

Demystifying the Huntress: Exploring the Experiences of Women Hunters in Eastern North Carolina

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The hunter occupies a special place in the system of human-animal interactions. When entering the natural world of wildlife each hunter learns to navigate this world in his or her own way. Hunters aid wildlife management agencies tangibly by maintaining a balance in wildlife populations and economically through hunting license fees, tags, stamps, and taxes from the sales of hunting weapons and equipment. Hunting participation in the United States has been declining over the past twenty years. However, the number of female hunters increased 25% between 2006 and 2011. The increasing concern for animal (wild and domestic) welfare and the decreasing connectedness to nature makes the exploration of women hunters a critical component to creating a comprehensive understanding of human-animal relationships.

This study explores how women hunters in Eastern North Carolina are engaging in and experiencing hunting and uncovering their thoughts and beliefs about hunting, wildlife, and the changing place of women in hunting. The sample includes 25 women hunters, living in Eastern North Carolina. The data are collected using a four part interview instrument; a semi-structured interview, an instrument to gather demographic information, and two structured components. Using the grounded theory approach to text analysis and the software application RStudio to conduct statistical analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, three main findings emerge; the culture of hunting that enables women's participation, women hunters' relationships with wildlife, and the changing perspectives about women who hunt. These findings can assist wildlife management agencies to improve their understanding of women hunters in hopes of further increasing female hunting participation, educating the general public about hunters and hunting in the US, and informing policy and planning for environmental and wildlife conservation.

Demystifying the Huntress: Exploring the Experiences of Women Hunters in Eastern North Carolina

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Dedication

For Blanche and George Noville and all my ancestors who came before me...I stand on the shoulders of giants.

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I want to thank:

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Introduction

Studies of the interrelatedness between humans and animals studies constitutes an emergent interdisciplinary field that explores the intricate and multifaceted relationships between humans and other nonhuman animals. Currently, many academic disciplines both in the sciences and in the humanities contribute to the growing body of public knowledge about human-animal interactions. The discipline of anthropology is considered to belong in equal parts to the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. As the study of people through time and space, the discipline can make vital contributions to the examination of neglected segments of the US population and human-animal interactions. Hence anthropology is in a unique position to explore an emerging new trend in human animal relations: what explains why women are joining the field of hunters in increasing numbers? Female hunters, their specific experiences, and their perspectives on wildlife, hunting, and human-wildlife interactions are overlooked and need to be examined. The goal of this exploratory study is to capture and chronicle the female hunters' experiences and uncover their perceptions about and relationships with wildlife, hunting, and human-wildlife interactions. The guiding question for the ethnography of women hunters are how are women engaging in and experiencing hunting; and what are women's thoughts and beliefs about hunting, wildlife, and the changing place of women in hunting.

Throughout their history, humans have interacted with other animal species. Thirty-five thousand years ago the dog was the first domesticate! For millions of years prior to the domestication of dogs, the last common ancestor of dogs lived among humans on savannas. In general, people love animals. This instinctive bond or love of other forms of life is called biophilia, a hypothesis developed by Edward O. Wilson and introduced in his book *Biophilia* in 1984. In 2012, according to the American Veterinary Medical Foundation (2012), roughly 72% of the households in the US have companion animals, 36.5% has a pet dog, 30.4% has a pet cat, 3.1% has birds, and 1.5% has horses. These percentages do not account for households that have small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, poultry, livestock, or other animals. Humans relate and interact with animals in a variety of ways: pets as members of our families, exotics we

observe in zoos, individuals that end up on our plates at meal times, and the wildlife we encounter outdoors in nature.

Throughout our history, humans and wildlife have experienced varying degrees of coexistence and conflict. During the lower Paleolithic, our earliest human ancestors were just another prey species being preyed upon by large carnivores roaming the landscape. Hunting, camping, hiking, or even just looking out a window offer people a way of engaging and interacting with wildlife. Today, as human populations continue to increase and sprawl into previously uninhabited terrain, and a wide array of human-wildlife interactions occur. Human-wildlife interactions occur on a spectrum from positive experiences to negative experiences. Positive interactions with wildlife involve seeing wildlife whether in one's backyard or while engaging in an outdoor recreational activity. Alternatively, some of these interactions are viewed as conflicts and can occur in rural, suburban, or urban environments. In rural settings, the conflicts often revolve around predation of livestock and/or game animals. Suburban and urban human-wildlife conflicts entail either fear induced by the presence of the wildlife or property damage caused by the wildlife (Manfredo, 2008).

Hunting is another form of human-wildlife interaction. Since the nineteenth century, tool creation, tool use, and hunting are supposed hallmarks of the *Homo sapiens* legacy. As hunter-gatherers, hunting functioned in many ways across many groups of peoples. Hunting served a practical purpose of providing food to a group, a means of achieving higher status within a group, or even ritualistic purposes.

The early forays of the North American hunting culture develop out of a rejection of the European model of sport hunting. In Europe, hunting was a past-time of wealthy landowners. Therefore, land, its wildlife, and the hunting of that wildlife were restricted to those wealthy landowners (Geist, Mahoney, & Organ, 2001; Duda, Jones, & Criscione, 2010). This led to many instances of poaching by commoners. Forbidden access to natural resources, like game animals, in their European homelands, early colonists seized the opportunity to hunt freely once in the New World. The land and its wildlife belonged to all.

Ultimately, the lack of management strategies and oversight led to the near extinction of many prey and predator species.

During the Progressive Era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the conservation movement was born. The Boone and Crockett Club, founded in 1887 by Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell, is considered the oldest wildlife conservation organization and advocated the use of scientific inquiry in determining the best practices for managing public lands and wildlife (Geist, 2001; Eliason, 2008; Duda, Jones, & Criscione, 2010). Additionally, the Boone and Crockett Club along with other early conservation groups and hunters, encouraged using hunters to achieve wildlife management goals and strategies. Thus, hunters became a vital force pushing for the formation of rules and regulations to protect wildlife and continue to play essential roles in wildlife management today (Eliason, 2008).

Wildlife management agencies must consider the opinions of the general public to maintain their conservation efforts. Additionally, it is critical that wildlife management organizations strive to comprehend the female hunters' perspectives of the relationship between wildlife management and hunting (Campbell & Mackay, 2003).

The number of hunters in the US has been gradually declining over the last twenty years (Ryan & Shaw, 2011; Larson, Stedman, Decker, Siemer, & Baumer, 2014). Hunters help maintain a balance in wildlife populations by keeping their numbers from getting too high to mitigate starvation, the spread of disease, and human-wildlife conflicts. If hunter numbers continue their downward trend, problems within wildlife management will continue to increase. Over last few years hunter numbers have stabilized somewhat, but still exhibit fluctuations. Hunting participation in the United States is extremely asymmetrical. In 2011, among the United States population of citizens over 16 years of age, 12% were hunters, 11% were male hunters and 1% were female hunters. Currently, the US hunter population, is 89% were men and 11% were women (US Fish and Wildlife Service). In the state of North Carolina, 93.3% of hunters were male and 6.7% were female (NC Wildlife Resources Commission, 2011). Although the overall number of hunters have been on a steady decline, the number of women deciding to participate in

hunting has been increasing. Nationally, female hunters have increased by 25% between 2006 and 2011 (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011). Past research suggests there is a difference between males and females in their attitudes toward wildlife and hunting (Kellert & Berry, 1987; Peterson, DePerno, Moorman, Cunningham, Milrad, Riddle, & Steelman, 2009). Typically, the concept of sport hunting in the US conjures images of the ruggedly masculine outdoorsman and linked with masculinity, aggression, and even sex (Kalof, Fitzgerald, & Baralt, 2004; Wilson & Peden, 2015). However, women have a history of hunting participation that goes back at least to the late nineteenth century. Currently, there is little to no data that examines female hunters and their relationships with wildlife, hunting, and human-wildlife interactions.

Today, hunting is conceptualized as a thing of the past, practiced by native groups living in balance with nature, or an activity of the elite wealthy who spend thousands of dollars to travel abroad and shoot a lion or giraffe. However, the hunter occupies a special place in the human-wildlife system. Currently, there is an increasing distance between humans and the natural world, including wildlife. Hunters enter the natural world of wildlife and each hunter learns to navigate this world in his or her own way (Leopold, 1987; Oelschlaeger, 1991). Hunters engage in an intimate and dynamic relationship with the wildlife they hunt. Each animal offers a different set of challenges and requires a different tools and strategies in the hopes of maximizing success. Although the culmination of a successful hunt ends with taking the life of another animal, the hunt is not just about killing. Most hunters do their best to ensure they harvest the animal to the fullest extent. This dynamic between human hunter and animal prey demonstrates a level of give and take. The hunter is taking the animals life and harvesting the meat, but in return the hunter often gives his or her respect and appreciation for the gift the animal has given.

The statistics from US Fish and Wildlife Service and North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission clearly demonstrate that more men than women participate in hunting (NC Wildlife Resources Commission, 2016; US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011). However, the modern popular cultural conception of hunting as a male dominated activity is less than a hundred years old. In fact, that

cultural construction of hunting developed after World War II ended. During the late nineteenth century, hunting was defined by class and race. Therefore, as long as an individual was upper class and white it was legal for that person to hunt. This included women. At this time, traditional subsistence hunting and market hunting were outlawed so the elite could create parks and camps for their sole enjoyment. It was only after the conclusion of WWII that the hunting community changed its stance on female hunters and began defining hunting by gender (Smalley, 2005). Today, the conceptualization of hunting in the US regards hunting as a blood sport and recreational pastime. It is a male bonding activity and is often defined as a rite of passage as fathers initiate their sons into manhood. Common perceptions of hunting in the US are driven by stereotypes of misogynistic rednecks wearing camouflage and perpetuated by television shows like *Duck Dynasty* and celebrities like Ted Nugent and Sarah Palin (King & McCarthy, 2005; Molloy, 2011). However, as the number of women taking up hunting continue to increase and hunter demographics overall continue to change a new vision that includes an authentic and truthful depiction of the female hunter must be documented.

Aldo Leopold is often considered the founding father of wildlife management. In 1933, Leopold wrote the book *Game Management* (1933). This seminal work laid the foundation for current national and state wildlife management programs. Wildlife management agencies are tasked with conserving and sustaining fish and wildlife through scientific research, thoughtful use, and input from the general public. These agencies strive to maintain balance between the needs of wildlife with the needs of people, utilizing the best available science. State wildlife agencies are responsible for setting the rules and regulations that govern hunting and fishing in their state. Traditionally, within wildlife management, hunting serves a vital role in wildlife conservation both economically, through hunting license fees, and practically, by harvesting a set number of members from a population (Duda, Jones, & Criscione, 2010; Leopold, 1987; US Fish and Wildlife Service). Over the last two decades, hunter numbers are on a gradual decline, leaving wildlife management agencies worried about the futures of hunting, conservation efforts, and wildlife management. Wildlife management agencies are constantly looking for new ways to increase hunter

recruitment. Wildlife agencies have acknowledged the importance of encouraging women to participate in hunting. Hunting license fees allow wildlife management agencies to fund wildlife and land conservation programs. Without that revenue, wildlife agencies will be unable to continue protecting all the wildlife US citizens have come to deeply treasure, at least from afar (US Fish and Wildlife Service).

The importance of state wildlife management agencies rests on their roles as mediators among hunters, the general public, wildlife, and the environment. Wildlife managers need to gather as much information as possible from all stakeholders in wildlife conservation, including hunters, so the most effective and beneficial policies are put in place to protect the tradition and heritage of hunting and the existence of wildlife. Public input provides valuable information regarding their attitudes and beliefs about wildlife and hunting. It is essential that wildlife agencies continue to assess the general public's attitudes toward wildlife in an effort to understand and mitigate human-wildlife conflicts. Over the last two decades general attitudes toward wildlife are shifting from more utilitarian views to more protectionist orientations. These changing attitudes further exacerbate the problems facing wildlife managers, as they work to balance the reduction of human-wildlife conflicts, hunters' desires for quality hunting opportunities, with the public's desires to preserve the environment and its wildlife. Assessing wildlife value orientations, changing attitudes, and hunting ethics can help shed some light on how wildlife management agencies can bridge the divide among their needs, the hunters' desires, and the wants of the general public.

The relationship among wildlife management, hunters, and the general public, who often oppose hunting, are delicate and increasingly under a microscope. Heated and contentious debates surround topics like drilling for oil or natural gas, delisting wolves from the endangered species list, or preserving specific landscapes. Therefore, it is essential that wildlife agencies continue to assess the attitudes of the general public and specialized groups, like hunters, toward wildlife and hunting in an effort to preserve a balance our natural resources, garner support for conservation efforts, and mitigate human-wildlife conflicts.

Prior research explores wildlife value orientations (Fulton, Manfredi, & Lipscomb, 1996; Peterson et al., 2009; Tarrant, Bright, & Cordell, 1997; Zinn, Manfredi, & Barro, 2002), attitudes toward animals

(Campbell & MacKay, 2003; Daigle, Hrubes, & Ajzen, 2002; Eliason, 2008; Heberlein & Ericsson, 2005; Herzog, Betchart, & Pittman, 1991; Herzog, 2010; Kellert & Berry, 1987), the changing of these attitudes toward wildlife (Heberlein, 1991; Manfredo, Teel, & Bright, 2003), and often compares hunters to non-hunters or anti-hunters. Most of this research relates to the delicate balance wildlife managers strive to maintain between hunters, the general public, wildlife, and the environment. This exploratory research aims to get in-depth descriptions of the female hunting experience and their attitudes toward and relationships with wildlife, hunting, and human-wildlife interactions.

Currently, little is known about how male hunters differ from female hunters. Capturing and chronicling the female perspective is vital pursuit; knowing what factors contribute to women's hunting experiences, encourage women to participate in hunting themselves, and inspire women to involve their families in hunting. Increasingly, women are the primary decision makers in their households or at least greatly influence decisions of how leisure time is spent by their household (Metcalf, Graefe, Trauntvein, & Burns, 2015). Therefore, illuminating the female hunting experience offers a potential alternative avenue for improving hunter recruitment and retention.

