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On Cooling the Tourist Out  
Notes on the Management of Spoiled Expectations

**Abstract**

This article focuses on the social world of the commercial whale watch cruise. It draws on several years of participant observation research with marine field scientists, particularly field scientists who serve as naturalists on commercial whale watch cruises. Using Erving Goffman's work, the essay details how the naturalist's narration is an example of "cooling the mark out" that Goffman conceptually outlined and others have explored. In the social world of the commercial whale watch, the naturalist is the "operator and the tourist the mark". It is argued that the naturalist's narration is the principal means for cooling the tourists' out. This is done within a context of the operator anticipating a set of spoiled expectations the tourist is likely to experience. While this essay extends the work of Goffman and others who have explored different settings of the cooling out process, it substantially differs from them. Past studies have focused on the cooling out process primarily within a context of individual face-to-face interaction. This essay looks at the commercial whale watch as a social setting of cooling out the mark not on a face-to-face basis but as a process of a "group of individuals who are being "cooled". Most importantly, this is viewed as occurring not after they have been conned or duped but in anticipation of their likely experiencing a set of spoiled expectations.

**Keywords**

Cooling out; Eco-tourism; Goffman; Science studies; Social construction of experience; Tour guides; Tourism; Narrative; Whale watching; Naturalists

In his classic article, "On Cooling the Mark Out," Goffman (1952) describes the "cooling out" process that attempts to smooth over or avoid adverse, hostile reactions of a "mark." That is, cooling out refers to persons whose self-image has been tarnished or shattered in realizing that they have been duped, suckered, or conned. In essence, "cooling out" is an interaction process designed to maintain routine practices of a social order by managing a specific perception of self and reality within social relations.

At first, Goffman entices us to think about "cooling out" by way of a sting or con game. However, he promptly draws our attention to consider other social arenas,

such as an intimate relationship or bureaucratic organization, which may also involve a “*mark* to be cooled”. Goffman (1952) notes:

Persons who participate in what is recognized as a confidence game are found in only a few social settings, but persons who have to be cooled out are found in many. Cooling the mark out is one theme in a very basic social story.<sup>1</sup> (pp. 452-453)

Indeed, other researchers have looked at a variety of social settings where persons have to be cooled out, or prevented from feeling conned or abused, as Goffman suggests. Each of these settings will have an individual operator whose role it is to cool a mark out. Clark (1960: 569) observed this phenomenon within higher education where educators must manage the discrepancy between encouraging students to achieve and within a context of limited opportunities. Pasko (2002, 49) studied the strip tease act in which “strippers maintain control of their customers”. Snow, Robinson, and McCall (1991) carefully observed the strategic cooling out methods women use in singles bars to avoid or extricate themselves from potential threats to body and self, while Miller and Robins (2004, 50) determined that OP or Out Placement in work environments parallels Goffman’s cooling out the mark metaphor. Miller and Robinson (2004: 50 and 55) see OP as “shifting clients’ attention (and smoothing the transition) from lost jobs to reemployment”. Walton and Warwick (1973: 682, 686, 687), on the other hand, consider the cooling out process entailed in situations facing external Organization Development Practitioners when they attempt both to improve organization capacity in reaching goals and improve the quality of work life for organization members. These studies collectively point to the idea that there are many social settings, other than a con or sting, which may well include a cooling out process, as Goffman earlier noted.

Most empirical studies of “cooling out a mark” look at individual face-to-face interaction. Pasko’s (2002) study specifically looks at a social situation of a group (with a focus on an individual, however) and notes the attempt to anticipate and control audiences. It is primarily social settings which entail audiences or a group of individuals (such as in live performances, eco-tourism, airline boarding rooms, etc.) who have come to the social occasion with an understanding of what that occasion should be experienced as and whose attention is focused on a individual leader (for example, guides of all manner of description, coordinators, actors, stand up comics and so forth) where anticipatory cooling out of a group would occur. The cooling out process would be handled in a manner discussed below whereby the group’s leader must verbally construct the “nature” of the experience the audience needs to grasp.

The commercial whale watch cruise affords another opportunity to observe the “cooling-out,” process where the “tourist” is the mark and the narrator or “naturalist” is the operator. The naturalist anticipates and is responsible for managing what is likely to be tourists’ spoiled expectations. Spoiled expectations may arise for several reasons including; not seeing whales, dramatic and nasty weather and sea conditions, and especially not seeing a spectacular or in close encounter with whales.

Tourists’ expectations appear to emerge from a number of experiences, including the attention media have given to marine mammals, especially endangered species of whales, from visitations to marine parks, and, of course, from advertisements created and distributed by commercial whale watch companies.

Tourists, however, may dramatically differ in their expectations as well as their perceptions of their experiences. From my experience in observing tourists on

commercial carriers I have noticed that the more trips they have taken, the more their expectations are, obviously, aligned with their experiences of a whale watch cruise.

In anticipation of tourists' expectations not being met the naturalist attempts to manage the discrepancy between expectation and experience by verbally framing and directing tourists' perceptions of their whale watch experiences. That is, the naturalist must assuage the tourists' sense of being conned, that is, must cool the tourist out, when their experiences "appear" to pale in comparison to their expectations. The naturalist attempts to manage the likely discrepancies between expectations and outcomes. The key issue here revolves around the confluence of *perception* (cf. Goffman 1963) and *expectation*.

Drawing freely on Goffman's conceptual contributions (1952, 1959, 1961, 1963, and 1966) and on nearly two decades of my own field research, this article looks at the relationship between the narrator/naturalist and the tourists in terms of "operator and mark". It articulates the nature of the cooling out process used by the naturalist to handle tourists' spoiled expectations.

