nuanced, I agree that it would be difficult to completely legalize whaling or to completely ban it, especially with the need to respect global power dynamics. The best management strategy would likely find some sort of middle ground, so I can see the merit in Josh’s proposal to find a way to sustainably

whale, especially with more humane processes. However, while non-lethal research is conducted to find out how to sustainably whale, what policies should be implemented, if any? Deciding to leave the situation as it will have a very different set of effects from taking immediate action. Honestly speaking, I feel like I have a better grasp of the current whaling situation, but at the same time, I am leaving with even more questions. I think the best course of action now would be to turn the question back to the audience to think about based on the information we have provided.

Zander: So, based on our investigation of Japan's current situation compared to Norway and indigenous populations, do *you* think whaling should continue, and if so, how should whaling be managed going forward?

[Whale sounds (Relax Night & Day - Beautiful Nature & Sounds, 2019, 00:00:00–0:00:45)]

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