

International Association for People-Environment Studies
My friend the whale
Emotional connectedness and willingness to behave pro-environmentally in whale watchers



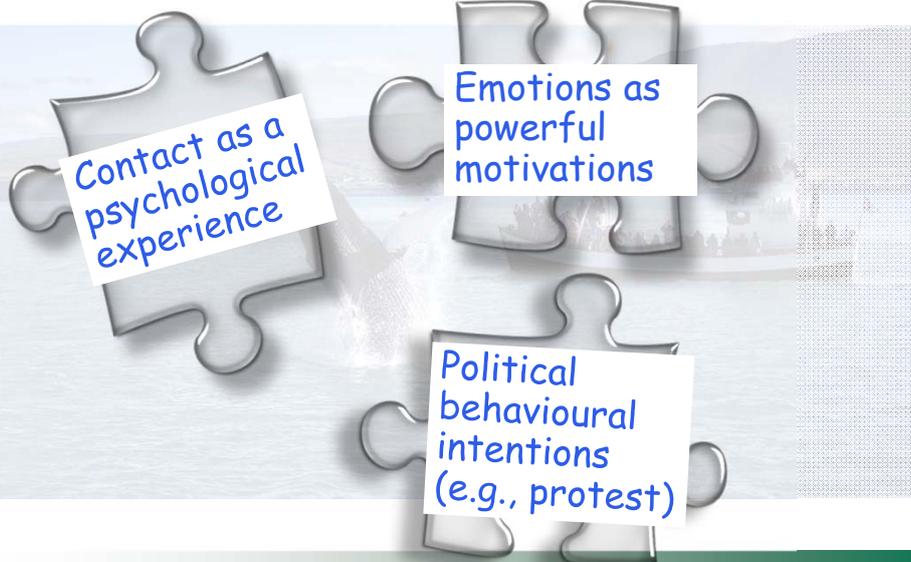
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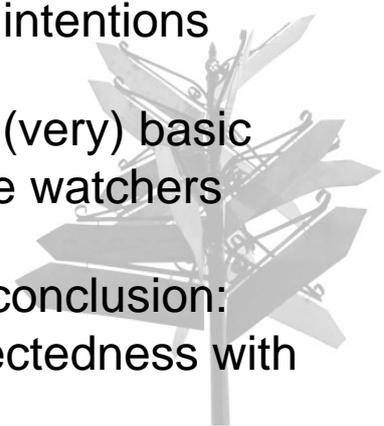
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A social-psychological perspective on whale watching



Emotional connectedness and behavioral intentions

- (1) Background: Contact, emotions, and behavioural intentions
 - (2) Study: Testing a (very) basic model with whale watchers
 - (3) Discussion and conclusion: Emotional connectedness with nature
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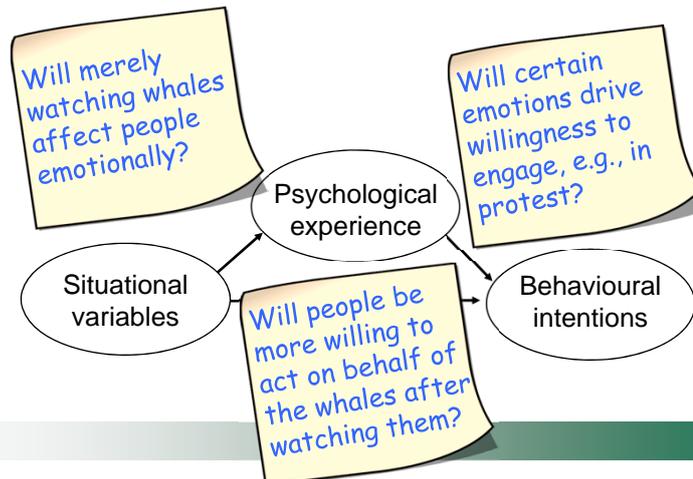
Some pieces to the puzzle

- Contact effects on positive attitudes towards outgroups mediated by emotional process variables (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006)
 - “Contact” with animals?
- Collective political behaviour can be a powerful driver of social change (Bamberg et al., 2015)
- and depends on (emotional) investment in a specific group or cause (Iyer & Ryan, 2009; Subasic et al., 2008)



A (very) basic model

- How could experiences in nature affect pro-environmental behavioural intentions?



Study setup: Whale watching in Iceland



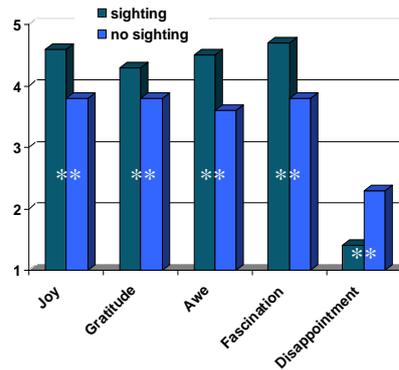
- $N = 286$ whale watchers
- 53% female
- 11 - 80 years old, $M = 32.7$ ($SD = 17.4$)
- at least 1 sighting during 90% of tours

Measures and results

4.) How strongly did you experience each of the following emotions during the tour?

	not at all				very strongly
Joy	<input type="radio"/>				
Gratitude	<input type="radio"/>				
Awe	<input type="radio"/>				
Fascination	<input type="radio"/>				
Disappointment	<input type="radio"/>				

Participants reported stronger emotions when they had seen orcas or dolphins during the tour.



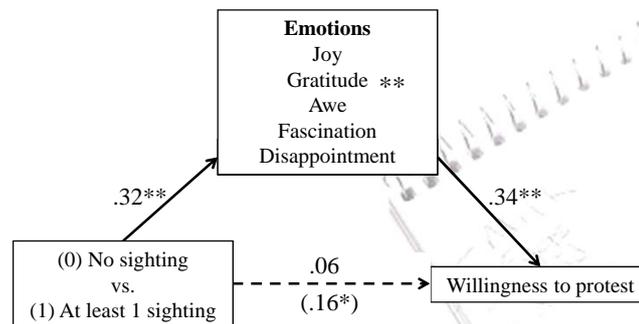
Measures and results



7.) We are interested to hear what you would be willing to do in order to protect our oceans and the environment in general and if you have done any of the following.

I would take part in a protest raising awareness about the situation

	I would not				I would	I have done this
	<input type="radio"/>					



Gratitude mediates the effect of sighting on willingness to protest, Sobel $z = 3.69, p < .001$.

analyses control for number of passengers, age, and gender



Conclusion and discussion

- In some respects, exceptional experiences in nature may function just like “meeting a friend” (Brown, 2010)
 - Watching whales evokes strong positive emotions
- These emotions, in turn, seem to drive willingness to engage “on behalf of that friend”
- Exceptional experiences in nature may mobilise pro-environmental political behaviour (Rees & Bamberg, 2014)

Thank you!



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