This essay then follows Goffman and other researchers and extends the social domains within which the social processes entailed in cooling out a mark may be observed, specifically the commercial whale watch cruise. Like these studies, there is a detailing of the verbal face to face interactional exchanges operators use in cooling the mark out. However, unlike most studies that detail these face to face individual processes, this essay details the cooling process carried out not with an individual but toward a group and from a physically separated distance. In addition, it is being done not after the con has been experienced but in anticipation of the mark believing that their "self" has been compromised.

## Observing whale watchers

My research is grounded within the sociology of science and scientific knowledge (see, for example, Clarke and Fujimura 1992; Collins 1983; Collins and Evans 2002; Lynch 1997; Mulkey 1983). It has been primarily devoted to the study of the everyday life-world of field scientists "doing science," especially the life-world of marine field scientists studying cetacea in their natural habitats. Within that context, I specifically focused on scientists who contributed to the emergence, development, and routine use of "photographic identification" of cetacea.

Data for this article are derived primarily from observing field scientists in their "natural settings." For more than two decades I have observed scientists in the field, in their laboratories,<sup>ii</sup> and on board field research and commercial whale watch vessels. I have formally and informally interviewed more than sixty research scientists in these settings. Many of my interviews and observations of scientists were with those scientists who were/are involved with photographic identification of humpback and killer whales. A number of observations occurred as I accompanied field scientists who were collecting data while they served as *tour guides* or *naturalists* on commercial whale watch cruises.

In accompanying scientists serving as naturalists, I had access to parts of the ship that are not accessible to tourists. I was, thereby, in a position to observe most of the "back region" of the commercial whale watch cruise (Goffman 1959 and MacCannell 1973). Being behind the scenes was often awkward because I was trying to be close enough to observe scientists at work while simultaneously trying to keep my distance in order to not get in their way.

While observing scientists who were serving as “naturalists” I became interested in and paid specific attention to the nature, content, and meaning of their narration on the commercial cruise. Eventually, I abandoned my role as researcher accompanying scientists and joined other passengers as a *fellow whale watching tourist* to observe the ways in which naturalists, be they scientist or not, narrated the voyage. I spent several summer seasons on whale watch cruises based in New England, noting and recording the naturalists’ narrative. I also used a video camera to record a whale’s surface behaviors, as many tourists would. In this way, I was able to capture the naturalist’s narrative while simultaneously “shooting whales”.

It is this part of my fieldwork that the following analysis of the naturalist on a commercial whale watch cruise is based. While it is my fieldwork during this period that primarily informs this essay, it is, however, also informed by all of my research with marine field scientists.<sup>iii</sup>

### **The commercial whale watch**

There is a range of “tourist outfitted” vessels varying in size, luxury, and expense. In terms of size, there are small open Zodiacs that can carry nine to twelve passengers and are primarily used for tourism purposes. There are also small “research vessels” equipped to carry four or five tourists. In terms of these small research vessels, the primary “objective” is to enable tourists to observe whales and to “participate” in scientific research. These small research vessels will be at sea for four to eight hours. One research group in Gloucester, Massachusetts regularly operated such voyages during the summer season. At the other extreme, I have also worked on enormous, luxurious ships such as the Navatek or Star of Honolulu. These ships have at least two tourist decks and can carry up to three hundred tourists.

While I have been on both small and large ships, the commercial ships I have been on most often are between 65 and 100 ft long, carrying approximately 100 passengers and charging each adult tourist about \$20-30 (US). Normally, most commercial cruises are two to five hours long depending on the company, geographic location, and the embarkation port’s proximity to whales. For example, when whales are relatively close to shore and are seen relatively soon after embarkation, as in Hawaii or British Columbia, a whale watch may only take two hours. Commercial whale watching trips embarking from Gloucester or Provincetown, Massachusetts will usually take four to five hours. Much of that time is spent traveling to and from the day’s designated whale watching site. For such an extensive sea time excursion, tourists must be properly prepared, handled, and, indeed, entertained. Keeping tourists occupied and “entertained” is the responsibility of the ship’s “naturalist” (also, see Davis 1997).

### **The social worlds of a commercial whale watch cruise**

The commercial whale watch cruise is a “traveling gathering” of intersecting social worlds (Goffman 1966). There are four relatively distinct social worlds, each with their specific social types (cf. Becker 1976), that one can observe: (I) the captain and crew, (II) the tour guide, narrator or naturalist, (III) research assistants, when there is a scientist serving as the naturalist, and (IV) the tourists.

While the captain and crew, the researcher and assistants, and, of course, the tourists all want to see whales on every voyage, these different groups have varied

and often contradictory interests, needs, desires, temporal agendas, and perspectives toward the cruise, whales, and watching whales.

The captain and crew are on a relatively rigid schedule that must be kept regardless of how good or bad a day's trip may be. The captain, who may also be the owner or part owner of the company, needs to keep to a scheduled time at sea and produce the best possible sightings for tourists within that schedule without breaching harassment regulations.<sup>iv</sup>

Each company attempts to maintain cooperative relationships with all other whale watch companies in the sighting arena. Since there are many carriers seeking to observe the whales in the same oceanic region, and because the ocean is vast, it is to the advantage of all captains and operators to cooperate with each other in locating whales and in "taking turns" at observing them. Captains regularly exchange information with each other, by radio, regarding types, location, and number of whales and synchronize their movement into and out of "sighting areas." When I asked a naturalist about these procedures, he informed me that, "it is in everyone's best interest to be cooperative since it is a big ocean and in helping each other, everyone benefits".

