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Jeep Nation: Wilderness Ideology and the American Icon

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Jeep Nation: Wilderness Ideology and the American Icon

A Thesis

Presented To

The Academic Faculty

By Kristy Ventre

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in American Studies

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According to Ike Eisenhower, three tools won World War II for Americans: the Dakota airplane, the landing craft, and the Jeep.

--Patrick R. Foster¹

When the United States Congress declared war on Japan on December 8, 1941 and war on Germany on December 11, 1941, the United States military required a vehicle powerful and sturdy enough to conquer geographical feats in each theater. World War I demonstrated that motorized transportation and the amazing ability of four-wheel drive warrant usefulness in tough situations.² Approximately two-thirds of wheeled machines that were utilized and not equipped with four-wheel drive sank in mud.³ Consequently the American military demanded a newer, more powerful vehicle in order to conquer the environment of the surrounding theaters to enable both the safety of Allied soldiers, as well as an American victory. The qualifications for this general-purpose vehicle maintained a rugged medium with room for three and four wheel drive, yet with a weight limit of thirteen hundred pounds using the standard components to the greatest extent. In 1942, the Jeeps were first utilized at the front lines in Northern Africa at el Alamein, Egypt.⁴ Equipped with a heavy machine gun, the Jeep proved powerful and destructive as an anti-aircraft weapon capable of subjugating the harsh desert environment. With its growing success, the Jeeps ventured into both the Pacific theater and European theater diminishing every hardship presented by the environment. According to soldiers on the ground, Jeeps made everything easier: recon patrols were easier to drive, planes were easier to tow, and supplies were easier to carry. In addition, the design of the Jeep, “the engine, combined bucket seats, floor

¹ Patrick R Foster. *Jeep: The History of America's Greatest Vehicle* (Minneapolis, MN: Motorbooks, 2014), 6

² Ibid., 16.

³ Ibid., 18.

⁴ Ibid., 2.

shift, and low cut sides,” was as close to a sports car as any soldier could obtain—and they loved it.⁵ As the creation of the Jeep successfully altered the perception of those involved with the war, Willys-Overland and Ford started to look for methods to convince civilians that they too needed this vehicle. Unbeknownst to the companies, civilian Americans were looking for a vehicle to travel into unknown territory. Americans were ready for the Jeep.

Today Jeep conquest is upon us. The original go anywhere, do anything general-purpose vehicle was a workhorse for the military, was a friend to the soldier, and is now a cultural icon for America’s relationship with wilderness. For decades, the Jeep brand symbolized conquest, adventure, and the outdoors. Its devout fan base has made the Jeep brand a lifestyle, and media professionals have created a consumer frenzy for it. This obsessive relationship between society and the Jeep occurred as a result of the relationships between society and nature, war and nature, and consumption and nature. However, its continued presence in media campaigns and efficacious sales suggest that the Jeep brand conveys an extraordinarily deeper meaning to the American people. Therefore the argument proposed here is that success of the Jeep brand relies on three crucial facets: the frontier myth, the evolution of consumerism, and the manipulation of both in Jeep marketing campaigns.

As the frontier myth continued to embed itself in American society, war and the conquest of nature simultaneously co-evolved; the control of nature expanded the scale of war, and war expanded the scale on which people controlled nature.⁶ This revelation holds true in the

⁵ Patrick R Foster. *Jeep: The History of America’s Greatest Vehicle* (Minneapolis, MN: Motorbooks, 2014), 9.

⁶ Edmund Russell. *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War I to Silent Spring*. Studies in Environment and History (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

development of America's most loved vehicle. Built to tackle the unknown environment in the Pacific and European theaters of World War II, the Jeep provided much more than a shuttling service to the front lines. After the war, Jeep's popularity grew in tandem with American society's demands of venturing to the unknown through outdoor recreation. The growth of interest in outdoor recreation, however, did not mean that Americans embraced a deeper appreciation of wild nature. In fact, the development of the Jeep in tandem with a maturing consumer culture altered Americans' relationship to nature. Furthermore the Jeep brand came to signify environmental consciousness. By owning a Jeep, consumers believed they were by association what the Jeep represented.

Since its inception, the United States' ability to control nature has led to its ability to thrive and flourish. In regards to wilderness, Americans consistently demonstrate the need to surround themselves with nature "over there," a geographic space that separates themselves from the industrial and residential complexities of life. One explanation for this sociological behavior is that of the romantic sublime. To Americans, the sublime represents unimproved, "natural" nature, and unimproved, "natural" nature represents regenerative power in the natural terrain. This includes access to undefiled and bountiful nature, which account for the virtue and special good fortune of Americans. Another explanation for this sociological behavior involving Jeep nation is that of the frontier: the longstanding conviction among Americans that the nation was forged by the pioneer encounter with wilderness. The frontier myth, introduced by Frederick Jackson Turner, has resonated with Americans for decades, and has therefore enabled the Jeep to capitalize on the myth's resonance.⁷

⁷ Frederick Jackson Turner. *The Frontier in American History* (New York, NY: Open Road Integrated Media, 2015).

While the frontier myth and the evolution of consumerism enable the success of the Jeep brand, new media campaigns undoubtedly present Jeep as a symbol of the wilderness and of the frontier to American society. Through particular mediums, these images communicate with society, and manipulate human emotions.⁸ Jeep media produces both concrete and abstract symbolic forms of the frontier myth that embraces culturally constructed characteristics embedded deep in American society. In this case, the cultural characteristics reflect the belief that Americans must escape the exhaustive day-to-day routine, and venture to a more natural environment away from industrial and residential society. Therefore the desire for Americans to consume nature “over there,” or to consume a machine that will successfully take Americans to nature “over there” occur in response to the illustration of the Jeep brand. The myth of the frontier found expression through media, and the Jeep brand is marketed to symbolize the frontier. The significance of the frontier myth, the evolution of consumer culture, and the embedded characteristics of both in media has allowed the Jeep brand to control markets as the vehicle of choice for the rugged outdoors.

Wilderness: Definition and Interaction

This thesis is formed first on prior American cultural scholarship in regards to both societal definition of wilderness and societal interaction with wilderness. The definition of wilderness, as well as interactions with wilderness, are culturally constructed as their meanings progressed alongside changing historical context. The literature provides the framework and the background for the eventual introduction and success of the Jeep, while also providing room for future study and discussion. While many cultural and environmental historians note the

⁸ W. J. Thomas Mitchell. *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, Ill: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010), XVII.

significance of wilderness on American society through the nineteenth century, few note the significance of the wilderness on American society after the nineteenth century. Therefore a brief historical and cultural overview of the term wilderness is essential in order to showcase the relevance of my project.

Western cultures use the word “wilderness” to describe a universal reality, thereby implying that it is, and must be, common to all people. In order for the frontier myth to gain such remarkable influence in American history and society, the concept of wilderness and nature became loaded with some of the deepest core values of the culture that created and idealized it. William Cronon advances this claim, stating that “[society] pour[s] all its personal and culturally specific values into their defined perception of wilderness: the essence of who they think they are, how and where they should live, and what they believe to be good and beautiful.”⁹ Ideas of nature have never existed outside a cultural context, and the meanings society assigns to nature cannot help but to reflect that context. Environmental historians illustrate nature and wilderness as a self-conscious cultural construction, one that mirrors the sublime. The sublime in this context represents the process in which the pervasive cultural construct of nature and wilderness become romanticized as concepts of desire, perfection, and awe.¹⁰ These notions are strongest in representations of landscape as nature provides the strongest sensations to its beholders.¹¹ Cronon argues, “go back 250 years in American and European history. One does not find nearly so many people wandering around remote corners of the planet looking for ‘the wilderness

⁹ William Cronon. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York, NY: Norton, 1996), 51.

¹⁰ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sublime>

¹¹ William Cronon. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York, NY: Norton, 1996), 72.

experience.”¹² In fact, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the term wilderness was anything but positive. Wilderness was a place to which one came only against one’s will and typically in fear. Historically both the development and progression of the United States revolved around territorial expansion or outward movement. Conflict was the central component, as Europeans and early Americans struggled against an unfamiliar natural environment.¹³ The struggle entailed much violence as Europeans and early Americans also encountered peoples already inhabiting areas of wilderness. However, a shift in meaning occurred due to the impact of the culturally constructed definition of the sublime. While expansion in the Western wilderness was indeed dangerous, uncertain, and violent, it was still romanticized as concepts of desire, perfection, and awe.

The romantic sublime transformed wilderness into a sacred American icon, but the sublime was not the only cultural construct altering the ideas of wilderness and nature. No less important was Jean Jacques Rousseau’s belief that the best antidote to the ills of an overly refined and civilized modern world was a return to a simpler living, or more simply nature “over there.”¹⁴ Jean Jacques Rousseau was drawn to the spontaneity and freedom of the primitive life. He believed that “the happiest state of man is the middle state between the savage and the refined or between the wild and luxurious state.”¹⁵ Therefore the definition of wilderness as a desolate area becomes the cultural construct of freedom and possibility married with the scenery of the

¹² William Cronon. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York, NY: Norton, 1996), 70.

¹³ Richard Slotkin. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 11.

¹⁴ William Cronon. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York, NY: Norton, 1996), 76.

¹⁵ Leo Marx. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 105.

deific in the sublime. The impact of this cultural construct is seen in both the emergence of the pastoral society in early American history, and the transformation of the pastoral ideal into the frontier myth. None of these natures, the pastoral and the frontier, are natural. They are both cultural constructs that reflect human judgments, human values, and human choices that solidify the idea of wilderness into American collective memory.¹⁶

During the early years of the colonial United States, the movement of peoples from the Old World to the New World signified the journey away from the artificial world and towards a more natural world. In this notion, nature is culturally constructed, and far from natural. Europeans could withdraw from the great world, and begin new life in a fresh, green virgin continent. The inchoate longing for a more “natural” environment enters into the contemptuous attitude early Americans adopted toward urban life.¹⁷ William Cronon stated, “rural life promotes health and morality by its active nature, and by keeping people from the luxuries and vices of the towns.”¹⁸ However, the necessity of such urban luxuries was unavoidable. Jean Jacques Rousseau concluded that pastoralism enabled the reconciliation between the natural and the civilized because it allowed men to embody that animal nature, and not feel repressed by society. Therefore early Americans equated the pastoral ideal to freedom. The myth, in regards to pastoral life, affirms that early Americans experience regeneration in the New World. They become new, better, happier men—they are reborn. The pastoral lifestyle enabled reconciliation between the civilized individual and the desire for a more primitive existence.

¹⁶ William Cronon. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York, NY: Norton, 1996), 34.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Leo Marx. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 160.

While society reveled in the pastoral ideal, progression fueled the United States forward. To a large extent, much American history has been the history of the colonization of the Great West. According to Fredrick Jackson Turner, “the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development.”¹⁹ As advancements in the industrial and urban sector altered the complexity of society, Americans began seeking liberation from their new repressive lifestyle on the East Coast. The act of seeking liberation embodied the same desire that Europeans felt when deciding whether or not to depart for the New World. As Turner argued, “it appears then that the universal disposition of Americans to emigrate to the western wilderness, in order to enlarge their dominion over inanimate nature is the actual result of an expansive power which is inherent in them.”²⁰ The frontier is the extreme limit of settled land bordering the rugged wilderness, and its physical being refers to the location many Americans desired to escape their repressive lives in the east. Turner’s explanation of America’s inherent expansive power alters the physical definition of the frontier to a culturally constructed definition where the frontier becomes the meeting place between savagery and civilization. Richard Slotkin claims that “the Frontier was, for [America], a complexly resonant symbol, vivid and memorable set of hero tales—each a model of successful and morally justifying action on the stage of historical conflict.”²¹ The frontier is then a more primitive version of the pastoral ideal. It goes beyond the rejection of urban life. In short, in terms of the physical frontier, the environment was too strong for people. Little by little, however, they transformed it. In the words of Fredrick Jackson Turner, “the

¹⁹ Frederick Jackson Turner. *The Frontier in American History* (New York, NY: Open Road Integrated Media, 2015), 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹ Richard Slotkin. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 3.

frontier masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and moccasin.”²² Consequently the frontier begins to symbolize a much deeper societal meaning than solely the edge of civilization.

The creation of the frontier myth has evolved. As Richard Slotkin notes, “The Frontier Myth is divided by significant borders, of which the wilderness/civilization, Indian/White border is the most basic. The American must cross the border into ‘Indian Country’ and experience a ‘regression’ to a more primitive and natural condition of life.”²³ This welcomed “regression” resonated with early Americans when they departed the Old World for the New World, when they sought after their pastoral ideal, and when they eventually ventured out West to escape the repressive lifestyle of rapid urbanization and industrialization on the East Coast. Slotkin continues by stating “the complete American of the Myth was one who had defeated and freed himself from both the “savage” of the western wilderness and the metropolitan regime of authoritarian politics and class privilege.”²⁴ This transformation proved popular as many Americans pushed the borders of the United States westward. In the 1880s, Frederick Jackson Turner discussed the contemporary crisis of closing the “old frontier,” and the inability to find a new one.