Kellert and Berry (1987) found that males had more knowledge of animals than females. In addition, the authors found differences between male and female attitudes towards animals. In their article, the authors asserted that gender is one of the most important demographic influences on attitudes toward animals. Females tended to elevate scale scores related to humanistic, moralistic, and aesthetic attitudes toward animals while males tended to elevate scale scores involving utilitarian, dominionistic, and naturalistic attitudes toward animals (365-367). Interestingly, Kellert and Berry (1987) found that although women tended to express stronger emotional attachments to pet, they communicated greater fear and indifference toward all animals, particularly wildlife. Additionally, the authors' research demonstrated that men were more likely to be involved in sportsmen (89% male) and environmental protection (62% male) organizations while women were more likely to participate as members of humane and animal welfare organizations (80% female) (368).

As a commonly overlooked population, female hunters, their specific experiences, and their perspectives on wildlife, hunting, and human-wildlife interactions need to be examined. The goal of this study is to capture and chronicle the female hunters' experience and their perceptions about and relationships with wildlife, hunting, and human-wildlife interactions. The guiding question for the ethnography of women hunters are how are women engaging in and experiencing hunting; and what are women's thoughts and beliefs about hunting, wildlife, and the changing place of women in hunting. This research will attempt to give a voice to female hunters, create an authentic image of the female hunting experience, and add to past and current research in anthropology, human-animal studies, the human dimensions of wildlife, and the growing body of public knowledge concerning the modern hunting experience in the United States.

My research was inspired by my husband taking up hunting and a personal interest in human-animal interactions. Watching as my husband learned the rules and regulations of hunting in North Carolina as set by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, I became interested in what hunters think about animals in general and the specific wildlife species they hunt. In addition to reading and learning North Carolina's hunting rules and regulations, I read other material related to hunting and wildlife. Ultimately, the lack in information on women lead to this research.

In the sections that follow, I review prior research on hunting and gender, the ethics of hunting, attitudes toward wildlife, shifting attitudes regarding wildlife, and identity. Studies and literature from human-animal studies, ecofeminism, human dimensions of wildlife, social psychology and sociology serve as the theoretical framework for this research and form a foundation within which to situate the exploration of the female hunting experience in Eastern North Carolina. The review of the literature aides in the development of the data collection instrument. I introduce the methodology. Then I present the findings on the culture of hunting, women hunter's relationships with wildlife, and the changing perspectives about women who hunt. This research endeavor concludes with a discussion of the findings,

the study's limitations, ideas for continued and future research, and the implications and outlook of this and other studies.

Literature Review

Since women hunter numbers are on the rise, research assessing women hunters' attitudes toward hunting, wildlife, and human-wildlife conflict is imperative. In addition, examining female hunters is vital to provide wildlife management with a more comprehensive look at these women and how to best communicate with them.

Hunting and Gender

The literature on sport hunting in the United States focuses on traditional subsistence hunting, trophy hunting, or moral and ethical debates surrounding hunting. There are a few ethnographies about the experience of hunting in North America. In *Bloodties: Nature, Culture, and the Hunt* (1993), Kerasote observes and documents the hunting cultures and experiences of the Inuit living in Greenland, a group of American trophy hunters who travel to Siberia to hunt snow sheep, and finally himself and other hunters that do not fall into the categories of subsistence hunters or trophy hunters. Dizard pursues a different facet of hunting in America in his book *Moral Stakes: Hunters and Hunting in Contemporary America* (2003). Dizard uses interview, survey, and demographic data from hunters to explore what hunting means to these individuals in an attempt to place the traditional concept of hunting into its contemporary context. He also compares hunters and non-hunters, both socially and politically and looks at how members within each group see themselves and others. In *A Matter of Life and Death: Hunting in Contemporary Vermont* (2009), anthropologist Marc Boglioli examines hunting specifically in the state of Vermont. He conducts fieldwork primarily in Addison County, Vermont and explores how modern hunters comprehend their relationships to their prey. Marvin (2005) takes an ethnographic approach to explore the multi-sensory experience of hunting and demonstrate the difficulties in capturing and depicting that experience to those who have not hunted. The author suggests all types of hunting can be separated into two general categories according to the ways hunters operate within the landscape.

Marvin (2005) defines these two categories as hunting by disturbance and hunting by disguise. According to the author, hunting by disturbance involves physical, emotional, and behavioral separation

between hunter and animal and the presence of humans in the landscape is marked with noise and movement causing animals to run (18). This provides hunters with the opportunity to take their shots. Conversely, hunting by disguise involves blurring the separation between hunter and animal and decreasing physical, emotional, and behavioral distance where the hunter inconspicuously enters the hunting landscape (18). This allows the disguised hunter to go undetected in the hopes of approaching and encountering animal prey. Marvin (2005) elaborates on the two categories of hunting in the remainder of his article. Ultimately, the author concludes hunting is an experience that engages all the senses from the preparation phases prior to hunting through the culmination of a successful hunt and eating a meal made with the harvested meat. However, Marvin (2005) acknowledges the difficulties in accurately depicting all the sights, sounds, and smells a hunter encounters.

The kaleidoscopic research concerning female hunters is limited and either explores female hunters, the feminist critique of hunting as a violent blood sport, or women's leisure. Smalley (2005) investigates women's place in American sport hunting by analyzing American outdoor magazines *Field and Stream*, *Outdoor Life*, and *Forest and Stream*. Women's discourse regarding hunting and men's discourse about women hunting are also examined. Smalley (2005) finds that during the late nineteenth century legitimate hunting was defined by class and race. As long as an individual was upper class and white, it was acceptable for that person to participate in sport hunting, regardless of whether an individual was male or female (187-188). However, after World War II the context for what constituted legitimate sport hunting changed. Hunting was no longer defined by class and race, it was defined by gender. It was only after WWII that hunting was designated a masculine pursuit for both upper and middle class men, a male bonding activity, and a rite of passage where young males were initiated into manhood.

Along with being considered male dominated, a male bonding activity, and a rite of passage for boys into manhood, hunting also tends to be stereotyped as a rural pastime. Stedman and Heberlein (2001) examine how the interaction between rural upbringing, gender, and family socialization effect hunting participation. The authors' find significant relationships between their three independent variables and

hunting participation. However, the relationship between a rural setting and hunting participation is the weakest of the three relationships (611). Stedman and Heberlein (2001) find that the presence of a hunting father is a much stronger predictor of hunting participation than growing up in a rural setting, especially for women. Subsequently, women without a hunting father rarely hunt (611).

Other literature that examines female hunting participation relates their presence in hunting to some form of male influence. McFarlane, Watson, and Boxall (2003) attempt to determine if women hunters in Alberta, Canada are buying hunting licenses, specifically lottery-rationed licenses, for themselves or if they are buying them to increase the chances for a male family member or friend to obtain a lottery-rationed license. McFarlane et al. (2003) conclude that Alberta, Canada's increase in female hunting participation may be due to some women entering the licensing system to obtain lottery-rationed licenses for other people. The data demonstrate that some women are less committed to hunting given their high dropout rates, show similar lottery-rationed license purchasing behavior but different general license purchasing behavior as cohabiting male partners, and are less likely to purchase any other license if they did not receive a lottery license (175). Adams and Steen (1997) conduct a study of the hunting behaviors of Texas women who hunt and compare their responses from a self-administered questionnaire to those of Texas male respondents from a previous study. The authors find that women's participation in hunting is initiated by their husbands. Heberlein, Serup, and Ericsson (2008) examine female hunting participation generally in North America and Europe. In their article, the authors stress the importance of male hunters, particularly husbands, in the creation of female hunters. Metcalf, Graefe, Trauntvein, and Burns (2015) examine four typologies of women hunters; the less-engaged hunter, the family oriented hunter, the nature-sport hunter, and the all-around hunting enthusiast, the factors inhibiting women's hunting participation, and the negotiation strategies women use to overcome these constraints. The authors learn that being outdoors, enjoying nature, and bring home meat are all notable reasons women hunt (38). Additionally, Metcalf et al. (2015) determine women do not describe high levels of constraints while also disclosing a high use of negotiation strategies mostly relating to time management.

The feminist critique of hunting often portrays hunting as an aggressive and violent blood sport. In addition, feminist critiques of hunting draw connections between hunting, masculinity, and sex and rarely deal with women participating in hunting. Kalof, Fitzgerald, and Baralt (2004) analyze photographs, narratives, and advertisements from a random sample of *Traditional Bowhunter* magazines. The authors contend that women are degraded by the display and description of women, animals, and weapons as interchangeable sexual bodies in hunting narratives and imagery throughout the magazine samples.

Kheel (1996) argues modern hunters seek to justify their participation in hunting using several strategies. The foundation of Kheel's argument is drawing parallels between sport and play by reviewing Caillois' (1961) six features common to play and applying them to hunting. The author creates a triad to classify the three types of modern male hunters: the happy hunter, the holist hunter, and the holy hunter. According to Kheel, the happy hunter is the typical sport hunter, driven to hunt for enjoyment, pleasure, and building character (33). The holist hunter acts as a manager and strives to maintain the order and balance of nature by hunting (33). Finally, the holy hunter hunts to engage in a religious or spiritual experience (33). Following the description of the three types of hunters, the author explores the underlying connection uniting the triad, the conflict between reclaiming their lost feminine and animal nature and preserving their masculine identity.

In *Woman the Hunter* (1997), Stange writes in the vein of feminist scholarship, contributing both a feminist perspective on the increasing number of women participating in hunting and a critique of feminist scholarship, specifically ecofeminism's avoidance of the topic altogether or reinforcement of the gendered stereotypes it sought to demolish. Stange's treatise on hunting is grounded in female experience and her own experiences as a female hunter. She recognizes not all forms of hunting can be defended and there are irresponsible and unethical hunters in the world. However, Stange asserts there are also hunters with a deep appreciation and knowledge of the natural world that rivals that of most non-hunters, with ethical and aesthetic conceptions of the nonhuman world. Stange contends more women than men fall into this classification of hunters and are the subjects of *Woman the Hunter*.

Fitzgerald (2005) attempts to add the missing voice of feminist scholars regarding the growing number of women opting to participate in hunting by exploring how three feminist perspectives (liberal feminism, ecofeminism, and feminist political ecology) can address this occurrence. She analyzes the trend of the growth in women hunter numbers and provides several explanations. According to the author, liberal feminism seeks to incorporate women into all facets of society, especially the areas dominated by men (87-88). Ecofeminism asserts there is a link between oppression based on gender, race, class, sexuality, physical abilities, and species and the exploitation of nature (89). This oppression is rooted in normative dualisms like the nature-culture dualism. As a result, anything associated with nature is perceived as the Other and therefore, lesser. Fitzgerald highlights ecofeminism's critique of contemporary sport hunting and absence from commenting on women hunters. The author discusses feminist political ecology's attempt to place decision-making processes in their appropriate contexts, while acknowledging gender is an important variable and examines the interchanges between gender, race, class, culture, and location. Ultimately, Fitzgerald contends the increasing participation of women in hunting is potentially a mode of class-based resistance, a form of nationalism, or a longing of middle-class urbanites to return to nature.

Overall, the literature on women hunters and the female hunting experience are scattered. Some literature discusses how women are initiated into hunting, what motivates them to hunt, and what interferes with their participation in hunting. Other literature examines how the United States hunting culture began as inclusive of upper class white women, shifted to pushing for the exclusion of women, and is again shifting back to want to include women to increase hunter recruitment. Furthermore, the feminist critique of hunting depicts hunting as a violent and aggressive act that degrades and sexualizes women by equating them with animals and weapons.

Ethics of Hunting

Hunting in the modern age, particularly in the post-industrial agriculture era, is often misunderstood and met with condemnation by the general public and in conversations about ethics.

Contemporary hunting is criticized and deemed unethical because it is seen as the needless killing of an animal for sport; causes undue suffering; violates animals' rights; there are other means of fulfilling nutritional needs; and the practice has no inherent ethics of its own (Cahoone, 2009). As of a 2011 survey on hunting and fishing, only 12% of the US population actively participate in hunting, nationwide (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011). This leaves the majority of the US population unaccustomed with hunting practices, including many of its critics (Cahoone, 2009).

Hunting practices involve an intricate web of elements. States are responsible for establishing the rules and regulations that govern individual hunting seasons and specify the number of each kind of animal that can be harvested in a season (bag limits) to guarantee wildlife conservation, specifically game animals, and human safety. Hunting does not begin and end with the killing of an animal. Hunting begins often before a particular season even opens, with study and scouting. Preseason hunting activities include honing proficiency and/or sighting in weapons to ensure their accuracy, researching the behavior and biology of prey, and scouting areas to hunt. Once a hunting season begins, hunting involves extensive searching for prey and prolonged waiting to ensure the prey is taken. Regardless of the particular season, hunts rarely end in success. Prey animals have heightened senses of smell, vision, and/or hearing, are quite intelligent, and are adept at evading humans and adapting to changes in their environment (Cahoone, 2009).

Not only is hunting governed by legal regulations, hunting practices are also guided by the unwritten rules of sportsmanship. The doctrine of fair chase delineates fairness in hunting as providing game animals a fair chance to escape (List, 2004). Critics of hunting often argue that modern hunting weapons technologies eradicate fair chase, making hunting too easy. Most technological enhancements in hunting weapons deal with convenience, safety, and comfort, not effectiveness. The only exception is a scoped rifle. It allows a hunter to take a game animal with precision and accuracy from several hundred yards away outside the game animal's range of detection. Technological improvements to weapons rarely make a hunter more likely to take an animal. Only 25% of deer hunters in the US successfully harvest a

deer in a particular year (Cahoone, 2009). Additionally, only 5% of turkey hunters harvest a turkey each spring season (US Fish and Wildlife Service). Most hunters do not shoot haphazardly at their prey. Instead they generally take a legal, practical, safe, and ethical shot which is influenced by the effective range of a hunter's weapon, the location and positioning of the game animal. All these factors must align before the animal becomes aware of the hunter's position.

Critics of hunting argue that hunting causes undue suffering and pain. However, the ethical, legal hunter never intends to cause needless suffering to the animals they hunt. Rather, hunters strive to execute a legal, practical, safe, and ethical kill that kills the prey in a single shot through the heart, lungs, or head thereby minimizing any pain or suffering. Cahoone (2009) argues that when hunting is compared to agriculture, hunting causes much less harm to the environment and wildlife. The author provides five ways farming harms or kills animals, including: the clearing of land kills animals and destroys habitats; the use of pesticides and fertilizers pollutes the ground water; farming machinery that tills the soil in fields maims and kills a variety of ground-nesting animals; protecting crops from opportunistic wildlife, and an array of indirect harms by modern farming technologies (e.g. diesel-burning machinery, nitrogen and oil-based fertilizers, fossil-fueled trucks transporting goods, etc.) (79). Additionally, Cahoone (2009) argues hunting embodies three virtues. They include the self-sufficiency of hunters, the trophic responsibility or personal responsibility of hunters, and the local ecological expertise of hunters (82-83). The author concludes modern hunting is not a sport but a neo-traditional cultural practice that allows the hunter re-enter the food chain and engage in an archaic pursuit of meat.