In addition, within the context of temporal agendas of and coordinated action with other ships, the captain and crew, in conjunction with the naturalist, try to have the trip appear as an (authentic) adventure in biological observation—an adventure not bound by rigid schedules. In other words, the trip becomes an instance of "staged authenticity" (cf., MacCannell 1973 and Davis 1997, 87-88) and if handled well, the tourist may lose sight of the imposed temporal parameters.

In sum, the captain has a schedule to meet and needs to synchronize this with other ships, travel time and distances, and viewing whales. The captain wants to get to the best site as soon as possible, have the longest viewing times in synchronization with other commercial carriers, and return to port on schedule either to end the day or to take out another group of tourists.

Each commercial whale watch cruise will have a tour guide or narrator. On commercial carriers they are nominally referred to and refer to themselves as naturalists. The naturalist is the *voice and representative of authority* of the coast guard, the captain, and when the naturalist is a scientist, science.

Naturalists, however, come in different hues and there are, sociologically speaking, significant differences between naturalists in terms of the prestige they can command, the educational background, experience, training they possess, and their involvement in or connections to science and scientific research. In this regard, naturalists are (a) *narrators*, (b) *naturalists* (per se) or (c) *scientists*.

- (a) The narrator/naturalist is an individual who is trained or asked to do the narrating of the voyage. Usually, they are neither formally trained in the sciences nor are they active, scientific researchers. They are doing a job, often filling in for other naturalists.
- (b) The naturalist/naturalist is someone serving as a narrator who will normally have some degree of formal scientific training and/or extensive scientific fieldwork. Their scientific knowledge is well grounded in formal training, often through internships with senior marine scientists. These naturalists are individuals who are likely considering a scientific career.
- (c) There is also the scientist/naturalist who is usually a field scientist serving as a narrator/naturalist for the commercial carrier. In this service, there is a markedly symbiotic relationship between the scientist-naturalist and the commercial whale watch company. The company gains prestige and competitive advantage in having an "authentic" research scientist as their

naturalist. A commercial carrier not having such a scientist is at a disadvantage. Most of the commercial cruises I took did have a scientist serving as the naturalist<sup>v</sup> and made a point of informing tourists of this fact.

On the other hand, from a research position, the scientist gains research, sea time with no financial outlay. For scientists to do photographic identification/behavioral studies of cetacean requires an inordinate amount of time at sea. The commercial cruise enables free sea time in addition to the research vessels scientists may also have at their disposal. In addition, scientists whose financial research resources are derived in part or full from public donations gain the opportunity to inform tourists on commercial carriers of their scientific, conservation efforts, and financial needs.

In their narration, the scientist/naturalist will clearly identify themselves as such in their opening comments: "Good morning I am Dr. (or Sarah) Jones from the Cetacean Science Center. I will be your naturalist today."

Neither of the two other types of naturalists (i.e., narrators and naturalists, *per se*) will introduce themselves in this manner. Normally, they will introduce themselves by saying, "Good morning I am Sarah Jones and I will be your naturalist today."

When the naturalist is an active, research scientist they are most often engaged in studying cetacea using photographic identification,<sup>vi</sup> and usually they will have one or more research assistants working with them collecting data. The scientists normally engage in research while carrying out their narrator/naturalist duties. In this regard, the scientist/naturalist ideally wants to see as much as possible and to get as many photo/observational opportunities as they can. The scientist characteristically prefers temporal latitude and would prefer not to be hampered by rigid commercial schedules and extraneous demands tourists may impose.

In addition, it is the responsibility of the naturalist to verbally construct, reconstruct, and document "the whale watch experience." When the naturalist is a scientist, the naturalist's construction of reality (or definition of the situation) commands a greater authoritative, authentic voice than it would were a non-scientist articulating the same thing. This is due in part because of the research evidence that the scientist is able to bring forward as part of their personal repertoire of intimate knowledge and direct experience with marine mammals. As well, the perceived status by the tourist of the scientist and the particular scientific field contributes to the acceptability of the scientist's social construction of reality, the status of science within a hierarchy of the social constructions of realities.

Meeting their role demands as both scientist and naturalist is inherently difficult in that these demands often entail a creative balance of contradictory interests, desires, and temporal agendas characteristic of the different social types on board. It is the mandate of the naturalist to mollify these conflicting social worlds. Further, the scientist, in this capacity, must balance tourists' desires with the demands of operating a commercial vessel, within the confines of harassment codes while also attempting to simultaneously carry out scientific field research.

The *tourist*, on the other hand, appears impervious to commercial schedules and, understandably, would like to see as much as possible---the more spectacular, the better. Under good weather and sea conditions, the tourist wants to view whales for as long as possible.<sup>vii</sup> Although tourists differ in this regard, they generally desire *the spectacular*; the greater the spectacle they actually see on a cruise, the more fully their *expectations* of whale watching are fulfilled.

Tourists' expectations and their fulfillment are quite variable. Christopher Hamilton, scientist, instructor, and documentary producer reminded me (19 February

2005 Honolulu, Hawaii) that “just seeing a whale’s dorsal fin in the distance would be ecstasy for some tourists, while others need the spectacular to be excited.” He also noted that “tourists may think that their trip to see whales in their natural habitats will be like the whales they saw on nature documentaries or at marine park shows (cf. Davis, 1997) where animals perform on demand.”

The tourist, while seeking and expecting a spectacular experience, wants what MacCannell (1973 and 1976) has referred to as an “authentic experience.” Given that this is the case, then an authentic experience, whether spectacular or not, must be carefully managed by a coterie of performers---performers who are in the “know” or as Goffman (1963) has characterized, the “wise.” It is the wise who are in the social position to “define the situation as authentic experience”. The weight of this construction of experience rests squarely on the shoulders of the naturalist.