The frontier provided a national identity, and its centrality to the American identity spurred the imagination of many. Current literature denotes the significant impact of the culturally constructed term wilderness, as well as its relationship to both the pastoral idea and

²² Frederick Jackson Turner. *The Frontier in American History* (New York, NY: Open Road Integrated Media, 2015), 2.

²³ Richard Slotkin. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 114.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

frontier myth. Nevertheless the absence of analysis in current American scholarship presents an interesting opportunity to address. Scholars express the importance of wilderness in congruence with the pastoral idea and frontier myth throughout the growth and development of the United States. Yet there is little analysis past the nineteenth century. Surely Americans do not rid themselves of a cultural embodiment, which according to previous scholarship, is deeply embedded into American character. Perhaps the eventual success of the Jeep occurs because the brand exploits America's love for progression, the popularity of the automobile, and America's nostalgia for the past, the rugged frontier.

American Automobile Culture

Currently there are over five hundred million cars roaming the world.²⁵ Scholarship discusses the impact of the automobile on American culture and society through the concept of automobility. According to Sarah Frohardt-Lane, "automobility captures the multiple, heterogeneous components of the automobile's impact."²⁶ Automobility refers not only to cars as a means of transportation, but as a technology deeply embedded into the lives of Americans. This concept promotes the belief that Americans drive automobiles, and automobiles drive Americans. For example, automobility permits Americans to drive to the gas pump, to consume houses with larger garages, to retreat from the standard workweek during leisure time, and to consume experiences in nature. In this manner, scholarship suggests that the automobile becomes the extension of the individual, and automobility becomes the extension of consumption.²⁷

Missing from the academic discussion, however, is the specificity of how the mass production of

²⁵ Mimi Sheller and John Urry. "The City and the Car." *International Journal Of Urban And Regional Research* 24, no. 4 (December 2000): 737.

²⁶ Sarah Frohardt-Lane. "Promoting a culture of driving: Rationing, car sharing, and propaganda in world war II." *Journal Of American Studies* 46, no. 2 (May 1, 2012): 339.

²⁷ Mimi Sheller and John Urry. "The City and the Car." *International Journal Of Urban And Regional Research* 24, no. 4 (December 2000): 739.

the Jeep and its brand transformed American culture and society. Society's relationship to nature in the United States began progressing further during the twentieth century. This progression enabled the Jeep to fit into the new American lifestyle as the concept of leisure time evolved from the popularly embedded frontier myth. While the development of the Jeep followed the newly constructed cultural concept of leisure, Americans came to again know nature through this new concept. Most importantly the establishment of leisure created an approach that the Jeep brand would successfully utilize in order to become the vehicle to symbolize America's nostalgia for the past.

Eventually the longing for interaction with nature manifested itself in societal consumption of leisure time activities. The concept of leisure differed greatly between the decades prior to World War I and the decades of the interwar period. Beginning in the late nineteenth century leisure emerged as a cultural product, a product produced by the United States' affluence. Paul Sutter states, "one of the most significant trends in modern recreation is the increasing demand for great open spaces set apart for the enjoyment of diversions," and the years 1880 through 1920 laid the ground work for the mass embrace of outdoor recreation.²⁸ Prior to World War I, creation of the automobile was the most influential for the mass embrace of outdoor recreation, as it became the primary means to spread the vacation habit. Preceding World War I, America's affluence produced leisure time, and outdoor recreation remained local. Conversely the interwar period democratized and commercialized outdoor recreation. Three massive changes occurred during the interwar period that helped the Jeep brand succeed as it introduced itself into civilian life. First, the rapid proliferation of the automobile influenced

²⁸ Paul Sutter. *Driven Wild How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 23.

America's vacation habit. Paul Sutter states that "automobiles brought millions of Americans out of towns and cities into a variety of natural settings," as many Americans held a romanticized notion of their primitive relationship with nature.²⁹ Second, the federal government emerged as an important force in the growth of outdoor recreation through its creation of national parks and sponsorship of road develop from the early teens to the 1930s.³⁰ Motor touring was the most popular outdoor recreation activity during the interwar period, but Americans only traveled on roads. The romantic notion of conquering wilderness was still prevalent, due to the frontier myth, but there was simply no vehicle capable of taking Americans to seek a new frontier. Finally, the interwar period presented a maturing consumer culture. As Paul Sutter notes, "the emergence of American culture of consumption premised on mass production and standardization of goods, ... rise of modern advertising, and the emergence of commercial mass media."³¹ Thus outdoor recreation shifted to a consumer activity, one that taught Americans to view the world through materialistic measures—an accumulation of experiences. Automobiles and automobility therefore extended where people could go, and hence what they were able to do. Notably absent, however, is any discussion of the relationship between the frontier myth and the use of the automobile.

World War II strengthened and solidified Americans' attachment to the automobile. Americans made key contributions to the war through proper driving, a phrase synonymous with carpool and routine maintenance of their vehicle. In doing so, World War II helped establish

²⁹ Paul Sutter. *Driven Wild How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 41.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

driving both as patriotic and as a constituent of citizenship.³² Wartime advertisements and government propaganda portrayed driving as integral to the American way of life. Sarah Frohardt-Lane argues that “advertisements built demand for future goods to be available after the war, and encouraged Americans to think of it as sacrifice to go without those products.”³³ As the automobile and its lifestyle increased in popularity during wartime, a new kind of vehicle was introduced in combat. Throughout World War II, more than 640,000 four-wheel drive Jeeps were manufactured.³⁴ Andrew Iarocci states that the fascination of the Jeep lies in its ability to cover any terrain: “Mud, water, and dust; up and down the steepest gradients. Nothing can stop the little vehicle.”³⁵ The practicality of science and technology during the war led leaders to plan ways to apply the lessons of World War II into the postwar world; specifically industries had to switch from military to civilian markets.³⁶ However, discrepancies through research indicate that there is no reasoning as to why the attachment of the automobile leads to a rise in civilian sales of the Jeep. Perhaps, the strengthening attachment to the automobile, the freedom of automobility, and the culturally embedded belief to return to a more primitive lifestyle on the frontier led to a relationship between the consumer and the Jeep.

American Post War Consumerism

The years after World War II were a time of affluence, and as will be argued, the marriage between civilians and the Jeep brand. Willys-Overland began to create ways to profit

³² Sarah Frohardt-Lane. "Promoting a culture of driving: Rationing, car sharing, and propaganda in world war II." *Journal Of American Studies* 46, no. 2 (May 1, 2012): 338.

³³ *Ibid.*, 342.

³⁴ Andrew Iarocci. "Farm Tractors, Occupational Therapy, and Four-Wheel Drive: Transforming a Military Vehicle into a Cultural Icon." *Bulletin Of Science, Technology & Society* 30, no. 3 (January 1, 2010): 164-167.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Edmund Russell. *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War I to Silent Spring*. Studies in Environment and History (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 165.

off of post war American society. According to Paul Sutter, “one of the most significant trends in modern recreation at the time was the increasing demand for great open spaces set apart for the enjoyment of those outdoor diversions which have become so eagerly sought as a means of escape from the noise and confusion of urban life,” a belief deeply embedded into American culture due to the pastoral ideal and frontier myth.³⁷ With improved means of travel, people found it possible to venture even further in their search for recreational activities. Willys-Overland believed that in order to capitalize off of a designed military weapon, the company must develop civilian brands that offered an escape popularized through motor touring and, as will be argued, the nostalgia of the frontier. Baby boomers experienced affluence due to America’s period of prosperity after winning World War II. This new class of people viewed nature in stark contrast to modernity and urbanism. The baby boomer generation’s definition of nature showcases the complete altered transition of humans and their attitude towards nature. According to Jennifer Price, their perception of nature “is a place apart to define, critique or counteract the urbanism, commercialism, technological control, complexity, white-collar work of the postwar era.”³⁸ Simply put, nature was “over there,” and motor touring required a nature that was separate, distant, and exotic—a nature that the individual traveled to see. Scholarship does not provide an explanation for why the Jeep was one of the popular automobile brands of choice. Therefore this thesis will argue that the acceptance and consumption of the Jeep brand became the definition of nature that the baby boomers adapted for themselves showcasing the change in their relationship with nature, a change according to Frederick Jackson Turner that was already

³⁷ Paul Sutter. *Driven Wild How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 19.

³⁸ Jennifer Price. *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999), 175.

apparent in the American psyche. The old, culturally constructed ideals have retained power. Now, however, the nostalgia for the Frontier finds expression through media, and exploits consumers accordingly leading to the Jeep's success in the sport utility vehicle world.

The Jeep has evolved into a status and aesthetic cultural symbol. Owning a Jeep mirrors a presence of rugged individualism and traditional American values.³⁹ Recent scholarship suggests that people in American culture are so estranged from the actuality of nature that their only avenue to it is consumerism. During the 1950s, baby boomers adapted nature to their own devices, and used it enthusiastically to canoe through the post war era.⁴⁰ Baby boomers set out in droves to hike and backpack in the 1960s; simultaneously, sport utility vehicle sales rose, as baby boomers utilized vehicles to take them to their version of nature, nature "out there."⁴¹ In the late twentieth century era of mass communications, most Americans encountered the natural world through mass-produced culture, a culture, I argue, that was to be exploited by Jeep marketing campaigns. The use of nature to define a certain kind of person recalls the 1950s suburban landowners and the English landowners "who lounged in natural postures in their own vast and natural landscapes."⁴² The very people who have used an idea of nature as "out there" to define who they are, and to navigate the confusions of urban postwar American life, are also the people who consume nature the most.

Alexander Jakubanecs and Magne Supphellen state that after the 1950s, perspectives in consumer behavior began shifting to the view of products endowed with certain symbols and

³⁹ Mark Meister. "'Sustainable Development' in visual imagery: Rhetorical function in the Jeep Cherokee." *Communication Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 223.

⁴⁰ Jennifer Price. *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999), XX.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 178.

meaning.⁴³ Thomas Maschio furthers the discussion adding that cultural patterns exploit consumer desire.⁴⁴ In the domain of consumer behavior, products and brands that embody national identity and culture play a central role with the consumer. In fact, cultural meanings embedded in consumer products have profound effects on consumers' attitudes and intentions.⁴⁵ American automobile culture always stated something profound about the archetypal American values, and brands were most successful when they expressed these values. Neglected in the present scholarship, however, is the analysis as to how companies and their brands, the Jeep as one example, capitalize on embedded cultural notions. In addition, while scholars point to consumerism as an avenue to reach nature, no analysis occurs as to why the idea of nature "over there" is deeply embedded into American consumers. Furthermore, if symbolism or cultural embeddedness predicts consumer attitudes towards different products, an examination of national self-concepts that originated in the early development of the United States must occur. The success of the Jeep brand, which will be argued in later pages, utilizes advertisements that pair their product with a certain cultural meaning, thus effectively transferring meaning to their product. The national cultural construct, in this instance, is the pastoral idea and nostalgia of the frontier, both of which are disregarded in current scholarly analysis in regards to the Jeep brand.

Marketing

Consumers define their social reality by drawing on meanings embedded in certain products. In fact, consumers often create commercial, brand meanings by considering the brand's

⁴³ Alexander Jakubanecs and Magne Supphellen. "Cultural embeddedness of products." *International Journal Of Market Research* 58, no. 2 (March 2016): 306.

⁴⁴ Thomas Joseph Maschio. "Culture, desire and consumer culture in America in the new age of social media." *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 19, no. 4 (October 2016): 417.

⁴⁵ Alexander Jakubanecs and Magne Supphellen. "Cultural embeddedness of products." *International Journal Of Market Research* 58, no. 2 (March 2016): 302.

relationship to large cultural themes.⁴⁶ According to Jakubanecs and Supphellen, the construct of cultural embeddedness, or constructed societal meaning, of products have profound effects on consumer attitudes and intentions.⁴⁷ Therefore scholars believe the most effective American advertising campaigns illustrate how American cultural values transcend boundaries to inspire consumer desire.⁴⁸ Missing from this discussion, however, is how specific brands, the Jeep in particular, capitalize on cultural notions of wilderness and the nostalgia of the frontier. Presently, the Jeep has evolved into a status and aesthetic cultural symbol, yet there is no discussion on how the portrayal of its brand in its campaigns utilizes cultural patterns to exploit consumer desires.⁴⁹

Visual imagery represents culture through critical interpretation of an image's rhetorical function. Most marketing campaigns take the form of single pictures or television commercials with multiple pictures. According to W. J. T. Mitchell, the complexity of a picture exceeds basic comprehension: "A picture is a peculiar and paradoxical creature, both concrete and abstract, both a specific individual thing and symbolic form that embraces a totality."⁵⁰ A picture in its totality contains three vital pieces for analysis: an image, an object, and a medium. Together the three pieces provide insight into how pictures place a claim upon society, and how society responds.