Hunting also has a long history within wildlife conservation. However, changing attitudes toward wildlife away from more traditional utilitarian views to more protectionist views, coupled with the decline in hunter numbers are presenting issues for wildlife management agencies. It is vital that these agencies work to research and understand the attitudes of people on all sides of the wildlife conservation debate. Having a foundation for how people form opinions and their attitudes and beliefs can assist wildlife

agencies in reaching target neutral populations that just might need a little more information regarding all the benefits hunting provides to the environment and wildlife.

Attitudes toward Wildlife

Values create the foundation on which our beliefs, attitudes, behavioral intentions, and behaviors are built (Fulton et al., 1996). Due to the fundamentality of values, they often change slowly, while behaviors can change quickly. In psychology, value orientations provide a context and guide the arrangement of an individual's core values, acting as a link to a broader range of more specific attitudes and behaviors. Literature examining the differences between men and women's attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors toward wildlife is limited. Although limited, the information on attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors toward wildlife reflects gender differences between males and females.

Kellert and Berry (1987) demonstrate the differences among adult men and women residing in the 48 contiguous states and Alaska regarding knowledge of animals, attitudes toward animals, species preferences, and animal related activities. The authors find significant differences between men and women in all the examined domains. In Kellert and Berry's study, the men exhibit higher scores regarding knowledge of animals than the women participants, in particular with questions concerning rare and endangered species or invertebrate animals (1987:365). Knowledge questions dealing with domestic animals did not show significant differences between men and women. Men and women in Kellert and Berry's study also differ drastically in their attitudes toward animals. The authors assert given the differences between men and women is so strong and consistent that gender is one of the most important demographic influences on attitudes toward animals in US culture (367). In previous research Kellert (1978) developed a set of typologies of basic attitudes toward animals and the natural environment to illustrate the values and perceptions individuals attribute to the nonhuman world. The results show women exhibiting stronger emotional connections to individual animals, especially pets, an affinity of large aesthetically pleasing animals, more concern for animal welfare issues, and less approval of the exploitation and dominance of animals (1987:366). Conversely, men tend to show support for the

exploitation of animals and wildlife habitats to benefit humans, more of a desire for direct contact with wildlife in their natural surroundings, and more concern for maintaining a balance between wildlife and the natural environment. Women and men also prefer different species of animals. Women show preferences for domestic animals like dogs and cats while men prefer predatory animals, invertebrates, and/or game animals (Kellert & Berry, 1987:367). Additionally, more men participate in consumptive-use activities including hunting, fishing, and trapping compared to women. In regard to organization membership, men are more likely to join animal-related organizations and environmental protection organizations while women are more likely to join humane and animal welfare organizations according to the authors (367-368).

Following the groundwork laid by Kellert and Berry (1987) examining gender differences in attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors toward wildlife, Czech, Devers, and Krausman (2001) provide a current assessment of the relationship between gender and wildlife conservation. Specific to wildlife conservation, Kellert and Berry (1987) uncover that men are more interested in the conservation of populations, species, and habitats than women. In relation to attitudes toward wildlife, the two authors describe men as mostly utilitarian and dominionistic but also naturalistic and ecologicistic in their valuation of wildlife while women are depicted as humanistic, moralistic, and negativistic (1987:366). Conversely, Czech, Devers, and Krausman (2001) suggest women are slightly more concerned with species preservation than men (189). However, the authors note this difference between men and women is not statistically significant and women and men care about the preservation of plants, birds, and mammals more than other classes of animals (189). Additionally, the women sampled in Czech, Devers, and Krausman (2001) are equally naturalistic and ecologicistic as the men.

Peterson, DePerno, Moorman, Cunningham, Milrad, Riddle, and Steelman (2009) explored hunting and non-hunting college student's perceptions of wildlife and each other. The purpose of their study was to assess how hunters and non-hunters orient themselves to each other and wildlife. The study used Kellert's (1978) wildlife orientations to assess how informants identified with wildlife. Peterson et

al. (2009) asserted that hunters and non-hunters learning about each other's identities related to wildlife can aid in reducing conflict that arises out of disparate identities. The authors found that hunters were more likely to hold utilitarian, dominionistic, and naturalistic wildlife orientations while non-hunters were more like to hold moralistic, humanistic, and symbolic wildlife orientations (50). Peterson et al. (2009) also found that non-hunters overestimated hunting for sport as the primary reason hunters hunt and that hunters tended to overemphasize concern for animal rights/welfare as the reason non-hunters chose not to hunt (50). According to the results the two groups agreed on the importance of wildlife conservation, management and the humane treatment of wildlife.

Fulton, Manfredo, and Lipscomb (1996) were the first to apply this cognitive hierarchy model to the examination of human thinking about wildlife. The literature argues that wildlife value orientations forecast attitudes toward hunting and fishing, wildlife management, as well as other issues related to wildlife. Wildlife value orientations are thought to occur along a continuum from a strongly utilitarian value orientation, that supports the use of wildlife by humans, to a strongly protectionist value orientation, that supports the protection of wildlife and opposes the use of wildlife by humans. Fulton, Manfredo, and Lipscomb (1996) took a cognitive hierarchy approach, where values create the foundation of the cognitive structure. From fundamental values, all other levels of the cognitive structure are built. Due to the centrality of values to an individual they go beyond specific situations and influence behaviors, attitudes, norms, and beliefs across a wide range of life experiences. The purpose of the Fulton et al. (1996) study was to create scales for measuring basic beliefs about wildlife, use the basic belief scales to determine wildlife value orientations, and utilize the wildlife value orientations to test the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy. The authors found that this conceptual approach demonstrated that wildlife value orientations affect behavioral intentions and behaviors. From this, they concluded that wildlife value orientations are determinants of attitudes and furthermore helped to illustrate patterns of human intentions toward behavior related to wildlife. Additionally, Fulton et al. (1996) asserted that wildlife value orientations should be predictive of patterns of attitudes and behaviors across a set of wildlife issues.

Building upon Fulton, Manfredo, and Lipscombs' (1996) work; Zinn, Manfredo, and Barro (2002) examined wildlife value orientations within families. The purpose of their study was to “describe the wildlife value orientations of hunters old enough to have adult children; examine perceived patterns of wildlife value orientations among respondents' family members; and test for relationships between within-family patterns of wildlife value orientations and participant characteristics” (2002: 149). Zinn et al. (2002) hypothesized that respondent perceptions of family differences in wildlife value orientations would be positively associated with years of education, urban upbringing, and urban residence as an adult and negatively associated with residential stability and extremity of respondent's own wildlife value orientations. The authors found that respondents reported little to no difference between their own thinking and that of other family members, suggesting cultural stability. Zinn et al. (2002) also uncovered patterns of perceived gender differences that were suggestive of both cultural stability and cultural change.

Campbell and MacKay (2003) conducted an assessment of public attitudes toward hunting in Manitoba, Canada of 3000 households. The authors used the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) as their theoretical framework. The theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Azjen, 1975) is a broad influential source of human behavior from the social psychological literature (Manfredo, 2008). The wildlife value orientations literature and attitudes toward hunting literature utilize either theory of reasoned action or theory of planned behavior to model how attitudes and subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control directly and indirectly effect behavioral intentions and behavior. The theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) argues that behavioral intentions, which immediately precede behaviors, are a function of pertinent information or beliefs about the probability that engaging in a specific behavior will yield a specific result. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), behavioral intentions are preceded by two different sets of beliefs: behavioral and normative. Behavioral beliefs are posited to be the underlying force on an individual's attitude toward performing the behavior, while normative beliefs effect an individual's subjective norm about performing the behavior (183). Campbell and MacKay (2003) utilize the theory of reasoned action as a framework

for their study and use it to identify beliefs about wildlife management that affect people's behavioral intentions to support hunting (behavior). The purpose of Campbell and MacKay's (2003) research was to increase understanding of what leads to the formation of public opinions toward hunting. The authors wanted to connect the formation of public opinions to possible actions in order to navigate communication efforts between wildlife management and the general public and foster public acceptance of the North American wildlife management model.

Campbell and MacKay (2003) found that the respondents fell into one of three categories, likely to support hunting (39%), unlikely to support hunting (27%), and neutral (35%) (186). They also found that four out of the five responses with the most positive attitude scores were related to wildlife management themes (187). When looking across the three levels of support, the authors found that likely supporters of hunting held the most positive attitudes toward the wildlife management themes. Regardless of level of intention to support hunting, if hunting was utilized as a wildlife management strategy, respondents held more positive attitudes toward hunting in Manitoba (192). However, respondents across all levels of support maintain more negative views of hunting if it leads to related unintended consequences like disrupting the balance of nature. Results from Campbell and MacKay's research demonstrate that individuals with moderate attitudes toward hunting are the ideal target audience for bolstering support for hunting as a wildlife management strategy.

The value orientations and attitudes literature assesses the different ways hunters, the general public, and other stakeholders in wildlife issues orient to wildlife. Some of the research also explores how individuals form their opinions about wildlife. The majority of research examining value orientations and attitudes toward hunting and wildlife comes out of the human dimensions of wildlife literature. Most of the research discussed utilizes survey methods and has focused on a select few states and regions in North America. Sadly, much of this data is at least ten years old if not older. Additionally, no retests have been done of particular methods in areas where the data was first collected or the testing of particular methods in new regions.

The various studies strive to help wildlife management agencies collect information regarding the attitudes and opinions of different groups, understand how those groups form their beliefs and ideas, and find new ways of communicating with all the different stakeholders. Unfortunately, there is an absence of gender specification. Little is known about how men and women differ with respect to wildlife value orientations and attitudes toward wildlife. Additionally, it is important to consider a deepening concern for protecting the environment and treading more lightly upon the Earth. These larger cultural shifts in reducing the carbon footprint, living a greener lifestyle, joining the sustainable food movement, the continuing growth of environmental movements of the 1960s, and changing of women's gender role identities are all possible developments from the more elemental shifts in the attitudes of the general public. The shifting attitudes in wildlife value orientations and the sources of these changes are other pieces of this intricate puzzle.

Shifting Attitudes

The literature about shifting attitudes toward wildlife and the environment accounts for the changing demographics of the American population. Hunting is recreational activity with highest participation rates among white males, living in rural areas, between the ages of 45 years old and 64 years old, and with a household income of \$60,000 to \$79,000 (Duda et al., 2010). The literature argues that increasing urbanization, education, and affluence, and decreasing residential stability are all contributing to these changes in values. However, none of the research discusses how men and women may be experiencing these attitude shifts differently.

Wildlife value orientations are shifting from a prevailing utilitarian orientation to a more protectionist orientation (Zinn et al., 2002). As a result, public attitudes toward wildlife are changing. Once uncontroversial wildlife management issues are now objects of conflict in the form of heated debates, legal battles, and ballot initiatives (Zinn et al., 2002). Both public acceptance of hunting and hunter numbers have been on the decline for several decades (Campbell & MacKay, 2003). As a result, wildlife management agencies are concerned about the future of hunting as an aid in wildlife conservation.

Increasing the understanding of this shift in value orientations along with how the general public forms their opinions about hunting for wildlife management, is important, allowing for the potential to foster communication and education efforts regarding the acceptance of hunting and wildlife management by the general public in North America (Campbell & MacKay, 2003). In addition, through the use of survey methods, several research projects examining public attitudes toward hunting have produced similar responses. These studies found that 10% of the public opposed hunting regardless of circumstances, 10% hunted or supported hunting in all circumstances, and 80% neither strongly supported nor strongly opposed hunting (Campbell & MacKay, 2003: 183). Potential factors influencing this shift include changes in the ethnic makeup and age structure of the US population, increases in affluence and education level, and/or urbanization.

Some of the literature associated with changing wildlife value orientations cites Inglehart's (1990) Post-materialism theory. This literature is grounded in the socialization hypothesis and that values develop and are set by adulthood and early socialization is of greater significance than later socialization. Additionally, shifting wildlife value orientations literature discusses the influence of increased affluence, education, and urbanization on the attitudes of the general public. Tenuous connections have been made between these increases and the rise of environmentalism and the shift from utilitarian wildlife orientations to more protectionist wildlife orientations. Manfredo, Teel, and Bright (2003) investigate connections between factors speculated to affect cultural value change (increased affluence, education, and urbanization) and wildlife value orientations. Their study was the first phase of a long-term study examining the relationships between factors thought to affect culture change and wildlife value orientations. The authors utilize Inglehart's (1990) theory of Materialist/Post-Materialist value shift as a theoretical framework. This theory asserts value formation occurs at an early age and gradual changes happen over time at the societal level as a result of intergenerational shift. Manfredo et al. (2003) posited three hypotheses regarding Materialist values and utilitarian wildlife value orientations: being associated with lower levels of education and income; being associated with rural lifestyles; and being associated

with higher levels of residential stability (290-291). The authors' findings suggest that lower levels of education and income, being from rural lifestyles, and higher levels of residential stability were associated with more Materialist utilitarian wildlife value orientations (299). Implications of this study's findings include its potential to predict reasons for future value shifts given different possible scenarios as well as providing valuable insights into the values and value orientations of the public and how they affect attitudes toward wildlife and wildlife management. Further research that takes these ideas into consideration is useful and could be a factor in female hunting participation.

Identity

Identity theory (Stryker, 1968) is from social psychology. Although not explicitly discussed in the literature on ethics in hunting, value orientations, shifting attitudes, or hunting and gender, identity theory is relevant to this study.