The “tourist industry’s” underlying credo is to provide the appearance of an authentic experience (MacCannell 1973). “The Industry” (sic) is organized to provide a “sense” of an authentic experience within a *zone of comfort*. Or as Holyfield (1999, 5) has noted “today commercial companies compete to provide a desirable (and profitable) mixture of perceived risk and organizational constraint for novice consumers because not everyone demands truly fateful action. Instead, many of us want only the *appearance* of fatefulness.”

This entails (borrowing from Simmel) a balance of “nearness” to the everyday home experiences and “distance” from those very same routines. For the most part, tourists seek the exotic within a range of “tolerated differences.” For example, tourists attending Hawaiian luaus will likely try an authentic Hawaiian dish of kalua pig. Kalua pig is distant and authentic enough but near enough to Western culinary tastes to be tolerable. Tourists are unlikely, however, to consume other “authentic” Hawaiian dishes such as poki, aged poi, and sea vegetables. These foods are far too “exotic” for most tourists, even some of the more culturally adventuresome.

Similarly, the tourist’s desire for an authentic, scientific research experience and the desire for the spectacular are equally contradictory, even where the naturalist attempts to support and promote the idea that the tourist can be part of a scientific adventure. Scientific field research and the spectacular are, nonetheless, contradictory in that seeing the spectacular normally requires an inordinate number of hours of *mundane* research observations. Thus, for the tourist to have an authentic scientific experience while part of a commercial whale watch cruise, the tourist must be willing to “suspend belief” regarding the actual nature of “scientific research.”

The industry is sensitive in supporting this fragile suspension of belief. The tourist must be nurtured, gingerly cared for, and whale watching performances carefully choreographed. As is true in other social stages, any number of events may occur to disrupt or undermine this performance. It is incumbent upon the naturalists, however, to maintain the performance and most importantly, as well as, to anticipate its breakdown and be prepared to handle this.

Searching for authentic experience leaves the tourist in a precarious position. It puts pressure on the managers of social reality to not only *not* let the performance fail, but, more importantly, to have strategies at their disposal to *cool the tourist out* in anticipation of the choreographed reality going awry.

## Marks and Operators: Tourists and Naturals

For Goffman, the mark can be a victim of a scam or any individual caught in a social situation in which his/her sense of self has been compromised and their perception of self shattered. A “mark” emerges when the self has been threatened, or diminished. As Goffman (1952) states:

The mark is a person who has compromised himself, in his own eyes if not in the eyes of others. Although the term, mark, is commonly applied to a person who is given short-lived expectations by operators who have intentionally mis-represented the facts, a less restricted definition is desirable in analyzing the larger social scene. An expectation may finally prove false, even though it has been possible to sustain it for a long time and even though the operators acted in good faith. So, too, the disappointment of reasonable expectations, as well as misguided ones, creates a need for consolation. (p. 452)

And, as Goffman (1952: 452) notes, the mark is a “person whose expectations and self-conceptions have been built up and then shattered.”

The commercial whale watch nearly always demands consolation for at least some of the tourists on board because of the tourists’ spoiled expectations—specifically, tourists’ expectations of the spectacular performances by whales are rarely met for several reasons. It is the possibility and likelihood of spoiled expectations that correspondingly produces the confluence of the *tourist as mark* and the *naturalist as operator*.

Expectations of the spectacular are spawned in the tourists’ imagination from three principle sources; (1) video footage of whales tourists have seen, (2) captive, performing cetacea as witnessed in marine parks (cf. Davis 1997)<sup>viii</sup> and (3) advertisements promoted by tour companies and tourist bureaus---- advertisements primarily geared toward enticing tourists into taking a cruise by promoting the image that it will be a spectacular nature experience. It is, however, an experience in “nature” guided by a narrator (see next section below).

Furthermore, and especially when the naturalist is a scientist, tourists are lead to believe they are on a scientific adventure and that their participation *vis-à-vis* the whale watch supports scientific research, conservation efforts, and educational projects. Indeed, images or perceptions of the spectacular overlap with beliefs that scientific research is always an exciting adventure. Rarely are nonscientists (tourists) aware that scientific field research normally entails tedious and often “boring” time spent doing observational research that demands a high degree of disciplined dedication to long -term study.

Spectacular expectations are rarely met and tourists’ expectations of comfort are often thwarted. In addition, it is not a single individual who is the mark but a group of individuals with different interpretive perspectives of their whale watch experience. Because of these factors, the naturalist treats the entire voyage, from start to finish as a cooling out process. Actually this is an instance of “blowing off the mark” (Goffman 1952) or avoiding having to treat a disgruntled mark after the fact.

Clark (1960 569) argues, for example, that junior colleges in the US are structurally situated to cool the student out by lessening the impact of the “inconsistency between encouragement to achieve and the realities of limited opportunity.” Similarly, the naturalist attempts to cool tourists out by framing their perceive experiences with their taken-for-granted ideas of what those experiences should be.



“Cooling the tourist out” entails constructing and reconstructing tourists’ perceptions of their whale watch experience. Such reality construction is, in essence, an attempt to mollify the “success” of advertisements, inducements, and enticements by way of a denial of the spectacular as an everyday occurrence. This does not mean that the spectacular does not occur, but the likelihood of the spectacular occurring on any given voyage is low. For example, documentary film producer Christopher Hamilton informed this author that it takes about 3,000 hours of video recordings to produce approximately two hours of excellent footage.

Cooling the tourist out is an attempt to produce the perception of satisfaction. Cooling the tourist out is done to defuse perceptions by tourists that they have perhaps been sold a “bill goods”--- that is, that the cruise company did not deliver what they implicitly promised by way of their promotional advertising. It is designed to assuage the perception that the tourist was taken for a “ride” because they did not see the spectacular or on the occasion that they did not see whales, at all. It is, of course, in the interest of both crew and naturalist not to have to cope with a “heated mark.” Attempts must be made to avoid having disgruntled and disappointed tourists.