⁴⁶ Thomas Joseph Maschio. "Culture, desire and consumer culture in America in the new age of social media." *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 19, no. 4 (October 2016): 418.

⁴⁷ Alexander Jakubanecs and Magne Supphellen. "Cultural embeddedness of products." *International Journal Of Market Research* 58, no. 2 (March 2016): 302.

⁴⁸ Thomas Joseph Maschio. "Culture, desire and consumer culture in America in the new age of social media." *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 19, no. 4 (October 2016): 423.

⁴⁹ Mark Meister. "'Sustainable Development' in visual imagery: Rhetorical function in the Jeep Cherokee." *Communication Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 223.

⁵⁰ W. J. Thomas Mitchell. *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, Ill: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010), XVII.

At its most basic definition, an image is a likeness, figure, or motif that appears in some sort of medium.⁵¹ The totality of a picture is the mechanism for eliciting specific desires. However through an analysis of the image, the communication of power over human emotions is noticed by scholars, specifically in regards to the producers or consumers of the image. Mitchell adds, “instead of providing a transparent window on the world, images are now regarded as the sort of sign that presents a deceptive appearance of naturalness and transparency concealing an opaque, distorting, arbitrary mechanism of representation, a process of ideological mystification.”⁵² Part of the deceptive appearance relates to the idea of images versus text. In this instance, images are representations of the visible world. Words are concerned with invisible ideas and feelings. Sometimes words signify the mental images that have been impressed on us by culturally constructed ideals, thus furthering their effect on future emotion. Advertising executives understand that certain images “have legs,” in regards to impact on society. Mitchell furthers this idea stating, “the point is to put [society’s] relation to the work into question... to turn analysis of images towards the spectator position: what does the image want from me, or from ‘us’, or from ‘them.’”⁵³ In looking at images, the viewer searches for what the image calls them to do. Advertising plays a crucial role in this instance. Its role educates, ritualizes, and commodifies the emotions in every possible domain. My thesis will work to uncover the cultural appropriations used by the Jeep brand, and how those appropriations influence consumers who view those specific images.

⁵¹ W. J. Thomas Mitchell. *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, Ill: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010), XIV.

⁵² W. J. Thomas Mitchell. *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2009), 8.

⁵³ W. J. Thomas Mitchell. *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, Ill: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010), 49.

In its most basic form, an object is a material thing that an image refers to. There are no images without objects, and there are no objects without images. Objects have no name and identity; they are not “things,” or stand ins for the forgotten.⁵⁴ W.J. T. Mitchell discusses two different types of objects: the found object and the sought object. In regards to nostalgia for the frontier, sought objects are worth careful analysis. Mitchell states, “sought objects are desired, sublime, beautiful, valued, produced, consumed, or exchanged objects.”⁵⁵ Sought objects are symbolic. Important here as well is the empirical production of certain types of sought objects. Mitchell adds, “empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers.”⁵⁶ The sport utility vehicle, specifically the Jeep, illuminates both the pastoral ideal and the nostalgia for the frontier, and capitalizes on both cultural constructs as a sought object. However that discussion is missing from current scholarship, but will be explored in my thesis.

The medium is perhaps the most important of the three terms. The medium is the set of material practices that brings an image together with an object to produce a picture. The medium is a “middle,” a go-between connecting the sender to the receiver, but it does not lie between them; it includes them.⁵⁷ Mediums are social practices, a set of skills, habits, techniques, tools, codes, and conventions.⁵⁸ The medium helps convey the speaking subject to the addressee, as well as the location, space, or site, which signifies the importance of where.⁵⁹ Through the

⁵⁴ W. J. Thomas Mitchell. *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, Ill: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010), 158.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁵⁷ W. J. Thomas Mitchell. *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, Ill: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010), 204.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 217.

medium, a brand can connect consumers through geographically concentrated areas, geographically scattered areas, and non-geographic spaces, such as the Internet. Therefore the importance of the medium lies in its ability to transmit the culturally constructed notions to the masses. In this specific study, research will explore the dynamics between the medium's dispersal of the Jeep brand's cultural appropriation in regards to wilderness and the nostalgia of the frontier.

W.J.T Mitchell discusses landscape in particular as a cultural medium. When changing "landscape" from a noun to a verb, landscape becomes a process by which social and subjective identities are reformed.⁶⁰ According to Mark Meister, natural landscapes are a signifying system in which a cultural symbol(s) is communicated, reproduced, and explored.⁶¹ Therefore landscape, in this study, is most important as it represents a bigger cultural concept. Landscape naturalizes a cultural and social construction representing an artificial world. W.J.T. Mitchell states, "what [society] has done and is doing to the environment, what the environment does to [society], how people naturalize what they do to each other, and how these doings are enacted" are representative of the cultural medium of landscape.⁶² Landscape becomes not only the medium for expressing value, but also for expressing meaning between persons, or the human and non-human. Mitchell adds, "landscape is not only a natural scene, and not just a representation of a natural scene, but a natural representation of a natural scene, or an icon of nature in nature itself, as if nature were imprinting and encoding its essential structures on our perceptual apparatus."⁶³ Through the three factions, image, object, and medium, the Jeep brand is

⁶⁰ W. J. Thomas Mitchell. *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1.

⁶¹ Mark Meister. "'Sustainable Development' in visual imagery: Rhetorical function in the Jeep Cherokee." *Communication Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 227.

⁶² W. J. Thomas Mitchell. *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 9.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 15.

successfully transforms itself into a wilderness icon by appropriating and exploiting the cultural constructed notion of wilderness and nostalgia for the frontier.

Conclusion

The continued presence of the Jeep brand in American consumer culture suggests that the Jeep conveys an extraordinarily deeper meaning to the American people. The purpose of this thesis is to show the Jeep's ability to exploit nostalgia. In regards to nostalgia, scholarship notes the American desire for a more primitive lifestyle: one absent of industrial complexities. By showing how one brand exploits cultural notions, we are then able to create a framework in which future research can be conducted on other brands. My research will utilize the Jeep brand as a specific example of how companies and trademarks capitalize on embedded cultural notions through the successful implementation of mass-produced culture. Another purpose of this thesis is to fill a void in post nineteenth-century research about consumerism, nostalgia, and early American culture. After Frederick Jackson Turner publishes his Frontier Thesis, it is unlikely that Americans no longer required liberation from their day-to-day drudgery. The conducted research will show that America's nostalgia of the frontier is very much still a part of American culture today.

My thesis looks at the Jeep and the Jeep brand through a lens of consumerism and nostalgia utilizing both historical and visual analysis methodologies. Scholarship states that progression of the United States removed Americans from "natural" nature. In fact, the residential and industrial complexities created a large demand for great open spaces, and the demand for great open spaces created a reliance on automobiles. This suggests that American culture is so estranged from the actuality of nature that the only avenue to nature is through consumption of experiences. Due to the successful implementation of mass-produced culture, I

argue that Americans view consumption of the Jeep brand as their newly constructed relationship to nature. By employing the historical methodology, I trace the history of the Jeep brand from war machine to a consumer good in tandem with changes in consumerism. This is done through archival research and primary source analysis of newspaper articles, marketing campaigns, and statistics. By employing the visual analysis methodology, I analyze how the Jeep exploits nostalgia, as well as its effectiveness. Visual analysis is conducted on Jeep marketing campaigns. Several advertisements, in different mediums, are analyzed in reference to their effectiveness in portrayal in embedded cultural constructs. In addition, research is produced in reference to sales on particular vehicles in order to calculate the success of the particular marketing campaigns. Due to the successful implementation of mass-produced culture, Americans will view consumption of the Jeep brand as its newly constructed relationship to nature.

I am losing precious days. I am degenerating in to a machine for making money. I am learning nothing in this trivial world of men. I must breakaway, and get out into the mountains to learn the news.

John Muir

I drive a Jeep. In the United States, the birthplace of this infamous vehicle, it's difficult not to take a drive almost anywhere without seeing a Jeep. The Jeep vehicle is as synonymous to the United States as apple pie, Coca-Cola, and country music. After all, this was the vehicle that drastically altered the American automobile industry and assisted in the American victory of World War II. Few other automobile companies could claim such prolonged success as that of the Jeep brand, especially with a solitary model. With the purchase of my Jeep I, too, am a vested member of Jeep Nation, and my membership embodies many of the same reasons others have felt compelled to also purchase a Jeep. I, along with other members, am completely enamored by the Jeep's ability to traverse through the unknown and to take me far away from the complexities of life. Sport utility vehicles are built for explorers, and Jeep is society's ambassador for the world of adventure and the outdoors. My Jeep will go places. My Jeep will take me places. Through it, I am a renegade.

The reality of the situation, however, is that my beloved Jeep doesn't quite accompany me through expeditions into the unknown. In fact, the only rugged quality of my Jeep is that the vehicle is driven outdoors. Mundane commutes on highways and cityscapes take precedent over participation in adventures. While it is safe to assume that various other Jeep owners find themselves in similar situations, Americans continue to consume the Jeep. Consumers believe in the brand's ability to relocate them from the intricacies of a post-industrial society into a more natural, and even primitive, setting. However, the ideologies presented in this American love affair are hardly consumer driven. Society is manipulated. Jeep Nation believes that Jeep ownership affords its members the opportunity to venture into nature. This opportunity,

worshipped by devout Jeep owners, is carefully constructed by the Jeep brand. The Jeep brand has adopted historical American ideals of wilderness and nature, including nostalgia and the frontier myth, into its marketing campaigns. Through both the visual portrayal of the historical American ideas in Wrangler advertisements and the physical portrayal of the historical American ideas in Wrangler colors and builds, the embedded cultural constructs enable Wrangler sales to substantially surpass other brands.⁶⁴

Historically, Americans have held varying notions about wilderness: its divinity, its tranquility, and its transformative abilities. Wilderness is more than the simple connotations of pristine wild lands, backpacking adventures, or stronghold for biodiversity; such connotations have been embedded into American culture since the early developmental stages of the United States. While the term wilderness may be assigned by a particular person to a particular place, wilderness itself produces a certain mood or feeling in a given individual. The Jeep brand capitalizes on these constructs of wilderness through its engagement of citizens for wild lands. This means that while wilderness expresses various ideologies of nostalgia and the frontier, the ability to foster human interaction with wild lands transcends simple romantic convictions, and leads to gross sales. Jeep must connect the consumers' constructed wilderness beliefs to the consumption of a Jeep vehicle. With emphasis on driving consumption through engagement, Jeep advertisements visualize the moods and feelings conveyed by wilderness. Continual saturation of signs allows the consumer to believe the Jeep can bring the constructs of wilderness to fruition, and thus purchases the vehicle. Jeep acquisition demonstrates the brand's ability to connect citizen with wild lands and manipulate the market.

⁶⁴ "Jeep Wrangler," Car Sales Base, accessed March 12, 2017, <http://carsalesbase.com/us-car-sales-data/jeep/jeep-wrangler/>.

Following visual and sign ideology, this study will analyze the marketing campaigns of the Jeep brand and its effectiveness in the consumer market. Individuals have become so far removed from nature that much of our contemporary experience with nature is mediated by consumer markets. Although various brands in the realms of outdoor apparel, vehicles, and gear attempt to utilize wilderness notions to spark consumption, this study will focus specifically on the Jeep's practice, as well as the Jeep's exploitation of the complexities of the postindustrial world to create a sense a nostalgia. This analysis of Jeep's visual media includes the development and progression of the sign through the signified, a concept or object, and signifier, a sound or image attached to the signified.⁶⁵ This will include the examination of the physical Jeep vehicle itself, as well as the vehicle in correlation to the culturally constructed ideals of wilderness. In addition, both the referent, the tangible object in the world that the sign is related to, and the medium, the manner through which the sign is transmitted, will also be analyzed through the visual discourse.

Wilderness is defined as a social and cultural construct in the American mind, and the Jeep marketing campaigns successfully manipulate those constructs in order to elevate gross sales. This argument is proven through the utilization and application of historical American ideas about wilderness and nature in the post-industrial world with added emphasis on nostalgia and the frontier. First, the physical build of the Jeep Wrangler is analyzed. Names, color choices and builds are dissected in reference to historical American ideas of wilderness and nature. In addition, comparison to other brands and companies will display the Jeep's successful manipulation of the consumer market through its chosen characteristics of the Wrangler. Next,

⁶⁵ Gillan Rose. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*. 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2012), 113.

visual case studies of Jeep Wrangler marketing campaigns are analyzed. Each advertisement or set of advertisements are visually critiqued, and then historical American ideas of wilderness and nature are applied. In addition, contemporary experience with nature in consumer markets and consumer engagement is deconstructed in tandem with the applied historical ideals of wilderness to further display the successful manipulation of consumption by the Jeep brand. However, before analysis can be provided, this study will begin with a brief synopsis of the Jeep Wrangler's history. For it is Wrangler's unusual history that enables the vehicle to make its way into American hearts.

