Whaling in the Modern World
Natasha Ferrer-Perez
Miramar College, 10440 Black Mountain Rd, San Diego, CA 92126

Abstract
Whaling is an age old practice in the harvesting of a natural resource for both nutritional sustenance and oil. As nations vie for the pro- and anti-whaling debate, political organizations have formed and both are using the ecology of whales and the science behind whaling to bolster their support for either sustainable whaling or a blanket conservationist moratorium on whaling.

History of Whaling
Whales have been hunted since prehistoric times for their bones, meat, and tallow or blubber. Ancient methods still used today includes driving smaller cetaceans to the shore with boats and loud sounds until they tire enough to either beach themselves or get harpooned.

Abstract
Whales migrate long distances across oceans and between continents in order to feed and breed. This subjects whales to both the unregulated international waters as well as to the Exclusive Economic Zones of every coastal nation. Spanning the oceanic territory of many nations makes them an industry that is near impossible to fully regulate. Gestation takes a year or longer and most cows only give birth to one calf every two to four years. Whales are born to swim. They need to nurse from their mothers until they are able to catch fish on their own. This being the case, it is difficult to regulate a sustainable whaling industry when the rate of catch already far exceeds the rate of recovery for many species of whales. Those nations that actively whale claim otherwise. Allowing any kind of whales would subject the older mothers to fisheries and would leave any calf unable to nurse or fend for itself.

Sustainable Whaling
Just as with any sustainable animal harvesting, in order to preserve population levels at an optimum level, you must efficiently harvest animals at a rate lower than the species’ rate of reproduction. You must also reduce waste of resources harvested to reduce the amount of harvesting required. In order to be efficient, you must develop and acquire new technologies. However, as these new technologies are developed and implemented, catch will increase and eventually will exceed the ability of the species’ population to recover, leading to decline and eventual extinction.

Whaling Techniques and Technology
The most ancient and common non-industrial method of whaling is simple and consists of simply encircling a pack of whales with boats and distracting them with loud sounds on the water, forcing them in a secluded cove, and simply hooping them by their blow holes to beach them if they don’t beach themselves first. Harpooning on the open sea is also a very common method in non-industrialized nations. Minke and Antarctic Minke whales are the primarily choice whales of the modern day whaling industry. This has shifted away from oil and more towards meat, despite their high mercury content.

Other Cetaceans
While other cetaceans are not specifically protected by the IWC, such as dolphins, porpoises, or the smaller whale species, there is no specific wording excluding them from protection either. There does exist an industry for dolphin meat as well a trade for both dolphins and whales in the entertainment industry. Any regulations existing to regulate these particular fields tends to be vague and imposes no real consequences on their respective industries. There is however a conservationist movement towards the protection of these smaller cetations as well.

Timeline in Whaling Politics
The IWC was originally chartered between industrialized whaling nations in order to cooperatively regulate a sustainable whaling industry through voluntary membership and self-regulation. Over time, the membership has evolved to include land-locked and lesser-developed nations pushing for a conservationist policy. In 1986, the IWC mandated a blanket moratorium on all whaling which could be objected to by its member nations. In 1994, the IWC established a Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary. Since shift away from its original charter in ideology towards a more conservationist regime, many pro-whaling nations, including Japan, have objected to the moratorium or have left the IWC altogether. The IWC meets annually to renew the moratorium by a 75% majority. Member nations may choose to formally object to the moratorium, as Japan did. Nations may also choose to issue permits for scientific whaling to its citizens at its own choosing and regulations. Many have accused these scientific whaling permits to be a guise for the whaling industry. Those nations argue that they choose not to waste the whales after research.

Whale Migration and Breeding
Whales migrate long distances across oceans and between continents in order to feed and breed. This subjects whales to both the unregulated international waters as well as to the Exclusive Economic Zones of every coastal nation. Spanning the oceanic territory of many nations makes them an industry that is near impossible to fully regulate.

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Bibliography

Whale Oil Products
Whale oil and products no longer being profitable industries was the transmission oil of choice for automobiles due to its long life and effects on performance.

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Whale Products and Usage
With medieval technologies being insufficient to drill for the modern day oil utilized in technologies today, the oils of the past were harvested from whale tallow, or blubber. This oil was used for everything from oil lamps and candle making to medicinal and pharmaceutical remedies for a number of illnesses of the time. Up until the Endangered Species Act of 1972, sperm whale oil was the transmission oil of choice for automobiles due to its long carbon chains. Whale oil and products no longer being profitable industries today, the majority of whaling is for the food industry. Many smaller nations and less-industrialized coastal communities rely heavily on whaling for food and nutritional protein.

Ecology of Whales
Whales are a keystone predator in the oceans as well as a primary source of detritus nutrients for benthic organisms. Their ability of the species’ population to recover, leading to decline and eventual extinction.

Energy of Whales
Whales are a keystone predator in the oceans as well as a primary source of detritus nutrients for benthic organisms. Their decline in the ecosystem could easily spell large imbalances amongst all of the lower leveled organisms along the food web.

The NAMMCO was established in 1992 by Norway, Iceland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands to follow the ideals of the original 1986 charter of the IWC. They aim to research the conservation of a sustainable whale fishery rather than a conservationist view, as adopted by the current membership of the IWC via the moratorium on all whaling.

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