In sum, the captain, crew, naturalist, and tourists have contradictory interests, expectations, and temporal agendas. As such it is reasonable to assume that tourists’ expectations are likely not to be realized. It is, nonetheless the case that the tourist’s perception of satisfaction needs to be nurtured for business, research, and conservation support and that the tourist should not walk away as dissatisfied, disgruntled tourists. It is the naturalist that attends to cooling the tourist out.

### **On cooling the tourist out**

Attention now turns to the scientist as naturalist and operator and the means by which the naturalist attempts to cool the tourist out.

The naturalist who is a scientist is characteristically perceived to be in a position of high social status, particularly in terms of knowledge claims about the *natural world*. This being the case, the tourist has little difficulty accepting and submitting to the narrator’s construction and reconstruction of the occasion, of what has happened, and of *what has been seen*. Indeed, having a scientist serving as the naturalist helps to establish the cruise as an authentic nature experience. The tourist can easily accept seeing nature “through the eyes” of a nature expert. Indeed, in terms of the “operator,” Goffman (1952: 457) notes: “give the task to someone whose status relative to the mark will serve to ease the situation in some way...frequently, someone who is two or three levels above the mark in line of command.”

In cooling out the tourist, the naturalist, overall, mediates the interests, needs, and desires of the captain/crew, coast guard, their own research, and the tourists. The naturalist is expected to maintain social order by mollifying actual and perceived differences between three distinct and intersecting social worlds. Furthermore, naturalists must carry out this work under the vagaries of cetacean behavior (spectacular or mundane), weather and sea conditions, travel time to and from the observational site, and maximization of tourists’ pleasure.

Naturalists help to maintain social order, create a veil of authentic experience, and negotiate between intersecting temporal agendas by way of their narration of the entire cruise. In accomplishing such a feat, naturalists are in effect cooling the tourist out. There are four distinct phases to the cooling out process on a commercial whale watch. Each phase entails the management of a specific set of likely or actually spoiled expectations.

The first phase entails opening comments about the ship, whales, and maritime safety. These also include “opening endings”. The second phase begins by shifting the tourists’ gaze (Urry 1990) from whales to the return to port. This happens just prior to actually turning about to head to port and normally includes a “final look” at whales before moving away from the observational site (s). The third phase is the journey back to port which is especially highlighted by the naturalist’s construction and reconstruction of the day’s experience, including what was sighted and what had happened. The fourth phase involves the naturalist, research assistants, and, usually, available crew moving freely about the ship mingling with tourists, and the setting up a kiosk inside the main cabin.

The first phase is the most important. It sets the stage for and is the backdrop to the cooling out process for the entire journey. What is said by the naturalist in this phase serves as an explanation for different events and experiences of the voyage.

In this first stage, the naturalist’s opening statements normally include the statement, “we will be seeing whales in their natural habitats”. At first, I was puzzled by this comment. Why would he/she say something so obvious? We are, after all, on a ship and will be several miles out to sea. The comment turns out to be a device to end opening comments and especially to open “ending” comments (see below). It serves as both an *account* of (Scott and Lyman 1968) and *disclaimer* for (Hewitt and Stokes 1975) the day’s experiences.

The naturalist, at this point, is in the first stage of *cooling-out the tourist* by attempting to manage spoiled expectations before they occur, especially expectations of the spectacular. In other words, the naturalist by making the natural habitat statement is in essence preparing for the very likely event that on this trip the probability of seeing the spectacular is remote and in all likelihood tourists’ expectations will be spoiled. In the language of Hewitt and Stokes (1975: 2) the naturalist is providing a *disclaimer*; that is, “defining the future in the present, creating interpretations of potentially problematic events intended to make them unproblematic when they occur.”

On the returning leg of the journey, depending on events and conditions, the naturalist may evoke the natural habitat comment as an *account* of what happened. As Scott and Lyman (1968) note:

An account is a linguistic device employed whenever action is subjected to evaluative inquiry. Such devices are a crucial element in the social order since they prevent conflicts from arising by verbally bridging the gap between action and expectation. Moreover, accounts are situated according to the statuses of the interactants, and are standardized within cultures so that certain accounts are terminologically stabilized and routinely expected when activity falls outside the domain of expectations. (p. 46)

Unlike cooling out an individual mark who has come to realize his/her situation as a mark, the naturalist is cooling out a group in anticipation of those who may actually need to be cooled.

For example, when the naturalist claims that whales will be seen in their natural habitat, the naturalist is attempting to cool the tourist out because of two possible ways that tourist expectations may be spoiled. First, there is always the possibility that no whales will be seen. I have only been on one cruise where “nothing,” literally not one whale was spotted until the return to port. On the return, the captain took a “detour” and did manage to have tourists “see a whale.” Tourists are normally notified at the outset that if no whales are sighted, they will receive a coupon for a free voyage

to be used by a specified date.<sup>ix</sup> In so doing, the tourist can be made to feel less disappointed should they not see a whale.

Second, naturalists are well aware (as noted earlier) that tourists have seen a plethora of photographic and cinema graphic images of the magnificent, indeed, spectacular acts of whales in their natural habitat - especially the spectacular display of a fifty foot humpback whales "breaching."<sup>x</sup> While breaching is a common behavior by humpbacks, it is not a common sight.

Not only must the naturalist struggle to deal with the spectacular images of whales that tourists have seen, the naturalist must also contend with promotional images companies display around their ships and ticketing offices. Some of the more spectacular images can be found on brochures promoting the commercial carrier. Ironically, scientists took many of the brochure photographs as part of their photographic identification research. In addition, the naturalist must also contend with the stage performance of dolphins and whales tourists have seen at marine parks.