Creation of an Icon

In a frequently cited and possibly apocryphal story related to the Jeep, a watchman, usually identified as a Frenchman, was guarding his post at night during World War II. Suddenly he heard a group of soldiers approaching on foot. The Frenchman propped his machine gun to position, and asked the soldiers to identify themselves. One of the soldiers replied that they were Americans. Without a moment's hesitation, the French guard shot them all to death. Later the dead soldiers were identified as German infiltration troops disguised in American uniforms. When asked how the French guard knew the soldiers were not American, the guard replied, "That's easy! Americans, they come in Jeeps!"⁶⁶ This popular tale provides some insight into the relationship between Americans and the Jeep. The Jeep and the GI were inseparable, and the relationship perhaps foreshadows the origins of Jeep Nation, the large fan base of the Jeep brand today. During World War II, more than 640,000 standard Jeeps were deployed. These vehicles embodied the iconic design that would become the standard for more than seventy years and spawn an entire new class of civilian vehicle.⁶⁷ To fully comprehend the magnitude of success that is the Jeep brand, a synopsis of its history is warranted. History makes Jeep marketing meaningful, especially regarding the vehicle's development. To understand the brand's utilization of common wilderness ideologies, nostalgia, and the Frontier Myth in marketing campaigns, Jeep's history must be analyzed. Indeed it is the colorful history of the Jeep brand that ferments the company's present day success as an ambassador to the outdoors.

⁶⁶ Imes Chiu. *The Evolution from Horse to Automobile: A Comparative International Study* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 192.

⁶⁷ Brian J Duddy. "The Jeep at 70: A Defense Acquisition Success Story." *Defense Acquisition Research Journal*, no. 4 (October 2012): 371.

World War II epitomized a global war as it involved more people (civilians and soldiers alike), and more nations, than ever before. Some seventy nations took part in the large-scale international conflict as fighting occurred on the continents of Africa, Asia, and Europe, and on the high seas. The United States sent soldiers to both the Pacific and European theaters of war, while the home front commanded the fulfillment of different roles for each individual. In the realm of combat, the American military demanded a newer, more powerful vehicle to replace both the motorcycle and cavalry horse in order to overpower the environment of the surrounding wartime theaters. A newer, capable vehicle would enable both the safety of Allied soldiers, as well as an American victory. The Ordnance Technical Committee was charged with developing a specification for a vehicle that would satisfy the needs of all military branches.⁶⁸

The qualifications for this general-purpose vehicle maintained “a rugged medium with room for three and four wheel drive, yet with a weight limit of thirteen hundred pounds using the standard components to the greatest extent.” In addition the vehicle must haul a minimum of six hundred pounds and have a forty-horsepower engine.⁶⁹ Commercial vehicles of the time were immediately deemed incapable for the task at hand. Many military authorities indicated that commercial cars, such as the Ford Model T, were too light and fragile for the environments of the impending war and combat. Large ponderous vehicles, particularly those used in World War I, stood out making an easy target for enemy fire. Chevrolet’s passenger car, tested since the 1920s, was lightweight, but did not perform well in cross-country terrain. Finally Marmon-Harrington’s 4-wheel drive truck was similarly ineffective because it was too heavy for

⁶⁸ Brian J Duddy. "The Jeep at 70: A Defense Acquisition Success Story." *Defense Acquisition Research Journal*, no. 4 (October 2012): 363.

⁶⁹ Patrick R Foster. *Jeep: The History of America's Greatest Vehicle* (Minneapolis, MN: Motorbooks, 2014), 22.

reconnaissance missions.⁷⁰ The necessary vehicle must balance the military's needs of durability and cross-country capability alongside a good fuel economy and an adequate carrying capacity. These characteristics eventually became highly coveted specifications in the civilian world as members of Jeep Nation sought to purchase a vehicle that would venture farther, longer.

The army contacted one hundred thirty-five manufacturers, but most companies thought the requirements were unrealistic and did not submit bids. Bantam Motors and Willys-Overland were the only two companies interested in the potential contract with the army. Both Bantam Motors and Willys-Overland designed and sold smaller than average vehicles, and with minimal sales, each company jumped at the opportunity. The military relayed its expectations to them once more, stating the vehicle “must be small enough for reconnaissance and command functions, be able to haul men and supplies long distances, and be sturdy enough to carry a machine gun.”⁷¹ The American Bantam Motor Company proved to have a slight edge in this competition, as the company initially dealt within the realms of cavalry car construction. The cavalry car was a lightweight and rugged vehicle with good visibility and cross-country capability.⁷² Bantam Motors had developed a cavalry car known as the Austin Seven. Originally designed as a vehicle to teach women to drive, its adaptability, maneuverability, and ease of handling granted Bantam an advantage in the development of a much-needed military vehicle.⁷³ As Bantam Motors and Willys-Overland began working, the military contacted Ford. With Bantam and Willys' precarious financial situation, another company with the experience and

⁷⁰ Imes Chiu. *The Evolution from Horse to Automobile: A Comparative International Study* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 169.

⁷¹ Patrick R Foster. *Jeep: The History of America's Greatest Vehicle* (Minneapolis, MN: Motorbooks, 2014), 20.

⁷² Imes Chiu. *The Evolution from Horse to Automobile: A Comparative International Study* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 177.

⁷³ Ibid.

success of mass production proved essential. Important to note is that all three companies sensed that a rugged off-road vehicle concept had the potential to grow beyond military application. No such vehicle with these parameters existed in the civilian world. With the increasing popularity of the automobile and automobile culture in American society, a bid from the military had the potential to completely alter car culture in the postwar world. Furthermore, in order for either of the companies to substantiate themselves in the postwar world, Willys-Overland, Bantam Motors, and Ford needed to separate themselves from the other competition. Creation of an all-American war machine, versatile enough to merge into the consumer market would challenge all civilian vehicles in the consumer economy.

The first prototype of the vehicle, created by Willys-Overland, was “a squat, low-slung bug of a car, with a barebones purpose built appearance to both the interior and exterior. It had a scooped out door opening, cycle front fenders, a tall windshield, and a rounded hood and grille.”⁷⁴ Bantam Motors and Ford constructed similar prototypes with Ford creating the only differentiation in appearance—pleasing aesthetics. “Vehicles were rated competitively for power, ride, comfort, smoothness, ruggedness, and ability to climb hills, ford streams, and run off road. The military also tested for top speed, fuel economy, and towing ability, while riding across fields, ditches, and up and down mountains.”⁷⁵ Army test procedures of the day called for rugged driving and punishing the vehicle until a part broke or until the driver was worn out.⁷⁶ These environmental tests administered by the military greatly influenced this new vehicle’s now

⁷⁴ Imes Chiu. *The Evolution from Horse to Automobile: A Comparative International Study* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 29.

⁷⁵ Patrick R Foster. *Jeep: The History of America’s Greatest Vehicle* (Minneapolis, MN: Motorbooks, 2014), 29.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

popular status as the vehicle for the rugged outdoorsmen, the adventurer, or the conqueror of nature.

While Ford proved most reliable, Willys-Overland's prototype encompassed all the qualities needed for a vehicle for World War II, including four-wheel drive. For Willys-Overland, the focus shifted from pleasing aesthetics to the automotive performance of the vehicle in all terrains. Willys-Overland synthesized the advantageous characteristics of the three competing vehicles into one configuration. The design that resulted, the Willy's M13 ¼-ton 4X4, the eventual prototype of what would be known as the Jeep, was broadly the Willy's body, engine, and drive train with a Ford front end and grille, a grille that is still used today.⁷⁷

Nicknamed "Arsenal of Democracy," Willys-Overland built 368,000 Jeeps for World War II, with Ford producing a few hundred thousand extras due to its reliability of mass production.

In 1942, the Jeeps were first utilized at the front lines in Northern Africa at el Alamein, Egypt.⁷⁸ Equipped with a heavy machine gun, the Jeep proved powerful and destructive as both an anti-aircraft weapon, and conqueror of the harsh desert environment. With its growing success, the Jeeps ventured into both the Pacific theater and European theater abolishing every hardship presented by the environment. Originally designed solely for the use of combat arms, the Jeep was adopted and employed by all services. In fact, Jeep's versatility was immediately recognized during the war so much so that Axis troops were known to capture Jeeps as often as possible. Due to the incessant utilization of Jeeps, Axis troops believed the capture of Jeeps would slow the advance of the Allied powers.

⁷⁷ Brian J Duddy. "The Jeep at 70: A Defense Acquisition Success Story." *Defense Acquisition Research Journal*, no. 4 (October 2012): 371.

⁷⁸ Patrick R Foster. *Jeep: The History of America's Greatest Vehicle* (Minneapolis, MN: Motorbooks, 2014), 2.

According to soldiers on the ground, Jeeps made everything easier: recon patrols were easier to drive, planes were easier to tow, and supplies were easier to carry. In addition, the design of the Jeep, “the engine, combined bucket seats, floor shift, and low cut sides,” was as close to a sports car as any soldier could obtain—and they loved it.⁷⁹ The famous World War II correspondent Ernie Pyle stated,

“Good Lord, I don’t think we could continue the war without the jeep. It does everything. It goes everywhere. It’s as faithful as a dog, strong as a mule, and as agile as a goat. It constantly carries twice what it was designed for, and keeps on going. It doesn’t even ride so badly after you get used to it.”⁸⁰

General George C. Marshall considered the Jeep to be the greatest contribution to modern warfare created by the United States, while General Courtney Hodges described the Jeep as the most useful vehicle America has ever had.⁸¹ The love affair with Jeep continued as Private Jesse Wolf wrote a poem articulating this change, as well as the newfound marriage of the Jeep and those associated with the military:

When the war was at its hottest
And the going got too steep.
One pal that I could count on
Was the mighty little Jeep
Through beachhead hell, through fire,
Our metal mounts would leap
With strictly GI courage;
I won't forget the Jeep.
And now the war is over.
The one thing I will keep
For farm and field and hunting -
That's my buddy, Willy Jeep.⁸²

⁷⁹ Patrick R Foster. *Jeep: The History of America’s Greatest Vehicle* (Minneapolis, MN: Motorbooks, 2014), 9.

⁸⁰ Deborah Stead "FROM THE G.I. TO THE YUPPIE THE JEEP ROLLS ON." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Mar 15, 137.

⁸¹ Imes Chiu. *The Evolution from Horse to Automobile: A Comparative International Study* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 191.

⁸² “The Bugle Bugle,” last modified August 1996, accessed April 2016, <http://www.veteransofthebattleofthebulge.org/vbob/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/1996-Aug.pdf>.

The mighty Jeep became a source of comfort and a sign of victory to each American soldier on the ground, as it continued to conquer each terrain in World War II. In addition, the Jeep grew popular on the home front as a symbol of victory for the American troops. The symbol of victory and success on multiple terrains became evident on the home front in 1943 when the *New York Times* reported that the United States Marine Corps actually awarded a Purple Heart to a battered Jeep that survived two beach landings.⁸³ Civic organizations sponsored wartime bond drives in a Jeep as a reward for donations, while Cub Scouts raised money for the government to purchase extra Jeeps for the war effort. The Jeep was associated with people from all ranks and walks of life: from infantrymen to dignitaries, presidents and prime ministers, royalty and Hollywood. The American public was consistently bombarded with stories and images of the Jeep, images propagandizing the success and patriotism of the all-American war machine.

When World War II ended, 16.1 million Americans had served their country. Millions of those soldiers who served their nation had their view of nature altered by the creation of the Jeep. World War II and subsequent wars introduced legions of Americans to a particularly attractive version of nature and wilderness, leading to fostering feelings of awe, and even the desire to engage. One of the most significant trends in modern recreation, occurring during the postwar period, was the increase in demand of great open spaces.⁸⁴ The era following World War II was a time of great promise in the United States. After twenty years of hardship and conflict, prosperity and the growth of the economy suggested to many that the American dream was possible, and its symbol was the automobile. Civilian Americans were looking for a vehicle to travel into unknown territory. While both Willys-Overland and Ford companies believed that a rugged, off

⁸³ Deborah Stead "FROM THE G.I. TO THE YUPPIE THE JEEP ROLLS ON." *New York Times* (1923-Current File), Mar 15, 137.