Stryker's (1968) conception of identity theory is most relevant to the present study of women hunters. Identity theory as developed by Stryker (1968) is designed to explain social behavior in terms of shared connections between the self and society. This theory holds that society affects social behavior via its influence on self. Traditionally, identity theory focuses on individuals and predicting role-related behaviors. Furthermore, identity theory asserts that the self is a reflection of society. The self is a multifaceted social construct that emerges from the roles people play within society. The multiple facets that make up the self are referred to as role identities. Role identities are "self-conceptions, self-referent cognitions, or self-definitions" that individuals apply to themselves as a result of roles they fill (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995: 256-257). For example, an individual's role identities may include that she is a daughter, a wife, an artist, an anthropologist, and a hunter. Role identities acquire self-meaning through social interactions, meaning as other people respond to a person's in terms of her role identities those responses form the foundation for defining one's self. Identity is an essential concept in connecting social structure with the actions of individuals. In order to predict behavior an examination of the relationship between self and social structure is necessary (Hogg et al., 1995: 256). Therefore, assessing if women who

hunt identify as hunters and if women have social interactions related to that particular role identity could help predict women's participation in hunting. Another aspect of a role identity is that it includes a set of expectations establishing behavior that is considered appropriate by others. This idea has direct implications for women's participation in hunting. Given the post WWII conception of hunting as a masculine activity, maybe the participation of women in hunting is low because it is not considered appropriate for women to occupy the role of hunter. Furthermore, perhaps the more recent cultural shifts of women being primary household earners and decision makers, heads of single parent households, and the general trend toward gender equality between men and women, it is becoming more acceptable for women to occupy the role of hunter. Further research can illuminate if the 25% increase in female hunting participation between 2006 and 2011 (US Fish and Wildlife Service) is related to the above concepts. The other two main components of identity theory are salience and commitment.

Role identities are organized hierarchically and some identities are more relevant than others. Identities near the top of the hierarchy are more likely to be called upon in a particular situation than those at the bottom. Identity salience is thought of as the likelihood that an identity will be called upon in an array of situations. In addition, identities that are higher in the salience hierarchy are more closely linked with behavior. Identity theory posits, when salient identities are invoked they should have greater influence on an individual's sense of self-meaning, self-worth, and psychological well-being (Hogg et al., 1995). People's relationships, specifically their perceptions of others, are also influenced by identity salience. People tend to hold more positive evaluations of others who occupy the same role. Salience of a particular role identity is effected by both the number of relationships and the importance of those social relationships related to that role identity. The more relationships tied to a specific role identity the more likely it is for that role identity to be invoked, provide positive affective outcomes, and engage in behaviors tied to that role identity (Hogg et al., 1995).

The effect of the number of relationships and the importance of those social relationships on the salience of a particular role identity relates to the concept of commitment in identity theory. Commitment

is defined as the degree to which an individual's relationships to specific other people are contingent upon being a certain type of person. An individual's commitment to a specific role determines the salience of that role identity. The result of leaving a role is the loss of the social network (Hogg et al., 1995: 258). The more dependent a person is on relationships and the importance of those relationships the more committed a person is to the particular role identity that ties them to that social structure. This in turn leads to a higher level of identity salience. Identity theory has not been used extensively to explore women's relationships to hunting and wildlife. If Stryker's (1968) conception of the self as a reflection of a person's social structures and the function of role identities, salience, and commitment, are accepted it could provide some unique insights into the female hunting experience.

There is minimal research on hunting in the US or the hunting culture of US hunters. There is even less information regarding female hunters. The literature discussed above involves the ethics of hunting, the limited gender discussions, critiques of hunting, wildlife value orientations of hunters and non-hunters, shifting attitudes, and human-wildlife conflict. The lack of literature on women hunters is most likely due to there being fewer in the US hunter population.

Methodology

The review of the literature demonstrates an overall lack of information regarding hunters, in particular, women hunters. Hunting is a common and traditional practice in Eastern North Carolina (NC Wildlife Resources Commission). Hence the aim of this exploratory study (Bernard, 2011) is to illuminate and document the female hunter's experience and to uncover her perceptions about and relationships with wildlife, hunting, and human-wildlife interactions. The research questions are: how are women engaging in and experiencing hunting; what do women think and believe about hunting and wildlife; and what explains the changing place of women in hunting.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

The first specific objective is to determine how female hunters are introduced to hunting. The corresponding hypothesis is: the majority of female hunters were introduced to hunting by their father or husband.

The second specific objective is to discover whether women hunters view hunting as a cultural practice, sport, and/or wildlife management strategy. The related hypotheses are: the majority of female hunters consider hunting a sport or recreational activity rather than a cultural practice that reinforces their identity and that female hunters are more likely to assert that hunting is a recreational sport rather than a wildlife management strategy.

The third specific objective is to reveal the wildlife value orientations of women hunters. Hence the fourth hypothesis is: female hunters are more likely to demonstrate utilitarian and naturalistic orientations toward wildlife than moralistic and humanistic orientations.

The fourth specific objective is to explore women hunters' beliefs regarding human-wildlife conflicts and the sources of those conflicts. The fifth hypothesis is: female hunters are more likely to assert humans are the problem in human-wildlife conflicts rather than the wildlife itself.

Sampling Strategy

The study sample includes female hunters, aged 18 years and older, living in eastern North Carolina. Over the last five years, the United States has seen a 25% increase in female hunters (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011). In particular, North Carolina has seen about a 2% increase in female hunters (NC Wildlife Resources Commission, 2011). The data collected in eastern North Carolina is not generalizable to the entire US population or the state of North Carolina, but it provides a much needed glimpse into the hunting experience of women and their attitudes toward wildlife, hunting, and human-wildlife interactions.

A purposive sampling strategy identified 25 women hunters to participate in this study. Given how little is known about women hunters in eastern North Carolina, women of any ethnicity and age were included. Similarly, residence in rural or urban areas was not used as an enrollment criteria. Although women hunters are on the rise, they are still considered a minority in hunter numbers. Therefore, using a probability sampling strategy from the roster of North Carolina residents with a hunting license would not be useful to reach 25 women given the topic of hunting. In particular, female hunters fit three out of four of Bernard's instances in which purposive sampling is highly efficient. Purposive sampling is effective for pilot studies, in-depth case studies, critical case studies, and studies of hard-to-find populations (Bernard, 2011). Women are recruited into the study using several different methods including, personal contacts, social media, and East Carolina University undergraduate anthropology courses.

The majority of the sample are women of European descent; 88% of the participants identify as European American, two identify as a combination of European American ancestry and one other source of ethnic identification, and one identifies as African American. The ages of the participants range from 18 years old to 53 years old. Among the women 14 of the 25 individuals are between the ages of 18 years old and 27 years old and the remaining 11 participants are between the ages of 30 years old and 53 years old.

The education levels of the women vary. However 88% of the women have educational experience beyond high school. Currently, more than half of the women are in school pursuing postsecondary education. The remaining women not enrolled in school run the gamut in education from high school to master’s degrees; three women hold high school diplomas, four have some college experience beyond high school, one has her associates, two women have bachelor’s degrees, and two hold master’s degrees. Overwhelmingly, the women (72%) designate their religious affiliation as Christian with the remaining women identifying as either spiritual or having no religious affiliation. Household income varies among the women participants. Over half of the women fall into income brackets above \$50,000 with the remaining women coming from households making less than \$50,000. More than half the sample of women are single while nine women are married and two are divorced. Additionally, more than half of the women are mothers. The hometowns and current residences of the participants are divided between rural and non-rural communities. Additionally, the women classify their hometown and current residence themselves. Eighteen of the 25 women classify their hometown as rural, while the remaining 7 women consider their hometowns as non-rural. Currently, 12 of the 25 women identify living in rural areas and the remaining 13 women reside in non-rural areas. Through the sampling process, 17 of the 25 women participants are natives of North Carolina, currently residing in Eastern North Carolina and 8 of the women are non-natives of North Carolina, currently living in Eastern North Carolina.

TABLE 1 DISTRIBUTION OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS BY TYPE OF HOMETOWN

	18 to 27 years old	30 to 53 years old
Rural	8	10
Non-Rural	6	1

TABLE 2 DISTRIBUTION OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS BY CURRENT LOCATION OF RESIDENCE

	18 to 27 years old	30 to 53 years old
Rural	5	7
Non-Rural	9	4

A variety of animal species are hunted by the women. The majority of the women (92%) hunt deer. Rounding out the big game animals, more than half of the women hunt bear (52%) and turkey (56%). Upland game birds (dove, grouse, pheasant, and quail) and waterfowl (duck, geese, and swan) are also popular among the women participants with 80% of the women hunting upland game birds and 56% hunting waterfowl. Squirrel and rabbits are also common game animals the women hunted, with 60% of the women hunting squirrel and 56% hunting rabbit. Furbearers (bobcat, coyote, fox, raccoon, etc.) are common non-game species the women hunted, with over half of the women (52%) hunting furbearers, mostly coyotes. Feral swine (hogs) also came up among 32% of the women as an animal they hunted.

TABLE 3 ANIMAL SPECIES WOMEN HUNT IN EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA

Animal Hunted	# of Women
Deer	23
Bear	13
Turkey	14
Upland Game Birds	34
—Dove	16
—Grouse	3
—Pheasant	5
—Quail	10
Waterfowl	23
—Duck	13
—Geese	5
—Swan	5
Small Game	29
—Squirrel	15
—Rabbit	14
Furbearers	24
—Bobcat	4
—Coyote	10
—Fox	6
—Raccoon	4
Feral Swine (Hogs)	8

Data Collection Methods

The design for this study uses a four part interview instrument, a semi-structured interview (see Appendix B), a structured instrument to gather demographic information (see Appendix C), and two structured tasks (see Appendix D), a survey to assess the women’s beliefs about hunting and a ranking

task to reveal the women's attitudes toward wildlife. The structured instrument is used to gather demographic information such as age, ethnicity, education, income, animals hunted, and weapons used in hunting. The structured tasks are designed to gather quantitative data regarding female hunter's attitudes toward hunting and wildlife. These instruments are approved by the IRB at East Carolina University (see Appendix A).

The semi-structured interview includes 34 closed and open-ended questions designed to capture qualitative data on the hunting experiences of women (Appendix B, questions 1-2, 7-19), assess the women's social lives (Appendix B, questions 3-6), what makes up a woman hunter's identity (Appendix B, questions 25-28), and their opinions about wildlife management (Appendix B, questions 20-24), and gender differences between men and women regarding hunting (Appendix B, questions 29-34). The use of open-ended questions allow for the collection of detailed information in the informants' own words. The semi-structured interview is utilized to get more in-depth descriptive responses from informants and is constructed by the primary researcher of this project. The semi-structured interview gathers data to address all the objectives and hypotheses of this study. The themes related to identity and gender are not hypothesized about prior to data collection due to a lack of information in the literature.

The first structured instrument is a modified version of Campbell and MacKay's (2003) belief frames (see Appendix D). Campbell and MacKay (2003) conducted a pilot study ($N = 30$) using open ended questions about the positive and negative features of hunting. This information was used to generate 20 belief statements. The belief statements were part of a province-wide mail survey distributed to a regionally stratified random sample of 3000 households in Manitoba, Canada. In this study, the participants are asked to rate 20 belief statements regarding hunting as 'extremely good,' 'somewhat good,' 'somewhat bad,' or 'extremely bad'. The quantitative information from this instrument is used as a comparison for the qualitative data from the semi-structured interview regarding opinions about hunting. This modified version of Campbell and MacKay's (2003) belief frames provides data to address the second research objective.

The second structured task is a ranking task (see Appendix D) consisting of wildlife value typologies originally developed by Kellert (1978) to describe how people perceived and interacted with wildlife. A modified version of the task (Manfredo, 2008; Peterson et al., 2009) is used for this research. Peterson et al. (2009) conducted their research at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina with students from eight colleges on NCSU main campus. Students were asked to “which best describes your views about wildlife” and asked to select up to three of the eight options. Each selection had a brief description. For this project, the women are given eight short statements regarding wildlife and asked to rank the statements in order of most agreement to least agreement. The statements concern a spectrum of relationships humans have with wildlife, also called wildlife value orientations and are used to uncover the women’s beliefs and attitudes toward wildlife. The wildlife orientations ranking task collects data to address the third research objective.

At the beginning of each interview, participants are informed that their identities would be kept confidential, they did not have to answer any of my questions, and they could withdraw from the study at any time. After reviewing the informed consent and each informant decides to proceed, participants are asked to complete the ranking task. Upon completion of the ranking task, participants are asked the 34 open and close-ended questions from the semi-structured interview instrument. The semi-structured interview is followed by the belief frames survey structured task. All interviews conclude with the collection of demographic information. Elicitation in response to the structured and semi-structured interview instruments took place at a mutually agreed upon location.

Data Analysis Methods

After all the data is organized and coded, the data is scrutinized for patterns and relationships between the experiences of the women hunters, their attitudes toward hunting, wildlife, and human-wildlife interactions, and demographic information. Responses to the structured tasks are input into an EXCEL spread sheet. Detailed notes are taken during and after the semi-structured interviews. I maintain a personal journal to reflect on my own opinions, biases, and initial thoughts on data analysis in an effort

to keep my subjectivity out of the data analysis. Answers to the two structured interview parts of the instrument are analyzed using descriptive statistics in RStudio. The detailed notes from responses to the open-ended questions are typed up and analyzed using the Grounded Theory approach to data analysis finding reoccurring and co-occurring themes (Glaser, B.G. & A.L. Strauss, 1967). The grounded theory approach to data analysis (Bernard, 2011) is one type of systematic text analysis of qualitative data. The primary purpose of the grounded theory approach to data analysis to establish causal explanations. The strength of the explanations comes from them being grounded in the source text. This type of data analysis takes on the emic perspective in that it works to understand the text from the inside out from the insider's point of view. I compute the statistic distribution of answers by demographic information and supplement insights from the text analysis of answers to the close and open-ended questions. I use the emerged codes and the information on their frequencies and relationships to build models about women hunters' values and thought processes.

Data Management

All data is analyzed, coded, and organized on a personal computer, protected by a passcode and on a secure internet network. When the data is not being analyzed and organized, it is maintained on an external hard drive. All personal identifiers are removed from any electronic documents to ensure the anonymity of the informants.

Exploring the Experiences of Women Hunters

The Culture of Hunting

“Hunting is in my blood.”

~ Informant # 4 ~

“Women either come from a hunting family and grew up with it or they meet a man that introduces them and they get the itch for it.”

~ Informant # 4 ~

Hunters reside all across the United States. However, hunters are not a monolith, they are heterogeneous, but many share a sense of legacy and passing on their family hunting traditions to younger generations. The practice of hunting is often acquired within the family, and knowledge about hunting passed from generation to generation, from father to son. In this conventional scenario, a father takes his son of a certain age for his first foray into the woods. Sons are immersed into the hunting culture at a young age, learning basic skills, rules, safety, weapons, hunting etiquette, how to listen and be quiet, and what to listen and look for. Yet, what is a father who enjoys hunting to do when he has no sons and only daughters? Do they let the family’s hunting legacy die with them or continue the traditions by introducing their daughters?