By intentionally locating the voyage within the context of a "natural habitat" the naturalist is indirectly alerting tourists to the fact that they are at the mercy of nature. In this way, the naturalist and the captain are, to a great extent, relieved of responsibility for the lack of spectacle or, for that matter, a sighting. A very disappointing aspect to this, however, is even if there are spectacular occurrences tourists may nevertheless not see what they have grown accustomed to seeing on TV or at marine parks. I recall one trip that was indeed spectacular where I overheard tourists lament the fact that not much had happened. It is an astonishingly sad commentary on the impact of popular media on perceptions of nature (see Davis 1997).

Furthermore, pointing to the fact that "we will be observing whales in their natural habitat" suggests and allows for the ending of a voyage regardless of the sort of day it had been. It serves to open the ending of the voyage without the onus resting solely on the shoulders of the naturalist and/or captain.

Another indirect means in cooling out the tourist at this first stage of the voyage is to invite tourists to participate in the adventure of spotting whales. Their assistance is solicited for two reasons; (1) for the enhancement of everyone's experience and (2) to help, when the naturalist is a scientist, carryout photographic identification research. Many, though not all, tourists readily participate in the search for whales and will make an effort to point out whales to the crew or naturalist. As best as I can ascertain from my research study, it is the scientific aspect of the whale watch that is attractive but mainly in passing and rarely does it captivate, or appear to captivate as well as hold that captivation after whales are actually sighted for most tourists.

What this sense of participation does do, however, is to add to the tourists' sense of an authentic experience, provide a sense of participation in scientific and conservation work and help generate a sense of group cohesion around scientific field study. The sense of participating in scientific research for those tourists who are interested also helps to offset disappointing dimensions of the trip such as bad seas and weather and adds a sense of feeling good over contributing to conservation efforts. In addition, participating in field research helps facilitate support for and donations to scientific research. Nonetheless, the main event is still watching whales, not engaging in scientific research.

Generally, in terms of contributing to research by spotting whales for researchers the tourist does not realize that usually there are several trained individuals on board looking in all directions from high above the tourists where they have greater visibility. Although it does on occasion happen, the likelihood that a

tourist would spot a whale that was missed by the captain, crew, naturalist or research team is very slim. In addition, the narrator and other crew will, on occasion, spot a whale but wait for a tourist to “spot” it before announcing the whale’s location.<sup>xi</sup> This in itself engages the tourist as a “partner” with the scientist.

What the tourist is not normally aware of is that ships from different whale watch companies are in continuous radio communication with each other. Although companies are competitors, it is in their best interest to support each other by sharing information regarding the locations, headings, dive patterns, and types of whales. In addition, the tourist is usually unaware of the fact that each commercial whale watch carrier is located within an oceanic, informal queue with other ships each of which will patiently await their opportunity to get a closer, better look at a whale or group of whales.

The second phase in cooling out the tourist begins when the naturalist attempts to shift the “tourist’s gaze” away from watching whales and to begin the journey back to port. This shift is normally accomplished by the naturalist indicating that it is time to return and we will take a last look at whales on site or where whales had not been seen, to look at a different site on the way back to port.

In beginning the journey back to port at its appointed time, the temporal agendas of the tourist, the captain, and the naturalist are likely to be in conflict. If it is a “good day,” the tourist and the scientist will undoubtedly want to stay as long as possible. The ship is, however, on a tight commercial schedule and the ship’s captain is mindful to respect the queuing norms informally established by commercial operators. To stay too long or to jump the queue breaks with normative expectations.

This turning point of the tourist’s gaze away from the “site” and toward the trip home or back to port demands a high degree of finesse on the part of the naturalist. The naturalist attempts to have a smooth transition from observing whales to moving off the site and returning to port. This is especially difficult to accomplish under ideal weather and sea conditions combined with a spectacular whale performance. In a very different context but nonetheless similar vein in shifting focus, Miller and Robinson (2004: 55) noted; “Minimizing retaliation and severance are both accomplished through OP (Outplacement Program) microprocess by shifting clients’ attention from lost jobs to reemployment.” Similarly, the naturalist needs to create a new focal point for the tourists.

When conditions are not so ideal, however, turning to port can be met with a delightful sigh of relief and joyous applause. Once that is accomplished, the naturalist begins their reconstruction of the day’s voyage.

In the excitement of their journey, it is fairly easy to understand that the tourists are likely to forget that they are on a choreographed and scheduled performance, indeed, a performance of staged authenticity. It is up to the naturalist to shake the tourists from their suspension of belief by shifting attention to ending observing whales with an announcement that it is time to return to port. Given, however, that tourists are likely to live their everyday lives in the industrial time/task framework, and that coupled with appeals to authority, the naturalist’s task in gently shifting the tourists’ gaze (from whales to the journey to port) is much less arduous than it might at first appear.

The naturalist will normally frame moving off site by announcing something like, “the captain has informed me that we must return to port”. Following this comment the naturalist will likely state, “we have time to take one more look.” The hope here is to get a “spectacular,” or at least, a very “good finish” before moving out of queue and returning to port. On occasion if timelines are “tight” and there is need to move off the site rapidly, the naturalist will state; “we will try another site on the way into

port.” In both announcements, a person of higher status utters the directive and also refers to a higher authority, the ship’s captain.