⁸⁴ Paul Sutter. *Driven Wild How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 19.

road vehicle could transition to the consumer market, the unmitigated success of the Jeep brand in the decades to follow was unfathomable. Americans were ready for the Jeep.

*4 by 4 by Land, 4 by 4 Sea
4 by 4 by Air 'cause I like to fly free
4 by 4 AM that's when I rise. Sneak up on the landscape, catch it by surprise.*
Morgan Dorr⁸⁵

The Icon: A Physical Case Study

A deep, longstanding connection lies between outdoor recreation and consumer culture since the last century, and the longstanding connection continues to contribute to the success and image of the Jeep vehicle. After World War II, outdoor recreation became a consumer activity as many Americans wanted to get away from the complexities of a postindustrial world. With a growing postwar economy, consumerism trained Americans to view the world not only through their acquisition of goods, but also as an accumulation of experiences.⁸⁶ The automobile, in particular, grew influential in terms of spreading the outdoor recreation habit. Automobiles brought millions of Americans from towns and cities into a variety of natural settings.⁸⁷ As the United States continued to progress economically in the post war world, consumerism and the number of wilderness users grew substantially as wilderness recreation was both marketed and sold.⁸⁸ The evolution of consumerism as an accumulation of experiences facilitated the Jeep's dissemination from the military to civilian market.

When the Jeep Wrangler replaced the CJ-7 in 1987, Jeep Nation mourned its passing. The CJ's popularity, along with its achievements in World War II, had given the Jeep brand universal recognition.⁸⁹ Its international and domestic appeal had been further stimulated by four decades

⁸⁵ "4x4Ever," Genius, accessed March 12, 2017, <https://genius.com/Morgan-dorr-4x4ever-lyrics>.

⁸⁶ Paul Sutter. *Driven Wild How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 26.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Paul Sutter. *Driven Wild How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 256.

⁸⁹ Robert C Ackerson. *Jeep Wrangler* (Dorchester: Veloce, 2005), 5.

of civilian production alongside effective promotion of the brand. The Jeep Wrangler has since surpassed the CJ esteem, and is now one of the most popular and well-known vehicles of all time. Its rugged exterior, comfortable interior, and off-road capabilities generate a vaunting disposition. Wranglers are a cultural phenomenon grossing the highest sales of the Jeep family. Perhaps most interesting, though, is the Wrangler's symbolic representation to society. Designed for the outdoorsman ready to transcend boundaries with voyaging vigor, Jeep markets the Wrangler through techniques of romantic fascination allowing for any individual to picture him or herself in a Wrangler. In 2014, the Jeep Wrangler ranked number one in worst value.⁹⁰ Nevertheless sales continued to increase, and Jeep sold thousands of Wranglers that year. The Wrangler is a lifestyle and image choice. Consumers enjoy the brawny descendant of the Willys World War II frame, and instantly become filled with wanderlust pangs. While its patriotic history influences some consumption, Jeep's utilization of culturally embedded tactics in both the physical vehicle itself as well as the advertisements of that vehicle, enable the consumer's acceptance of the collectively altered definitions of these notions thereby promoting consumption.

After the termination of the CJ, newer Jeep models were labeled with names fit for the brand's image, an image created in World War II and stabilized with the CJ's effective promotion tactics, especially those of nostalgia. The Jeep Wrangler is one such example. A wrangler is a cowboy, especially one in charge of saddle horses.⁹¹ Typically wranglers are found out West, in nature, and in wide-open spaces often in wild situations. The actual name of this

⁹⁰ "Jeep Guns for 2 million in Annual Sales," Forbes, accessed January 27, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/georgepeterson1/2017/02/24/2-million-jeps-global-sales-target/#1fdd6fd4430c>.

⁹¹ "Wrangler," Merriam-Webster, accessed February 1, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wrangler>.

Jeep vehicle denotes a sense of wildness, a characteristic envied by most in a postindustrial society because wildness is equivalent to freedom. Since the consumer is so far removed from nature, then the only avenue available to escape the complexities of a postindustrial world and the constant saturation of signifiers, codes, and messages is the consumption of a vehicle whose name denotes the very characteristics individuals seek and identify with. There lies the first success of the Jeep Wrangler. The Wrangler name represents a rugged, outdoors appeal, and is the earliest signifier of a more primitive lifestyle for this brand. Before Jeep Nation connected the term wrangler to the physical vehicle itself, the term wrangler was romanticized and connected to the American wilderness ideal.

Another physical component of the Jeep Wrangler worth exploring is that of color and build. The Jeep Wrangler does not offer basic color choices to the consumer, such as white, black, and grey, unlike its competition.⁹² Wranglers are available in rhino grey, chief blue, pure white, Gobi brown, billet silver, and forest green.⁹³ These colors hold meaning to the Jeep brand's overall message as ambassador to wilderness for the consumer. Gobi brown, forest green, and pure white are in reference to the wilderness landscape. Gobi brown refers to the Gobi Desert, an area uncultivated, undeveloped, and wild. Forest green, the color of choice for Jeep Nation, displays similar connotations as Gobi brown: uncultivated, undeveloped, and wild. Jeep's choice to utilize pure as an adjective for white displays the company's ability to manipulate consumption through romanticism. Pure references untouched. Untouched white is typically found after a fresh snowfall. Fresh snow, untouched, implies no human contact. Snow with no human contact is found in mountainous regions that are uncultivated, undeveloped, and

⁹² "Toyota SUVs," Toyota Motor Sales, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.toyota.com>.

"Nissan Crossovers & SUVs," Nissan USA, accessed February 17, 2017, <https://www.nissanusa.com>.

"Welcome to Showroom," Ford Motor Company, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.ford.com/suvs>.

⁹³ "2017 Wrangler," FCA US LLC, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.jeep.com/wrangler.html>.

wild. The concept of the sublime and the picturesque show value of undeveloped and wild country as a sanctuary in which those in need of consolation can find solace from the pressures of civilization.⁹⁴ Landscape is a medium for communication between persons, or most radically for communication between the human and the non-human.⁹⁵ Therefore the pure white color allows the consumer to romanticize about seeking solace and seeking human/non-human communication in the fresh, untouched snow, and the Wrangler's ability to take the consumer to that wild land of consolation.

Chief blue and rhino grey signify objects of interaction. Chief as an adjective of blue insinuates a reference to Native Americans. Many Native American chiefs applied blue dye in times of war, or to display status. Specifically, in regards to the frontier, conquest of the wilderness and the subjugation or displacement of the Native Americans who originally inhabited it have been the means to America's achievement of a national identity, an identity shared by Jeep consumers.⁹⁶ The American must cross the border into "Indian Country" and experience regression to a more primitive and natural condition of life.⁹⁷ In regards to "Indian Country," man is drawn to the "Indians," and all they represent: a simple, effortless, spontaneous existence. Since the term wrangler references a cowboy, and cowboys are usually found in the West, the utilization of chief as an adjective of blue furthers the notion of escaping the complexities of the postindustrial world in search of a more primitive, simple existence. Rhino grey's interpretation encompasses similar results to that of chief blue. A rhino is an endangered species. This remarkably scarce animal is almost impossible to locate in the world today. Jeep's

⁹⁴ Roderick Nash and Char Miller. *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 4.

⁹⁵ W. J. Thomas Mitchell. *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 9.

⁹⁶ Richard Slotkin. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 11.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 114.

utilization of rhino as an adjective of grey enables the consumer to romanticize the Wrangler's ability to traverse through remote locations with the hopes of potentially locating a scarce species. The Jeep Wrangler is the vehicle of choice for Jeep Nation to embark on romanticized journeys into the wilderness. Through color, Jeep separates itself from market competition, as consumers customize their Wrangler through the biome color of choice. All colors enable the consumer to blend in with the surroundings of wilderness with the hopes of catching landscape and wildlife by surprise. This furthers the notion of connection to nature through consumption of the Jeep.

While color terminology fosters romantic possibilities of wilderness, the Wrangler builds actualize the opportunity of forging a path to wilderness. Climbing into a Wrangler and driving out into nature is only possible if the consumer purchases the correct Wrangler build for the ideal wilderness destination. Therefore the Jeep brand further mitigates both the materialism and the artifice of a modern capitalist society, as only specific Wrangler builds enable specific adventures into the wilderness. Should the consumer require a more rugged experience, farther away from postindustrial intricacies of society, the consumer must purchase a build with advanced handling capabilities. As each Wrangler build advances its technical and motor components, the price also increases. Consequently, the Jeep brand manipulates Wrangler consumption through careful analysis of the consumer and the evolutionary mechanical components of each build.

Similar to Wrangler color choices, basic terminology such as LE, XLE, SV SL, are not found in the realms of Wrangler builds.⁹⁸ Instead Wrangler builds represent the Jeep brand's

⁹⁸ "Toyota SUVs," Toyota Motor Sales, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.toyota.com>.

"Nissan Crossovers & SUVs," Nissan USA, accessed February 17, 2017, <https://www.nissanusa.com>.

"Welcome to Showroom," Ford Motor Company, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.ford.com/suvs>.

overall message as an ambassador to wilderness. Wrangler builds include Willys Wheeler, Wrangler Big Bear, Wrangler Freedom Edition, Wrangler Sahara, Wrangler Rubicon, and Wrangler Smoky Mountain.⁹⁹ Wrangler Willys Wheeler and Wrangler Freedom Edition pay homage to the patriotic past of the Jeep vehicle. The Wrangler Willys Wheeler transmits nostalgic undertones as the company boasts the original Willys CJ, the father of recreational vehicles, as the build's inspiration.¹⁰⁰ Purchase of this build enables the consumer to relive the grandeur of America's greatest generation, the generation of and following World War II. The Wrangler Freedom Edition pays tribute to American armed forces with service inspired style and capability including patriotic exterior badging and a freedom inspiring command traction four-wheel drive system.¹⁰¹ Both the freedom and the wheeler builds expose a significant cultural meaning embedded in wilderness.

Howard Zahniser, and American environmental activist, proclaims wilderness as a fancy human concept defined as much by society's values as the state of land itself.¹⁰² More simply, wilderness is the "very stuff" that America is made of.¹⁰³ Forged by American independence, promoting hardihood and self-reliance, wilderness contributes to America's democratic origins, and its ideals are preserved today through the service of the American soldier. The Jeep brand is deeply tied to the American military, as its establishment revolved around the need to protect American ideals and its democratic origins by providing soldiers a vehicle to assist during combat in World War II. The consumer, recognizing this relationship between the Jeep and the American military, is more inclined to purchase a Wrangler build upholding a patriotic past.

⁹⁹ "2017 Wrangler," FCA US LLC, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.jeep.com/wrangler.html>.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² James Morton Turner. *The Promise of Wilderness: American Environmental Politics since 1964* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 36.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 4.

The American national identity involves narratives of the nation's past, its founding fathers and documents, seminal events and so on.¹⁰⁴ The Jeep became a symbol of American national identity through its introductory role in World War II. Other automotive companies, such as Ford, also contributed in assisting the American military, but the builds of their vehicles do not encompass any physical or visual notion of the American military. The Freedom Edition or Willys Wheeler build carries the consumer out into the very type of wilderness constructed by democratic ideals and protected by the American soldier in a vehicle resembling a faction of the American national identity. Understanding the foundations of patriotism and the development of national identity in the United States enables the Jeep brand to manipulate the market through the visual and physical representations of patriotic Wrangler builds and as the builds contain embedded cultural meanings.

Wrangler Sahara, Wrangler Rubicon, and Wrangler Smoky Mountain builds represent various wild landscapes the consumer can traverse in a Wrangler. Named after the Sahara Desert, the Sahara build will take the consumer off the beaten path in style with a heavy-duty suspension and command traction four-wheel drive.¹⁰⁵ Noted as one of the most storied and unforgiving lands in the world, the Sahara evokes a poignant sense of nature's power, of antiquity and legend, and of wonder and mystery. Topographical features include its iconic sand dunes, arid mountains, plateaus, and shallow oasis regions, all areas most fit for a Jeep Wrangler. The Sahara build and name enables the consumer to romanticize about recreational opportunities and a sense of reconnection with the wild world, a reconnection highly sought after since the growth of a postindustrial society. The Wrangler Rubicon takes off roading to the limits.¹⁰⁶ Rubicon is

¹⁰⁴ W. J. Thomas Mitchell. *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 243.