Although fathers play a pivotal role in the hunting socialization process for sons and daughters (Heberlein, 1987; Stedman & Heberlein, 2001), women are more likely to be introduced to hunting via their husbands (Adams & Steen, 1997; Mcfarlane, Watson, & Boxall, 2003; Heberlein, Serup, & Ericsson, 2008; Boglioli, 2009). This research examines the culture of hunting in reference to the women hunter’s socialization, identification as hunters, hunting as a cultural practice and a sport, and their motivations for hunting. A culture is a set of beliefs, values, customs, and traditions that are shared and passed down from generation to generation through learning (Tylor, 1874). The findings of this study demonstrate the culture of hunting for these women in Eastern North Carolina.

Socialization into the Culture of Hunting

Findings from the analysis of data for this research reveal that in North Carolina hunting is a widespread practice enjoyed by a large proportion of society demonstrating hunting's deep roots and being woven into their cultural fabric. Therefore, fathers often decide to include their daughters and pass on their family hunting traditions to them. Eighty percent of the women are introduced to hunting during childhood, with 15 women being initiated by their fathers and 5 being introduced by other male family members. A woman from this study who was initiated into hunting by her father recalls, *"I was born into it. My father hunted and my brother hunts. My brother is a year younger than me and my dad was going to take my brother and I threw a fit. We had hunting dogs and I was in charge of feeding them. I was interested in it. The first time I went out, I was probably five years old."* The average age of the women with introductions to hunting in childhood by fathers or other male family members is 6 years old. Four women start hunting with their significant others as adults. A woman introduced to hunting by her husband explains, *"I started out of an affection for my husband. Last year was my first season. If I wasn't so confident in his ability and respect for animals I would never have tried it."* The average age of these women is 26 years old. Two of the 15 women who had introductions to hunting via their fathers, really started hunting and became hunters through experiences with their husbands. The remaining woman has an unconventional introduction to hunting via friends from her church at 13 years old.

Identifying as a Hunter

It is often said that hunters come from hunting families (Heberlein, 1987; Stedman & Heberlein, 2001; Larson et al., 2014). Twenty of the 25 women assert they identify as being a hunter. The five women who are not self-proclaimed hunters communicate different reasons. For one of the women who does not identify as a hunter, hunting did not last long. She is introduced to hunting by her grandmother's boyfriend at 4 years old, and by the age of 8 years old had already quit hunting. Three women give similar responses

as to why they do not consider themselves hunters, *“It’s a hobby.”* The fifth woman does not identify as a hunter because hunting is something she grew up doing and still does out of necessity to feed her family.

Another aspect of hunters coming from hunting families is the supportive atmosphere of the families and communities. In general, this implies a father who hunts and teaches his sons or daughters to hunt and a mother who cooks what is harvested or prepares breakfast the morning of a day of hunting. Interestingly, some of the participants report mixed sentiments from their mothers or other female family members. Only 13 of the 25 women specifically mention their mothers or female family members’ reactions and feelings about hunting. Eight of these 13 women have mothers who are supportive with half of them having mothers who hunt themselves. The remaining five women have mothers or female family members who are unsupportive, some even upset by their hunting participation. However, all 5 of these women say it is normal for women to hunt, *“Everyone hunts where I’m from.”* Despite having a supportive or unsupportive mother, 16 participants asserted hunting was a normal activity for women in their communities, regardless of a rural or urban upbringing.

Hunting as a Cultural Practice

Culture is defined by the sharing of beliefs, values, customs, and traditions that are passed down from generation to generation through learning (Tylor, 1874). Thirteen of the 25 women declare hunting is a cultural practice and way of life. All but one of these women is initiated into hunting by their father or a male family member. The common reasons for this assertion include hunting is something passed down from generation to generation involving history, tradition, and how one is raised. Three of these 13 women also assert they rely on the meat they harvest each hunting season. One woman in particular states, *“I depend on the meat to save money and survive through the winter.”* Furthermore, hunting as a cultural practice is confirmed by information from the belief frames instrument with all 25 women showing support for the belief statement ‘hunting as a cultural activity’.

Ten of 25 women state hunting can be a cultural practice or way of life. Common explanations for why hunting can be a cultural practice and way of life are how one is raised, if one relies upon the meat harvested, or if one is Native American. These 10 women differ more in relation to how they are initiated into hunting. Some are introduced via their husbands while others are introduced by their fathers or male family members.

Only one woman insists hunting is not a cultural practice or way of life because we no longer rely solely on hunting to survive. The remaining woman claims hunting is a cultural practice but is not a way of life. For her, hunting is steeped in tradition and is a regional practice thereby making it a cultural practice. However, hunting is not a way of life because we have meat markets and grocery stores.

Hunting as a Sport

Historically, hunting in the US has been designated as a sport to differentiate it from subsistence and commercial hunting. Despite history's definition of hunting in the US as a sport, the women participants' opinions on hunting as a sport vary. Overall, the women fall into one of three distinct categories; hunting is a sport, hunting can be a sport, or hunting is not a sport. Nine of the 25 women assert hunting is a sport. All eight of them agree hunting is a sport because it requires some physical strength, practice, training, and equipment. One woman remarked, "*Hunting is physical chess.*" Eleven of 25 women declare hunting "*can be*" a sport. The women fall into two groups when giving reasons for why hunting can be a sport. A little over half of them claim hunting can be a sport because it requires strength, practice, and preparation. The remaining half of the women think hunting can be a sport if the hunter is only after the antlers or to mount the head of the animal. Nine of the 25 women insist hunting is not a sport. Overwhelmingly, all 9 women concur hunting is not a sport because it is a food source. In addition, 4 of these 9 women define hunting for sport as not using or consuming the meat. One woman stresses, "*If you hunt for sport you're not really a hunter. You're just shooting, slaying targets and it's a waste of a life.*" Furthermore, this information is reinforced by data from the belief frames questionnaire. Fifteen of

the women support the belief statement ‘hunting for sport’ while ten of the women disapprove of hunting for sport.

Motivations for Hunting

Motivations and reasons for hunting vary by participant. Some women provide multiple motivations and reasons while others give only one motivation and reason. However, four motivations emerge as the most recurring. Interestingly, the same four topics come up as main reasons for hunting. The four main motivations and reasons for hunting include harvesting food, experiencing the outdoors and nature, bonding time, and the thrill and enjoyment of the hunt. Although the same four themes emerge as occurring most frequently, they recur to varying degrees.

The theme that occurs most frequently as a motivation and main reason for hunting is the food it provides. Twelve of the 25 women discuss the food provided by hunting as a motivation while 20 women discuss food as a main reason for hunting. However, only ten women consider the food hunting provides as both a motivation and main reason. One woman comments, *“If you get a good sized deer, you don’t have to buy meat.”* This is confirmed by data from the belief frames questionnaire with all 25 women approving of the belief statement ‘hunting that provides a food source’.

Getting outside, seeing wildlife in their natural element, and watching the world wake up are essential aspects of the hunting experience. Ten of the 25 informants state experiencing the outdoors and nature as a motivation for hunting. Seven of 25 women express that experiencing the outdoors and nature as a reason for hunting. Interestingly, only three individuals provide experiencing the outdoors and nature as both a motivation and reason for hunting. One woman stresses, *“It [hunting] is more about relaxing. It’s the whole reason I hunt and fish. I can hunt for 8 hours and not bring home anything and I’ll have had the best day.”* The motivation for hunting to experience the outdoors and nature is also reinforced by information from the belief frames instrument. Twenty-two women agree with the belief statement

‘hunting to experience fresh air and nice scenery’ while the remaining three women are against hunting solely to experience the outdoors.

Although hunting can be a solitary activity with a lone hunter sitting in a tree stand, it can also be a weekend getaway for family and friends to meet up, socialize, and reconnect. Ten of 25 women are motivated to hunt because it provides an opportunity for general bonding or time with a specific individual. Nine of 25 participants mirror the statements that hunting allows for bonding time as main reasons they hunt. Yet, only 4 women assert hunting because it allows for bonding time as both a motivation and reason for participation. One of the women in this study reminisces, *“It’s [hunting] a social and family thing...I hunt because of my dad and the bonding between me and my dad. Hunting is something he had only with me.”*

The fourth and final most frequently discussed motivation and reason for hunting is that it is thrilling and/or enjoyable. Ten of the 25 women are motivated to hunt because it is thrilling and/or fun while 11 women cite hunting being exciting and/or fun as a reason for hunting. Still, only 3 women list hunting being thrilling and/or enjoyable as both a motivation and main reason. One of the women professes, *“It’s [hunting] thrilling and exciting, but it’s not something you’d think you could do in an industrialized society.”*

Women Hunters’ Relationships with Wildlife

“The idea that hunters don’t have reverence for animals, land, and nature is really irritating.”
~ Informant # 3 ~

“You respect something it respects you. I have a hard time watching something die, but it’s something that happens. It’s more respectful than current agricultural practices.”
~ Informant # 5 ~

Animals play a major role in the lives of many people. From domesticated animals, pets and livestock to wildlife, in zoos or in their natural habitat; humans interact with animals in some capacity and tend to have strong opinions and emotions when it comes to those relationships and interactions. Although hunters seek to kill animals to harvest the meat and/or trophies, they too have strong thoughts and feelings about animals and wildlife. Despite the end result of hunting, hunters are often compassionate, thoughtful,

respectful, ethical, and the most active conservationists. This is especially true of the women hunters interviewed regarding wildlife.

A Hunter's Role in the Wildlife Management System

Whether waking in the early morning hours to settle in the woods before sunrise and the world wakes up or waiting until the afternoon to trek out for a twilight hunt, a hunter hopes to return home at the end of her hours in the woods with a successful harvest. Hunters have their own motivations and reasoning for hunting, but they are also a tool for state wildlife management agencies. Wildlife management agencies rely on hunters financially, through the purchase of hunting licenses, tags, and stamps, but also on their skills and penchant for hunting.

Correspondingly, the majority of women (23) participating in this study see hunting as a wildlife management strategy. The most agreed upon themes for how hunting is a wildlife management strategy are population control and disease control. Many more women talk about hunting helping with population control than disease control, 15 and 5 respectively. One woman explains, *“I believe hunting helps to prevent the spreading of disease through species and also keeping populations of deer and similar species at a manageable level”* while another woman remarks, *“Most certainly, it [hunting] helps with population control, quality [disease] control, and carrying capacity. Letting hunters do their thing is cheaper than letting the government figure out how to handle the situation.”* Despite the majority of the sample viewing hunting as a wildlife management strategy, several could not articulate how hunting is a wildlife management strategy or they insist in ideas like not shooting the young and not killing everything or vague concepts like maintaining balance.

In the opinion of the majority of women participating in this study, hunters have a place in the wildlife management system. Twenty-three of the 25 women agree that hunters have a role in managing wildlife. However, two other women along with one of these 23 women believe nature manages itself and does not need to be managed by anyone and is its own self-regulating system. The women describe a few

different roles hunters play within wildlife management including controlling population numbers and the spread of disease, abiding by the laws set by state wildlife agencies, and being mindful/cognizant of their actions (not shooting young animals, not overhunting, and being respectful) while afield. According to 13 of 25 women, hunters play a role in the population and disease control within game species. One woman reflects, *“He [the hunter] is nature’s natural selection.”* Another important duty for any hunter is abiding by the laws set by state wildlife agencies in relation to bag limits, seasons, tags, and stamps. One woman expresses, *“[The hunter’s role involves] staying within limits of how many can be taken and population control so the land can sustain them. It’s a delicate balance and hunters have an important part in that.”* Nine of the 25 women relay the importance of following the law and staying within those limits. Additionally, the majority of women in this study believe it is also vital for hunters to be mindful/cognizant of their actions while hunting. Seventeen of 25 women discuss the condemnation of shooting young animals and overhunting, and the importance of being a respectful hunter.

Wildlife Value Orientations

In general, the element of being a mindful and respectful hunter shapes the women’s opinions of wildlife. Wildlife orientations are a classification system for basic opinions toward animals and the natural environment and used to portray intrinsic values and meanings people ascribe to the nonhuman world (Kellert & Berry, 1987). In Kellert’s (1980) scheme there are eight wildlife orientations.

However, of the eight wildlife orientations only five prominent wildlife orientations surface to typify the women’s attitudes toward wildlife. Findings from the wildlife value orientation ranking task show that the majority of the women in this study clearly align with two of the eight wildlife orientations, in turn illustrating their opinions of wildlife. The two wildlife value orientations demonstrating the attitudes of the majority of women are aesthetic and scientific. An individual with an aesthetic orientation toward wildlife views wildlife as ‘attractive and beautiful representations of nature’ while someone with a scientific orientation sees wildlife as ‘a window to understanding how nature works’. Nineteen of the 25

exhibit an aesthetic wildlife value orientation. Nineteen of 25 women hold a scientific orientation toward wildlife. Additionally, a third wildlife orientation, the naturalistic orientation, aligns with half of the women in the study. A person with a naturalistic orientation toward wildlife believe wildlife ‘give humans satisfaction through direct experience or contact’.

Furthermore, results from the ranking task show that two wildlife value orientations distinctly deviate from how the majority of the women in this study categorize their thoughts on wildlife, the negativistic and dominionistic orientations. An individual holding a negativistic wildlife value orientation perceives wildlife as ‘a source of fear, aversion, disdain, and alienation from nature’ while someone with a dominionistic orientation sees wildlife as ‘objects humans exert mastery, physical control, and dominance over’. Overwhelmingly, 23 of the 25 women do not perceive wildlife from a negativistic viewpoint. In addition, 16 of 25 women do not regard wildlife in terms of the dominionistic wildlife value orientation.

It is important to note that the women only moderately relate to the remaining wildlife orientations which include the utilitarian, moralistic, and humanistic orientations. The outlook of someone with a utilitarian orientation toward wildlife believes wildlife ‘exist to be used efficiently to meet human interests’. An individual with a moralistic orientation sees wildlife as ‘entities eliciting strong affinity, spiritual reverence, and ethical concern’ while the viewpoint of a person with a humanistic orientation think wildlife ‘elicit strong emotional attachment and love in ways similar to humans’. All three of these wildlife orientations are consistently in the middle of the ranking task findings for these women.