If luck has it, a “good” sighting will occur on the way to port. When this does occur, it is a blessing that can cap the day. If it is an exceptional sighting, it can highlight the entire cruise and will be duly reported in the naturalist’s reconstruction of the day within the third phase narration. On one occasion, for example, an entangled northern “right whale” was spotted. Right whales are an endangered species and seeing one is extremely rare.<sup>xii</sup> Seeing one entangled is even more so. In addition, it was our ship’s captain who radioed the location of the whale to a whale rescue team. That evening, the story broke on Boston news. Regardless of the events of the day, this sort of “real” adventure in eco-tourism would likely satisfy even the most disappointed tourist.

If on the other hand, it is a “*bad day*” then the naturalist must try to smooth over the impact on tourists. There are three types of bad days that the naturalist handles. First, there is always the chance of bad seas and weather conditions. Second, there is the possibility of not seeing whales. In both types of bad days, there is the repeated appeal to the unpredictability when venturing into natural habitat. The naturalist will make clear that in attempting to see whales in “nature” one must be prepared for unpredictable outcomes and possible disappointment. The third and more difficult type of bad day for the naturalist to handle is where whales sighted did not perform in ways that would satiate tourists’ expectations. While a more complex situation, this is also similarly handled by reminding everyone on board that the cruise is an adventure in nature. This last scenario directly informs a major aspect of the naturalist’s job in cooling out the tourist; that is, dealing with the complex connections between expectations and perceived experience.

The third phase begins once it is clear that the ship has gained speed and is heading away from the site, and toward port. During this leg of the journey, the naturalist takes time constructing and reconstructing the day’s voyage. The extent of this narrative depends on the character of the naturalist and on the nature of the day’s events. The naturalist will selectively note what has been ‘seen’ and what the tourist “actually” saw. Davis (1997: 19) highlights this dimension of the narrator’s construction of events within the context of a commercial “adventure”.

“The present-day surge of commercial nature imagery is not a transparent matter of bringing the previously unseen into focus, but a case of selecting natural things to see and inventing ways to see them.”

A key feature of the naturalist’s *reality construction* consists in highlighting whatever was spectacular and where there was nothing particularly spectacular, highlighting the most dramatic event of the day and pointing out what was unique or rare. The naturalist in these reconstructions will normally remind tourists of the unpredictability of whales’ behaviors in natural habitats. They will also indicate how much is and is not known about cetacea in the “wild” and how much more research, and, of course, research funding is needed to answer a number of scientific questions. These specific comments set the stage for the fourth phase of the cooling out process that is advantageous to the receipt of support, financial and otherwise, for continued research, conservation, and educational efforts.

The fourth phase has two separate but related dimensions. Unlike the other three stages where the naturalist’s effort is directed to all tourists, in this phase the naturalist, research assistants, and crew will interact face-to-face with individual tourists, especially those who may be in need of direct, individualized consolation. This is also an opportunity for tourists to distance themselves from being interpreted

by the naturalist, crew, and staff as a “novice whale watcher.” (cf., MacCannell 1973).

One aspect of this fourth stage entails setting up and managing a “kiosk” in the inside cabin. Normally, research assistants manage the kiosk. The kiosk provides an opportunity for tourists to talk about whales and to talk about that day’s whale watch to research assistants and often the naturalist. The kiosk also facilitates the distribution of literature informing tourists of nonprofit, conservation, educational, and scientific research organizations which the tourist are encouraged to join. It will also have the standard tourism paraphernalia of tee- shirts, postcards, photos, and other relevant souvenirs.

In addition, the kiosk enables research organizations that sponsor adopt-a-whale programs to bring their programs directly to tourists and to encourage them to join the program and as such contribute to saving whales and be informed on the fate of “their adopted whale.”<sup>xiii</sup>

In joining and making contributions to nonprofit organizations and in purchasing various paraphernalia, the tourist can get the sense of making a contribution to “righteous” causes. In this regard, the tourist is subtly encouraged to see that they have participated in and had contributed to scientific research, education, and conservation simply by being on the commercial whale watch in the first place. These venues of participation contribute to the tourist ending the tour with a sense of well being even where other expectations may have been foiled.

The other aspect of phase four involves the naturalist and research assistants freely mingling with tourists after they have invited tourists to discuss the day’s voyage. Researchers stress that they are open to discuss any issue related to whales and to answer any questions tourists may have in this regard.

Having the opportunity to meet face-to-face with research/scientist/naturalist allows for several different things to occur. Minimally, it allows the tourist to have direct contact with the “voice” of science they heard throughout their journey. It personalizes and enhances their over all experience. It also allows the tourist to demonstrate expertise or knowledge about cetacean and to establish their identity, if they can, as experienced in whale watch. Normally, the scientist and/or assistants will listen and exchange comments with the tourist without challenging the credibility of the tourist’s claims of expertise and experience. In addition, the face-to-face social contact between staff and tourist enables the tourist to vent any misgivings he or she may have had about the trip. In response, the naturalist is provided the opportunity to mollify any “rough edges” the tourist might display. Further, this contact facilitates detailed discussion about the reconstruction of the day’s journey. In this interactional context, the tourist is directly consoled before disembarking. The face-to-face experience provides one last opportunity for the naturalist to cool the tourist out.

## **Concluding comments**

In the above, the commercial whale watch cruise has been considered as another social situation in which “cooling out a mark” can take place. In this specific case, it is a group of tourists, and not an isolated individual, who are collectively considered the “mark”, except for parts of the fourth phase of the cruise, and it is the naturalist who is considered the “operator.”

It was argued that most of the cooling out work is done by the naturalist in anticipation of the possibility of having disgruntled, disappointed, or dissatisfied tourists—tourists whose expectations may have been spoiled. It was also argued that

this is anticipated because of the expectations tourists are very likely to carry over from their media exposures to “whale watching” in contrast to the experiences they are likely to encounter on any single voyage.