¹⁰⁵ "2017 Wrangler," FCA US LLC, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.jeep.com/wrangler.html>.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

defined as a bounding or limiting line, one that when crossed commits a person irrevocably.¹⁰⁷ The term rubicon becomes an adjective for the Wrangler itself. Consumers purchase Wranglers with the intention of crossing boundaries and journeying into the unknown with the hopes that the voyage will also transform the consumer. This furthers the notion that the Jeep brand capitalizes on the utilization of nostalgia. A real man, the rugged individual he was meant to be, let civilization sap his every energy and threaten his masculinity, and therefore requires the Wrangler Rubicon to fulfill the romantic desire of returning to a simpler time.¹⁰⁸ The Wrangler Smoky Mountain build boasts high gloss accents, impressive black interior, and legendary capability to make it the perfect vehicle for urban adventurers who have a taste for the outdoors.¹⁰⁹ A truly living mountain range, the great Smoky Mountains are constantly re-inventing themselves as wind, water, and erosion continuously shape an environment perfectly constructed for a Wrangler. The Smoky Mountain Wrangler build entices the consumer who prefers to wander the tranquil woods and hills in order to escape the hyperactivity of a modern capitalist society. In addition, the name of the build immediately allows the consumer to envision an immediate escape from a world that hinders both individualism and self-sustainability.

Through its various Wrangler builds, the Jeep brand constitutes a contradiction between how consumers want to connect with nature and how consumers actually connect with nature, and between what consumers want nature to be and what nature actually is. The Wrangler introduced legions of consumers to a particularly attractive version of wilderness, often fostering feelings of closeness, awe, and even the desire to engage. Consumers purchase assorted

¹⁰⁷ "Rubicon," Merriam-Webster, accessed February 1, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Rubicon>.

¹⁰⁸ William Cronon. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York, NY: Norton, 1996), 78.

¹⁰⁹ "2017 Wrangler," FCA US LLC, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.jeep.com/wrangler.html>.

Wrangler builds in order to fulfill the nostalgic desire and romantic fascination of escaping the postindustrial world. However if the consumer truly wished to reminisce with wilderness in a nostalgic fashion, consumption of a Wrangler with eye catching style, high gloss accents, and impressive interior would not be the chosen avenue. Originally individuals were drawn to wilderness because of the belief that certain natural sites epitomized the romantic sublime where the individual could experience God first hand, or be reborn through a transformative, primitive experience without the interference of technology or machinery. In direct opposition to the belief of the consumer, the Jeep brand creates nature and wilderness as a product available to those who purchase the finest Wrangler build. While the consumer romanticizes about the departure of a postindustrial society into a more natural setting, the Jeep brand has capitalized on the created consumer's need to have the technology of a postindustrial society in a wild setting. The happiest state of man is the middle state between the wild and the luxurious, and the Wrangler is indeed the medium. Through the Wrangler, the Jeep brand has facilitated the return to nature as both recreational, and an advertised destination.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Paul Sutter. *Driven Wild How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 52.

The Icon: A Visual Analysis

Baby boomers experienced affluence due to America's period of prosperity after winning World War II. This new class of people viewed nature as a stark contrast to modernity and urbanism. The baby boomer generation's definition of nature showcases the complete altered transition of humans and their attitude towards nature. Their perception of nature is a place apart to define, critique or counteract the urbanism, commercialism, technological control, complexity, white-collar work of the postwar era.¹¹¹ Simply put, nature was a place away, and motor touring required a nature that was separate, distant, and exotic—a nature that the individual traveled to see. Therefore the acceptance and consumption of the Jeep brand became the definition of nature that the baby boomers, and future generations, adapted for themselves showcasing the change in their relationship with nature.

The most effective American advertising campaigns and slogans to inspire consumer desire illustrate the enduring and defining value of freedom and the desire to transcend boundaries.¹¹² These strategies enable the Jeep brand to retain a loyalty rate of 43.6%, and manipulate American cultural patterns to facilitate consumption.¹¹³ In the late twentieth century era of mass communications, most Americans encountered the natural world through mass produced culture, a culture exploited by Jeep advertising enabling the brand to become the symbol for the wilderness and the outdoors. Nature is easily recognized as the central component of most, if not all, Wrangler print and digital media.¹¹⁴ Although the Jeep brand originated

¹¹¹ Jennifer Price. *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999), 175.

¹¹² Thomas Joseph Maschio. "Culture, desire and consumer culture in America in the new age of social media." *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 19, no. 4 (October 2016): 423.

¹¹³ "Jeep Attracting New, Repeat Buyers," CNBC, accessed January 27, 2017, <http://www.cnbc.com/2014/06/25/jeep-attracting-new-repeat-buyers-as-sales-surge.html>.

¹¹⁴ See Appendix

through the need to conquer and traverse any terrain, Wrangler media continues to utilize the concepts of wilderness and nature due to the embedded meanings constructed by society. Therefore the visual representation of wilderness in Wrangler media is not a rudimentary reconstruction of various biomes. Instead wilderness becomes the medium in which a constructed American ideal justifies the consumption of a sought object. In fact, what is most important about the visual representation of mountains, deserts, rainforests, and glaciers, is not what they are, but what they mean.

Upon first glance of Wrangler advertisement, it is difficult to decipher the focal point of the image. Typically two crucial points of Wrangler media emerge: the landscape and the Wrangler itself.¹¹⁵ Landscapes can be deciphered as textual systems in which features such as trees, water, animals, and dwellings can be read as symbols in a cultural context. Exposure to landscape in Wrangler media should not be taken at face value, as the represented landscape becomes less of a physical entity, and more of a meaning behind a cultural practice. Jean Baudrillard stresses the value of signs in media due to the sign's ability to shape expressions of style, power, and prestige in the age of consumerism.¹¹⁶ In an advanced post-industrial, capitalist society, the signs located in Wrangler media force consumption of the Wrangler and its certain build. Individuals construct their identities through the signs they consume in Wrangler media.

The landscape most effective in Wrangler media is wilderness. In all marketing examples provided, the Wranglers are not on paved roads, and this warrants attention. Roadlessness equals wilderness, and the Wrangler sells wilderness as adventure and freedom. The outdoor recreation economy and successful Wrangler sales were shaped by the proliferation of the automobile, and multiple forms of advertisement urging Americans to venture into

¹¹⁵ See Appendix

¹¹⁶ Anthony Elliot. *Contemporary Social Theory: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 242.

wilderness in their automobiles. Wilderness developed as a consumer construct, but society's nostalgia towards wilderness date back to the early years of America. There is a longstanding conviction among Americans that the United States was forged by pioneer encounters with wilderness.¹¹⁷ Dictionaries define wilderness as uncultivated and undeveloped land. The term itself has changed over time, eventually giving meaning to the Wrangler marketing campaigns. The Teutonic and Norse languages trace the origin of wilderness to "will," describing the notion of self-willed, willful, or uncontrollable.¹¹⁸ From willed the term adjusted to "wild," describing the state of being, lost, unruly, disordered, or confused.¹¹⁹ "Deor" is defined as not under the control of men.¹²⁰ Arranged together, wild-deor-ness, is a place of wild beats where a person is known to be confused, disorderly, or of wild condition. In the 18th century, the sublime dispelled the notion that beauty in nature cannot be vast, and suggested the association of God and wild nature.¹²¹ Simultaneously romanticism enabled the coveted appreciation of solidarity and mystery with the association of God and wilderness. As the United States became a postindustrial society, the cultural notions of primitivism and nostalgia ensued. Through primitivism, a man's happiness and well-being decreased in direct proportion to his degree of civilization. Over time, society began to idealize contemporary cultures nearer savagery that promote a simpler life, as the complexities of the postindustrial world amplified. Through the facilitation of the Wrangler, the Jeep brand enhances the myth of the frontier by visually representing the separation from the postindustrial world, a penetration to a source of power

¹¹⁷ Paul Sutter. *Driven Wild How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), VII.

¹¹⁸ Roderick Nash and Char Miller. *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 2.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Roderick Nash and Char Miller. *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 45.

found in the culturally constructed notion of wilderness, and a life enhancing return. The brand showcases the Wrangler in this manner to evoke feelings of nostalgia from the consumer through the saturation of signs in order to encourage consumption.

Figure 1



When first analyzing *Figure 1* and *Figure 2*, the consumer's eyes are immediately drawn to three different signs: a wild animal on the left, scattered human physical entities on the right, and the landscape itself. The Jeep Wrangler is not displayed in either print advertisement. *Figure 1* showcases an overweight lion in the savannah, while *Figure 2* showcases an abnormally large snake in a jungle. The colors represent the wilderness of each biome adding to the realism on the image. Both the animals and the landscapes are classified as sought objects, since they represent the desired, the symbolic, and the consumed. In this manner, the culturally constructed ideal of wilderness becomes the signified in both *Figure 1* and *Figure 2*. The signifiers, or images that expose the signified, are the wild lands and wild animals portrayed, specifically the lion and the savannah in *Figure 1* and the snake and the jungle in *Figure 2*.

Figure 2

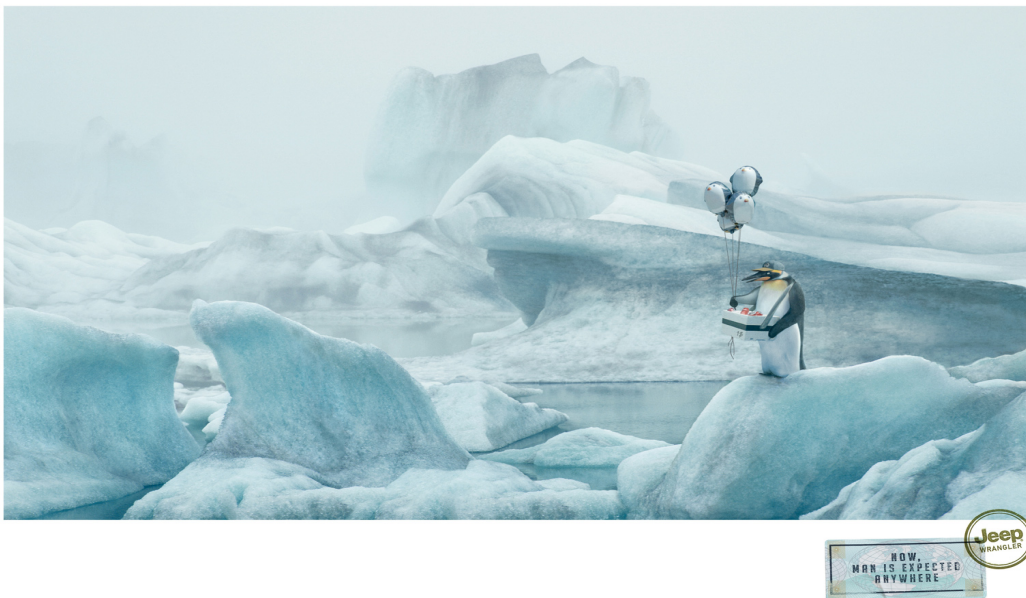


The anchorage of the print advertisement is provided on the bottom right corner stating, “The five passenger Wrangler Unlimited. Bringing more people to more remote places.” Analysis of the anchorage provides more insight to the print advertisement. The frontier is a complexly resonant symbol to society, complete with sets of hero tales empowering the desire for those discontent with civilized society to venture into uncivilized territory. Primitivism became the opportunity wilderness afforded for freedom and adventure, and the Jeep brand facilitated the transmission of these culturally constructed ideals through the provided Wrangler print media. The missing people from both print media suggest that while the supposed individuals were hoping to escape civilized life to return refreshed, perhaps the individuals were a little too close to wilderness, prompting the attack and digestion by a wild animal. Ending of the frontier prompted many Americans to seek ways of retaining the influence of wilderness in the postindustrial world, but love for wilderness was always clouded over with doubts.¹²² *Figure*

¹²² Roderick Nash and Char Miller. *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 79.

1 and *Figure 2* display the possible errors that could occur should individuals not travel in a Wrangler. Therefore the culturally constructed, safe yet free, ideals of wilderness is displayed as a commodity through these Wrangler print media in a manner that convinces the consumer of the need own a Wrangler.