Greater than the Harvest

Wildlife are representations of nature and provide a window through which to understand how nature operates and not something to be feared, hated, or dominated. Subsequently, hunting has a greater purpose beyond just harvesting game for many hunters. Several themes emerge to illustrate hunting’s greater purpose. Those themes include allowing the young to grow; not killing just to kill; if you shoot it,

you eat it; and not shooting mothers with their young. The importance of allowing the young to grow appears most often. Seventeen of the 25 women discuss allowing the young to walk so they can grow big. One woman states, *“Nothing can grow big if you shoot every little cow horn.”* A cow horn is a young buck with little button antlers. Several other women echo this concept. If a hunter is constantly harvesting young bucks, they never have a chance to grow big, potentially being trophy size, contribute to the gene pool, and strengthen the population.

Related to this idea is the opposition to killing mothers with their young that five of 25 women discuss. Whether fawns or cubs, young animals will not survive without their mothers. One of the women explains how fawns will either remain at or return to the spot where their mother is killed because the fawn does not know what else to do. A young animal is still learning how to navigate and survive in the world, therefore without its mother it will most likely die. One woman recalls, *“My uncle shot a doe with a young fawn once just to upset my mom and I. Technically, it was poaching but what bothered me more was the maternal aspect. He basically left that fawn die.”* Another woman declares, *“I don’t agree with shooting a doe with fawns or a mama bear with cubs. I didn’t feel that way until I had my own son. There’s no point in it...killing a baby. It could grow into being a large buck.”*

These women hunters condemn hunting where the sole motive is killing for killing’s sake. Fifteen of 25 women state they do not agree with hunting where the only goal is just to kill an animal. One woman remarks, *“I don’t believe in just killing to kill or just to kill to get the antlers. If you’re going to kill something you need to put it to use, eat it.”*

Following from this idea of not killing just to kill, ten of the 25 women declare the importance of if you kill it, you eat it. Not eating the meat and using the animal to the fullest extent is seen as a waste and disrespectful. One of the women states, *“I don’t believe in just shooting to shoot. Why take a life if you’re not going to eat it? If you take a life you should respect it.”* Regardless of location of upbringing and influence of who initiates women into hunting, these women disapprove of killing for killing’s sake and wasting the meat of a kill.

Highly Debated Hunting Practices

Given hunting's greater purpose beyond harvesting meat and/or trophies, not all hunting methods are held in high esteem or thought of equally. Running dogs is one such contested practice. The tradition of running dogs to hunt deer and bear is common in Eastern North Carolina. Hunting season for deer and bear in Eastern North Carolina is marked with trucks parked on the side of the road. Typically, running dogs involves a group of hunters, each with two or three dogs. Depending on the animal, bears are usually treed while deer are driven through a lane (a wide gap between two tree lines), the dogs are released to track and chase the animal, giving hunters the opportunity to take their shots.

Despite the common nature of running dogs, not everyone supports the practice. The topic of running dogs comes up throughout several of the interviews and the women are firmly either for or against running dogs. Sixteen of the 25 women discuss running dogs. Nine of the 16 who discuss running dogs describe the practice as cultural, either grew up running dogs or had family members who ran dogs to hunt, and approve of the practice. The majority of these women are natives of North Carolina, only one is a non-native. Furthermore, all but one of the women who support running dogs are from rural communities. One of these women states, *"People are often against running dogs, claiming the dogs are not cared for. In most cases the dogs are cared for really well and if a hunter is not caring for his dogs then he is not an ethical hunter."*

The other seven women vehemently oppose the running of dogs, arguing that the practice endangers the dogs, the dogs are often mistreated and have poor living conditions, and that it is unfair and cruel to the animal being hunted. One woman asserts, *"The guys who do it make it more of a sport. I don't like how they treat the dogs. I found two pups abandoned, dogs get hit by cars, the living conditions, and I've seen hunters leave their dead dog and take the radio collar. However, I also know some who take really good care of their dogs."* There is more diversity in the native status of the women opposing dog running. Four of the women are native North Carolinians while the other three are non-natives. However, all but one of the women are from rural hometowns. One of the women who opposes running dogs to hunt

still engages in the practice because it is the only legal way to hunt bear in North Carolina. She states, *“I’m not a fan of running dogs. It’s cruel and there should be a better method, with bear the dogs run for a little while and then the bear runs up tree but with deer the dogs sometimes run for hours. Dogs are not cared for and I don’t think dogs should go through that, but it’s the only way to legally hunt bear. It’s dangerous for the dogs. I would never put my dogs in that.”*

Running dogs is not the only hunting method the women oppose. A variety of other topics come up in the interviews regarding hunting practices the participants are oppose including causing harm and suffering, trapping, and overhunting. Other than running dogs, the hunting practice with the most disapproval is causing harm and suffering. Seven of the 25 women object to anything that causes harm and suffering. Related to this topic is trapping. Five of 25 women are against trapping because of the unnecessary and prolonged suffering it produces. The objections to practices that cause harm and suffering are supported by data from the belief frames questionnaire. All 25 women disapprove of the belief statement ‘hunting that results in cruelty to animals’.

Overhunting is another practice that appears in the interviews. Overhunting involves shooting more animals than the law allows. In Eastern North Carolina a hunter is allowed to harvest a maximum of six deer all of which can be antler less, but they cannot harvest more than four antlered deer. Four of the 25 women disapprove of overhunting.

Caring for Wildlife is Important to Hunting

Interestingly, hunters hold contrary attitudes toward their relationships with wildlife. Hunters care very much about wildlife in general and specifically about the species of wildlife they hunt, while also taking the lives of those same species. All participants in this study emphasize the importance of caring for animals in the wild. Caring for wildlife is interpreted in several ways including conservation, population and disease control, and growing food for consumption by wildlife. Fourteen of the 25 women argue conservation is key to caring for wildlife. One woman states, *“You gotta care for it to have it.”*

Other means of defining the importance of caring for wildlife to hunting relate to the ideas of hunting for population and disease control. Removing individual animals from the group helps to keep the population from exceeding what the habitat can support and decreases the possibility of a disease decimating an entire herd. Actually, some women talk about waiting for certain deer that are diseased, deformed, or older before taking a shot with the hope of bettering the population. Eight of 25 women consider population control a method of caring for wildlife while five of 25 women view disease control a means of caring for wildlife. One woman says, *“I like to hunt deer because they overpopulate and end up starving and I would rather hunt and feed a family so the animal doesn’t starve.”* These ideas are also supported by information from the belief frames instrument. Twenty-four of the 25 women support the belief statement ‘hunting to maintain wildlife population levels’ and all 25 women agree with the belief statement ‘hunting to reduce or control disease in wildlife’. Interestingly, six of the 25 women grow food plots or put out food as a way to care for wildlife.

Great Appreciation for Wildlife

Given the importance of caring for wildlife to hunting, it follows that the hunting experience presents the opportunity to deepen the respect and appreciation a hunter has for wildlife. The discussions with the female participants of this study reveal that 24 of the 25 women assert their hunting experiences have given them a greater appreciation and respect for wildlife.

An array of ideas unfold regarding ways hunting provides a greater appreciation for wildlife. Those ideas encompass the life of wildlife, the capabilities of wildlife, the education wildlife provide, and the diverse opportunities hunting affords to see and experience wildlife. Twelve of the 25 women insist on recognizing an animal as a life. Some of these women talk about the animal as giving back to us, giving up or offering its life so we can live, or acknowledging that it is a living breathing entity with a family. One woman refers to killing a deer as a *“sacrifice”* while another woman says, *“They have a soul.”*

Furthermore, another woman states, *“I take it to heart; watching them grow, they have family too, their characteristics, how they interact with each other.”*

Women often address the capabilities of wildlife. In general, people often dismiss non-human animals and consider them below humans. However, twelve of 25 women hunters claim that wildlife have impressive abilities that are overlooked. Wildlife are fast, strong, have better senses, and are smarter than people give them credit for according to these 12 women. Two women describe hunting as a back and forth of hunter trying to outsmart the animals they hunt and vice versa. One of these women even says that the deer often wins and outsmarts the hunter, stating, *“You have to outsmart deer because they often outsmart you.”* Furthermore, these women also discuss the adaptability of wildlife to human induced environmental destruction and that they will survive longer than humanity.

A handful of women, 5 of the 25, express we can learn from wildlife; their behaviors, patterns, what to do and not do when they are present, thereby increasing our understanding of them and ourselves. One participant says, *“I have a greater appreciation for how they survive the world, what they add to the ecological environment...they’ll survive better and longer, I could learn a thing or two from them, they’re smarter and faster. It’s humbling.”*

A few of the women, 4 of the 25, highlight that hunting affords the opportunity to see and experience other things. One participant states, *“I appreciate seeing other animals, foxes and squirrels, seeing them in their element and they don’t know you’re there.”* Most hunting excursions include seeing a variety of animals beyond what is being hunted and experiencing sunrises and the woods waking up.

Conflicts with Wildlife and their Sources

Despite the hunter’s sense of stewardship, the importance of caring for wildlife, and the greater appreciation of wildlife hunting experiences afford a hunter, conflicts between humans and wildlife exist. The human population continues to grow and urbanization is a byproduct of that growth. As a result humans increasingly come into contact with wildlife which in turn leads to conflicts. Today, hunters in

the United States have more contact with wildlife, in their natural habitat, and as a result have their own perspectives on the conflicts between humans and wildlife.

Four themes emerge from the discourse with female hunters about the conflicts between humans and wildlife, including humans, damage caused by wildlife, vehicle collisions, and a lack of understanding. Humans are the most frequently discussed conflict between humans and wildlife in the form of human's sense of entitlement and/or encroaching on or taking land and resources needed by wildlife to survive. Fourteen of the 25 women participants regard people as a conflict. A related theme that emerges from the interviews as a conflict is vehicle collisions.

Development of land through the construction and expansion of towns, cities, and roads for human consumption has fragmented the habitat of wildlife forcing them to navigate our roads and speeding traffic. Seven of the 25 informants reference vehicle collisions as a conflict.

Another theme most recurring among the women is damage (crop damage and property damage) caused by wild animals and their nuisance behaviors (animals in the trash). Fourteen of the 25 women discuss the damage and nuisance that animals can cause when looking for a meal. However, they also understand the actions of wild animals looking for a meal to survive in a world constantly being altered by human activity. One woman insists, *"The state of overdevelopment is the problem. We're taking their habitat. They don't have any habitat left so they eat people's shrubbery and become a rodent that people [non-hunters] want to get rid of."*

An extension of perceiving crop and property damage and nuisance behaviors as burdensome pertains to the final conflict, a lack of understanding. Six of the 25 women refer to a lack of understanding of either animals or hunting. One participant says, *"Ones [conflicts] that are misunderstood on the human end...Humans latch onto something and lose it without being completely informed. It's our fault. They were here first. The closer we get to the wild we shouldn't be surprised or upset by them but that's never how it goes."*

All of these perspectives shared by the female participants of this study consider humans to be the main source of the conflicts between humans and wildlife. Some of the women believe humans are taking land and resources away from wildlife and that human population growth is out of control. Others think it is humans' sense of entitlement, greed, and desire to dominant that is the origin of the conflict between humans and wildlife. Instead of accepting our role in upsetting the balance, humans still tend to cast blame onto wildlife. One woman asserts, *"Humans are upset when a bear is in their yard, a deer is eating their shrubbery, or rabbits are in their garden. Animals don't have enough habitat. It's a sign that something is out of balance for them to move into our existence and seeking food out of their natural area. We want to kill them for no reason except that they're trying to find food."*

Changing Perspectives about Women Who Hunt

"TV shows all have women on them. It shows that it's not just male dominated and makes women more comfortable with it."

~ Informant # 18 ~

"Everybody's roles have changed. Women are no longer expected to just stay home and men are not expected to go out and get the dinner."

~ Informant # 11 ~

Historically, hunting has been perceived as a male bonding activity, often defined as a rite of passage as fathers initiate their sons into manhood, and exclusive to men (Kheel, 1996; Stange, 1997; Macfarlane, Watson, & Boxall, 2003; Fitzgerald, 2005; Boglioli, 2009). Times are changing. Although the majority of hunters in the US are men, between 2006 and 2011 25% more women have picked up their hunting weapon(s) of choice and taken to the woods (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011).

Male Domination of Hunting

Hunting is considered a male dominated activity, but what is the rationale for hunting being perceived as male dominated? A variety of arguments for why hunting is seen as male dominated arise including the stereotypes of gender roles, history, and that hunting is seen as masculine.

Stereotypes of gender roles emerges as a theme and a reason for why hunting is perceived as male dominated. Eighteen of the 25 women discuss stereotypes of gender roles. One woman asserts, *“They don’t teach women to hunt. Men are the hunters and women are the gatherers...They don’t encourage our daughters like they encourage sons. I’m going to teach my five year old daughter. Men are more apt to take sons than daughters.”* Additionally, 13 of these women talk about men being hunters and providers while 10 women discuss women as homemakers, gatherers, and cooks.

Related to the stereotypes of gender roles is another common theme that comes up as to why hunting is considered male dominated is history. Fourteen of the 25 women argue history plays a major role in hunting being perceived as male dominated. Men hunted and women gathered. One of the women remarks, *“Our history from the time we settled...it has always been a man’s role to go out into the cold, mud, and muck and provide for women and children.”*

The final reason hunting is considered male dominated is that it is seen as masculine given that more men hunt than women and the weapons used in hunting. Seven of 25 women assert hunting is seen as a masculine activity.

Linking Hunting to Masculinity, Aggression, and Sex

In some circles hunting is perceived as related to masculinity, aggression, and sex. Overall, the majority of hunters are men and hunting tends be considered male dominated and seen as masculine and not feminine. Culturally, in the US there is often an assumed association between masculinity, aggression, and sex. Hunters are seen as aggressive brutes who are only interested in sex and food (Kheel, 1996; Luke, 1998; Kalof, Fitzgerald, & Baralt, 2004). Interestingly, not all of these oft perpetuated stereotypes align with the opinions of the women participants.

In general, the majority of the women understand the connection between hunting and masculinity. Twenty-one of 25 women who participated in this study see hunting’s ties to masculinity given the male dominated nature of the activity. One woman asserts, *“It comes from men hunters wanting to kill*

something...biggest buck...buck with the biggest rack. They don't think about the emotional side, taking a life. Killing something and bringing it home makes them feel masculine."