In their narratives, naturalists attempt to realign expectations with experience. What is central in helping the naturalist achieve this is to define and locate the entire voyage/experience as an outing in nature and an adventure in natural habitats. From their opening comments, naturalists lay the groundwork for their ending the journey and ending the journey on a “up note.”

In analyzing the cooling out process as part of the nature of a commercial whale watch, I have identified four distinct phases of the cruise and articulated tourist expectations that are likely to be spoiled. I also outlined the cooling out techniques naturalists use in managing these spoiled expectation. In sum, these spoiled expectations include, but are not limited to: (1) not seeing whales, (2) poor sightings or poor weather and sea conditions, (3) not being able to get close to whales; (4) not seeing a spectacular performance; (5) overall “poor days” within the tourist’s expectations and (6) contradictory temporal frames—wanting more or less time in the field.

In addition, the key ways spoiled expectations are managed include: (1) evoking the disclaimer and account of “nature and natural habitat” within which all things submit; (2) appeals to authority—that is, science, the coast guard, captain’s demands, and the authority of national and international law; (3) appeals to lofty ideals---implicitly science, education, and conservation; (4) reliance on and appeal to a temporal/task industrial model of work and activity; (5) awarding of a free trip, and (6) particularly important, the construction and reconstruction of the day’s experiences by a voice of authority—the naturalist.

Goffman is here revisited because of the conceptual richness and insights into everyday life that he has offered. His essay “On Cooling The Mark Out” provides rich insight to a number of social situations beyond the con game or sting. In this case, it can be used in understanding dimensions of tourism, specifically eco-tourism within the context of the commercial whale watch. By constructing the naturalist as an operator in cooling out a group of tourists as the mark, it helped to clarify what at first appeared to me as a puzzling situation and provided a conceptual framework for understanding an important component and social dynamics of a commercial whale watch cruise. To date, tourism research appears to have little to say in understanding the “tour guide.” This article represents a contribution to that research and literature.

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## Endnotes

- i With this claim, Goffman conceptually ties together superficially distinct social settings. Further, Goffman characteristically links different and seemingly disparate social arenas under one conceptual umbrella. *Stigma and total institutions* are especially good examples of this trait. (see Goffman 1963 and Goffman 1961).
- ii Over the course of six years, I carried out a participant observation study of marine field scientists at a research laboratory in the Caribbean. This study involved living at the laboratory, participating in the day-to-day activities of scientists at the facility, as well as serving as a “dive buddy” and research assistant to several scientists and one doctoral student. It is worth noting that research scientists coming to the laboratory to carry out a research project

would often find themselves without a dive partner, referred to as a dive buddy. The rules of the laboratory forbade diving alone. Given that I was a certified and experienced diver and known at the laboratory, I had the opportunity to serve in a dive buddy capacity with scientists while they carried out their underwater research work. Serving as a dive buddy to visiting scientists provided a unique opportunity to observe scientists at work in a very different setting.

- iii Nearly all of the contemporary, observational social studies of science are, however, studies of scientists at work in laboratory research settings. Indeed, there are very few participant observational studies of scientific field research (cf., Roth and Bowen 1999, McKegny 1980, Nutch 1996).
- iv Harassment (Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972) means getting closer than 300 feet by sea and 1,000 feet with aircraft. Taken from a telephone interview with Dr. J. Mobley, Cetacean Researcher - Honolulu, Hawaii (February 2005).
- v The few occasions when this was not the case were interesting in themselves. There were two instances of narrators not being scientists that I observed. One was a crew member trained to simply do a routine narrative of the salient features of the cruise. The second involved a person who in her presentation led us (tourists) to believe, in the way she used the pronoun “we” within her narrative, that she was an active research scientist studying cetacea. After the cruise I mentioned to her that I was interviewing scientists studying cetacea and I was curious about her research. She responded by saying that she was “thinking about applying to graduate school and for a research grant to study cetacea.” There are good reasons for this deception.
- vi Photographic identification (photo-id) of cetacea emerged as a research technique in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Photo id relies on photographing and cataloguing individual cetacea on the basis of their unique natural markings, for example, the dorsal fin of a humpback whale. This is similar to identifying humans on the basis of fingerprinting.
- vii On the other hand, I have been on many cruises where most tourists simply wanted to get back to port and off the ship as soon as possible because of poor viewing possibilities, terrible seas and weather conditions. Indeed, on two occasions, the seas were so rough that most passengers were sea sick and vomiting for most of the voyage, not a pretty sight.
- viii Davis (1997: 19) highlights this: “Sea World parks are popular culture...more than 11 million (*people*) a year enthusiastically enjoy them.
- ix I do not have data on how many times there were no sightings nor how many tourists were actually able to take advantage of such an offer. Given the likelihood that most would have a tight vacation schedule, I doubt if many could take advantage of such an offer.
- x A term used by field scientists and commercial operators, breaching means that a whale has literally jumped out of the water. It is a spectacular sight to see a 40-50 foot whale weighing about 40-50 tons break the water surface and display its entire body prior to splashing back into the water.
- xi This may be done for a number of reasons, including attempts to control the movement of tourists on the main deck. Tourists will naturally move to the side of the ship with the best visibility of the whale. It can be particularly chaotic when this is the very first whale sighted.
- xii Canada Fisheries and Oceans estimates that there are between 250-300 North Atlantic Right Whales. A recently aired (July 2005) documentary “The Nature of Things” hosted by Dr. David Suzuki and focusing on the research of Dr. Scott



Kraus reported an estimated right whale population of 350. Right whales are so named because they were considered the right whale to kill by whalers and were hunted to near extinction by the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

- xiii According to one scientist I interviewed, "Adopt-a-Whale Programs" are a major funding source for cetacean field research programs.

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