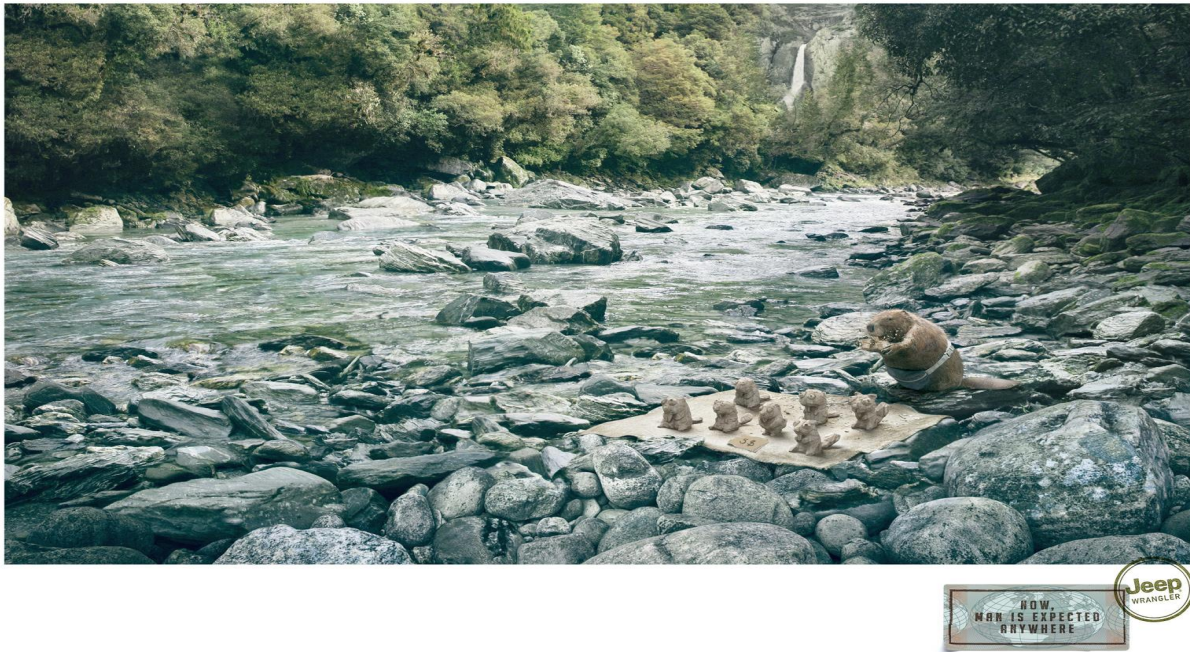
Figure 3



When first analyzing *Figure 3* and *Figure 4*, the consumer's eyes are immediately drawn to the pristine landscapes of the tundra and the river, as well as the animal native to the biome on the right. No Wrangler is pictured in these print ads to assure the consumer that the sole focus remains on the serene, picturesque, wild lands. The signified is the cultural construct of wilderness, and the signifier that allows for the signified to present itself to consumers is the vast open spaces in both *Figure 3* and *Figure 4*. As individuals began to view wilderness as a component of the sublime, a climate of opinion in which wilderness could be appreciated developed and ensued through postindustrial times. As society progressed, individuals grew nostalgic and began seeking avenues to return to a simpler time. America's frontier and pioneer past was believed responsible in creating desirable characteristics, and the postindustrial world

was blamed for alleviating those same characteristics. As a result, individuals believed wilderness led to regeneration, as the regenerative power immersed itself in the sought after terrain.¹²³

Figure 4



The Jeep brand chose wilderness as the sign of focus in both *Figure 3* and *Figure 4* to manipulate consumer thought. The pristine landscape of the tundra and the river is the visual representation of regenerative power, as both wild landscapes are shown undefiled, bountiful, and with sublime characteristics. Exploring these lands will enable a better, happier individual who is reborn.¹²⁴ The anchorage, “Jeep Wrangler: now man is expected everywhere,” furthers this analysis. Since society advanced, finding undefiled wilderness has since grown difficult, due to both an expansive population grown as well as the characteristic of roadlessness. However

¹²³ James Morton Turner. *The Promise of Wilderness: American Environmental Politics since 1964* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 248.

¹²⁴ Roderick Nash and Char Miller. *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 67.

through the consumption of a Wrangler, individuals can traverse any terrain to find pristine landscape with regenerative powers. This is yet another example of the Jeep brand embedding Wrangler media with nostalgia and other cultural constructs of wilderness with the hopes of manipulating consumption.

Figure 5



When first analyzing *Figure 5*, the consumer's eyes are immediately drawn to Mount Rushmore. The anchorage of the print advertisement is provided in the bottom right corner stating, "Jeep Wrangler. Legendary Fun." The Jeep Wrangler is located on George Washington's nose with Washington looking strangely at the Wrangler located in an area no vehicle has yet to travel. With the Jeep Wrangler appearing tiny in comparison to Mount Rushmore, the focal point of the advertisement becomes nature with both Mount Rushmore and the Wrangler are signs. The cultural construct of wilderness is, again, the signified, while the Wrangler itself is the signifier because the Wrangler represents the medium to the culturally constructed wilderness. Through the embedded cultural notions found in this advertisement, the Jeep Wrangler begins to

signify wanderlust pangs. One of the embedded cultural notions stems from Frederick Jackson Turner's discussion of the contemporary crisis in the closing of the "old frontier," and the inability to find a new one.¹²⁵ With the United States' progressing into a postindustrial society, the need to find a new frontier to free individuals from the metropolitan regime became apparent. This necessity is the central theme of *Figure 5*. While any vehicle can take the consumer to Mount Rushmore, only the Wrangler can take the consumer to such rugged locations, such as George Washington's nose. Roadlessness equates to wilderness, and wilderness equates to adventure and regeneration. Wilderness in this instance signifies the type of person the consumer aspires to become through the accumulation of the Wrangler.

Figure 6



Another embedded cultural notion utilized by Wrangler media is the relationship between people and nature. With the proliferation of the automobile in the post war world, car country

¹²⁵ Richard Slotkin. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 3.

profoundly altered how people interacted with the natural world, as they began exploration into the unknown.¹²⁶ As society and American culture continued to progress, core elements of the frontier myth remained in that wilderness was the last bastion of rugged individualism.¹²⁷ Wilderness began to embody the national frontier myth and began to seemingly represent a highly attractive natural alternative to the ugly artificiality of modern civilization. Upon first glance of *Figure 6* and *Figure 7*, the consumer's eyes are immediately drawn to the covered forest in *Figure 6* and the covered mountains in *Figure 7*. The covered landscapes represent the sought objects, or desired ideals that are then consumed. The signified is the cultural construct of wilderness brought out by the signifier, the covered wilderness itself.

Figure 7



On the opposite side of each covered landscape, in both *Figure 6* and *Figure 7*, there are three to four individuals trying to unveil their newfound landscape. The individuals are difficult

¹²⁶ Chris Wells. *Car Country* (University of Washington Press, 2014), XXIII.

¹²⁷ William Cronon. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York, NY: Norton, 1996), 77.

to notice, which enables the consumer to focus on the hidden wild land, and visualize his or herself in that landscape. The anchorage, “see the unseen,” helps substantiate the embedded meaning of both *Figure 6* and *Figure 7*. The farther removed from nature consumers are, the greater the nostalgic tendencies. The Wrangler print media of *Figure 6* and *Figure 7* visualize the nostalgia felt by the consumer by unveiling the possibility of adventure and new frontiers; two facets lost in the post-industrial world. Participation in such a journey humanizes the rugged characteristics the consumer idealized through the cultural constructs of wilderness. Similar to other Wrangler print media, no roads exist. In order for the consumer to complete the journey into uncharted territory, consumption of a Wrangler must ensue. Wilderness, again, is presented as a commodity, a symbol of the consumed. The Jeep Wrangler grants the consumer the opportunity to travel off road, and therefore *Figure 6* and *Figure 7* provide another example of how deeply embedded cultural constructs manipulate the consumption of the Wrangler.

Figure 8



When analyzing *Figure 8*, the consumer is met with multiple signs. An avalanche ensues from the side of a mountain, and a Wrangler is placed in its path. The anchorage of the text, “Take on Anything Nature Throws Your Way,” immediately changes the message behind the print advertisement. The Wrangler is not simply placed in the way of the avalanche, the Wrangler is charging forward towards the avalanche. The focal point of the media is the Wrangler, not the avalanche. While most consumers typically purchase Wranglers with a white, black, or forest green exterior, the exterior of the Wrangler in the print ad is a noticeable bright yellow. Chosen to grab the consumer’s attention, the yellow Wrangler signifies the relationship the consumer wants with wilderness. Similar to other Wrangler print media, the signified is the cultural construct of wilderness, and the cultural construct is visualized by the signifier, the 2012 Jeep Wrangler Sahara.

Figure 8 showcases nostalgia through a different avenue of the frontier myth. Conquest of wilderness and the subjugation of land is a part of consumer national identity, and characteristics of the dynamic and progressive civilization.¹²⁸ The visual display of the relationship between the Wrangler and the avalanche provides culturally embedded notions that the conquest of wilderness is not only inherently American, but also the qualities of a rugged individual. This type of wilderness experience is available through the consumption of a Wrangler, furthering the argument that nature and experiences in wilderness are commodities. The Jeep brand understands that consumers are exhausted with the intricacies of the postindustrial world, and are looking for an escape into uncharted territory. Thus *Figure 8* showcases another example of a Wrangler advertisement embedded with cultural notions to manipulate consumption.

¹²⁸ Richard Slotkin. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 11.

When analyzing *Figure 9*, *Figure 10*, and *Figure 11*, the consumer's eyes are drawn to several signs. *Figure 9* contains a 2007 red Jeep Wrangler Unlimited with a sea kayak and two all-purpose kayaks. *Figure 10* contains a 2007 blue Jeep Wrangler Unlimited with sleeping bags and tents. *Figure 11* contains a 2007 green Jeep Wrangler Unlimited with surf boards. The signified in all three figures are the cultural constructs of wilderness, in this case the reconnection with the natural world through outdoor recreation brought out by the signifier, the Wrangler itself. Automobiles put more people where they would find ample greenery, recreational opportunities, and a sense of reconnection with the natural world. The average American citizen in a postindustrial society was intimidated by the qualities of solitude and hardship faced by early pioneers, and approached the cultural construct of wilderness with the viewpoint of a vacationer.¹²⁹ In doing so, Americans could still retain the influence of wilderness in modern society, even if only for diminutive intervals of time. Wilderness trips, specifically those of recreational purpose, are escapes from a culture that alienates various members in an advanced capitalist society.

¹²⁹ Roderick Nash and Char Miller. *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 143.

Figure 9



Wild places demand dependency on self rather than dependency on society. Drawing upon nostalgia for a more primitive lifestyle, man is drawn to the Natives on the frontier due to a simple existence. Natives strike man as relatively autonomous and independent, and thus happy men.¹³⁰ The *Foor-dooricus Rockcralerius* marketing campaign promotes the self-sufficiency and independence the consumer grows nostalgic for. *Figure 9* contains a one-man sea kayak placed upon the Jeep Wrangler. *Figure 10* displays singular camping gear placed upon the Jeep Wrangler, and *Figure 11* contains a surf board placed upon a Jeep Wrangler, a board that can only be utilized by a singular individual. In addition, each of these recreational activities require short participation interludes supporting the cultural construct of wilderness with the viewpoint of a vacationer. With the Wrangler advertisements promoting individual recreation opportunities spanning smaller time periods, romantic notions of self-sufficiency and nostalgia for a simpler time soften the opinions of those whom wild county might have produced unmitigated hostility,

¹³⁰ Leo Marx. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 86.

the wilderness vacationer.¹³¹ Man seeks to reconcile his admiration for the primitive life with the needs of a truly civilized community.¹³² Therefore the *Foor-dooricus Rockcralerus* marketing campaign visualizes the manner in which the consumer can combine independence, autonomous outdoor activities, with the refinements of civilization, the Jeep Wrangler.

Figure 10



In addition to the portrayed romanticism, the *Foor-dooricus Rockcralerus* showcase another embedded culture construct of wilderness. Wilderness alludes to roadlessness, or nature “over there,” an area undeveloped by man.

¹³¹ Roderick Nash and Char Miller. *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 64.

¹³² Leo Marx. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 87.

Figure 11



Rivers, forest, mountains, and oceans are all biomes adhering to the standard of undeveloped land. The *Foor-dooricus Rockcralerus* campaign enables the consumer to envision traversing the undeveloped biomes through the mediums of sea kayaks, tents, and surf boards. The Jeep brand, in this example, is using the Wrangler to sell experiences. This further solidifies the argument that contemporary experience with nature is mediated by consumer markets.

Conclusion

World War II epitomized a global war as it involved more people and more nations, than ever before. The multi theater war necessitated a vehicle that surpassed the rugged and unforgiving terrain. Willys Overland created a vehicle that not only challenged the various environments, but also left a lasting impression to all those who encountered the vehicle. With the vehicle's success in World War II, the Jeep began to symbolize American patriotism and freedom. In addition Jeeps began to represent a vehicle for the common man, as infantry men in multiple branches utilized the Jeep on the ground during the war. With the creation of the Jeep Wrangler in the 1970s, the American public flocked to the familiar design of the successful World War II vehicle.

The continued presence of the Jeep Wrangler in American consumer culture suggests that the Wrangler signifies a deeper cultural meaning to the American people. As advancements in the industrial and urban sector altered the complexity of society, Americans began seeking liberation from their new repressive lifestyle. In addition, after the nineteenth century, the American people believed that nature and wilderness held a greater significance to their lives. Nature and wilderness became loaded with the deepest of core values of American culture that created and idealized it. The eventual success of the Wrangler occurs because the Jeep brand exploits America's love of the automobile and nostalgia for a simpler time. Americans began to equate freedom with driving, as automobiles filled a void created by the cultural construct of wilderness and nostalgia. The Jeep Wrangler's continual success correspond to the American consumer. Consumers purchase Wranglers to fill the void created by nostalgia. In this manner, contemporary experience with nature is mediated by consumer markets, as nature and wilderness become available for purchase above all that is real.