Masculinity is where the connections end. Seventeen of the 25 women do not see any connection between hunting and aggression. Several of the women describe hunting as tranquil and peaceful and that it requires one to be calm and focused. One woman states, *"Hunting doesn't have anything to do with aggression. I'm not mad when I go. I'm calm and focused. When you're mad you're not able to focus."*

Furthermore, another 17 of the 25 women do not see and disagree with there being a link between hunting and sex. However, the women did not necessarily interpret sex in the same way. Some interpret sex as sexual activity while others interpret sex to mean male or female. One woman disagrees with hunting being connected to sex and argues, *"It is the misconception of someone who hasn't hunted"* while another woman insists there is no connection and states, *"In the world I grew up in it doesn't apply. My dad was as willing to take me as he was to take my brothers."*

Overcoming the Kill

Hunters are a small segment of the overall US population with women making up an even smaller percentage of the general hunter population. Although more women are beginning to hunt, why do fewer women chose to become hunters than men? Several themes emerge as reasons for why fewer women take up hunting. They include the lack of opportunity and knowledge, stereotypes of gender roles, the male domination of the activity, family upbringing, women being taught to be nurturers, and challenges posed by hunting.

Lack of opportunities and knowledge is the most frequently discussed reason for the small number of women hunters. Fourteen of the 25 women think fewer women become hunters due to the lack of opportunities and in turn knowledge about hunting. In addition, four of these women state, *"Someone has to teach you."*

Growing up it is common to hear boys being taught to be adventurous, outspoken, and brave while girls are taught to be delicate, quiet, and caring. The second most often cited reason fewer women hunt are stereotypes of gender roles. Ten of 25 women assert that gender role stereotypes impact women becoming hunters. Five of these women specifically refer to women cooking, gathering, or staying home to care for children while four women talk about men hunting. This relates to a third theme, hunting being considered masculine and not feminine. Eight of the 25 women state less women become hunters because hunting is regarded as a masculine activity and it is culturally unacceptable for women to participate, regardless of location of upbringing or initiates the women into hunting.

Akin to hunting being considered a masculine activity and not feminine is the idea that to be feminine women are taught and encouraged to be nurturers. Seven of 25 women discuss women being more sensitive and soft-hearted and in turn struggling more with killing animals. One woman states, *“It has to do with the kill itself. They see it as taking an animal’s life”* while another woman echoes this sentiment saying, *“Women have a hard time taking animals’ lives. We are raised to nurture.”* An aspect of our acculturation is our family upbringing which plays an important part in the adoption of a hunting lifestyle. Seven of 25 women assert the influence of family upbringing. Many of these women highlight the effect of coming from a hunting family, hunting starts at an early age, and if a girl does not grow up doing it she probably will not start as an adult.

The final reason the participants provide for why fewer women hunt relates to the challenges of hunting. These challenges include the rigors of hunting (waking up early, dragging a deer or bear through heavy brush, and/or the gutting and cleaning process) and the fear of firearms. Eight of 25 women consider this theme. Half of the women talk about hunting as challenging and time consuming. The remaining four women talk about how the fear of firearms presents a hurdle that is often difficult to overcome for some women.

Women's Contributions to the Hunting Lifestyle

Despite viewpoints that hunting is a male dominated activity, 11% of all hunters in the United State are women (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011). But what makes these women different? What do women contribute to the hunting lifestyle? Several themes arise for the contributions of women to the hunting lifestyle. These themes include mindfulness, gender neutrality, strengthening relationships, domesticity, and attention to detail.

The mindfulness women bring to hunting is a reoccurring theme. Seventeen of the 25 women assert women are more thoughtful than their male counterparts when hunting, which for them means being more careful, considerate, selective in the animals they opt to shoot, and law abiding. One woman declares, *"Women leave less of a footprint in the woods; chopping down fewer trees, shooting fewer animals, and staying to clean up."* Similarly, another woman states, *"There are only three [women] in the hunt club and we're the only ones who make sure the trash is picked up, the stand doors are closed to keep out bears and snakes...We focus on the ones [deer] that need to be taken out, spare the you...We see the bigger picture."* Along different lines a third woman remarks, *"Women provide the emotional side, which is a good thing. Men don't think about the emotional side and taking a life."*

A second contribution of women to the hunting lifestyle is bringing gender neutrality to hunting. Seeing women participate in hunting demonstrates women are capable of doing anything men can do and be successful. This opens opportunities for women to show other women that there is a place for women in hunting.

Women participating in hunting leads to another emergent topic, the strengthening of families and relationships. Hunting presents an opportunity for more dynamic family experiences when both a mother and father are taking their children. In addition, hunting creates opportunities for bonding time between family and friends alike. Six of 25 women participants argue women participating in hunting strengthens relationships. In a similar vein, six of the 25 women discuss women bringing an atmosphere of domesticity to the hunting lifestyle in the form of cooking game meats and preparing meals at hunting camps.

The final topic that comes up in the interviews regarding women's contributions to the hunting lifestyle is their attention to detail. Five of 25 women insist women have greater attention to detail and are more organized than men.

Women's Liberation

Some of the previously discussed themes describe many of the hurdles to women participating in hunting. However, the hunting participation of women in the US has seen a 25% increase (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011). Possible explanations, as highlighted in the findings of this research are the changing interpretations of gender, more men who are including their wives and/or daughters, women wanting to spend time with their families, and medias' portrayal and inclusion of women in hunting.

Gender occurs on a continuum and gender roles are not as strict as they once were. Women have entered academia, the workforce, politics, and several other traditional boys clubs including hunting. Fifteen of 25 women assert these changing attitudes toward gender roles in society are part of why more women are getting out into the woods and becoming hunters. One woman states, *"More women aren't as scared to be seen as masculine and killers."* Another woman asserts, *"Traditional gender roles have sort of evaporated...and it's not as taboo or seen as strictly masculine."*

Changing attitudes have most likely facilitated a growing number of husbands and fathers to include their wives and/or daughters in their hunting experiences. Six of the 25 women participants argue that men have helped to get more women participating in hunting by involving their wives and/or daughters. Additionally, more women are agreeing to participate in hunting so they can spend more time with their husbands and/or fathers. Five of 25 women assert more women are participating in hunting to spend more time with their husbands and/or fathers.

Another explanation for the increase in female hunters refers to the influence of television. Over the last few years hunting shows like Duck Dynasty and many others have women on them and women hunting icons like Eva Shockey have placed a spot light on hunting. Six of 25 women discuss the role

television plays in increasing the visibility of women hunters and in turn encouraging more women to participate. Seeing women on these hunting television series demonstrate that women's participation in hunting is accepted and welcomed.

Discussion

This study addresses how women engage in and experience hunting; what women think and believe about hunting and wildlife, and how women's participation in hunting activities is currently perceived. Prior to data collection, I hypothesized that women would be introduced to hunting by their fathers or husbands, view hunting as a sport compared to being a cultural practice or wildlife management strategy, hold utilitarian and naturalistic orientations toward wildlife compared to moralistic and humanistic orientations, and assert humans to be the problem in human-wildlife conflicts.

This research reveals that the majority of women in Eastern North Carolina participating in this study are initiated into the culture of hunting through their fathers or a father-like figure during childhood. Only a few women are introduced to hunting by their husbands. This confirms the hypothesis that women hunters in Eastern North Carolina are most likely to be introduced to hunting by an influential male figure. However, the findings demonstrate that the socialization of these particular women into the culture of hunting do not adhere to the positions purported in literature. Although limited, the literature on women and hunting states that husbands are the most influential driver of women becoming hunters (Adams & Steen, 1997; Mcfarlane, Watson, & Boxall, 2003; Heberlein, Serup, & Ericsson, 2008; Boglioli, 2009). Perhaps, the rural characteristics of Eastern North Carolina can serve as an explanation for the difference and also point to a change in gender expectations towards women among North Carolinians.

Since other studies on female hunters are scarce it is only possible to speculate about what accounts for this difference. None of the studies acknowledge the possibility of regional differences in the hunting socialization process. Perhaps the findings from this study do not align with the literature on female hunters due to a regional variation in Eastern North Carolina. Men in Eastern North Carolina may be equally likely to take his sons as his daughters. Additionally, the passing of family hunting traditions to the next generation or sharing an activity with their daughters may be more important to male hunters in Eastern North Carolina so that these men do not forgo sharing those experiences. Furthermore it is possible

that the wives of male hunters in Eastern North Carolina encourage them to take their daughters. Whatever reasoning motivated the fathers of the women participating in this research, many of the women themselves assert it is normal for women to hunt where they are from and in many cases it is expected.

Hunting is considered a normal and traditional practice by the majority of women in this study, for some it was even expected of them during their childhood. A culture is a set of beliefs, values, customs, and traditions that are shared and passed down from generation to generation through learning (Tylor, 1874). When the definition of culture is broken down into its component parts hunting follows the definition of culture. Hunters within the same family are more likely to share similar beliefs, values, customs, and traditions. Typically, these beliefs, values, customs, and traditions are passed from father to son or daughter. Hunting is something that must be learned, someone has to teach you. Additionally, the shared beliefs, values, customs, and traditions of hunting through the ethics and unwritten rules of hunting bridge the family sphere and unite all hunters.

The majority of the women in this study view hunting as a cultural practice. However, several provide conditional reasoning for hunting being a cultural practice, including how one is raised, being Native American, or relying on the food harvested via hunting. Literature on hunting in the US tends to focus on its history and development or is examined through the lens of wildlife management. A select few researchers have approached modern hunting in the US as a cultural practice (Kerasote, 1993; Dizard, 2003; Marvin, 2005; Boglioli, 2009).

In an effort to differentiate hunting from subsistence and commercial hunting during the nineteenth century it was deemed sport hunting. It was a pastime for the upper class to escape to the countryside and get away from the rigors and stresses of city life (Herman, 2003; Smalley, 2005; Duda, Jones, & Criscione, 2010). Subsistence hunting was demonized as a practice of savage natives while commercial hunting was criticized for its excessive hunting. Sport hunting developed in parallel with wildlife management and as a result was interested in the thoughtful use of game animals. However, today many hunters are removed from this history of hunting so there is disagreement on calling hunting a sport. Regarding hunting as a

sport relates to the women's personal definition of a sport. Two-thirds of the women in this study view hunting as a sport or understand how hunting can be considered a sport. The women who view hunting as a sport or that it can be a sport think of hunting as requiring a measure of physical strength, preparation, practice, training, and equipment. The women who disagree with hunting being considered a sport define hunting for sport as frivolous, disrespectful, and wasteful given hunting's true purpose as a food source. Therefore when someone hunts for sport in their minds they do not consume the meat and/or are solely after the trophy.

Although more women participating in this study view hunting as a cultural practice than a sport, over half of the women agree with each statement. This refutes the hypothesis that women hunters in Eastern North Carolina are more likely to consider hunting a sport or recreational activity than a cultural practice. Hunting is deeply rooted in Eastern North Carolina. Therefore it is not surprising that the majority of women see hunting as a cultural practice. Some of the literature on women and hunting view women as the gatekeepers of family recreation and how families spend their vacations. Again due to a lack of literature on hunters' conceptualizations of hunting it is difficult to account for how and why so many of the women in the sample experience hunting as a cultural practice and a sport.

Surprisingly, more of the women see hunting as a wildlife management strategy than a recreational sport, however, two-thirds of the women do see hunting as a sport. This refutes the hypothesis that women hunters in Eastern North Carolina are more likely to consider hunting a recreational sport than a wildlife management strategy. Although many of the women view hunting as a wildlife management strategy, it appears their knowledge is limited to the concepts of population and disease control. Wildlife management entails concrete biological information, managing humans, benefiting all plants and animals, maintaining animal numbers at a level we can live with and that their habitats can sustain, and balancing conservation and preservation. Additionally, wildlife management is defined as "the science and art of managing wildlife and its habitat for the benefit of soil, vegetation, and animals, including humans" (Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks, 2017).

Despite not understanding the full scope of wildlife management and hunting's role in wildlife management, there is a consensus among the women that humans are the root of all the conflicts between humans and wildlife and the devastation thrust upon wildlife. Human entitlement, greed, and disregard for the consequences of our population growth and urban sprawl and development are pervasive in the US. Hunters maintain a more regular connection with nature and many are ardent conservationists. As a result, many hunters have a healthy and honest understanding of the human impact on the environment and animals.

This research highlights that for these women hunters wildlife are attractive and beautiful representations of nature offering a lens to understanding how nature works and provide humans with satisfaction through direct experience or contact. The majority of women in this research have aesthetic, scientific, and naturalistic orientations toward wildlife. Overwhelmingly, the women least relate to the negativistic and dominionistic orientations. In part, this refutes the hypothesis that women hunters are more likely to exhibit utilitarian and naturalistic orientations than moralistic and humanistic orientations. The women in this study did relate to the naturalistic orientation more than moralistic or humanistic orientations. However, these women hunters only moderately related to the utilitarian orientation. Interestingly, this research differs from previous research on wildlife value orientations.

Prior research examines wildlife value orientations (Fulton, Manfredo, & Lipscomb, 1996; Peterson et al., 2009; Tarrant, Bright, & Cordell, 1997; Zinn, Manfredo, & Barro, 2002), attitudes toward animals (Campbell & MacKay, 2003; Daigle, Hrubes, & Ajzen, 2002; Eliason, 2008; Heberlein & Ericsson, 2005; Herzog, Betchart, & Pittman, 1991; Herzog, 2010; Kellert & Berry, 1987), the changing of these attitudes toward wildlife (Heberlein, 1991; Manfredo, Teel, & Bright, 2003), and often compares hunters to non-hunters or anti-hunters. However there is no literature that specifically examines women hunters' wildlife value orientations. Previous research found that men who hunt tend toward utilitarian, dominionistic, and naturalistic wildlife value orientations while women and non-hunters have moralistic, humanistic, and symbolic orientations toward wildlife. It is challenging to account for these differences

given the lack of literature specific to women hunters. These differences may be due to the shifting demographics in the US, increasing urbanization, education levels, and affluence; the disconnection from the natural world; and generally more protectionist sentiments toward the environment and wildlife compared to a decade ago.

As a result of these women hunters believing wildlife are attractive and beautiful representations of nature that offer a lens to understanding how nature works and provide them with satisfaction through direct experience or contact; caring for wildlife is an important aspect of being a hunter. While those unfamiliar with hunting or only familiar with the world's worst examples of hunters tend to focus on the killing of animals or to perceive hunting as an activity that is anachronistic and unnecessary, hunters are interested in conserving and maintaining wildlife and their habitats so they and future generations can continue to hunt, but also so everyone has the opportunity to enjoy wild nature. The hunter understands that wildlife and their habitats must be cared for through a delicate balance between conservation efforts and hunting for population and disease control due to a lack of natural predators in the wild. Caring for wildlife takes on many forms for these women. Concepts like conservation and growing food for wildlife are palatable to the general public and akin to other protectionist ideals. Conversely, concepts like population and disease control that involve killing individual animals for the betterment and health of the population may be harder for the general public to understand.

Debates about hunting are not exclusive to animal rights activists or the general public. There are controversial practices within hunting and among hunters. All the hunting practices the women participating in this research oppose relate to those that cause harm either through excessive pain and suffering (running dogs and trapping) or threatening the propagation of a species (overhunting and shooting mothers with young animals).

The practice of running dogs to hunt is hotly debated in Eastern North Carolina. It is a common practice in this part of the state and the hunters who grew up doing it believe it to be a component of Eastern North Carolina's rich hunting traditions. Conversely, the women who oppose the practice assert

the dogs are mistreated and endangered and it causes unnecessary harm, suffering, and stress to the animal being hunted. In a similar vein, the women against trapping believe it causes prolonged and unnecessary suffering.

The other controversial hunting practices relate to exhausting the species. Overhunting is taking more animals than the number of tags provided by the state. For example, if the state of North Carolina allows the taking of six antlerless deer in a season, anyone harvesting more than six deer in a season is guilty of overhunting. In the short term, the practice affects next year's population numbers, while in the long run overhunting has the potential of devastating populations and species. Similarly, shooting mothers with young animals relates to overhunting because young animals are often not equipped to survive when they are orphaned. Therefore, it has the potential to effect the following year's population numbers in the short term and hinders the perpetuation of the species in the long term.

Ultimately, minimizing harm to wildlife, their footprint in this world, and not abusing their role as a hunter is essential to the women participating in this research. Given the importance of minimizing harm to wildlife and that hunters enter the natural world and get to see wildlife up close and more often than most in today's modern world, imparts hunters with a greater appreciation and respect for the animals they hunt. This greater appreciation of wildlife; their lives, their capabilities, and what they can teach us, along with the importance of caring for wildlife and the hunting practice these women oppose, coalesce and translate into hunting's greater purpose. Hunting is about more than just harvesting meat. This research reveals that for these women it is more important to allow young and healthy animals to grow and mature so they can contribute to the gene pool, thereby strengthening the population. Furthermore, it is reprehensible for a hunter to kill just for the sake of killing an animal or only to take the trophy meaning it is vital in the opinion of these women that if you do kill an animal, you use it to the fullest. In addition, hunting affords hunters the opportunity to see and experience the natural world and wildlife up close beyond what is being hunted. All of these ideas demonstrate the compassion and perspectives of these specific women. Interestingly, the women participants perceive themselves and women, more generally,

as being more considerate and thoughtful than men when in the woods and when it comes to the lives of the animals being hunted. Several of these women claim women think about the bigger picture, understand the emotional side of taking a life, leave a smaller footprint when in the woods by ensuring any trash is picked up and shooting fewer animals, and are more concerned with management than men. An essential component of being an ethical hunter is to not be disrespectful or wasteful. Although the animals are a resource it is important to consider the bigger picture.

This research illuminates several concepts related to how women hunters think about wildlife and hunting. It is important to note that these concepts do not have parallels within the literature. The women participating in this research highlight the importance of caring for wildlife, not abusing their role as hunters, appreciating all that wildlife offer the world, and that hunting has a greater purpose. However, with further research these findings may be found among the larger hunting population. In addition, this knowledge can be used to help inform the general public about hunting and hunters.

When different media outlets are all riddled with negative images and hunting's worst examples, like reality television stars from Duck Dynasty or individuals like Ted Nugent, Sarah Palin, and Walter Palmer the dentist who shot and killed beloved lion Cecil, it is not surprising that hunting is becoming increasingly unpopular among the general public. The combination of common stereotypes of misogynistic rednecks wearing camouflage and media images make it challenging for hunters who are only looking to feed their families or enjoy family bonding time with the added bonus of filling their freezers to be seen as anything more than people out of time and touch with the modern world (King & McCarthy, 2005; Molloy, 2011). This also makes it difficult for wildlife management agencies to recruit new hunters, in particular women.

It is a fact that far fewer women are hunters in the United States. The women in this research present a picture of fewer women hunting because of the male domination of hunting, "traditional" gender roles and women being taught to be nurturers, and the lack of opportunities related to family upbringing. Across cultures and here in the US hunting is passed from generation to generation from father to son.

Some fathers still hold onto these traditions and decide not to introduce their daughters leading to the lack of opportunities due to family upbringing. Many of the women recount being the only women at camp or in a group of hunters. Furthermore, starting in childhood men and women are constantly bombarded with culturally constructed ideas of what it means to be a man and a woman. Media constructions, family upbringing, and life experiences mold how we relate to members of the same-sex and the opposite sex and reinforce societal expectations.

Feminist literature, specifically ecofeminist literature delves into discussing hunting and hunters. However, ecofeminism tends to only consider the hunter as male, enacting in war games, engaging in male bonding, and acting out their sexual, aggressive, and domineering impulses (Dahles, 1993; Kheel, 1996; Fitzgerald, 2005; Smalley, 2005). Ecofeminism draws connections between hunting and masculinity, aggression, and sex. However, the women participants did not completely agree with all three of these concepts being connected to hunting. The women agree with hunting's ties to masculinity given it being a male dominated activity. However, the majority of the women disagree with hunting being tied to aggression or sex. These women demonstrate hunting has nothing to do with masculinity, aggression, or sex. Unfortunately, only a few scholars under the ecofeminism umbrella consider the existence of women hunters and that their numbers are increasing nationwide (Stange, 1997; Fitzgerald, 2005). Truthfully, ecofeminism appears misinformed or to be writing about the worst examples of hunters, especially given the tendency to ignore an entire segment of the hunter population, women.

Statistics show more women are becoming hunters given the 25% increase in women's hunting participation between 2006 and 2011 (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011). This research exhibits that fathers, father-like figures, and husbands alike are willing to introduce the women in their lives to hunting. Interestingly, many of the women participating in this research attribute this increase to more men being willing to take their daughters and wives. Here to, the literature is lacking on women's introductions to hunting from the perspective of the women being introduced and those doing the introductions.

The greatest influences to the increasing number of women taking up hunting appear to be men and the media. Most hunting television programs have women hunters on them. Additionally, some of the women on these shows have become icons for women hunters. One such woman is Eva Shockey. She has a signature series compound bow and release designed and marketed specifically to women hunters, a substantial media presence among Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Although women specific education workshops like Becoming an Outdoor Woman (BOW) are becoming increasingly popular, there has not been any research done to examine the impact of these workshops on women's hunting participation numbers. Women hunters, whether in the guise of television personalities or instructors at BOW workshops appear to have the most influence on adult women. Perhaps in the future if these trends continue, women will have more influence and inspire a generation of young women to get involved in hunting, conservation and food collection.

There are several limitations of this research. The study has a small sample size of only 25 women hunters making it impossible to generalize the results at the state or national levels. Other limitations within this study are its focus on Eastern North Carolina and that the distributions of who initiated the women into the culture of hunting, type of hometown, ethnicities, and ages are unequal across the sample. Future research should seek to verify the findings of this study with a larger sample size of women hunters. Additionally, further research should examine for more detailed ethnicity, age, and urban versus rural effects on the data. After a thorough examination of women hunters in North Carolina, research exploring the experiences of women hunters should expand to other states in the US and then endeavor a cross-cultural global investigation of women hunters.

Anthropology and other social sciences have the potential to make critical contributions to human-animal studies and the human dimensions of wildlife literature. However, anthropology has been slow to rise to the challenge and the call from human-animal studies and the human dimensions of wildlife. Cultural anthropology's use of participant observation and gathering of thick detailed descriptions places the field in an optimal position to tackle issues related to the experiences and opinions of hunting and

wildlife. Looking to the future, this research and research like it has useful applications for education and outreach within wildlife management. Whether it is to encourage more women to take up hunting or educating the general public about the realities of hunting and wildlife, further research on hunters and hunting, in general, and women hunters and other groups of hunters, more specifically is needed. Although the gender question of increasing women's participation in hunting is important to understanding how women hunters are engaging in and experiencing hunting and wildlife and helping wildlife management agencies increase hunter recruitment, wildlife managers need to take a step back and get a broader understanding of hunters and deal with the misconceptions of hunters and hunting within the general public. In addition, the land and safety issues hunters experience that keep them from using public lands to hunt need to be addressed. Continued research of women hunters needs to examine how women hunters prioritize hunting within their daily lives. Women tend to put the needs and wants of others before their own. Therefore, unless women hunters are retired, with adult children who are out of the house, and some discretionary income women will have other commitments that they prioritize about hunting or other personal activities. Furthermore, learning about hunters and women hunters, more specifically, can inform policy and planning for environmental and wildlife conservation.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office
4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · www.ecu.edu/irb

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB

To: Dominique Bragg-Holtfreter

CC: Christine Avenarius

Date: 6/17/2016

Re: UMCIRB 16-000487
The Female Hunting Experience in Eastern North Carolina

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 6/14/2016 to 6/13/2017. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category # 6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
BraggHoltfreter.InformedConsentDocument.doc	Consent Forms
BraggHoltfreter.SurveyInstrument.doc	Surveys and Questionnaires
BraggHoltfreter.ThesisProposal.doc	Study Protocol or Grant Application
BraggHoltfreter-InterviewInstrument.doc	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview

Interview Guide

Personal History:

1. How were you introduced to hunting? (Age? Who was with you?)
2. What are your family's hunting traditions?

Social Life:

3. Please tell me about your social life.
4. Who do you hang out with other than your spouse and family?
5. How did your family react when you decided to take up hunting?
6. How did your friends react when you decided to take up hunting?

Hunting Experiences:

7. Are you currently a licensed hunter?
8. When was the last time you were licensed?
9. What factors contributed to your lapse in getting a hunting license?
10. Do you plan to get a hunting license this year or in the future?
11. What animals do you hunt?
12. What changes occur in the hunting experience with the animal being hunted?
13. Are there any hunting methods you are personally against? Why?
14. What are your thoughts on the statement that hunting is a sport?
15. What are your thoughts on the statement that hunting is a way of life or cultural practice?
16. What motivates you to hunt?
17. What are your main reasons for hunting?
18. In your opinion, has your hunting experience given you a greater appreciation or respect for the animals you hunt?
19. How important is caring for wildlife to your ideas about being a hunter?

Wildlife Management:

20. What is the hunter's role in managing wildlife?
21. Do you consider hunting a wildlife management strategy? How so?
22. What conflicts between humans and wildlife exist?
23. What is the source of the conflict between humans and wildlife?
24. Does the process of hunting do anything to help the environment—if so what?

Identity:

25. What makes up the hunter identity?
26. Do you identify as a hunter?
27. Were there any marked experiences that you recall that solidified you being a hunter?
28. What other elements contribute to your personal identity?

Gender:

29. Why do you think fewer women than men become licensed hunters?
30. What do women provide to the hunting lifestyle?
31. What do you think contributes to the idea that hunting has been or is a male dominated activity?
32. What are your thoughts on hunting often being tied to masculinity, aggression, and sex?
33. Did you know women hunting participation increased by 25% between 2006 and 2011?
34. In your opinion, why do you think more women have started to take up hunting in the last few years?

Appendix C: Demographic Information

Hunter Demographic Information

*What animals do you hunt?

Big Game:

Bear

Deer

Wild Turkey

Small Game:

Raccoon

Opossum

Squirrel

Rabbit

Quail

Grouse

Bobcat

Groundhog

Coyote

Hogs

Pheasant

Fox

Beaver

Migratory Birds

Waterfowl

Other

*What weapons do you hunt with?

*Who do you hunt with?

*How often do you go hunting within a year?

Demographic Information

*Age: _____

*Gender: M _____ F _____

*Self-Reported Ethnicity: _____

*Highest Level of Education:

*Occupation:

*Religious Affiliation:

*Rural, Suburban, Urban:

* Hometown:

* Current Residence:

* Marital Status: Single: _____ Married: _____ Divorced: _____

*# of Members in Household: _____

* # of Children _____

*Household Income

- \$14,999 or less
- \$15,000-\$24,999
- \$25,000-\$34,999
- \$35,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$74,999
- \$75,000 or more

Appendix D: Structured Tasks

Belief Frames (Campbell & Mackay, 2003)

1. Hunting that requires license fees to support wildlife management is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

2. Hunting that provides a source of food is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

3. Hunting to maintain wildlife population levels is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

4. Hunting to reduce/control disease in wildlife is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

5. Hunting to maintain wildlife habitat is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

6. Hunting that contributes to the local economy is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

7. Hunting to experience fresh air and nice scenery is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

8. Hunting as a tourism attraction is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

9. Hunting as a cultural activity is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

10. Hunting for outdoor recreation is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

11. Hunting for sport is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

12. Hunting where the animals are penned is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

13. Hunting that upsets the balance of nature is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

14. Hunting that risks the safety of hunters is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

15. Hunting that forces animals to migrate is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

16. Hunting that risks the safety of others is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

17. Hunting that results in cruelty to animals is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

18. Hunting for trophy animals is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

19. Hunting by people who are not educated in weapons safety is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

20. Hunting on an illegal basis (poaching) is...

Extremely Good Somewhat Good Somewhat Bad Extremely Bad

Wildlife Orientations (Manfredo, 2008) Rank Task

Please rank these 8 statements in order of the one you most agree with to least agree with:

- A. wildlife exists to be used efficiently to meet human interests
- B. wildlife are objects humans exert mastery, physical control, and dominance over
- C. wildlife give humans satisfaction through direct experience or contact
- D. wildlife are entities eliciting strong affinity, spiritual reverence, and ethical concern
- E. wildlife elicit strong emotional attachment and love in ways similar to humans
- F. wildlife are attractive and beautiful representations of nature
- G. wildlife are a source of fear, aversion, disdain, and alienation from nature
- H. wildlife represent a window to understanding how nature works

1st Place: _____

2nd Place: _____

3rd Place: _____

4th Place: _____

5th Place: _____

6th Place: _____

7th Place: _____

8th Place: _____