The Jeep Wrangler showcases culture in consumer desire, and therefore exhibits how cultural patterns manipulate consumer markets and consumption. Jeep borrows historical American ideas about wilderness and nature, and visualizes them through the physical Wrangler itself, as well as Wrangler marketing campaigns. Names, color choices, and builds of the physical vehicle are examples of the Wrangler's ability to thwart competition and manipulate consumption. Deeply embedded cultural constructs and carefully chosen visuals generate Jeep Wrangler marketing campaigns. These marketing campaigns manipulate the American consumer, and alter the constructs of nature and wilderness to items of purchase.

While this thesis creates some discussion on the role of wilderness and nature in the sport utility vehicle consumer market, there are further implications of study. Firstly, the Jeep brand houses other vehicles alongside the Wrangler: the Compass, the Cherokee, the Grand Cherokee, the Renegade, and the Patriot.¹³³ While this study focuses solely on the Jeep Wrangler, future studies could analyze wilderness rhetoric and historical American ideals of the other brands, as well as its effectiveness on the consumer market. The aforementioned Jeep vehicles contain similar wilderness connotations in their names giving reason to suspect correlation to the cultural constructs of nature and of wilderness.

Secondly, this study calls for future analysis of nostalgia and its deeper implications. Individuals create identity through the consumption and display of signifiers in the Wrangler marketing campaigns. The individuals who purchase Jeep Wranglers, produce a brand community. A brand community is a specialized, non-geographically bound community of people based on a structured set of social relationships among user brands. Following post-modern theory, the Jeep brand and its brand community generate a collective memory. Future

¹³³ "2017 Wrangler," FCA US LLC, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.jeep.com/wrangler.html>.

research could determine whether or not nostalgia creates a falsified, yet accepted reality due to the hyper-reality of consumption and capitalism in a postindustrial world. Therefore the new beliefs of wilderness and nature, as shown in Jeep marketing campaigns, are constructed and accepted by the Jeep brand community.

Finally this study calls for a Marxist critique of the Jeep Wrangler and other Jeep vehicles. While the Jeep brand boasts the success of its American icon, the vehicles are expensive.¹³⁴ Different models and builds add extra cost to the Wrangler, as the brand community frowns upon base model vehicles. In addition, Jeep Wrangler marketing campaigns typically promote more expensive build and models.¹³⁵ Therefore only certain Americans can afford the Jeep Wrangler, transforming the iconic vehicle from a vehicle of the common man, as in World War II, to a symbol of affluence. Future analysis of the Jeep Wrangler through a Marxist lens could create discussion as to whether consumption of nature and wilderness and the return to a more primitive lifestyle is only available to those who have the ability to leave. If that hypothesis is deemed true, then further study on the transition from vehicle of the common man and soldier to the affluent is also warranted.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ See Appendix

Appendix

Figure 1



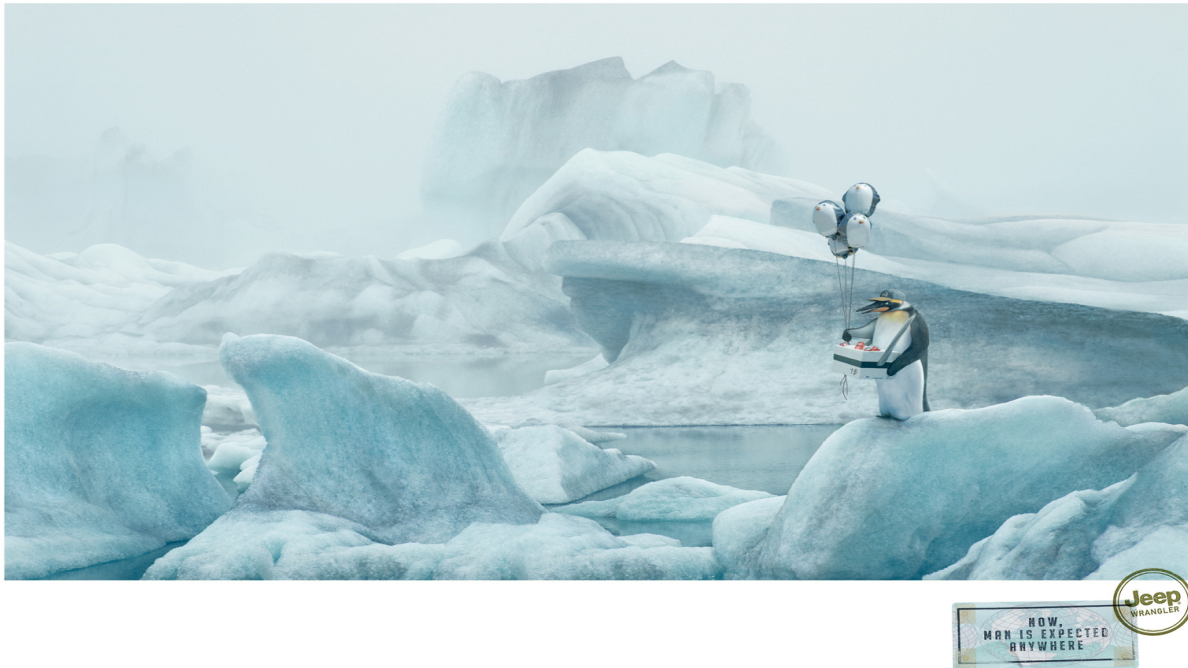
“Jeep Wrangler Unlimited: Fat Lion.” *Adeevae*. Accessed January 12, 2017.
<http://www.adeevae.com/2008/04/chrysler-canada-jeep-wrangler-unlimited-fat-lion-outdoor/>

Figure 2



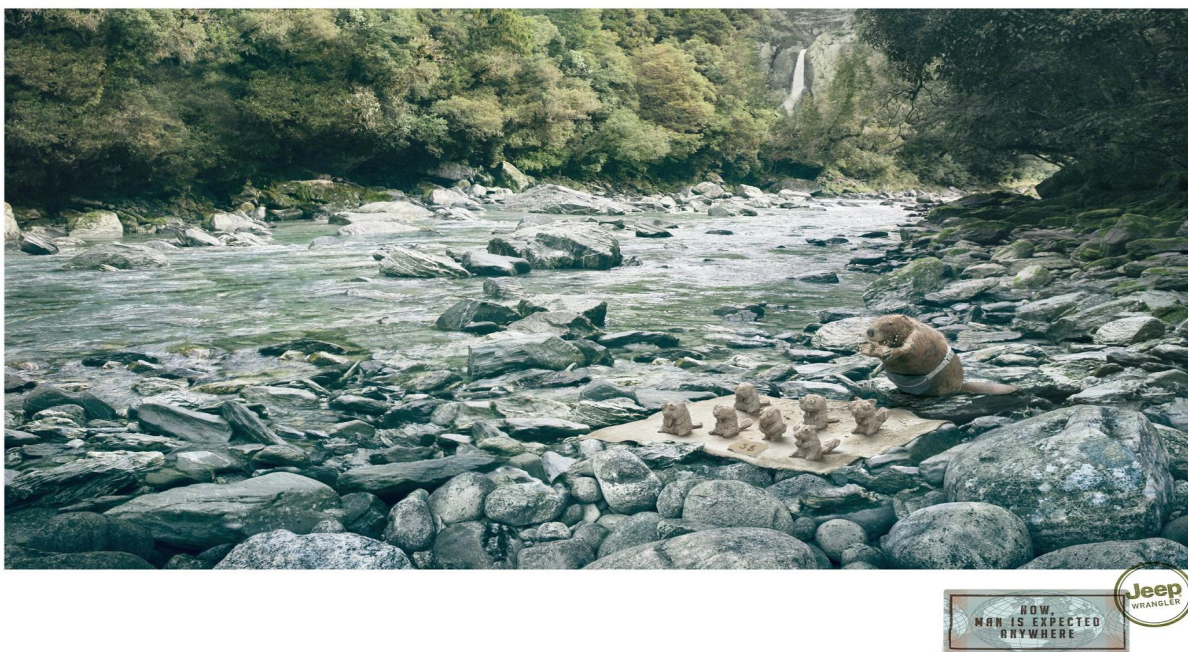
“Jeep Wrangler Unlimited: Fat Snake.” *Adeevae*. Accessed January 15, 2017.
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Figure 3



“Jeep Wrangler: Penguin .” *Coloribus*. Accessed January 17, 2017.
<https://www.coloribus.com/adsarchive/prints/jeep-wrangler-penguin-15424805/>.

Figure



“Jeep Wrangler: Beaver.” *Coloribus*. Accessed January 17, 2017.
<https://www.coloribus.com/adsarchive/prints/jeep-wrangler-beaver-15424755/>.

Figure 5



“Jeep – Mount Rushmore.” *Behance*. Accessed April 27, 2016.
<https://www.behance.net/gallery/13764921/Jeep-Mount-Rushmore>.

Figure 6



“Jeep Wrangler: Unveil Forest.” *Advertolog*. Accessed January 17, 2017.
<http://www.advertolog.com/jep/print-outdoor/unveil-forest-16315255/>.

Figure 7



“Jeep Wrangler: Unveil Mountain.” *Lucas Zaiden*. Accessed January 17, 2017.
<http://lucaszaiden.com.br/work/wrangler/>.

Figure 8



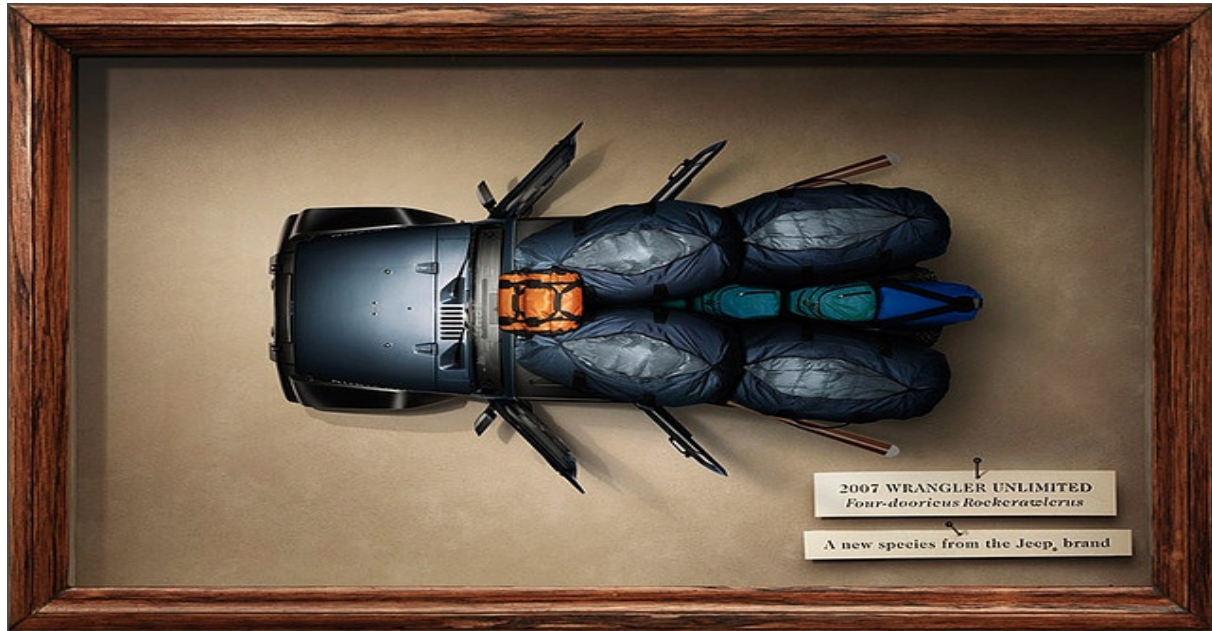
“Winter X Games Aspen’ 12.” *ESPN*. Accessed April 27, 2016.
<http://espneventwrapups.com/winter-xgames-2012/sponsor-marketing/jeep>.

Figure 9



“Four-dooricus Rockcrawlerus.” *Motorpasion*. Accessed January 25, 2017.
<https://www.motorpasion.com/todoterrenos/foor-dooricus-rockcrawlerus-la-nueva-especie-jeep>.

Figure 10



“Four-dooricus Rockcrawlerus.” *Motorpasion*. Accessed January 25, 2017.
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Figure 11



“Four-dooricus Rockcrawlerus.” *Motorpasion*. Accessed January 25, 2017.
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